

SOLDIER - MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

JANUARY 2007

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SOLDIER

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SELECT FEW

Nepal's finest vie for prized places in Brigade of Gurkhas



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UNDER BigBen

A digest of what is being said on Army matters in Parliament

Improvement in Iraqi capability

THE numbers of Iraqi soldiers operating independently of coalition forces has increased significantly in the past year.

Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram said that of 112 Iraqi army battalions, 13 were now capable of planning and conducting counter-insurgency ops while a further 78 needed only minimal back-up in areas such as planning and logistics. The remainder were undergoing the early stages of formation and basic training.

The current situation is in sharp contrast to November 2005, when only one of the Iraqi battalions was capable of operating independently, 13 could operate with minimal support and the rest were either working alongside coalition troops or in the process of being formed.

Equipment: Kit used by British troops in Iraq will be kept under review and changes made where necessary. Defence Procurement Minister Lord Drayson told the House of Lords: "In terms of the nature of the operation we will monitor what changes we need to make to our equipment profile as circumstances unfold."

Cash bonus: Armed Forces personnel wounded in action will still be eligible to receive their new tax-free bonus while recovering from their injuries. Defence Secretary Des Browne told MPs that the windfall, which is worth around £2,240, would also be credited to soldiers who died on operations.

Returning troops: Commonwealth soldiers completing their military service are not publicly funded to return to their home countries, Veterans' Minister Derek Twigg has confirmed. In a written answer he stated that troops were paid to travel to a UK point of departure. If discharged abroad, they received funding "equivalent to a notional cost of a move from their overseas unit to Catterick Garrison".

Barracks set to become smoke-free

Forces leading the way, say health campaigners

MOD chiefs are poised to start the New Year with a decisive resolution of their own – a smoking ban in all defence workplaces and vehicles.

In a move that will put the department more than six months ahead of the rest of England, Wales and Northern Ireland regarding new legislation to stop smoking in public places, troops will have to stub out in environments including Service messes and clubs.

The ban was due to be introduced by the MoD at the end of last month, although final consultations with Civil Service unions were taking place as this issue went to press.

But anti-smoking activists were quick to praise the department's forward-thinking approach and have called on civilian businesses to follow its example.

A spokeswoman for the pressure group ASH said the MoD's decisive action was "excellent news" for the health of all Service personnel.

She added: "It is obviously important that people in the Armed Forces are fit and healthy. Working in a smoke-free environment will help them achieve this. The sooner the new law is introduced, the better. Every day the health of people is being put at risk by them breathing secondary smoke."

Having separate smoking and non-smoking areas in public places was "simply not sufficient" to address the

problem, the spokeswoman said.

"Our message to people is to go smoke-free quickly. What the MoD has done is excellent news and we hope it will encourage others to do the same."

The smoking ban will bring the Armed Forces in England, Wales and Northern Ireland into line with Scotland, where troops had to stub out last spring.

But it is not all bad news for smokers – health clinics are offering counselling and free nicotine patches to help those committed to quitting give up for good.

● Up in smoke – Page 90

What the ban will mean

● All MoD and Service enclosed work areas in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and overseas, as well as vehicles, must be smoke-free

● No-smoking signs should be displayed at all entrances to defence establishments as a reminder not to light up

● Smoking in Service messes and clubs is not allowed

● Local commands have discretion to allocate certain bedrooms as "smoking permitted" in single living accommodation

Sappers build bridges

BATTLE-hardened sappers were pressed into action closer to home recently when they helped open up a picturesque waterway for boat enthusiasts.

The troops from 53 Field Squadron (Air Support) – part of 39 Engineer Regiment – raised a Second World War-era Bailey bridge to enable river traffic to get through on the Middle Level Waterway

in Cambridgeshire. A 20-strong team of combat engineers and carpenters carried out the work. The move means that more than 30 miles of waterway have been opened up to canal traffic.

Based at nearby Waterbeach, the sappers carried out the project for the Inland Waterways Association under the Military Aid to the Civilian Community initiative.



On course: Determined soldiers taking part in a round-the-world sailing trip organised by the Royal Signals have been put through an arduous training package in preparation for one of the world's most prestigious races.

The all-ranks crew of the Challenge 67 yacht *Adventure* assembled in Australia on the latest stage of the Mercury Challenge, where they were due to take part in the Perth-to-Hobart event as this issue went to press.

And under the watchful eye of skipper Maj Charles Roberts and first mate Sgt Windy Gale, both R Signals, the sailors braved bracing 50-knot winds in the Bass Strait as they geared up to take on nearly 90 other boats.

The 628-nautical mile Sydney-to-Hobart route is recognised as being one of the world's most demanding, with unpredictable and testing weather conditions. After the race, the crew will sail from Hobart to Wellington, New Zealand, before heading across the perilous Southern Ocean to Argentina.

As previously reported in *Soldier*, the Mercury Challenge started last July and is taking 120 troops round the world in ten separate legs. They will compete in the Antigua Race Week before returning to Portsmouth in the summer. Sgt "MJ" Holt, R Signals, is pictured at *Adventure's* helm.

Call to fight with bite

'Watch your mouth', soldiers are warned by senior defence dental staff

TROOPS have been warned to make sure they keep tabs on their teeth amid concerns about the numbers of dental casualties in the field.

Latest figures show nearly 1,680 dental emergencies were reported in Iraq last year, of which more than 180 had a "severe operational impact".

Soldiers are also currently the worst offenders from all three Services for skipping check-ups with their dentist. Most recent figures for the penultimate quarter of last year showed nearly 13 per cent of them failed to show up.

Now Forces health professionals have warned troops to keep their mouths in good order and make sure any problems are addressed before deployment.

Dental chiefs have also rolled out two new initiatives – a text-messaging trial to remind troops that they have appointments plus a scheme to encourage good practice among recruits – to make sure troops can fight with bite.

Lt Kay Birkin, Royal Navy, a staff officer in clinical services at the Tri-Service Defence Dental Services, said all soldiers should have mandatory check-ups before they deployed. She also said they needed to look at the long-term picture.

Lt Birkin added: "People need to maintain regular contact with their dentist. It is no good just going two weeks before you deploy and finding you need lots of work. You need to make sure that you turn up for your appointments and

make sure that you keep your mouth as fit as the rest of your body."

Cutting down missed appointments is at the heart of the ongoing text-messaging trial while the dental health of recruits is being targeted through Project Molar, a scheme to get them into the dentist's chair during basic training.

Lt Birkin was confident the initiatives would be positive for troops' health.

She said: "With Project Molar, we are aiming to give recruits a minimum of two hours dental treatment during their Phase One and Phase Two training.

"And by using text messaging as a reminder for appointments we have direct contact with the patient. This will save on the time spent on administration."



UPDATE

Cell behind bars

Op Telic troops lead night-time strike against terror suspects in Basra city

YOUNG British soldiers have been praised for their "determination and skills" after they successfully smashed a major terror cell in Basra City.

In the biggest strike operation since 2003, nearly 1,000 troops serving with 19 Light Brigade raided houses in the north of the city under cover of darkness in Operation Pisa.

The soldiers, supported by Challenger 2 tanks and Warrior armoured vehicles, came under fire as they moved towards targets in the Al Harthah area.

According to military sources, troops exchanged rounds after coming under attack from RPGs and small-arms fire but were able to press ahead without sustaining any casualties.

As soldiers from the 2nd Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment advanced by road, comrades from the 1st Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment carried out a river-borne assault.

The 3rd Battalion of The Royal Regiment of Scotland was also involved in the night-time swoop and were assisted by Danish coalition troops advancing from the north of the suburb.

Commanders in theatre hailed as a great success the operation, which targeted suspects implicated in murders, kidnappings and attacks on multi-national forces.

As well as making five arrests, soldiers unearthed a cache of heavy machine-guns, ammunition and ready-for-use improvised explosive devices.

They were confident the arms discovery would lead directly to the doors of other extremists.

In an interview with *Soldier*, 19 Light Brigade spokesman Maj Charlie Burbridge attributed the success of the operation to junior soldiers, who, having only been in theatre for a few weeks, had proved themselves to be a robust and potent force against would-be terrorists.

"The operation had been planned over several days and was complex so it's a testament to the determination and skills of the young soldiers that it was ultimately successful," said Maj Burbridge.

Op Pisa follows a long line of counter-insurgency actions carried out on previous Op Telic tours, which have been taking terrorists and their weapons out of circulation.

In August last year, troops deployed with the 20th Armoured Brigade seized the largest haul of weapons discovered in the three years of coalition involvement in southern Iraq.



Picture: Cpl Russ Nolan RLC

City slickers: Op Pisa was the largest counter-terrorist action mounted since the arrival of troops in Iraq

Women swell ranks

MORE women and members of ethnic minorities are signing up for careers in the Armed Forces.

Latest MoD figures show 11.5 per cent of officers across the three Armed Forces are now female – up fractionally on the last survey in October 2006 – while their number grew slightly in the ranks to just under

nine per cent. Numbers of personnel from ethnic minorities going through the doors of recruiting offices also showed a modest growth – they now account for nearly six per cent of the Servicemen and women.

Overall the MoD statistics reveal the Armed Forces are at more than 96 per cent of full strength.



UPDATE



Stopped in their tracks: Challenger 2s from The King's Royal Hussars withdraw from the exercise area following days of heavy rainfall

Picture: Steve Dock

Rain on the Plain

Pre-Iraq training halted as bad weather prompts environmental concerns

ARMOURED troops limbering up for Iraq were forced into an all-out retreat after days of torrential downpours put paid to their manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain.

Military chiefs canned Exercise Druid's Dance amid concerns that the environment would suffer if the main battle tanks of The King's Royal Hussars were allowed out in the sodden conditions. The decision, which came after days of depressing weather for the Challenger 2 crews and their support teams, sent soldiers back to their barracks in Tidworth.

Cancellations are rare – only one other exercise has suffered the same fate in the past three years – but it was hoped that some elements of the KRH training could be salvaged.

The regiment's CO, Lt Col Nick Orr, expressed disappointment that the manoeuvres had been halted but accepted that they could have done serious damage to the training area.

Salisbury Plain is recognised as a unique location for rare animal and plant species as well as being home to

many hundreds of archaeological sites.

Lt Col Orr told *Soldier*: "We have a responsibility towards training areas and their ecology and environment.

"We decided to call a temporary halt to the exercise as Salisbury Plain was rapidly turning into a flood plain.

"However, there is clearly huge disappointment from my perspective that I am not going to be able to achieve all that I set out for this initiative."

The KRH, which fielded some 60 armoured vehicles, 30 of them Challenger 2 tanks, on the exercise, were halfway through Druid's Dance when

it was stopped. Lt Col Roger Fellowes, KRH, commandant of the Salisbury Plain training area, said the 50,000-acre estate was rich in plant and wildlife and needed to be looked after.

He emphasised that training needs had to be balanced against potential environmental damage, adding that important manoeuvres would take priority where possible.

Lt Col Fellowes said: "We monitored the situation during the exercise.

"We had 20mm of rainfall in one night, including a particularly heavy 7mm in six minutes."

Tankies endorse stubby rifle

DELIGHTED tank crews have given a resounding welcome to a pint-sized version of the SA80 rifle, designed specifically to fit into tight spaces.

The soldiers, serving with The King's Royal Hussars, gave the thumbs-up to the carbine version of the weapon after they began using it a few months ago.

Capt Hugh Stacey, 2ic of B Squadron, KRH, said it had proved a popular addition to the armoury and a welcome replacement for the pistols normally issued.

He added: "We've had the weapon for six months and the guys think it is fantastic. It gives us the same firepower as the SA80 A2 but will easily fit in a turret."



Cream of the crop

Nepal's finest vie
for prized places in
Brigade of Gurkhas »

Against all odds: Competition to join
this most respected fighting force is
fierce – this year 14,292 young men
applied for just 230 places

Hill start: Potential recruits power their way through the most gruelling part of central selection – the 5km stamina test (previously known as the doko race) carrying 25kg up a hillside in Pokhara's Kali Khola Valley in western Nepal



Report: Andrea Webb
Pictures: Mike Weston

“HAVEN'T slept all week,” the anxious father of a potential recruit confessed as he waited to hear if his son had realised the hopes and dreams of his extended family by being selected to serve in the British Army's prestigious Brigade of Gurkhas – Nepal's most famous export.

So great is the desire to join this most respected fighting force that the young men of the impoverished mountain kingdom train for months on end and travel miles to pit their skills against the very best their country has to offer.

Last month, *Soldier* journeyed into the Himalayan foothills to the British Gurkha Camp in Pokhara where central selection – the final phase in this most rigorous of recruitment programmes – had just begun and the first of the would-be Gurkhas were nervously waiting for their chance to shine.

“We have many more people wanting to join the British Army here in Nepal than careers offices in the UK would deal with,” said Maj Toby Jackman, RGR, the camp's second-in-command

and the officer in charge of recruiting. “This year a total of 14,292 young men applied for just 230 places.”

With demand seriously outstripping supply, Maj Jackman and his experienced team are in the enviable position of being able to choose the very best for the brigade.

Standards are incredibly high, competition is fierce and candidates must fight tooth and nail if they want to earn their ticket to a better life.

“I've always wanted to join the British Army,” said potential recruit Hari Bahadur Thapa. “Making it through to central selection is a wonderful moment for me – it is an honour to be here.”

To reach this stage is an achievement in itself and all 700 of those called forward had proved their ability during regional selection and beaten more than 13,500 others to secure their spot in the final showdown.

But it is during central selection in Pokhara that the pressure really mounts. The bar has been set even

higher this year and only the best quality candidates will be accepted.

“We had a big problem with forged documentation during this intake,” said Maj Jackman. “Because the educational entry requirements have increased, individuals have been trying to pass off siblings' School Leaving Certificates as their own to get through.

“But I'm confident that our multi-layered selection

system will ensure that the cheats will come unstuck at some point in the process.”

During the final stage of selection candidates – an equal mix of 350 from the

east and 350 from the west – undergo an in-depth medical assessment which includes a chest x-ray to check for signs of tuberculosis and other conditions prevalent in Nepal.

The medical is followed by a one-and-a-half mile run (to be done in 9min 40sec), a 5km uphill stamina test, eight educational assessments, and interviews which help the selectors judge how much recruits know about the brigade and the British Army.

“All 700 of those called forward had beaten more than 13,500 others to secure their spot in the final showdown”



Moving mountains:
Fit and strong, most
candidates complete
the 1.5mile run well
within the 9min 40sec
limit during central
selection's basic
fitness test

"Some don't realise what they are signing up to," said Maj Jackman. "They must understand that it's a huge commitment which may require the ultimate sacrifice. They may have to put their lives on the line if that's what's called for."

The stamina test (previously known as the doko race) is arguably the most gruelling aspect of selection. Potential recruits race each other to the top of a steep hill over a distance of 5km carrying 25kg of sand in a traditional Nepalese doko – a cone-shaped basket carried on the back with a strap around the forehead.

"A test like this is just as much about mental push as physical fitness," said Maj Toby Jackman. "You can train a man to be fit and strong – but when the chips are down, it all comes down to mental determination and robustness, and that is something that can't be taught."

"We are selecting high-grade individuals based on their potential to deliver as Gurkha soldiers within the brigade as part of the modern British Army," he said. "It is important we choose people who are bright and robust enough to deliver operational

success in the sorts of environments we are deploying to these days."

And just as the demands of the British Army are changing so too are the demographics of the Himalayan hills – once the traditional recruiting ground for the Gurkhas.

Nepal's decade-long civil war, combined with the migration of a large section of the population to the towns in search of employment and education, has meant the brigade's approach to recruiting has changed.

"In the past, the first phase was hill selection, where senior recruiting assistants would go up into their areas and identify suitable applicants," explained Maj Jackman.

"But because of the situation in Nepal, we've adjusted the process and replaced hill selection with a registration phase where potential recruits come to one of four locations, submit their registration form and have their documentation checked."

As a result of the population shift, potential recruits now tend to come from more urban areas, and with greater access to schooling, particularly in western Nepal, they also tend to be better educated than those drafted in

from remote hilltop communities.

"Perhaps they are not as familiar with living in a rural environment as they were in the past," said Maj Jackman. "But their backgrounds are ideal when you consider that most of the operations we conduct now are in urban or semi-urban areas."

Operations, however, are a long way from the minds of the young Gurkha hopefuls in Pokhara, who face a tense wait to see whether they have made the grade.

When the results are announced the successful 230 will begin induction training immediately, in preparation for their passing out-parade in front of proud family and friends, before they fly to the UK as British Army recruits.

Being selected is an opportunity of a lifetime for these young men but this is just the beginning of an intensive training process based at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick.

There, in far-off North Yorkshire, Nepal's most talented youths will be moulded into Gurkha soldiers – the bravest of the brave, whose distinguished Victoria Cross-strewn military heritage is summed up in the motto "It is better to die than live a coward." ■



"Now you mention it . . . there is just one little glitch . . ."



"Er, Simkins, while firing the grenade launcher at 90 degrees elevation proves its versatility . . . there is just one little drawback!"

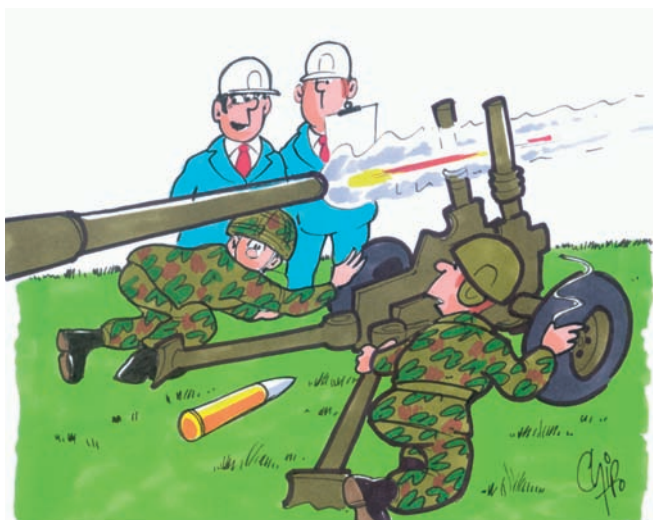


"Of course, if you'd like me to tell *Newsnight* that the PM didn't really mean it, when he said we could have what we wanted . . ."

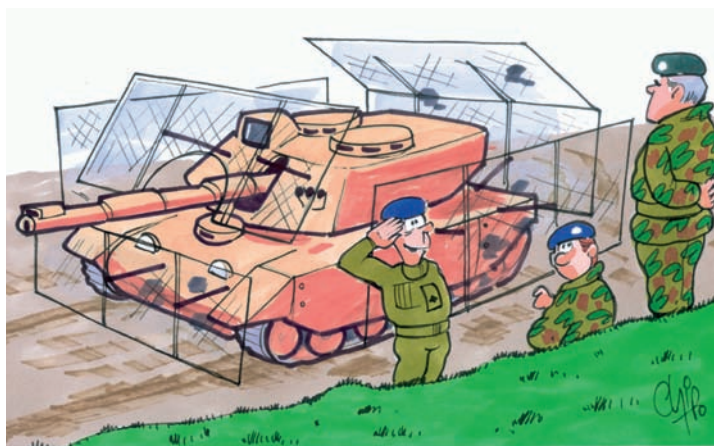
Testing times

Chuckle with Chip

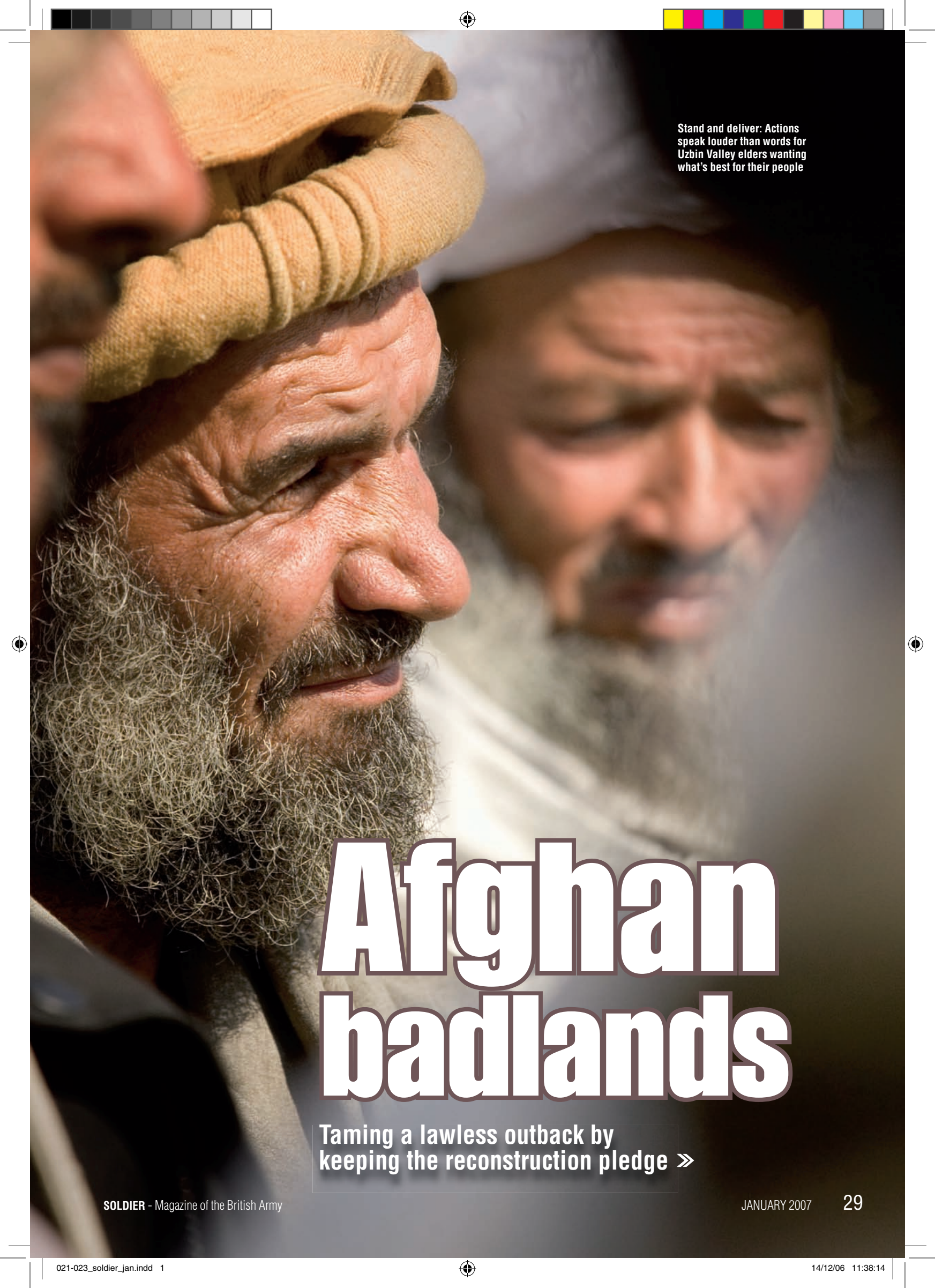
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"Smaller charges and stronger springs next time, I think. Less bang more boing, so to speak."



"The rocket screen works well, General . . . but it's a sod to parallel park!"



Stand and deliver: Actions
speak louder than words for
Uzbin Valley elders wanting
what's best for their people

Afghan badlands

Taming a lawless outback by
keeping the reconstruction pledge »

Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Mike Weston

WINNING the loyalty of ordinary Afghans to prevent the anti-coalition cancer spreading across their country goes beyond engaging smiles, friendly waves and vague promises, especially in the poorer and more unruly provinces.

The district of Surobi, a few hours drive east of Kabul, is one such impoverished place vulnerable to the machinations of the Taliban.

The town has two dams that provide half the capital's power and is the gateway to five valleys in which local Afghans live under the cloud of lawless groups wielding power through bullets and bombs.

Identifying the security of Surobi as a priority, the British-led Force Protection Company extended its patrols from Kabul to Hawkeye, a forward observation base protecting the power source.

Keeping a watchful eye for trouble, a 12-man team spent several days and nights in the remote region. Although aware they were out on a limb in a notoriously wayward area, the troops agreed it felt safer than Kabul, largely because the residents welcomed them.

"The local Afghans liked us because they could see the International Security Assistance Force (Isaf) bringing them security," explained Pte Ganesh Thapa, RGBWLI. "I can also speak with them in Urdu."

Team commander 2nd Lt Alasdair Luff, RLC, agreed. "Only the Uzbin Valley has a police station so there was no real law and order and our presence provided good security for the local Afghans who are very hospitable people."

The Uzbin is a slither of land stretching across huge sand dunes dwarfed by snow-capped mountains. Despite its police force, it still struggles against anarchy. But the valley is also home to people trying to scratch out a meagre livelihood miles from the nearest basic services.

Born in one of the world's poorest countries, Uzbin Valley children can expect to die before their 45th birthday and more than 70 per cent of them will grow up to live on less than \$2 a day.

With so little to lose, they are unlikely to bite the hand – be it British or insurgent – that renovates their school, services a health clinic or builds a mosque.

Lt Col Richard Winstanley, Gren Gds, and commander of the support group to Isaf, decided to get his hand in first.

He took *Soldier* into the valley, where breathtaking scenery easily conceals anyone waiting to launch an ambush on

'The British have delivered on their promises but my country will be beautiful only when there is peace'

the single dead-end road.

Since the police station had come under attack, local communities agreed the first project should be its relocation to a more easily defended position. We were checking how the building work was progressing.

"Surobi has had a perhaps unfair reputation for being the badlands, although it is still dangerous," said Lt Col Winstanley in the aftermath of a recent improvised explosive device (IED) that injured building contractors leaving the construction site. "The violence could erupt at any moment so we need to win local allegiance by using local people in the reconstruction."

"This boosts their economy and they guarantee your safety. You also have to

trust these players and I really trust the local police chief, Col Zanger."

Confidence between British troops and Col Zanger, who has the ear and respect of the inhabitants, was strengthened because reconstruction progressed beyond empty words.

"Many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) came, saw our great need and said they would do something. Then they went away and we never saw or heard from them again," explained Col Zanger. "Lt Col Winstanley is the first person to say he will do something and it has happened."

Village elders from a neighbouring community suddenly appear out of nowhere. They're not happy and want a word with the colonels about when they will get their new buildings and services.

"When villages show they can work together, that it is safe and they stop fighting," comes the firm reply.

Lt Col Winstanley is adamant the





Main picture, money where your mouth is: Lt Col Richard Winstanley, Gren Gds, with villagers wanting their piece of the reconstruction pie. Below, on the tools: Afghan labourers put their back into building up their community

only way to encourage NGOs to pick up the reconstruction ball and keep it rolling in these beautiful but isolated communities is by creating a secure environment.

He is equally adamant the can-do spirit of the British Army had found a niche in the Afghan badlands.

"The pioneers and signallers have got more out of working in Surobi than Kabul. They have developed professionally and matured and it's got them out of the HQ to do a real job like training the Afghan police," said Lt Col Winstanley, with the hope that a reconstruction pattern had been set for the whole country.

For Col Zanger and his people living in such a striking panorama, the fighting has to stop before prosperity can flourish. "The British have delivered on their promises but my country will be beautiful only when there is peace." ■



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Cover picture (left): Potential recruits power their way through Gurkha selection in Pokhara. See Pages 21-23

Picture: Mike Weston

Background image: British troops reach out to rural Afghans. See Pages 29-31



UK's best internal newsmagazine



Bling: YOUR views

OUR feature on souvenir and commemorative medals ("Chocolate box decorations", Dec) produced an instant and massive response from readers.

Many – but certainly not all – were in favour of banning bling altogether. Some thought official policy on the award of medals was unrealistic and there was much sympathy for National Servicemen who had received no formal recognition.

There was also strong support for the right to wear the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM) Medal awarded by the Government of Malaysia for service during the Malaya and Borneo crisis.

Its inclusion in the feature was in no way intended to suggest it was a "bling" medal, but rather to highlight the confusion that surrounds medals not awarded in the first instance by Her Majesty's Government.

Among those angered by the attack

on the wearing of souvenirs was a former soldier with three years' service in the Regulars in Germany who left the Army with no medals. He had bought the British Forces Germany commemorative medal and wore it as a visible sign to others of his service for Queen and Country.

Perhaps, as one contributor suggests, a "Service Medal" to recognise time in uniform would fill the void.

Space in this edition is at a premium, so here is a glimpse of what you have been telling us. We will publish fuller versions, plus many more of your emails and letters on this subject, in forthcoming issues and our website.

COMMEMORATIVES should, in my view, be representations of service where none currently exist and in that role I think they serve their purpose. – **Philip Mussell, Director, Medal News.**

THE wearing of bling should be banned. – **Peter Duffen, ex-TA and ACF officer.**

I HAVE seen many "chocolate box" medals worn on Remembrance Day parades and it infuriates me. – **Chris Duggan, fundraising coordinator, SAMA82 (Wales Branch), Falklands War veteran.**

THE ineptitude of decisions on medals makes it difficult to blame some of the deprived for sporting something that recognises what, to them, is an important part of their service to the country. Perhaps an official "Service Medal" for all would help. – **Lt Col (Retd) Ashley R Tinson, Fleet, Hants.**

I SUPPORT the non-wearing of so-called chocolate box medals, but I must point out that the PJM is not bling. It has been awarded by the King of Malaysia and not by some private company from Shropshire. – **Paul Alders, email.**

I WAS recently awarded at a ceremony in Colchester two Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medals – a posthumous one on behalf of my father and one for myself. The MoD representative informed me that my medals are souvenirs or keepsakes, which beggars believe. – **John Cooper, Kesgrave, Ipswich.**



Pingat Jasa Malaysia

WE are campaigning for permission to wear the PJM at www.fight4thePJM.org. Our two VC supporters have been joined by the Veterans Minister at the time of the PJM decision (Don Touhig MP), who changed his mind while in office and now supports our case and has tabled an Early Day Motion in the Commons. – **Barry Fleming, Inkpen, Hungerford, Berks.**

THE UK has no National Service Medal, no Nuclear Tests Medal, no medal for service with Nato – in short a shambles. I do not blame the National Service lads for purchasing the private medal. I bought it myself but do not wear it. – **M P Cocker, Cleveleys, Lancs.**

IT may not please the "not-on-my-parade" brigade, but I would like to point out, respectfully, that Britain has an effective nuclear deterrent due to the service of these men.

A great number were National Servicemen with absolutely no say in where they served or what they did. – **Bob Smith, ex-SSgt REME, British Nuclear Tests Veterans Association.**

AS a former Royal Engineer who served in the Gulf 1990-91 I feel that anyone who wears bling medals should be ashamed of themselves. It is an insult to those comrades who may never have the opportunity to wear their medals, and to their families. Blingers make themselves a laughing stock but also make the rest of us look silly. – **Scott Mason, RHQ Staffords.**

Colin's Column



WITH the New Year comes the final phase of the JPA roll-out and Army go-live in March. This month's focus is on Longer Separated Service Allowance (LSSA).

● I recently started earning LSSA having been in the Army for just over a year. When JPA comes in, will I have to wait another year before I can start earning LSA?

NO. One of the major benefits of LSA (Longer Separation Allowance) is that, with effect from April 1, there will be no initial qualifying period. This means every soldier will be eligible for LSA, from the first day of joining, for periods of duty of ten days or more spent away from their permanent duty station.

● Will the rates for LSA be the same as we are getting now?

YES and no. There are 14 levels of LSA compared with just three for LSSA. The first three LSA levels equate to the current LSSA Basic, Middle and Higher rates but the good news is that, under the new rules, all personnel have the opportunity to qualify for the higher rates as their number of days away increases. All your qualifying service accumulated for LSSA prior to transfer to LSA will count towards LSA and will be used to set the level at which you move across. In addition, all those who have completed 12 months' service on transition to JPA will be automatically credited 100 days to count towards reaching the next LSA level.

● I'm on ops and due to qualify for an LSSA bonus in April. Will I still get it?

FROM April 1 the LSSA (Accumulated Turbulence) (LSSA (AT)) and Accumulated Turbulence Plus (AT+) bonuses will cease. The last LSSA bonuses paid will be to those with enough qualifying separation up to and including March 31. The loss of these bonuses is compensated for by the increased levels of LSA available under JPA which will give individuals access to 14 levels of payment throughout a career.

See Army Briefing Note B19/06 (published Dec 6) for more detail on Separation Allowances changes.

EMAIL [DSPS\(A\)-Mailbox](mailto:DSPS(A)-Mailbox). Alternatively post your question on the JPA Forum on ArmyNet. Further details can be found at ArmyNet under Communities and at www.armyjpa.dii.r.mil.uk (intranet)



KITSTOP

Multi-tool:
Trojan, left, is
fitted with a
mine plough,
knuckle-arm
excavator
shovel and is
equipped with
fascines

Track & field

Royal Engineers pave the way with latest armoured double act

Report: Cliff Caswell
Pictures: Steve Dock

ENTHUSIASTIC sappers were over the moon after they were toolled up with two armoured engineering vehicles specifically designed for the 21st century battlefield.

Based on an enhanced Challenger 2 platform, the Trojan and Titan will provide extra pace and punch plus the equipment needed to keep the troops rolling.



Bridging the gap:
Titan, above,
carries a close
support bridge
during a demo in
Bovington

Titan can lay a 25-metre bridge in less than two minutes while its cousin, which is billed as the “Swiss army knife” of the Army, can carry out tasks such as clearing mines and demolishing obstacles with its highly versatile and raptor-like mechanical claw.

The two vehicles, which weigh 60 tonnes and can reach speeds of up to 56 km/h, are fully air-conditioned and offer protection against nuclear, biological and chemical threats. They will replace the ageing Chieftain-based kit still in service.

The Royal Engineers are taking delivery of more than

30 of each model – and commanders reckon the sappers will be the envy of the Army.

Engineer-in-Chief Brig Chris Sexton said that the vehicles would give troops a battle-winning capability.

He added: “Trojan and Titan will give us a terrific morale boost.

“Both can easily keep up with the formations they are supporting. They are also well protected and the armour is excellent.”

Built under a £250 million contract with defence firm BAe Systems, Trojan and Titan also come fitted with the hi-tech Bowman communication suite as standard. ■



Titan can launch a 25-metre single close support bridge in less than two minutes

Into the

Safety first: WO1 Dave Bunting, APTC, trials the oxygen system during build-up training in the Bernese Oberland prior to the West Ridge expedition in 2006

death zone

Captain Admin reflects on mission to breach one of Earth's final frontiers

Interview: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

TOWERING above humanity at a monstrous 8,848m, Mount Everest's imposing form contrasts starkly with the short, stocky figure of elite mountaineer WO1 Dave Bunting, APTC.

Jutting into the jet stream, the world's highest peak disarms climbers with slashing 250mph winds and freezing cryogenic temperatures whereas Bunting charms you into submission with his boyish grin and cheeky humour.

But be wary of his innocent blue eyes because he has just concluded an almost fatal three-year attraction to a forbidding and menacing temperament.

The West Ridge route to the top of Everest is the dark side of the mountain and has killed as many expert climbers as it has let pass to the summit.

Known as the death zone, the last kilometre to the peak is so starved of oxygen that human cells die – a harsh reward for surviving the treacherous avalanche-prone Hornbein Couloir.

So what drives a man to lead a crack mountaineering team to the Himalayas in an attempt to conquer one of Earth's most inhospitable places? "Fun," comes the reply with a smile.

But the light-heartedness disguises a conscientious nature that has served Bunting well during his 22-year Army career and earned him the nickname "Captain Admin".

"Before I can do any work, I have to make sure the place is tidy. Even if there is an untidy-looking list, I'll rewrite it just so it looks tidier – that's how sad I am," he confessed to *Soldier*, who had tracked him down to the fitting backdrop of Trail's End Camp in the Canadian Rockies.

Captivated by his Chindit grandfather's tales of Burma during the Second World War, the young Bunting began craving adventure, excitement and travel. He joined the Army cadets at 13 and soon got his first taste of climbing, which he "massively enjoyed".

Three years later Bunting was posted as a junior leader to the Royal Engineers in Dover.

Although the Army took him to the

Falklands and twice to Northern Ireland, his passion for scaling the highest heights grew unchecked.

It was during a three-month stint as a climbing instructor in Norway that others began to notice young Bunting's potential. Encouraged to explore his ability, he transferred to the Army Physical Training Corps in 1994.

Six years and a stint as an elite mountain guide with the German Army later, Derbyshire's finest had an epiphany in the Himalayas.

"I successfully climbed Kangchenjunga, the third highest peak in the world and my first summit over 8,000m,

and the seed to lead a big expedition of my own was sown," recalled Bunting.

"There is so much history surrounding Everest and I'd read so many books I knew it would be very special to set foot on it."

When a mate from the Royal Marines summited Everest in 2003, Bunting knew the time had come to plan the Army's attack. The crux of his strategy was not only getting the best of the best, but also people he could really trust. Key to his dream team was John Doyle, at that time the military's most successful high altitude climbing leader.

"John is just such a strong guy both mentally and physically, and he's a walking library on the Himalayas," said Bunting of the man who steered the expedition towards Everest's most dangerous path.

"We agreed the West Ridge would be perfect – it's technically difficult, remote and isolated from other expeditions.

"It also drew on our adventurous training skills because if anything happened, from accident to triumph, it would be the team as a whole that would deal with it."

After his boss gave the green light, Bunting's fate for the next three years was sealed.

His team came together after intense scrutiny that went beyond being top-class climbers.

Characters who would cheerfully suffer long periods of isolation with just each other for company were chosen in anticipation of the privations.

Doyle painted a graphic picture of the horrors Everest's West Ridge had in

store but Bunting admitted there were still some surprises.

"It was a once-in-a-lifetime adventure which I knew might wreck me but I had to do it because it was never going to happen again. I wrote off my social life but I would never have predicted how the expedition became such a monster."

Holding down his regular job as an instructor at the Army Foundation College, Harrogate, organising the expedition, handling the growing media attention and then finding time to train for the ascent pushed Bunting to his limits.

But, despite the teams's training and preparation comparable to that undertaken by Olympic hopefuls, Everest would not give up its gold medal. Faced with deadly avalanche conditions laid down in the death zone before the team even reached the Himalayas, Bunting drew on his military training to put the lives of his team above the prized summit.

He remains firm in his conviction that withdrawing from slopes was the right decision, but does he have unfinished business with the mountain?

"Everest is still on my list but it would take another three years of my life because it would have to be the West Ridge again," is his cagey answer, ill-disguising his weariness in the wake of the monumental assault on the world's crown. But the smile gives him away – maybe *there ain't no mountain high enough* to stop Bunting after all. ■



At home: A different kind of adventure for Bunting at Trail's End Camp at Batus, Canada

'I would never have predicted how the expedition became such a monster'

TALKBACK

Criteria for LS & GC is out of date

THE criteria for the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal – the requirement for 15 years' continuous unblemished service – should be changed because if a soldier completes 15 years in today's high-tempo climate, he deserves recognition regardless of conduct.

If you have never received a regimental entry you will be issued the bar at the same time as the medal, but if you have entries you will be awarded the bar after the qualifying period, if you fulfil the criteria.

If the qualifying period falls outside

the 22 years, you will not be eligible for the bar.

The changes I propose have nothing to do with time, but rather the medal itself. It should be broken into two parts: after 15 years you should be awarded a Long Service

Medal – the same as the current one (which will save on the cost of franking a new medal).

And after 15 years of continuous good conduct, you should be awarded a Good Conduct bar.

I would be interested to hear other views on this subject. – **WO2 (QMS)**

J R Miller, DEODS, Rochester.



Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A)

responds: *An interesting idea, but I will explain why I disagree. A soldier receives recognition for his service in a variety of ways – the Operational Service Medal (OSM), the Accumulated Service Medal (ACSM) and promotion, for example.*

The LS and GC recognises loyal service but combines it with good conduct.

Even so, the Army Medal Board has some discretion and allowances are made for minor misconduct within the 15-year period. The Board considers all cases individually and very carefully before a decision is made.

As a nation, we set standards such that our medals have to be earned. I do not believe long service by itself is enough to earn a medal.

Five pages of your letters and emails on issues of the day

We want to hear from you – but please be brief

ACROSS the ranks, your letters provide a real insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas . . . but please keep them brief. Emails **MUST** include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). Anonymous letters go straight in the bin. The Editor reserves 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.

Time to relax UK rules on citizenship

I NOTE that the MoD was sending a team to Pretoria to negotiate on behalf of South African nationals serving in the Armed Forces.

I am retired in the USA after 24 years in the Army and point out to American friends that even though both our armed services are professional in nature, many of the young men and women joining the American military do so for the money to attend college while those joining the British military do so to "soldier".

But the big difference between the two militaries is that honourable service guarantees citizenship to foreign nationals serving in the US military.

They have to serve for five years but are able to get US citizenship while still in the military, something foreign nationals in the British military cannot.

It is time the MoD and Home Office worked something out. – **Alan Guilfoyle (ex-Sgt, 3 RHQ), Illinois, USA.**

GOOD news for Commonwealth soldiers (and Gurkhas) serving in the British Army was announced at the end of November, just too late for us to include in the December issue. The residency rules for those seeking British citizenship have been relaxed so that military service, both home and abroad, will count towards the five-year eligibility requirement (three if you are married to a UK citizen).

The revised rules became effective on November 1. For more details, log on to www.homeoffice.gov.uk – **Editor**

PRIZE LETTER

PS...

I AM concerned that our soldiers in Iraq may be unsettled by the often negative coverage of their operations. It is true that many in Britain do not support government policy in Iraq and this may come across to Servicemen and women that we, the public, do not support them.

This is not true. Please pass on a message to our troops that the general public is behind them and we realise that they are making every effort to succeed in their objectives.

We wish them a safe return home when their job is done.
– Colin Tozer, Cdr RN (Retd), La Roque-Gageac, France.

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"The Pentagon last month . . . now the MoD! Where will all this hacking end, Frobisher?"

● Hacked off: report on the cyber crime cell – Pages 34-35

Don't like a bit of kit? Report it

FIRST SIGHT

ANONYMOUS emails from troops in
Afghanistan to this office last month
targeted the new Osprey body armour.

One soldier acknowledged the plates were
"strong enough to stop a train", but said the
size and weight made it impractical to wear
for more than three hours a day.

To him that meant a quarter of a day
on stag or about half a foot patrol. He also
claimed the body armour's design made it
virtually impossible to bring the butt of his
weapon to his shoulder to fire aimed shots.

We passed the observations up the chain
of command, respecting, of course, the
soldiers' wish for anonymity.

A day or so later a national newspaper
carried a story headlined "£1,000 body
armour soldiers must remove to fire their
weapon", which pretty much encapsulated
what the emails said.

Last February we printed a letter
from Iraq under the headline
"I can't do job safely in new
improved armour". We thought
it worth repeating the official
response *Soldier* was given at
the time, that the new armour
was "a good piece of personal
equipment designed to be



specific-to-role". We also reported how
the same equipment had saved the life of a
young gunner.

It was up to commanders (said the
response) to decide on the appropriate
personal protection equipment for tasks
in accordance with their local threat
assessment, advice repeated by an MoD
spokesman commenting on the latest story.

Equipment issues, he said, should
be reported via the chain of command.

In response to criticism aired in *Soldier*
(November) of an unrelated bit of kit,
troops were urged to make use of the
defect reporting system to ensure
equipment was doing its job.

**While we remain happy
to pass on your views, the
message is clear: if you have
doubts about your kit YOU
can do something about it by
making sure your criticisms are
logged into the system. ■**

Posthumous VC awarded to Helmand para hero – Pages 7, 8 and 9

JANUARY 2007

5

Time to speak out on this pay travesty

I AM in Iraq and have a complaint regarding pay. Staff sergeants around my promotion bracket feel we have been hard done by since being promoted from corporal.

I was unlucky enough to be promoted soon after Pay 2000 and, as a sergeant, received a rise of just over £1.

Eight weeks earlier a friend of mind stayed on the old rate on promotion. We did the same job in the Royal Armoured Corps but he was on £7 a day more than me even though we joined the Army around the same time.

I spent four years as a sergeant on the lower pay band working towards the same scale he was on. I was promoted to staff sergeant in The Queen's Royal Hussars and less than a year later was told all sergeants in the RAC would move to the higher pay band.

This left me as a staff sergeant troop leader earning 60p a day more than the troop sergeant under me.

Sergeants on the high band have since been promoted and some have jumped above my scale as I had to wait until June for mine to go up.

After 18 years' service and never complaining it is time to speak out.

– **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon DPS(A), replies: This is a known weakness of Pay 2000, which appears unfair to you and others in your



"There's nothing here to lift me out of the unequal pay gap."

situation, and which has been exacerbated by the Job Evaluation System.

The issues raised are not new, so how did we get to where we are?

It was not possible, in the time available before the introduction of Pay 2000 to fully job evaluate all trades so many were provisionally placed into a pay range based on the evaluation of similar trade/ranks across each of the three Services. It was done in a way that ensured that nobody took a pay drop on transition to the new Pay 2000 structure.

A five-year programme began in 2001 to job evaluate all remaining trades, and to confirm the provisional pay range allocations. One of the results was that RAC sergeants moved from the lower to higher range – great for them, but no

comfort to you as you already had been promoted to staff sergeant. It is difficult for me to comment on your specific case, as I do not have all the details but I assume you have moved from sergeant (lower range) to staff sergeant (lower range).

One of the principles of Pay 2000 is that no one should take a pay drop on promotion and that the increase on promotion be at least two per cent. This is doubtless why some of your colleagues will have overtaken you.

To illustrate, a sergeant on the higher range of four years' seniority (level 4) is paid more than a staff sergeant on lower range level 1 (£85.20 against daily £81.13 per day).

If the higher range sergeant is promoted to staff sergeant in the lower range, he will start at level 5 (£88.03 per day) with the consequent effect that even though he is a more junior staff sergeant, he will draw a higher daily rate than the more experienced lower range staff sergeant.

I sympathise with your situation, although the fact is that no one has been overlooked or disadvantaged – it is just that some have benefited. We do recognise however that we need to do something about it.

The MoD is carrying out a Strategic Review of Remuneration aimed at ensuring that the Armed Forces remuneration package, including basic pay, is fit for the future. I hope we will achieve a simpler system which addresses the weaknesses you highlight and recognises that with increased rank goes responsibility, and therefore greater pay, while recognising also the attainment of experience, qualifications and particular skills.

Our fight for empty quarter

I SHARE the anger and frustration of families who write to complain about the poor management, allocation and availability of married quarters.

We are living with the legacy of the sale of so much of the Defence Estate back in the 1980s. The most commercially lucrative quarters frequently go on sale.

Last year my husband had to fight long and hard to get us a quarter that had been kept empty so it could be sold. We were fobbed off with lame excuses as to why it could not be allocated to us.

It was suggested the Service pay commercial rates for us to live in a rented property nearby but we resisted vigorously and were eventually (and reluctantly) allocated that same quarter.

It had been earmarked for sale because "there was no demand for it", had been allowed to fall into disrepair and "needed £40,000 to bring it up to standard". We took it as it was, moved in nearly a year ago and are still at a loss to think what anyone could spend £40K on in a married quarter – apart from underfloor heating and a jacuzzi.

– **Name and address supplied.**

PS...

I WELL remember Peter N Woods, the former editor of *Soldier* whose death at 86 was reported in the last issue.

He saw the magazine through difficult times and, in lectures to everything from promotion seminars to staff college and command courses, never lost an opportunity to sing its praises as an organ of internal information for all ranks.

A question often asked was: could he print any stories he liked? His answer was always: "Yes, once!" The fact that he was not fired speaks volumes for his judgment. – Nigel Gillies, Shrewton, Salisbury.

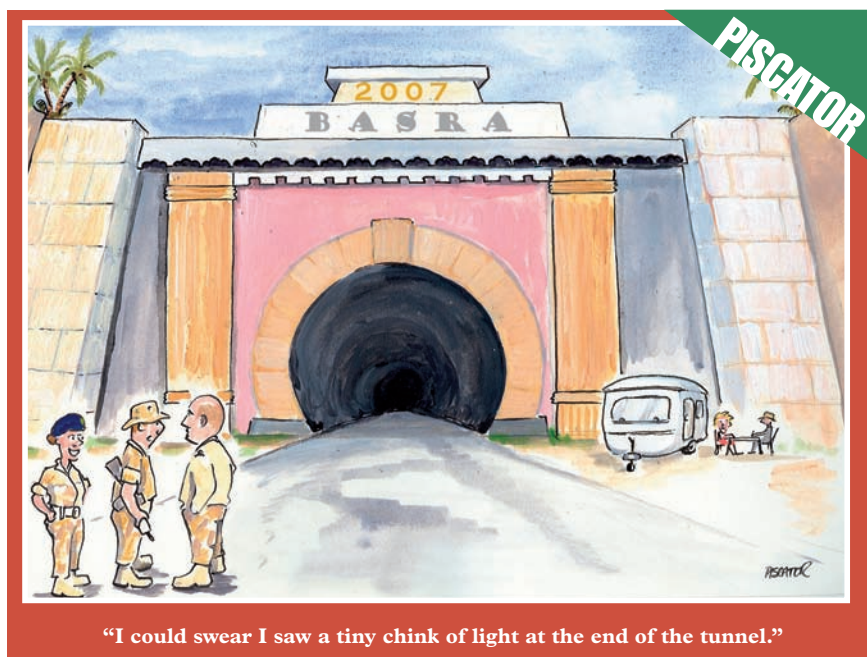


TALKBACK

CHECK out the *Soldier* website for more of your letters, and the responses from the chain of command. They include:

- The instructor injured during grenade training at Catterick who says he has been let down by the Army.
- The soldier angry with Glasgow because his pay was incorrect – by a margin of £5,000.
- The SPS senior NCO who reckons it's all going wrong with JPA.

www.soldiermagazine.co.uk



"I could swear I saw a tiny chink of light at the end of the tunnel."



ARMY BENEVOLENT FUND SUPPORTING THE BEST



The Army Benevolent Fund's Christmas card competition is back again. The ABF is searching for an eye-catching image of soldiers at Christmas to feature on its Christmas cards in 2007, as last year's winning image, above, has been on this year's cards. Don't forget to take out that camera this Christmas. Further details will be coming soon on our website at www.armybenfund.org

Call 020 7591 2000 or visit www.armybenfund.org

Reverting in rank cost me a packet

I WAS promoted acting staff sergeant in March 2005, backdated to December 2004, which meant I missed out on the high-band wages that RA ACS level-four sergeants were granted in April 2005 and cost me about £3,000.

I hung on to acting staff sergeant rank until the board results were released last year. When told I was just short of picking up my substantive rank, I asked about reverting and was told I could. I would go back to high-band sergeant as if I had never been promoted.

I reverted and should have moved from low-band staff sergeant level three to high-band sergeant level seven, but was paid at high-band level two.

Blandford Pay Office said it was a Pay 2000 software problem and that it would be sorted out in due course. Glasgow agreed.

Now DSPS(A) has said level two is correct because I must lose two per

cent. I am nearly at breaking point with this and hope *Soldier* can help. – **Sgt R J Griffiths, Blandford.**

Maj Andy Larner, SO2 RPA, DSPS(A), replies: In the same way as a minimum two per cent increase is paid on promotion, the Pay Warrant includes a minimum two per cent reduction on reversion to a lower rank, except where rank is relinquished.

In this instance, Sgt Griffiths appears to have voluntarily reverted in rank in accordance with Queen's Regulations Para 9.176. Voluntary reversion is included in the two per cent reduction rule as a disincentive to personnel to revert merely to benefit from a higher range pay.

Since the job evaluation review had moved sergeants from the lower to higher range while he was an acting staff sergeant it means that to achieve a minimum per cent reduction in pay he must be placed on sergeant higher range level two.

I can't get NVQ credits for my trade training

FOUR years ago I left college unsure what to do next. I hadn't given the Army much thought until I found out that the Royal Engineers could give me a trade for life.

It seemed a fair deal: join the Army, get life experience and paid while training for a trade National Vocational Qualification (NVQ level 2), all for four years' minimum service.

I completed my A2 training and got nothing but part credits. The NVQ body told me I did not meet the criteria for work-based evidence.

Now I have completed my A1 trade course, which should have given me an NVQ level 3, but again have been left with no qualifications. I feel I was enlisted under false pretences. – **Name and address supplied.**

Maj Jo Stobart, SO2 LF Ops, HQ DETS(A), replies:

The essence of the NVQ system is to grant qualifications based on experience in the workplace. Military trade training courses provide the skills and knowledge needed by soldiers to perform their trade at the appropriate level. In several cases the courses alone cannot satisfy the full NVQ requirement for a portfolio of work-based evidence.

Where appropriate knowledge-based certificates or craft awards exist, soldiers are entered for the relevant tests during the trade course. All soldiers completing trade courses at RSME are briefed on what they need to do subsequently to qualify for an NVQ and how to apply for it.

The system emphasises the need for a soldier to ensure that he (or she) records his work experience in his Personal Development Record (PDR). He should also make his chain of command aware of his aspirations and what elements of experience are still required. Many soldiers have gained their NVQs in this way.

If this correspondent sends his details, including work experience, to the RE CPD Team at RSME (94661-2329 or enquiries@re-cpd.org.uk), they will be happy to advise him.

Partners in the Army

I AM at the School of Logistics in Deepcut and my partner of five years is at REME Arborfield.

We live in our respective messes during the week and enjoy life in the Army. We have chosen not to marry yet but have bought a house in Oxfordshire and pay council tax. We still have to pay Contribution in Lieu of Council Tax (CILOCT).

One of our pay offices believes we are entitled to the Get-You-Home allowance (GYH), the other says not.

Why are heterosexual couples who are proactive in managing their lives but choose not to marry ignored by the Army? – **Name and unit supplied.**

MY partner and I have been together for three-and-a-half years and do not want to get married just yet.

I asked for a quarter but as we are not married we are not entitled to one. Exceptions should be made so those in long-term relationships are eligible for quarters. Our needs are being ignored. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: Your observation that heterosexual couples who choose not to marry are ignored by the Army is misplaced. Both marriage and registered civil partnerships are recognised in law, but other relationships are not.

Long-term same-sex couples, who choose not to register a civil partnership, are treated in the same way as long-term heterosexual couples who choose not to register a marriage.

It is the legally recognised relationship that determines eligibility for allowances, not the nature of the relationship itself.

As all Service accommodation in



England, Scotland and Wales is exempt from council tax, the MoD pays CILOCT to local authorities, broadly equivalent to the average amount of tax that would otherwise be due.

This is recovered from soldiers, determined by the type of service accommodation they occupy.

All soldiers who own or rent a private property remain liable to pay council tax to the local authority on this property. Council tax concessions are a matter for local authorities as they are responsible for the interpretation of regulations concerning "sole or main residence".

In reaching their decision they take various factors into account, including the amount of time spent at a property, whether it is the family home, and security of tenure. You need to discuss this with your local authority.

Regardless of marital state, soldiers who wholly or partially own a property, which is

not let, would be eligible to GYH Stability Assistance (SA) if they met the eligibility criteria of daily travel being impractical (more than 50 miles from a UK duty station).

However, where a property is shared by more than one soldier, only the soldier solely responsible for paying the council tax can claim GYH. This will change with the introduction of JPA and you should both be eligible to claim.

Precedence of Lancasters wasn't ignored

D SMART expressed concern that the full title of the new Duke of Lancaster's Regiment (Oct) ignores the correct precedence of the antecedent regiments and interprets the "Kings, Lancashire and Border" as equating to the 8th Foot, 30th Foot and 4th Foot.

He is mistaken. In the sub-title "Kings, Lancashire and Border", the first elements refers to two regiments, the 4th King's Own and 8th King's, the second element to the Lancashire regiments now included in the new regiment, and the third to the former Border Regiment (34th and 55th).

Perhaps someone could clarify if there is anything left of The Manchester Regiment (63rd and 96th) which amalgamated with The King's Regiment (Liverpool) in 1958 to form the King's Regiment (Manchester and Liverpool). Ten years later this regiment became simply The King's. – **Richard Doherty, Co Londonderry.**

I wasn't allowed to rejoin the Army in my old rank

HAVING served for 15 years and left the Army for personal reasons I re-enlisted into the 2nd Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment after 14 months in civvy street.

I returned on my old contract, but as a lance corporal rather than a full corporal even though I was told I would be given my former rank. I was also told I would get a similar rate of pay but am £7.68 a day worse off.

My regimental admin office has made many calls to Glasgow but is unable to answer my queries on rank and pay. Can you help? – **LCpl P Main, 2 Yorks.**

Capt Simon Walton, APC MCM, Inf SO3, King's Div, replies: The MCM desk officer's primary guide is Queen's Regs (paras 9.113 – 9.115). An ex-Regular allowed to rejoin his former corps within 12 months of termination should be granted his former substantive rank if there is a vacancy and he is qualified. When 12 months or more has elapsed the former rank is not normally granted, although it may be if it is in the interests of the Service. LCpl Main rejoined nearly 16 months after he left and at that time there were no vacancies in 2 Yorks at corporal rank. He will be put forward to the battalion's next promotion board.

PS...

THE three replies to my letter on the veterans' badge (Nov) missed the point. I wrote that they were "for veterans of the Second World War" and later "for veterans of subsequent conflicts", which includes up-to-date conflicts such as the Gulf Wars, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan and so on.

As a veteran of conflict myself, I applaud these veterans, no matter the length of service. I know many ex-Service who have not been in a conflict and are still entitled to a veterans' badge. – **R Whenman, Korean veteran, Burton-on-Trent.**

Why should we pay for new mess dress?

MY regiment is soon to merge with others to form The Rifles and we've been told our corporals' mess dress is to be replaced by a regimental blazer and tie and that the officers' mess dress and WO's and sergeants' mess dress are to be replaced completely.

I transferred into my regiment four years ago and willingly paid the £500 for my new mess dress, despite having paid a similar amount for my old one.

Will I now have to fork out another £500? I have less than five years' service remaining and will not be happy if I am forced to pay again as my current outfit would last me until my 22-year point.

Our corporals are going to be even worse off. In addition to the cost of mess dress which they have already bought they are going to have to pay for a blazer and then for a new mess dress again on promotion.

The same applies to stable belts and other items, which all cost money. Why should soldiers be out of pocket because

of changes in Army structure? If we have no choice may we claim back this expenditure? – **Sgt D Hill, BFPO 645.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A) responds: *I understand your concerns over the costs of transferring to the new regiment. First, the corporals' mess will not be wearing a regimental blazer and tie and you will not be required to pay for your new stable belt.*

I have been told NCOs will be required to wear Rifles' pattern mess dress, but the intention is to minimise the cost by adopting a mess dress pattern similar to that already worn by the LI and RG (two-thirds of The Rifles).

Also, sensible "grandfather" rights of former regiment mess kits will be permitted for five years, as is the case with officers' mess kit. I am told also that group discounts and interest-free loan arrangements have been made with the approved tailors. I hope you will be reassured by those decisions to offset the costs of transfer, but you should seek any further detail direct from the regiment.

Meals-out rule stops me claiming for lunch

I WORK in London but spend a lot of time visiting units. We regularly have to purchase meals so are entitled to Meals-Out Allowance (MOA).

I put in a claim for about £12 for five lunches during September and was annoyed when an officer found it amusing to rip up my claim because I had not bought nine meals that month (as stated in JSP 752).

The system is better now that we can claim for out-of-pocket items with receipts, so why can I not be refunded for one MOA in the same way as nine? I am still out of pocket £2.56 for one day. – **Name and address supplied.**

Brig Jamie Gordon, DPS(A), replies: *I have assumed that the units you are visiting are not able to provide meals. MOA aims to contribute towards (not pay for) the additional costs incurred when meals are regularly purchased at retail outlets that would otherwise have been taken by those eligible in a Service mess or a government-subsidised canteen.*

For this reason MOA claims only cut in after nine days – half the number of the



"It says here in Soldier that we're only expected to work 18 days a month... do you think the CSM and the Taliban know this?"

18 days you would normally be expected to work in a month, taking account of leave and bank holidays.

The circumstances you set out suggest that you might be entitled to day's subsistence, I suggest you discuss this with MoD Commandant (Army).

PS...

SGT Evans ("It all went wrong in Cyprus", Nov) is running down his regimental admin office. Personnel should understand that issues can occur when they are posted to a new unit. Before an overseas posting, soldiers are required to ensure payments from their own accounts are correct. I wish people would stop running down SPS clerks as if it was their fault. Roll on JPA when everyone will be accountable for their own admin. – **Cpl Michelle Tighe, MoD Main Building.**

It's taking a long time to sort pay out

HOW can Glasgow be so effective at taking money from soldiers but so useless at paying it back?

I paid off my Long Service Advance of Pay (LSAP) on June 12 and four months later they are still taking payments from my salary.

My pay office has told me they are making a payment to me but it is still not the full amount. If I carried out my duties this way I would be sacked. – **WO2 D Kershaw HQ RG.**

Air Cdr Ian Harvey, AFPAA Director of Operations, replies: *An error was made within AFPAA passing the paperwork between one department and another. This is a rare occurrence and I apologise for the oversight and the inconvenience it has caused. Procedures have been double-checked to reduce any risk of it happening again. The difference in the overpayments refunded to WO2 Kershaw and the amount he paid represents the insurance premium charged on LSAP, which is not refundable. As this was an internal error I have asked the Pay and Allowances Casework Cell to consider a refund of the insurance charges for WO2 Kershaw.*

If soldiers have cause for complaint on pay, pensions and allowances which cannot be answered by unit admin staff, they can write to the JPA Ops Room, set up as the focal point for all such complaints.

Please write to JPA Operations Room, AFPAA, Centurion Bldg, Room 1027, Grange Road, Gosport, Hants PO13 9XA.

Want to let off steam? Write to:
Soldier, Ordnance Road, Aldershot,
Hants GU11 2DU
Email: mail@soldiermagazine.co.uk

I'm resolved . . .

My New Year suggestions are: find a dentist and pay off credit card debt

A NEW year is upon us and I suspect that most of us will have made a resolution. Gyms will be full of enthusiastic dieters working off the Christmas excesses.

Whatever we Army families targeted this year (from smoking to drinking less), most of us could improve our families' wellbeing by adopting two resolutions which will not require physical effort.

The first is to tackle the problem of debt by resolving to pay off credit cards and bank loans. There has been a stream of articles in the media regarding the high levels of debt families in the UK are struggling with.

I had hoped those serving overseas might have been cushioned by the fact that the credit card is not as welcome in quite so many establishments abroad as it is here. But sadly even British Forces in Germany are now in the clutches of the unpaid credit card.

It is a myth that families may default on credit payments overseas – due to the mistaken belief that once a defaulter

returns to the UK they become invisible. The reality is different.

Read Keith's column below if you want excellent free advice.

The second resolution is for all families based in the UK to find a dentist. This may take some

perseverance because dentists turn away double figures of hopeful applicants every week.

The realities came home to me when I needed to see my dentist urgently and discovered his diary was full for two weeks.

Today's dentists do not have the slack to just squeeze you in. If you are not on their books there is no way they will be able to see you. Your hour of need is not the moment to try and find one.

What should you do in a dental emergency if you haven't got your own dentist? One

suggestion is to try the A&E department of your local hospital.

Finding a dentist is probably not on your Must Do list when you move, but this is not just a problem for Army

families. There aren't enough dentists to go around, period. This is a subject that has been raised with our ministers on many occasions, but it is always deemed to be too expensive to treat Army families with Army dentists.

So overstretched civilian practices are burdened with Service dependants (Royal Navy and RAF families have teeth too).

I can't help wishing that a little of the money being lavished on the 2012 Olympics could go into boosting the number of dentists available.

In six years the nation will have state-of-the-art stadia and facilities so it is a shame that within the same timescale the nation's gnashers cannot be guaranteed attention. ■

'A pity we can't spend some of the Olympic millions on dentists'



A personal view from Rachael Troughton, Communications Director of the Army Families Federation



● THIS is Rachael's last column for *Soldier*. As she leaves to take on new challenges, Catharine Moss, Editor of the *Families Journal*, is to write Home Truths. Look out for her first contribution next month.

Worried by debt? Keith's column offers you a one-stop, confidential – and absolutely free – method of tackling your money problems

MANAGE YOUR MONEY

Credit Action Director Keith Tondeur will be pleased to answer, in confidence, specific questions addressed to the Editor.



Debt-buster

DEBT can stack up at this time of year. Last-minute Christmas overspending and red-hot credit cards catch us out all too easily.

Recent interest rate rises will have made the situation worse – especially for those of you with large mortgages. If you find the bills are more than you expected don't panic – or bury your head in the sand. You will find a free downloadable debt guide on our website

– www.creditaction.org.uk – and here are some ideas to help:

● Pay as much off your cards each month as you can.

● Don't allow yourself to be seduced into making unnecessary purchases.

● If it gets worse, ask for free, confidential help from the Consumer Credit Counselling Service (CCCS) on 0800 1381111 or from the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

● Make sure your partner is aware of debt problems so you can tackle them together. Secrecy kills trust.

● And make sure you don't get into the same mess this time next year. When you clear this Christmas's debts, start saving for next year's festive season.

● Look at ways to save money. There are plenty of ideas at www.moneybasics.co.uk to help you make your money go a bit further.

Don't bury your head in the sand if you are struggling with debt. Call CCCS for help right away

● A top tip to managing your money is to have a budget so you know where your money is going.

Ignored debt can be a disaster which leads to depression, loneliness and suicide.

So few of us have been taught how to handle the basics of money management it isn't surprising millions get trapped in debt each year.

CCCS receives more than 1,500 calls a day, so, if you have the slightest worry you could

be getting behind on your payments or your credit commitments are too high, get in touch with them right away. Ring the number below or visit the website. ■

**0800 1381111 or
www.creditaction.org.uk**

NO. 782

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?



TEN details have been changed in the latest in the series of drawings by our cartoonist, Chip. Circle the differences in the left-hand image and send the whole panel to **HOAY 782, Soldier**, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU by January 31.

A photocopy is acceptable, but only one entry per person may be submitted. First correct entry drawn after the closing date will win £100; the second and third will receive £25 gift vouchers. The results will be announced in the March issue.

Name: (Give initials and rank or title)

Address:

November competition (No 780): First correct entry drawn at random and winner of the £100 prize was **Rfm S Limbu, Derling Lines, Brecon**. Runners-up **LCpl J N Sellers, Marne Barracks, Catterick** and **Edward Gibb, Urchford** each win a £25 gift voucher.

The ten differences were: Hands on clock; side pouch on leg; yacht in picture; woman's spectacles; glass shard; TV aerial; TV button; chair stud; screw on floor; keyhole in door.

freeze frame

Winner of our November competition (inset)

CAPT Mike Gee of 32 Regt RA at Larkhill wins the new Stephen Coonts novel *Traitor* for his innocent observation on what was going on in the photograph: **"It had been years since old Jock had felt the horn"**.

Contenders included **"It seems that soldiers were still apprehensive about using the new Bowman handset"** from SSgt R N Hill, MoD Main Building, and **"After the goat mascot had eaten his jackpot-winning Euromillions lottery ticket, Beavis finally got his revenge"**

from Paul Clarke of Wokingham, Berks.

We also liked **"Pte Smith longed for his white hunter days in Africa"** from Sandra Shephard, FMO (PROM), BFPO 40; **"This must be one of the Horns of a Dilemma**



the Colonel found himself on" from Jim McEvoy, Runcorn, Cheshire; **"If he calls me 'little hobbit' once more I will show him how a ring can make something disappear"** from WO2 Dave Donaldson,



Although Pte Blenkinsop had passed his Basic Combat Fitness Test with considerable ease, PT staff were unable to find any signs of life

WIN A BOOK: Write your own caption for the photo, above, from our December 1960 issue and send it to us by January 31. The best, in our opinion, will win a copy of *Victoria Cross Heroes* by Michael Ashcroft, who has built up the world's largest private collection of VCs. (Headline Review, £20 hardback).

DII IPT Corsham; **"They don't like it up 'em, Sir"** from Simon Saunders, HQ London District, and **"The RSM was not impressed with the new EU pace stick design"** from Sgt Taff Watkins, BFPO 806.

USEFUL NUMBERS

Army Benevolent Fund 020 7591 2000; www.armybenfund.org

Army Welfare Information Service 01722 436569/436461. Enquiries: awis@hqland.army.mod.uk; www.army.mod.uk/aws

Army Families Federation 01980 615525; www.aff.org.uk

British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association 020 8590 1124; www.blesma.org

Career Transition Partnership 0207 766 8020. www.ctp.org.uk

Children's Education Advisory Service 01980 618244 enquiries.ceas@gt.net.gov.uk

Confidential support lines: UK 0800 731 4880; Germany 0800 1827 395; Cyprus 080 91065; Falklands #6111; from operational theatres Paradigm Services *201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) +44 1980 630854. Lines open 1030-2230 (UK) every day.

Consumer Credit Counselling Service Free Confidential Helpline 0800 1381111

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

Family Escort Service 020 7463 9249

Forces Pension Society 020 7820 9988; www.forpen.co.uk

Gulf Veterans Association 0191 230 1065; www.gulfveteransassociation.co.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office (Civilian Housing) 01722 436575

MoD Medal Office. Medal queries to JPAC Enquiry Centre on 94560 3600 or 0141 224 3600; www.medals.mod.uk

Mutual Support (Forces Multiple Sclerosis support group) 01666 824709

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office (0900-1700) 01482 808730; 24-hour helpline 01482 833812; www.ngvfa.com

Regular Forces' Employment Association 0207 321 2011; www.rfea.org.uk

Royal British Legion's Legionline 0845 7725 725; www.britishlegion.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre 01622 717202/718484; www.rbli.co.uk

ESHRA Ex-Service Homes Referral Agency 020 7839 4466; www.eshra.com or info@britishlegion.org.uk

St Dunstan's charity for blind ex-Servicemen and women 020 7723 5021; www.st-dunstans.org.uk; enquiries@st-dunstans.org.uk

SAMA 82 (South Atlantic Medal Association) Falklands conflict veterans 01495 227577, e-mail: densama@aol.com; www.sama82.org.uk

Samaritans 08457 90 90 90

Services Cotswold Centre 01225 810358

SSAFA Forces Help 020 7403 8783 (www.ssafa.org.uk); Western Europe 02161 472 3392; Housing Advisory Service 01722 436400

Veterans' Agency 0800 169 2277 (from UK); 0044 1253 866043 (from overseas); www.veteransagency.mod.uk

Victim Support, Germany 02161 472 2272; UK 0845 3030900, www.victimsupport.org

WRVS Contact details (24-hr answer service): 02920 739016; e-mail anna.ashley@wrvs.org.uk; General enquiries 02920 739016; www.wrvs.org.uk

REUNIONS

16/15th and 17th/21st Queen's Royal Lancers: Aliwal dinner and reunion for weekend Jan 26-28 in Telford, Shropshire, for serving and ex-members. Contact Bill Cook on 01952 740411 or email wjc@yahoo.co.uk

Royal Anglian Regimental Association: Inaugural meeting of the Hertfordshire branch will be held at the TA Centre, 28 St Andrew Street, Hertford on Feb 10. Regular, TA or Army Cadet Force all welcome. Email nich.kelsey@virgin.net

74 Battery (The Battle Axe Company) RA: 198th anniversary celebration of battle honour, at Leda Palace Hotel, Wolseley Barracks, Nicosia, Cyprus on Feb 24. Contact Sgt Martin Whitehead on 00357 2261 4340 or email skinbo35@hotmail.co.uk

655 Squadron (The Scottish Horse) AAC: Anzio disbandment dinner and sunset fly-past, Mar 3. Open to former members of 655 Sqn. Contact Capt D K R Hennessy on 02894 455334 or email thescottishhorse@hotmail.com

RHA Association: 60th reunion dinner on Mar 17 at Trowbridge, Wilts. Past and present members and their ladies welcome. Ring Maj (Retd) R J Whiteway on 0049 2594 784438 or email dinnersec@rhaassn.fsnet.co.uk

Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment: Riding staff past and present reunion dinner Mar 23 in WOs' and Sgts' Mess, Hyde Park Barracks, London. Ring WO2 Moore on 0207 414 2529 or 01753 755255.

95 Signal Squadron: Reunion on Mar 24, tickets £13. Contact SSgt Laragh McIntosh, 95 Sig Sqn, Sundorne Road, Sundorne, Shrewsbury, Shropshire SY1 4RL.

7th Electronic Control Equipment: Reunion to be held on Apr 7 at Bailleul

SEARCHLINE

Researcher Mary Keenan wants to know what the acronyms **TDCS** and **BMA**, which appear in the diaries of **Alexander Rollo Colin Bolton**, a district commissioner in Sudan 1933-34, stand for. Bolton was seconded to The King's African Rifles in 1941-42 and later to the British Army as a lieutenant colonel, serving with a British military mission and the Russian element of Allied Control Commission in Romania. It has been suggested that BMA stands for "British Military Administration" or "British Military Attaché". Email marykeen44@hotmail.com

Where are you now? **Jack Polson, Bob Hunter, Michael Brooks, Roy Bates, Frazer Mee and Ian Frazer**, all ex-RAMC operating theatre technicians (OTTs). Ken Hannah is interested in hearing from OTTs. Contact him on 01354 660636 or email ken.hannah@peterborough.gov.uk

Researcher seeking information on **Newcombe Lines, Larkhill, 1941-42**. The camp was bombed twice during this period and a bomb hit the camp in 1942 and also a small attached hospital. Information sought

WOs' and Sgts' Mess. Contact WO2 (AQMS) Marc Wilding on 01189 763354 or email marc.wilding@seae.mod.uk or ecereunion@hotmail.co.uk

Glostors: Reunion for WOs and sergeants on Apr 14 at TA Centre, Whiteladies Road, Bristol. Contact Tim Godden at timmy.godden@virgin.net or ring 01453 835019.

RAMC Operating Theatre Technicians (OTTs): Reunion on May 19 at the Pearson Park Hotel, Hull. Email Ken Hannah at hannah@peterborough.gov.uk

Army Catering Corps: Reunion for 83 and 84 intakes of the Army Apprentice College, in WOs' and Sgts' Mess, St Omer Barracks, Aldershot in July. Interested? Email WO1 Dave Chalmers at daviemaria@yahoo.co.uk or david.chalmers692@land.mod.uk or ring 07888 841733.

Gibraltar veterans are planning a reunion in 2008 on the Costa del Sol to follow previous successful gatherings in Greece in 2005 and Scotland last year. For more information, email Paul Gebhard at venelam@otenet.gr

APPOINTMENTS

Maj Gen: W M Moore, late RA, to be Chief of Staff Support, HQ Land, Jun; J D Page, late Para, to be Commander Regional Command (South) Afghanistan, Apr; D J Rutherford-Jones, late LD, Commandant Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, Aug; J D Shaw, late Para, to be Chief of Staff, HQ Land, Oct; R M N Sykes, late RA, to be Kosovo Protection Corps Coordinator, Mar; B W B White-Spunner, late RHD/G, to be GOC, 3rd (UK) Division, Nov.

Brig: Ven S Robbins to be Deputy Chaplain General, Mar.

on how many were killed or injured in the hospital. When did Newcombe Lines open? Write to R Biggs, Brookside, Baisher End, Yetminster, Sherborne, Dorset DT9 6NH.

Does any one know **Richard Lee Clerk**, who was stationed in Paderborn in 1977? Last known address was in Little Hill, Wigston, Leicester. Contact jane.g@freenet.de

Seeking former members of the **Royal Anglian Regiment** – Regular, TA or Army Cadet Force – living in Hertfordshire to join the Royal Anglian Regimental Association. For details email nick.kelsey@virgin.net

Where is **Charlie Rixon** who served with 35 Petrol Station Platoon RASC, 1955-56, in Moascar, Ismailia, Egypt? Last known address was in London. Write to Jay McDowell, 17 Willowdene Crescent, Stranraer, Wigtownshire DG9 0HE.

John Aitken seeks **National Servicemen** who reported to the Royal Inniskilling barracks, Omagh, Co Tyrone on March 17, 1954. Email him at firbank1000@aol.com

BULLETIN BOARD

Gordon's still going strong

GORDON Passmore has had an extraordinary career in uniform – and at 83 he's still going strong.

Last month he clocked up 65 years of continuous uniformed service since he was first called up on the day the USA was brought into the Second World War.

Musketeer Passmore, a proud member of the Company of Pikemen and Musketeers of the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC), wears Second World War campaign medals on parade. He has caught the eye of the Duke of Edinburgh, probably because they have the Atlantic Star, Burma Star, Pacific Star and Italy Star in common.

Gordon's uniformed service dates from his call-up for war service on December 7, 1941 – the day of Japan's infamous attack on Pearl Harbour.

He volunteered for the Fleet Air Arm and earned his wings as a telegraphist air gunner. Gordon flew in Fairey Swordfishes – the famous "Stringbags" – on anti-submarine patrols and later against U-boats in the North Atlantic from the escort carrier HMS Campania.

In 1944 he transferred to HMS Implacable and a Barracuda squadron which early the next year re-equipped with American Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers when the carrier joined the British Pacific Fleet.

Gordon was shot down on a night raid against a Japanese fleet in the Caroline Islands, survived several hours in the water and later took part in the first British bombing raid on Japan.

After the war he joined C Battery of the HAC as a gunner, rising rapidly to the rank of battery sergeant major before joining the



Picture: Steve Dock

● Musketeer Passmore in all his finery

Company of Pikemen and Musketeers in 1967. The unique unit provides colour and pageantry at Armoury House, the HAC's headquarters, and for the Lord Mayor of London's functions.

Last month, as he has since 1968, Gordon escorted the Lord Mayor's coach for the full circuit of its procession – from Guildhall to the Mansion House, past St Paul's to the Royal Courts of Justice and back again.

Gordon qualified as a chartered surveyor and valuer after the war.

He retired last May after 46 years as a Wandsworth councillor, including two terms as the borough's mayor. ■

COMPETITIONS

Virgin Ballon Ride: Winner – SSgt M Patterson, Worthy Down, Winchester.

Company of Heroes DVD: Winners – Cpl A Taylor, RAF Henlow; P Munday, Sedbergh, Cumbria; Y Birtle, Ashchurch, Tewkesbury; Cpl M Thomas, HQ Nato, BFPO 49; G Bridges, Burton-on-Trent, Staff.

Caesar IV PC game: Winners – G Grandles, Edinburgh; R Smith, Preston, Lancs; B Barton, Lexden Road, Colchester; H Timothy, Thiepval Bks, BFPO 801; P Benisek, Burley in Wharfedale, Ilkley; Cpl I Bigh, Camp Souter, BFPO 758; P Harding, Worcester; L Newport, Oxford; C Draycott, Woolwich Bks, BFPO 36; Ms S Ridding, Blandford Camp, Blandford Forum.

ROADSHOWS

THE Army Presentation Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its exciting hi-tech roadshow.

The event starts with a drinks reception, is followed by a presentation and questions-and-answers session and culminates with a finger buffet.

Military personnel will be on hand to answer your questions.

Call 01276 417000 or email your name and address to apt.mod@btinternet.com with the event you are interested in attending.

Jan – 16, Bournemouth; 17, Bath; 18, Gloucester; 30, Carlisle; 31, Stockport.
Feb – 1, Wigan. **Mar** – No presentations.

British Army Badges

By Lt Col Robin Hodges

Cap badge

THE Armed Forces Parliamentary Scheme gives Members of Parliament an opportunity to visit military units to better understand the working of the Armed Forces. The parliamentarians wear uniform without holding military rank but adopt rank slides (or, more accurately, appointment slides) embroidered with designs connected with both Houses of Parliament and equating to the ranks of major up to brigadier.



Tactical Recognition Flash

THE Royal Yeomanry TRF, approved in 2002, is known to the regiment's permanent staff as the "Sein Fein" badge because of its colours, which are very evident in republican areas in Northern Ireland. The colours are also those of the King's South Africa War Medal 1902, the first medal generally awarded to the yeomanry.



Formation sign

THE badge of 15th (North East) Brigade introduced by Brig Andrew Farquhar in 2001 depicts a merlin, a small but ferocious bird of prey that roams the dales and moors of north-east England, on a red Infantry ground. Brig Michael Aris had adopted the original badge, a merlin in the kill posture, when 15 Infantry Brigade was reformed in 1982. The approved badge faces to the right, or forward, when worn on the left sleeve.



Specialist Badge

SINCE 1944, Class B1 Mounted Dutyman of the Household Cavalry have worn the badge authorised for all Class B trades. In 2002 a new badge based on the design of a riding stirrup was authorised for Class B3 Mounted Dutyman.



THESE excerpts appear in **British Army Badges** by Lt Col Robin Hodges, available from Court Hill Farm, Potterne, Devizes, SN10 5PN, tel 01380 723371, email robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk





UPDATE

Highest honour for fallen hero

Victoria Cross awarded to paratrooper who died protecting his comrades

AMUCH-respected NCO who died charging into withering fire to protect comrades in Afghanistan has been awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross.

Cpl Bryan Budd, of the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, received the nation's highest award for gallantry after leading an attack against Taliban fighters who had wounded three of his men in Sangin, Helmand province.

It is the first time a posthumous VC has been awarded in 25 years – the last being Paras Sgt Ian McKay and Col 'H' Jones during the Falklands campaign.

Cpl Budd's citation describes two acts of remarkable valour during ferocious clashes between troops from A Company and Taliban fighters last summer – the last of which cost him his life.

During fighting on July 27, the 29-year-old led an assault on an enemy-occupied building to allow the rescue of a wounded comrade, who was lying exposed with enemy rounds striking the ground around him. Cpl Budd pressed ahead in the face of intense fire, personally killing two fighters and forcing the others to flee. His action saved the life of the injured soldier.

A month later, on August 20, he had been leading his section on a platoon clearance patrol when they spotted and engaged a group of Taliban.

In the assault on the enemy, three soldiers suffered gunshot wounds and the rest of the section took cover. But Cpl Budd maintained the attack alone and, despite being wounded himself, killed several fighters.

Inspired by his example, his comrades followed and forced the enemy to retreat. Cpl Budd's body was later discovered surrounded by three enemy dead.

The NCO, who was about to become a father for the second time when he was killed, lived in Ripon, North Yorkshire, with his wife Lorena and daughter Isabelle.

He had served in the Army for more than ten years, signing up for The Parachute Regiment in 1995 and later passing the selection process for 16 Air Assault Brigade's elite Pathfinder Platoon. As a member of the platoon Cpl



Picture: The Sun

Natural leader: Cpl Bryan Budd's actions have been rewarded with the nation's top gallantry award

Budd had deployed to many operational theatres including the former Yugoslavia, Sierra Leone, Macedonia and Iraq.

A qualified Army combat survival instructor, rock climber and freefall parachutist, he had been posted to the Army Foundation College in Harrogate in 2004 before joining A Company last year to deploy to Afghanistan.

His CO, Lt Col Stuart Tootal, said that Cpl Budd, who was remembered as a softly spoken and gracious family man, had been "a natural leader". He added: "Bryan was proud to call himself a paratrooper and we were proud to stand behind him. He died doing the job he

loved, leading his men from the front."

Lt Col Tootal's assessment was echoed in Cpl Budd's VC citation, which stated: "Throughout his service in Afghanistan, he was always at the point where the action was fiercest.

"Twice he behaved with the greatest gallantry but his single-handed action on the second occasion and his determination, though wounded, to push on against a superior enemy force, stands out as a premeditated act of inspirational leadership and greatest valour, which cost him his life."

● Operational honours – Pages 8-9

Games

JANUARY REVIEW



Rising sun: *Red Steel* forces players to adapt to the complex codes of the Japanese underworld



Feudal fighters

Deadly Tokyo ganglands are the setting for Nintendo Wii mafia actioner

Report: Cliff Caswell

WHILE Nintendo has something of a reputation for gearing its products to the younger end of the market, the new Wii console has been proving that it has the potential to win the hearts and minds of adult gamers.

Amid a plethora of titles aimed at kids accompanying the launch of the new machine, French software developer Ubisoft has come up with *Red Steel*, a first-person actioner based around the Yakuza, or Japanese mafia gangs.

It is a world away from the happy go-lucky pre-school world of *Spongebob Squarepants* or *Super Mario*. With a grim storyline of a kidnapped girlfriend, Tokyo gangsters and Samurai swordplay, the tone is dark and unremittingly ugly.

Red Steel could attract a new audience for Nintendo, which has never conquered an adult gaming scene dominated by Microsoft's Xbox and Sony's PlayStation.

Yet on the occasions when the underrated previous generation

GameCube ventured into adult territory, it achieved surprising success.

The 2002 gothic horror title *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*, was among the best and most original games to be released in recent years.

If the previews shown to *Soldier* are anything to go on, *Red Steel* has the same potential to win over converts on two counts. The first is the presentation, with beautiful Japanese comic book-inspired artwork, and evocative soundtrack.

The second is related to the Wii's unique selling point over its rivals – a motion-sensitive controller that allows players to mimic the hand actions of the on-screen characters. And in the case of *Red Steel*, it is used for martial arts.

The combat element certainly promises to be an interesting experience. Part of the game's storyline involves the player learning the ancient art of fighting with traditional weapons – as well as getting to grips with modern firearms.

But it is not all action. In a complex plot, players assume the identity of a

Los Angeles resident who has, perhaps foolishly, been dating the daughter of a powerful Yakuza clan leader. When dad gets himself gunned down during a night out at a restaurant – and the girl gets kidnapped – the clueless US outsider is plunged into the murky world of the mafia.

"The story of the game follows an American man trying to save his fiancée, who is caught in the middle of a war between two generations of Yakuza," an Ubisoft spokesman said. "He has to fight his way through the mafia, understand their ethics and learn Asiatic fighting techniques."

"Our aim was to put the player in the same situation as the character, asking him 'why is this happening to me?' and having to learn skills and rules."

Gaining an understanding of tradition and becoming immersed in the culture is central to the game. But starting as an outsider, players have the benefit of two guides to take them through the maze of oriental life.

"Your old master – Otori – will teach



you fighting and mastering the respect and honour code, while Harry, an American and nightclub owner, teaches you shooting techniques and provides you with underground info," said the spokesman. "You go back and forth between the two."

In recreating the complex world of the Yakuza, the Ubisoft development team did a lot of research, making two trips to Japan and using some 7,000 pictures to capture the flavour of the environment.

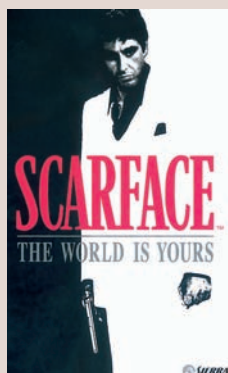
Novels and movies were a key source of inspiration, while the team also visited Japanese communities in the US to see how their culture was perceived in America.

"A lot of references are well known the world over from movies and Manga animations," said the spokesman. "However the design team noticed that Japan seemed to be the only country in the world where tradition and modernity are so well mixed."

Culture, action, honour and corruption – *Red Steel* has all the ingredients to make it a winner. With the Wii now out, this title is an impressive showcase of the newcomer's potential.

By offering a console with a unique controller plus a game with plenty of appeal, Nintendo could break new ground in the adult game market if the credibility of this title matches its promise. Watch this space. ■

SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army



Scarface, PS2, PC

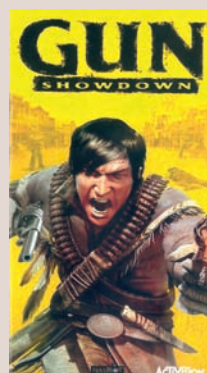
THIS plot picks up on the long line of gang warfare games headed up by *Grand Theft Auto* and *Saints Row*, although this is a credible film tie that holds its own. Beginning with the infamous mansion shooting, players fill the shoes of a vengeful Tony Montana, who is vying to be king of the underworld.

Players, who have the ultimate aim of becoming Mr Big, will find plenty to hold the interest, with side missions and lots of weapons to dispose of opponents. But the market is now becoming flooded with gangster games.



Marvel: Ultimate Alliance, Xbox 360

CASHING in on the insatiable appetite for all things superhero, this latest Activision offering pits the cream of good guys and villains against each other. The result is a decent actioner, giving teams of players the opportunity to battle a legion of darkness. You even get to pick your team, with an initial roster of 20-or-so heroes from which to choose. Even if you're not a fan of the comics, this will keep your thumbs occupied for a while. Some cooperative multiplayer options add to the fun.



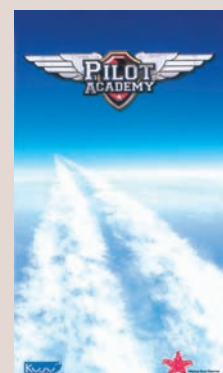
Gun Showdown, PS2

FOLLOWING a successful outing on the Xbox last year, *Gun* blazes its way onto the PS2 with a few extras and a wireless multiplayer mode. The Western puts players in the boots of sharpshooter Coulton White, who develops a taste for vengeance after the murder of his father. Looking for his killers, White takes out bad guys and causes havoc and mayhem. While *Gun* makes the transition to PS2 reasonably well, the controls are fiddly and can be difficult to master. It is better suited to a full-sized console.



Need for Speed Carbon, Xbox 360, PS2

EA takes the chequered flag for console driving games with this one. *Need for Speed Carbon* is pretty much a flawless offering on the Xbox while the PS2 version demonstrates the pint-sized platform's big-engine capabilities. The game puts you in the cut-throat world of street racing where winning means fending off opponents who want to do you in and the pursuing police are intent on closing you down. Both versions have their own unique storylines and are well worth a look.



Pilot Academy, PSP

THIS package took *Soldier* by surprise. Flight simulators rarely make an easy transition to any console, but this little gem actually replicates flying reasonably well. After completing training, PSP aviators embark on a civilian or military flying career, delivering either passengers or missiles to their appointed targets. *Pilot Academy* doesn't take itself too seriously, but skill is needed to master it and all the basic cockpit controls are there. There are a fair few aircraft to get airborne too, including the ubiquitous C-130 Hercules.



WIN: Rainbow Six Vegas

SOLDIER has teamed up with Ubisoft to give away ten copies of the latest counter-terrorism actioner on PSP. *Rainbow Six Vegas* puts you in the thick of the famous Sin City, where a group of terrorists have taken control. With a different storyline to the Xbox 360 version, the PSP incarnation of the game is a pretty slick offering. The multiplayer versions we sampled were particularly impressive. To have a chance of winning, just tell us in which US state Las Vegas is situated. Answers on a postcard to reach us by January 31. Usual rules apply.

JANUARY 2007

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Music

JANUARY REVIEW



Uncovered, above: Behind the scenes of Pink's live tour now available on DVD

Provocative, right: Pink challenges convention through the power of song



Pretty in Pink

Vietnam War veteran dad inspires star's punk rock protest music

Interview: Karen Thomas

PROVOCATIVE, candid, loud – Pink's music reflects her audacious character, molded by growing up in a family fighting a legacy of private battles and demons left over from the Vietnam War.

From gay rights supporter to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) campaigner, the hugely successful singer-songwriter is uninhibited about publicly voicing her frank views. She also has no qualms in using her family as a source of inspiration for her lyrics, most notably those penned for *Family Portrait*.

But Pink claims openness and honesty make healthier relationships and her father, a Vietnam War veteran, took the lead vocals on *I Have Seen The Rain*, taken from her fourth album *I'm Not Dead*.

"He was my first rock star and used to sing me to sleep when I was a baby," recalled the Grammy award-winner, acknowledging her father as her inspiration for pursuing a music career.

"He turned me onto a lot of music, we sang together and he played the guitar – I loved it."

Born Alecia Beth to James Moore and Judy Kugel in Pennsylvania, Pink suffered the heartache of her parents' divorce when she was just seven. Admitting her family background politicised her from an early age, the former gymnast took a musical dissent about

hot topics to the highest authority, US President George W Bush, in the track *Dear Mr President*.

"It's a very questioning song and the questions are not hypothetical. I grew up with a lot of Vietnam veterans and I guess I've always had that punk rock protest mentality," she said.

"My brother's in the US Air Force and he might be going to Iraq. I don't want him to go but he wants to," added Pink about her only sibling.

Despite the in-your-face persona, the girl who wore braces and played the clarinet in school has lately revealed this softer and more vulnerable centre. Her latest single, *Nobody Knows*, shows off Pink's talent for singing soulful ballads and she has recently taken on the mantle of online teen agony aunt. But the 27-year-old enjoys responding to fans about hard issues.

"I get several girls saying one of my songs or an album or something I said

SOLDIER is on the lookout for new music reviewers. Whether your bag is plastic or vinyl, rock or soul, dance or rap, we want to hear from you. Just send an 80-word review of your favourite track or album so we can judge if you have what it takes. Successful pop-pickers will be sent the latest releases to big up or shoot down. Write or email: Music Reviews, *Soldier*, Parsons House, Ordnance Road, Aldershot, Hants, GU11 2DU; kthomas@soldiermagazine.co.uk

REVIEWER'S CHOICE The pick of 2006



In Between Dreams (Jack Johnson)

THIS soulful acoustic sounding album is, for me, the best of 2006, equalling the quality of **Johnson's** other albums. It is music at its best – simple but enthusiastic – from a man who turned down professional surfing for the love of music. I listened to *In Between Dreams* loads of times last year – on the beach, in the car, in the garden – but I'm still not tired of it. If you haven't bought this or Johnson's other albums, they do not disappoint. My top music tips for 2007? Look out for more **Johnson** and **Incubus**.

Pte Chris Annear, MPGS



Acoustic Extravaganza (KT Tunstall)

MY favourite album isn't an obvious chart-topper but rather a hidden gem. *Acoustic Extravaganza* is no stepping stone to **Tunstall's** next studio album but stands out as a cleverly crafted and masterfully performed collection of eight new tracks and two re-vamped renditions of older tracks. It's laced with charm, showcasing the wistful delights of a first-class performer. In 2007, look out for a brand new **Queen** album with **Paul Rodgers** at the helm – don't knock it 'til you've tried it.

Cpl Tom Robinson, 151 Tpt Regt RLC



Black Holes and Revelations (Muse)

LAST year saw the emergence of a plethora of bands making their mark on the live music scene. From **The Automatic** to **The Young Knives**, new bands were out to prove themselves. But the highlight was an unprecedented performance by **Muse**, the three-piece from Devon, who were quite literally out of this world. For 2007, **The View**, **Captain** and **Cold War Kids** are set to make a big impression. If you can only make it to one venue this year then the Reading or Leeds music festivals will have the best on offer.

Cpl Ray Kalaker, RETDU(B)



Mezzanine (Massive Attack)

THIS double CD with a DVD on one side features the group's biggest hits, as well as previously unreleased songs. Their subversive and unpredictable electronica style has been resonating on the airwaves for years, making this a long-awaited production. A definite for any fan's collection, it also makes an excellent addition to those who just want their better-known tracks. Keep an eye on **Panic At The Disco**, as their subtle blend of indie and electronica has been tearing up the rock genre.

Bdr Luke Stevens-Burt, 5 Regt RA



To All New Arrivals (Faithless)

SNEAKING in as my best of 2006 is the fifth studio stunner from **Faithless**. Although I'm not a huge dance anthem fan, this group has me hypnotised and *To All New Arrivals* has lived up to long-awaited expectations. Lead single *Bomb* sets the tone for an album which explores a new range of sounds. Listening to the 11 creative, diverse and superbly mixed tracks is like warm honey dripping on your tongue and reminiscent of early 90s ambient trance. I'm keeping it in the family for 2007, as the girl in me can't wait for **Dido's** fourth album.

Karen Thomas



I'm Not Dead (Pink)

AS soon as the curtain went up revealing a lone figure atop a grand staircase dressed in a security guard's outfit with black stiletto boots, you knew it was going to be a good night. A barrage of hits from **Pink's** latest album *I'm Not Dead* followed, leaving a packed audience screaming for more. She is one of the best female performers around and after a thought-provoking rendition of *Dear Mr President* and an impressive aerial aerobic show, the night drew to a close. **Pink** is one artist you must see.

Cpl Ray Kalaker, RETDU(B)

stopped them from wanting to commit suicide and that means I'm helping them understand their pain a little bit better.

"It's a lot more important than where I am in the charts or what colour my hair is. It re-inspires me to keep going and to push the envelope with each new album."

But sometimes the fans get a little too close. One girl's over-the-top adoration gave the feisty performer a heart-stopping scare.

"She jumped out in front of me, grabbed me and started screaming in my face. I didn't know what else to do so I screamed back. It was very weird."

Yet the weird and unorthodox seem to be trademarks for Pink. The modern Miss became a Mrs after her rather unusual proposal early last year to US motocross star Carey Hart.

"Well, a girl's got to do what a girl's got to do. We were at a race and he was competing and I just decided he should marry me."

"I held up a pit-board sign asking him to marry me and he almost killed a guy coming off the race," she laughed.

With her avant-garde life and chart-busting music unlikely to change, it seems we can expect more of the unconventional from natural blonde, Pink. ■

Valiant to the end

George Cross winner rescued mine casualties despite mortal injuries

A SELFLESS soldier who shouted words of encouragement to wounded friends as he lay dying in a minefield has been saluted for his “outstanding courage and leadership”.

Cpl Mark Wright, of the 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, was posthumously awarded the George Cross after being mortally injured saving the life of a comrade near the Kajaki Dam in Afghanistan’s Helmand province.

In great pain, and after being trapped for three-and-a-half hours in the minefield with six other injured soldiers, he continued to keep up morale.

Cpl Wright’s citation revealed how he had rushed to help after seeing a fellow NCO and patrol leader lose a leg in the unmarked danger zone on September 6 last year.

Despite managing to get through to the casualty, summoning medics and calling a helicopter, Cpl Wright and others were seriously injured when mines detonated during the attempted evacuation.

The blasts left seven injured and stranded, including three with lost limbs, and the situation worsened when the Chinook that had arrived to help had to abort its mission.

Despite his own grave injuries, Cpl Wright managed to maintain contact with rescuers and continued to shout words of encouragement to his injured comrades until they were eventually winched to safety by an American aircraft. He died on his way to a field dressing station.

His George Cross citation acknowledged that the 27-year-old had entered the minefield to save a comrade in full knowledge of the risks he faced.

“When further casualties occurred he again ordered others to safety, but



Commanding presence: Cpl Mark Wright initiated a rescue from an unmarked minefield in Afghanistan

continued to move around to control the situation,” the citation read.

“He suffered a mortal injury but still continued to demonstrate command presence that was so vital to eventually ensuring that all casualties and members of the rescue party were evacuated from the horrific situation.”

Cpl Wright, who was remembered by his family as “always putting others before himself” joined the Army in 1999 and was posted to 3 Para after completing his basic parachute course at RAF Brize Norton, Oxfordshire.

A mortar fire controller in Afghanistan, he had completed three tours of Northern Ireland during his military career as well as serving with distinction in Iraq.

● **The operational honours and awards included on these pages were announced on the day this issue went to press. This meant it was too late for us to include details on our front cover, as we would have wished, or to allocate sufficient space to reflect all the many outstanding citations. Further coverage can be found on our website at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk**

AFGHANISTAN

CBE: Brig E A Butler DSO MBE, late RGJ.

OBE: Lt Col R F P Felton MBE, AAC; Col M N Nadin, late RAMC.

MBE: Lt Col S P W Boyd, RE; Maj S M Burke, R Irish; Capt M J Dicks, RRV; Maj D J Eastman, REME; Maj H S Williams, Para.

DSO: Maj P A Blair, Para; Lt Col S J C Tootal OBE, Para.

MC: Capt D R Beattie, R Irish; 2nd Lt O Dale,

Para; CoH M J Flynn CGC, RHG/D; Staff CoH S K Fry, LG; Cpl S J Giles, Para; LCpl K W Jackson, Para; Pte P McKinley, Para; Maj G M Timms, Para; Capt P J Williams, RHG/D; Pte M J Wilson, Para.

GM: LCpl P Hartley, RAMC.

QGM: Cpl S H Pearson, Para.

ARRC: Capt C McWilliam, QARANC.

Mid: Capt M A W Armstrong, RA; Pte J C Bevens, Para; WO2 M J Bolton, Para; WO2 K T Brennan, RA; Capt A J Eida (KIA), RA; Capt M R Eisler, Para; Cpl S J Farling, KRH; Lt T H Fehley, Para; Rfn G Gurung, RGR; WO2 T Gurung, RGR;

Cpl B S Hall, RAMC; Pte S J Halton, Para; Lt M J Hewitt, Para; Lt P R Hollingshead, RGR; Sgt D Jarvie, Para; WO2 T H Johnstone, AAC; Cpl K Khebang, RGR; Sgt C F Lane, Para; WO2 Z A Leong, Para; Capt A J Mackenzie, Para; LCpl L E P McCulloch (KIA), R Irish; WO1 C P Mulhall, AAC; Rfn N Rai, RGR; SSgt J G Rankine, RE; WO2 A K Schofield, Para; Maj T P O Till, Coldm Gds.

QCB: LBdr D M Byrne, RA; WO1 A S Gee, RLC; Cpl N J Grant, RAMC; WO2 A J Stedman, RLC.

QCVS: CSgt S Bell, Para; Capt N J Bishop, Para; Brig N R Davies MBE MC, late Para; LCpl A S Fear, R Signals; Lt Col M A Fenn MBE, RE; Col C P H Knaggs OBE, late IG; Maj P G B Strudwick, Scots.



UPDATE

Afghan accolades

Conspicuous courage shown by British troops during fierce Helmand fight

AJUNIOR officer inspired Afghan police to fight on after picking up a rocket launcher from their fallen company commander and taking the battle to the enemy.

Acting Captain Timothy Illingworth of The Light Infantry blasted Taliban positions in an operation to recapture the Helmand settlement of Garmsir, only just managing to cheat death when they returned fire.

His actions, in full view of the enemy, were commended with the award of the Conspicuous Gallantry Cross (CGC).

Deployed to mentor and encourage the local police officers rather than fight the Taliban, Lt Illingworth moved to the front after seeing the resolve of the inexperienced Afghan security forces crumble during an ambush.

Seizing a rocket launcher from a dead company commander, he fired off three rounds but was abandoned by all but one of the local troops when the enemy fired back.

Isolated and under a hail of bullets, he pushed forward, blasting off seven magazines of ammunition and rallying the Afghans to fight on.

Lt Illingworth's citation read: "His bravery and example over seven days went well beyond the call of duty – his role was to mentor rather than fight.

"However, he placed himself in a position of utmost danger to influence events. His outstanding courage, leadership and selflessness in pressing home his attack undoubtedly distracted the ambush and saved many lives. Such inspiring courage was exemplary."

● Lt Hugo Farmer, Para, led his men into action against the Taliban again and again during heavy fighting in the Sangin district of Afghanistan. He wins a CGC.

In command of 1 Platoon, A Com-

pany, 3 Para, he led his men from the front, never hesitating during three months in which he was frequently under intense fire. His citation lists three separate incidents during which Lt Farmer's courage and inspirational leadership were significant factors in defeating determined and effective Taliban attacks.

● LCoH Andrew Radford, of the Household Cavalry Regiment, also wins a CGC for sprinting into a Taliban killing zone near the town of Musa Qal'eh in southern Afghanistan to rescue the badly injured driver of a Scimitar disabled in an ambush.

The lead vehicle was destroyed in the



Gallant: Lt Timothy Illingworth, Lt Hugo Farmer, and LCoH Andrew Radford

initial attack, and three of its four-man crew killed. LCoH Radford leapt out of the comparative safety of his own Scimitar and, under sustained fire, ran to the scene of devastation to help the driver, Tpr Compton.

The citation describes his feat of extracting the injured man 70m uphill while under machine-gun and RPG fire as "almost superhuman".

Warriors reward

CSGT James Harkness, WFR, won his CGC for raw bravery in three separate incidents, including a six-hour battle against 200 heavily-armed Mahdi militiamen in the narrow alleyways of Al Amarrah.

Deployed as a Warrior platoon sergeant with The Queen's Royal Hussars battle-group in the fractious southern Iraq city, he charged forward when a flanking attack attempted to cut off and isolate soldiers leading a strike against Mahdi forces. He led his platoon against a torrent of incoming fire to hold ground vital to the extraction of the forward elements.



Two weeks later he held a key crossroads in Al Amarrah during the largest and most intense battle in Iraq since 2004.

Frequently exposed to enemy fire when he dismounted his Warrior to overcome communication problems, he repeatedly engaged roof-top gunmen with his rifle as strike marks peppered his vehicle.

The following month he played a crucial part in protecting a re-supply convoy ambushed in Al Maymunah, risking machine-gun and sniper fire to locate, engage and kill the attackers during an hour-long engagement.

IRAQ

OBE: Lt Col J H Bowron DSO, LI; Lt Col D H Labouchere MBE, QRH.

DSO: Maj A G C Fair, Scots DG.

CGC: Cpl J Collins, Para.

MC: LCpl N A T Coleman, D and D LI; Pte R J Copping, PWRR; Capt R J Bassett-Cross, SG; Maj R A Head, LI; Cpl S P Iszard, PWRR; Maj M A P Nooney, PWRR; LSgt S E Ross, Gren Gds.

GM: Cpl M Caines, PWRR; SSgt G O'Donnell, RLC.

MiD: LCpl P Bains, PWRR; LCpl L A Davidson, R Anglian; Cpl O Hartshorne, R Anglian; SSgt J N Lane, AAC; Lt K J Lyons, PWRR; Pte J J Martin, R Anglian; Sgt A P J Pepper, PWRR; LCpl K Steen, REME; CSgt D W J Webb, Para; LCpl S Wells, PWRR; Sgt J Whiteley, R Anglian; Capt A D Wigham, QRH.

QCB: Bdr P Ellison, RA.

QCVS: Lt Col A C Boreham, RAMC; LCpl A D T Brown, RE; Maj M A Davies, QRL; Maj A S D Harrison MBE, Para; WO2 M K Hopkins, R Signals; WO2 S A Kelly, RLC; Lt Col D P O'Driscoll, R Anglian; Maj C J Ormiston MBE, Int Corps; Pte L J Walters, R Anglian.

NORTHERN IRELAND

MBE: Capt M J Canham, RE; Maj D H Jackson, R Irish.

QCB: WO2 R L Walker, RLC.

QCVS: WO2 C R Millington, RRF.

NATIONAL OPERATIONS

QCB: Capt A R Viney, Yorks.

NON-COMBATANT

QGM: Sgt K P Slaughter, RE.



No way through: Cpl Andy Parkinson (R Signals) finds his path to the try line blocked by a well-organised Leopards pack at Aldershot

Picture: Roger Thompson

Leopards maul Reds

Touring side prove they're up to scratch with victory over Army centurions

Report: Roger Thompson

ARMY skipper Sgt Mal Roberts (RLC) ran in a solo try to herald the start of the Army Rugby Union centenary, but could not save his side from the claws of Africa's Leopards at Aldershot.

The tourists – drawn from the internationals of Namibia, Kenya, Uganda, Tunisia and Morocco and making their first visit to the UK – made it known they were intent on leaving their mark from the first whistle of this fast-paced exhibition match.

Nine of the Army team had played a gruelling cup match the day before and, clearly somewhat leg weary, found themselves trailing 10-0 before Roberts thundered on to the scene early in the second half.

Faced with 25m of heavy traffic, a shrug, dipped shoulder and smart change of direction took the captain

over in the corner – an action that gave the hosts some hope.

Bearing the brunt was lock Cpl Ben Hughes (RE), who worked like a Trojan to direct the efforts of a rearranged pack, and prop Cpl Melvin Lewis (WG), who took a turn both on the tight and loose head.

Behind them, debutant scrum half LCpl Alipate Vakasawaqu (AGC) buzzed and bossed the pack and, outside, Cpl Andy Parkinson (R Signals) showed pace and was only held in check by some thunderous tackling.

Wholesale changes in the Army team in the second half might have saved the tired limbs but could not prevent the Leopards scoring two further tries.

Lt Mark Honeybun (RA), an accomplished Sevens player introduced at fly half, had a very sound match pushing the attack and kicking for position. The freer spirit and sheer grit enabled the Army to respond with

a fourth quarter period of intense pressure on the Leopards line but they failed, just, to cross the whitewash for a second time.

A very tolerant referee eventually awarded the Reds a penalty try to close the scores at 20-10.

Speaking after the match, Army coach WO2 Andy Sanger (RE) singled out two newcomers for special praise. "Considering the high pressure games on the previous day and the fact that six players pulled on the red jersey for the first time, the team showed tremendous commitment," he told *SoldierSport*.

"Mal Roberts scored a wonder-try but no one performed better than open side LCpl Maccu Koroiyadu (RLC) and Rugby League convert LCpl Ben Seru (RE), who showed real pace and flair.

"It is encouraging to see that the competition for Reds' shirts in our centenary year is as keen and wide open as ever." ■



VOX POP

Up in smoke

The regular feature in which we ask soldiers for their views on a hot topic

We asked the Golden Lions Scottish Infantry Parachute Display Team how Scotland's smoking ban had affected their working and social lives

Cpl Kev Doust, 2 R Scots
Non-smoker

When you go out for a meal you don't have to worry about passive smoking and the ban generally makes the places you go to a lot more pleasurable to be in.



You no longer have to hunt out the non-smoking areas. Even if there were allocated areas for smokers and non-smokers, you wouldn't be able to get away from the smoke because it hangs in the air.

LCpl Jaco Pierneef, 1 R Scots
Non-smoker

I think the ban is a good thing although when we go out to a club and the smokers have to go outside, I'm left holding all the drinks. On a positive note, I no longer go back home after an evening out stinking of smoke, so it is obviously a lot healthier.



The ban doesn't affect our working environment and I haven't noticed anyone getting grumpy because they can't light up.

WO2 Robert Thomson, 1 R Scots
Smoker

If secondary smoking is as bad as they say, then I agree with the ban.

But I think it's ridiculous when you're not allowed to smoke in your own home because somebody who might be a non-smoker is coming to the house.



They had a long time to plan, but I don't think enough thought went into the practicalities of having a smoking ban.

Cpl Nigel MacGillivray, 4 R Scots
Non-smoker

It's brilliant. My wife suffers from bronchitis, which is set off by smoke, but now she can go out and not worry.



It's also great to be able to eat out and not worry about people smoking.

I was in Norway when their smoking ban was introduced – it was minus 20C and people were still going outside for a cigarette. If people want to smoke, they'll smoke.

Cpl Stevie Millar, 2 R Scots
Smoker

Smoke probably put off a lot of non-smokers from going into pubs and clubs so I think it's their turn now.



I suppose it's for all our benefit and maybe people who do smoke will stop because of the ban, but it's too early to tell.

I'm in favour of the ban and think all of Britain should have it.

What is good for one, is good for us all.

LCpl Steve Studders, 1 R Scots
Non-smoker

I don't believe that the ban encourages more non-smokers to go out, I just think that people will enjoy themselves a bit more when they do.



If you go to a pub or club where there are a lot of smokers, your clothes always stink afterwards and you get a sore throat the next morning.

I don't smoke because I want to be healthy but it's pointless if others smoke around me.

Cpl Mark Lawrie, 1 R Scots
Smoker

I see the point in banning smoking in places where you sit down for a meal, but when it comes to nightclubs and pubs I think you should still be able to light up.



Venues could have segregated areas where you are allowed to smoke and use extractors similar to those they have in airports. That said, I personally don't like to smoke in a room where there are non-smokers.

Pte Andy Abbess, 6 R Scots
Non-smoker

I think the ban is great because I don't like cigarette smoke and now there are fewer places where I'm in contact with it.



I've heard one argument that if people aren't going out to smoke in the pubs in the evening, they might stay at home and smoke in front of their kids, which is a concern. But, personally, I would say that not smoking in public places is a very good thing.



Picture: Courtesy of The Scottish Executive

Interviews: Karen Thomas Pictures: Graeme Main

Coming up . . . in SOLDIER

Starship Trooper Michael Ironside credits his family's military history with bringing authenticity to his Hollywood roles



What the Press has been saying

● **PRINCE William** got a king-sized rollicking for driving across Sandhurst's famous parade square on a mini motorbike. Wills had hoped his prank would give everyone a laugh, but a furious staff sergeant failed to see the funny side. — *The Sun*

● **QINETIQ**, the defence research company that was controversially privatised earlier this year, is set to win a £10 billion deal to train Britain's armed forces — one of the biggest contracts awarded under the Government's private finance initiative. — *The Independent*

● **BRITAIN's military commander** has given a warning that climate change is going to cause substantial security challenges for the Armed Forces. Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup outlined fears about the potential damage by global warming and the likelihood that Britain's Armed Forces will have to play an interventionist role to prevent or react to humanitarian crises. — *The Times*

● A **HERO** soldier fired his way into the history books in a dramatic and bloody ambush in Afghanistan. The troop commander is believed to be the first British soldier to use a pistol in open battle since the Korean War in the 1950s as he attacked 60 Taliban with an 18-round 9mm handgun. — *News of the World*

● A **VITAL** Army tank exercise for troops heading out to Iraq was called off because it posed a threat to the rare marsh fritillary butterfly. Some soldiers are furious that they had to abort the three-week battle practice on Salisbury Plain as part of a deal with environmentalists to protect butterfly habitats in the rain. (See Page 15) — *The Times*

● AN unprecedented bidding war has started up for the 13-acre Chelsea Barracks site in Knightsbridge. The shortlist of ten companies in the bidding reads like a *Who's Who* of London's new breed of residential developers. The initial valuation was around £250 million, but the barracks are now widely predicted to sell for well over £400 million. — *Evening Standard*

● **BRITAIN'S** former top soldier ripped into the Prime Minister in a devastating attack on what he claimed was the shoddy treatment of the Armed Forces. Gen Sir Mike Jackson accused the Government of fobbing troops off with low pay and housing them in slum accommodation. — *The Sun*

Browne calls for cautious drawdown

Defence Secretary warns of potential violence

ATACKS on British troops in Iraq could worsen as troops continue handing over responsibility for security to local forces, Defence Secretary Des Browne has warned.

In an address to the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London, Mr Browne predicted that terrorists would try to claim victory as the soldiers pulled back. But while he expected that troop numbers would be reduced "by thousands" by the end of the year, he stressed that handing back the two remaining provinces did not mean withdrawal.

Mr Browne added: "We have said that we, and the Iraqis, hope they will be ready to take over Maysan province in January 2007 and Basra by the spring.

"If both of these go to plan, we will be able to start drawing down our forces. This will itself need careful handling. Those who have been attacking our forces will claim a propaganda victory and, as we move towards handover, attacks on us may increase."

The return of Maysan and Basra follow the return of Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar provinces last year, although

soldiers have been standing by to assist Iraqi forces if required.

Despite the ongoing hand-back apparently proceeding on schedule, Mr Browne declined to speculate how many troops would be left in theatre by the end of 2007.

But he expected the number "to be significantly lower by a matter of thousands". The soldiers who remained would continue to mentor the local army and police forces as well as making sure coalition supply routes were protected.

Mr Browne added: "I have been pressing our planners to look at all the options to make sure we do not ask a single extra soldier to remain longer than is necessary."

He also told the institute that he would continue to work with senior military officers to make sure plans for Iraq were "clear and realistic" in the coming months. But Mr Browne stressed: "I will also work to resist cynicism and defeatism so long as I believe we are making a difference, and so long as I believe the presence of our forces there is increasing the chance of a positive legacy for their work and sacrifice."

Music to the ears

SOLDIERS and their families have been given a double helping of over-the-airwaves entertainment after the launch of two broadcasting initiatives.

BFBS Radio is now available via cable and satellite on Sky Digital, with programmes to keep listeners up-to-date with troops throughout the world.

In a separate move, Garrison Radio has set up a medium wave system at the Army Training Regiment at Basingbourn, aiming its initiative at both recruits and staff.



Both services are good news for troops, helping them stay in touch with families while on operations and keeping those training informed about the wider Army.

The BFBS service is available at Sky Digital Channel 0184, with stations in Iraq and Germany linking up with the UK to maintain round-the-clock broadcasting.

Troops at Basingbourn can tune to 1287AM for Garrison Radio, which receives a regional feed of the Colchester station.



UPDATE



Robust response: British patrols continue in southern Iraq despite the ever-present threat of terrorist ambush and roadside bombs

Picture: Cpl Ian Forsyth RLC

Staffords strike

British soldiers win the upper hand after patrol is ambushed in Basra city

TERRORISTS who attacked a British patrol in Iraq quickly lost the stomach for a fight after fired-up soldiers relentlessly hunted them down.

Having ambushed troops from the 1st Battalion, The Staffordshire Regiment and 1st Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets, the gunmen crumpled under a hail of bullets during the contact in Basra's Al Jumhuriya district.

The skirmish began when the British soldiers, who had only recently arrived in theatre as part of Op Telic 9, came under attack from insurgents.

Spotting the enemy's muzzle flashes down an unlit street, troops dismounted from their three Warriors, supported by a rain of fire from the armoured vehicles' lethal 30mm Rarden cannons and 7.62mm chain guns.

The gunmen sought cover before attacking again, but found themselves facing a fresh onslaught when LCpl Daniel Hargreaves, Staffords, blasted their position with his 40mm underslung grenade launcher.

Having shot three terrorists dead, the soldiers attempted to give chase but were cut off by a canal. The troops then re-grouped to continue their patrol.

While the Al Jumhuriya area is normally friendly during the day, after dark it attracts terrorist groups planning to set up mortars and hit coalition bases.

The soldiers, who are serving with the Basra City North battle-group as part of 19 Light Brigade, won the praise of superiors for their cool-thinking and decisive response to the ambush.

Patrol commander Lt Chris San Jose,

RGJ, said: "It fills me with confidence that the guys did so well. They had a robust and quick response and took the fight back to the gunmen."

Cpl Matt Foster, Staffs, who pressed ahead in the counter-attack with his fire team, added: "I was concerned as we have new lads. But I could see that they were not only doing their job, they were doing it well."

LSA: Privates will profit

JUNIOR soldiers will be better off with the introduction of a new tri-Service operational payment, Defence Secretary Des Browne has said, despite claims that some personnel might lose out.

During a visit to RAF Odiham, Mr Browne maintained that lower ranks would have up to £600 extra in their pockets following the removal of the initial qualifying period for Longer Separation Allowance (LSA) this year. The initiative, which is being rolled out to the Army in April on the introduction of Joint Personnel Administration, replaces a string of older bonuses.

These include Longer Separated Service

Allowance, Accumulated Turbulence Bonus, Married Unaccompanied Service Allowance and Northern Ireland Detached Duty Allowance. But because LSA, which has already been rolled out to the Royal Air Force and Royal Navy, will not have any qualifying period from April, troops can start earning extra cash immediately.

Payments will be based on the amount of qualifying separation accumulated during a career, at up to nearly £25.50 a day at current rates. Mr Browne claimed troops would notice the difference in their pockets, particularly when added to other financial rewards.

● Colin's column – Page 33



Withdraw cash on camp

FREE-to-use cash machines will be offered to every UK military base after the new owners of Naafi Financial outlined their plans for the future.

Bosses of the newly re-branded Forces Financial said they would offer the ATMs to commanders, claiming the move would save soldiers £15 a year in withdrawal fees. The machines could be in place by autumn 2008.

Other initiatives pledged by the company include a panel of nearly 30 motor insurance providers plus additional cover in policies to meet the specific needs of troops.

Naafi Financial was bought by the R3 Group last month. Al Voice, head of the Naafi business, formed a partnership with R3 principals Rob Proudman and Robin Williams to make the purchase and is now managing director of Forces Financial.

Telic heroes remembered

TROOPS from the Paderborn-based 20th Armoured Brigade held a service of thanksgiving and commemoration following their seven-month tour of Iraq.

Nearly 1,400 soldiers, their relatives and friends packed the city's cathedral to reflect on Op Telic 8 and remember the 24 personnel who gave their lives.

During an emotional service, senior chaplain Father Andrew Lloyd said: "Whether we deployed, stayed at home or supported in the rear party, the intensity of these past few months will be an experience that has marked our lives."

Sappers' Helmand rescue

TERRITORIAL Army engineers rescued two Royal Marine comrades who were involved in a horrific crash in a remote area of Afghanistan's troubled Helmand province.

The Marines' Land Rover had plunged 100ft over a cliff in the mountainous Kajaki district. But, luckily, Sgt Tony Savage, a casualty nurse in civvy street, and Pte Dave Walker, a former paramedic, both serving with 131 Independent Commando Squadron RE, were first at the scene.

After pulling the casualties from the wreckage, Sgt Savage and Pte Walker stabilised them until help arrived on the scene.

The two Royal Marines are now recovering in the UK.

AFF calls for fairer deal

Spouses of Commonwealth troops 'deserve more'

THE Army Families Federation claims that new Home Office rules designed to make it easier for Commonwealth troops to meet citizenship requirements do not go far enough.

Federation chairman Sammie Crane said it "beggared belief" that new regulations, which mean that time troops serve abroad as well as in the UK will count towards their naturalisation application, did not apply to their spouses.

Under the old system personnel had to be resident in Britain for a full five years to be eligible to apply for nationality, or three years if they were married to a national. But the new rules, drawn up to "reflect the commitment and sacrifice" of troops, mean service anywhere in the world will count towards that time.

While Mrs Crane welcomed the change as a step forward, she was disappointed that a move "trumpeted as proper recognition for the ten per cent of the Army who are not British" had failed to consider their loved ones.

She added: "It is extremely bad news that the families have not been considered as entitled to naturalisation in their own right at the same time as their serving spouses."

"They feel their lack of status just as much as the soldier, if not more so since they are normally not eligible for UK state allowances in their own right."

Mrs Crane said families of Common-

wealth troops had been placed in an unfair situation and called for spouses to be given the recognition they deserved. "I believe this announcement means that families of Commonwealth troops will be discriminated against in relation to civilian counterparts."

"If a civilian on a work permit arrives in the UK with a spouse, both can apply for settlement after five years and, after a further year, can apply for naturalisation."

"Under the new regulations, a spouse can apply only by virtue of being married to a newly-naturalised British soldier and then only after waiting a further two years," she said.

However a Home Office spokeswoman said that current legislation for naturalisation contained "a number of requirements that could not be waived".

The spokeswoman added: "Under the current immigration rules, spouses will generally be able to obtain indefinite leave to remain (ILR) in the UK two years after the member of the Armed Forces to whom they are married has been naturalised. Both the MoD and the Home Office are currently reviewing the requirement for ILR."

● **The revised rules became effective on November 1. For more details, log on to www.homeoffice.gov.uk**

● See Talkback, Page 49

Auction line open

Soldiers given permission to bid in own time

THE internet auction site eBay can still be used by soldiers and military staff in their own time and on operations, the MoD has confirmed.

Access to the site is banned in the office and private eBay transactions are not allowed using work-based equipment.

But the ban does not affect individuals using eBay outside the MoD business environment.

A department spokesman told

Soldier: "Wherever possible, the MoD does provide internet access for personal use by military staff deployed on operations and these systems are entirely unaffected by the MoD's office system ban on the use of eBay."

"Likewise, any off-duty communal internet access provided for Service personnel in their UK military accommodation will be able to access eBay and other auction sites."



UPDATE

Guards pay tribute to rising star

POLICE are probing the death of a soldier on manoeuvres in Kent.

Gdsm Ian Wright, of the 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards, died from a single gunshot wound to the head during an exercise at Lydd Ranges on November 23. Kent Police said officers were called to the ranges around 1900. They had been receiving full cooperation in their investigation and were working closely with the Army.

Gdsm Wright, 20, from Bristol, had been in the Grenadier Guards for four years. He had recently returned from Iraq and had served in Bosnia. His CO, Lt Col Carew Hatherley, described the soldier as a "rising star in his platoon".

Lt Col Hatherley added: "Gdsm Wright was an outgoing and friendly soldier. He was a very popular member of the battalion and a good friend to those who knew him.

"He had been selected to attend the next lance corporals' promotion course. Gdsm Wright enjoyed life in the Grenadier Guards and our prayers go out to his family and friends."

Paras suffer terrible loss

DEFENCE Secretary Des Browne has paid tribute to the bravery of a senior NCO who died from wounds sustained during an operation to clamp down on terror suspects in Basra city.

Sgt Jonathan Hollingsworth of The Parachute Regiment was shot during a search-and-detention operation on November 24. He died in a military hospital.

Mr Browne described the death of the NCO, who was on secondment to HQ Multinational Division South East, as a "terrible loss" and said his thoughts were with his family and friends. The Defence Secretary added: "Sgt Hollingsworth was killed on a successful operation to detain those who were known to attack civilian and military personnel. He did not die in vain."

Few details have been released about the operation, although it has been confirmed that a number of people were detained.



Top honour: JUO Angela Laycock was judged best cadet at the Royal Military Academy last month

Wonder woman

Laycock enjoys proud moment in the limelight

APROMISING young officer has spoken of her delight after joining the exclusive club of women judged best cadet at the Royal Military Academy in Sandhurst.

JUO Angela Laycock became the third female to receive the coveted Sword of Honour from the Queen during the Sovereign's Parade last month.

The sword is awarded to the cadet judged by the academy's commandant, Maj Gen Peter Pearson, to be the best of the intake at the end of the 44-week training course.

The 24-year-old said she was overwhelmed and delighted to receive the accolade but admitted that it had been a shock. "I didn't expect to win this," she confided. "I'm so pleased to have received this honour, especially as

we have to compete equally with the boys. Everyone has been so positive and thought it was well deserved."

A former Welbeck College student, Bedfordshire-born JUO Laycock wanted to join the Army as a teenager after being bitten by the bug as a youngster in the cadets. The young officer, who has a Masters degree in civil, structural and environmental engineering, has now started her specialist training with the Royal Engineers.

● The Sword of Honour has a new sponsor. Firmin and Sons, the famous Birmingham-based badge and button makers, has taken responsibility for backing the award.

The company succeeds blade manufacturer Wilkinson Sword, long-time sponsors of the award.



Close combat

Falcon Squadron reinforces parts other armour cannot reach



Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Steve Dock

COLD War scenarios of Soviet T-72 tanks rolling over Eastern Bloc plains meant the infantry and the Royal Armoured Corps once had a somewhat long-distance relationship.

With Nato tanks poised to hammer front-line targets from the rear, the two

entities could focus on their respective jobs several miles apart and remain in touch by radio.

But modern battlefields require a subtler approach, especially in harder-to-reach landscapes. A more intimate relationship between infantryman and armour is needed in the world's emerging hostile neighbourhoods, where threats are often hard to spot.

Moving infantry and tanks forward together now calls for more agile vehicles to blast enemy positions within metres of the foot soldiers. Enter Medium Armour (MA) and Falcon, the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment's squadron of 12 modified combat vehicle reconnaissance tracked CVR(T) Scimitars. Using reconnaissance skills to move stealthily into rugged terrain, the 2 RTR troops adapted to their new MA role of firing from alongside the infantry in simulated close combat battles staged on the Canadian prairies.

Getting up close to the Scimitars proved a hit with the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Green Jackets.

"I felt safe with the medium armour and wanted to go into battle as I knew the enemy had taken a real pounding," said LCpl Chris Price, 2 RGJ, after 72 hours of engaging with the mock hostile forces night and day, sometimes in sub-zero temperatures.

"The fighting atmosphere was a lot better because we had Falcon supporting us and we could use our manpower more effectively elsewhere."

The Scimitars were also successful in protecting exposed flanks and the rear,

Man meets machine: Infantry soldiers and tankies synchronise their steps as feet and tracks move forward together

In the pipeline

AN emergency in one of the world's more volatile areas is threatening to erupt into a full-scale crisis. Deploying troops are likely to encounter resistance from pockets of armed fighters. A quick response is needed but what armour is going to be the most appropriate?

Challenger 2 tanks have significant firepower but are too big to squeeze onto narrow ridges or negotiate deep gullies. In addition, they can only be moved by sea, which would take too long and requires the use of a port in a friendly country.

On the other hand the Future Rapid Effect System (FRES) will be a combat vehicle protected by armour that won't hinder agility, has enough firepower to deter potential aggressors and could be flown directly into hot spots around the globe.

With FRES still in the development pipeline, however, Medium Armour (MA) is an appropriate gap-filler. Being compact and nimble, the CVR(T) Scimitars can be rapidly deployed by air and stop an emergency from escalating into a crisis.

trading blows with an enemy exploiting the open spaces left by the infantry pushing forward.

Although MA had met with some scepticism, Lt Col Patrick Sanders, the CO of 2 RGJ and battle-group commander, was quick to highlight it worked in the right circumstances and was an effective asset. He was also impressed with how both Tommy and

tankie had adapted to their new roles and communicated directly with each other while fighting across the British Army Training Unit Suffield ranges.

"Twelve days ago very few of my battalion had worked closely with armour. Ten days on I have corporals and platoon commanders calling forward the Falcon squadron just yards away to support a position and they're doing it with confidence.

"Falcon is a fantastic addition to the battle-group. They are a really professional and experienced gang and it's been much more difficult for them to adapt to MA so I take my hat off to them."

Swapping recce skills for weapons tactics was a key change for the 2 RTR troops getting to grips with the new features in their Scimitars. Handling the battle-group thermal imager (BGTI), Bowman and quickly getting the artillery onto the targets were techniques largely unknown to them. It had been a steep learning curve but Tpr Simon Mussell, 2 RTR, said the MA training had been beneficial.

"It's quite a new BGTI system for all of us so it's been good to get the hang of it on the field. Working alongside the infantry was also a good opportunity, especially as we have an important role

to do when they call us in to support them."

Originally introduced to fill the gap before the Future Rapid Effect System (FRES – see panel) comes online, using MA up front has already proved its worth in Afghanistan's combat zones.

But trials continue to adapt and improve the effectiveness of tanks working in close proximity to the infantry.

Brig David Rutherford-Jones, director of the Royal Armoured Corps, summed up the new relationship between

armour, foot soldiers and 21st century battlefields.

"The 'medium' of MA is about the effect on the enemy delivered by an automatic gun and cannon. Combining the vehicle's agility, the tank mind-set and the use of three or four CVR(T)s at the points of contact on the ground makes very compelling support for the infantry."

Far from being an interim measure, MA is already getting combat infantry used to working shoulder-to-track with tanks and paving the way for the first FRES generation of armour. ■

'I felt safe with the medium armour and wanted to go into battle as I knew the enemy had taken a real pounding'

Hacked off

MoD cyber team has the byte to deal with electronic menace

Report: Cliff Caswell
Picture: Graeme Main

THEY have the tools to cause mayhem – and British soldiers are in their sights.

An enemy in the shadows without a tangible physical presence, they can strike without warning and wreak havoc both on the home front and operations. Their silent assaults could potentially leave units cut off and paralysed.

This is not a far-fetched scenario. It is the stock-in-trade of the professional computer hacker, who is becoming a dangerous opponent – and one who has rapidly been growing in strength.

Fortunately, he is not unbeatable and anyone attempting to breach the security of the UK's defence networks will find themselves squaring up to an Army-led team of experts. Based at MoD Main Building in London, the Joint Security Coordination Centre (JSyCC) is prepared to combat the cyber threat.

"The situation is moving all the time and risks are literally changing daily," said Lt Col Ian Dodeswell, RA, head of the JSyCC. "So we have to be on our guard, making sure that we are covered against all known threats.

"But the real concern for us is what we call Zero Day Exploits – something that hits us that we don't know about. Our systems are protected and we are reasonably secure, but that does not mean that there aren't people out there looking to get through all the time."

By all accounts, it has been a steep learning curve for the team since the JSyCC was established seven years ago. The importance of the centre's work took on a new dimension after 9/11, when it was recognised that computer systems could be a potential terrorist target and that attacks against British networks could potentially give any adversary the upper hand.

JSyCC staff have a wide remit, which includes liaising with civilian and military organisations around

the world and sharing best practice information.

For Lt Col Dodeswell, the key to success on the cyber battlefield is to remain one step ahead of the hackers. But he admitted that the rate at which the IT security threat had matured in a short time was a concern.

"The time gap between a system's vulnerability becoming public and the hacking community providing a virus to match it has been coming down," said Lt Col Dodeswell. "Not long ago the hacking interval was 331 days, now it is just six."

"It is not just here in the UK that there is a threat – we are in regular contact with people in theatres such as Iraq and Afghanistan because our forward operating bases are as subject to potential virus attacks and threats of hacking as anywhere else."

Lt Col Dodeswell emphasised that another key defence against hackers were the front-line troops and commanders, and he urged them to remain vigilant and not to ignore anything suspicious on their computers.

"We are trying to raise the bar on our security as high as we possibly can, although no system can be 100 per cent secure," he said. "Ultimately the users are the best defence – the people who alert us if they see something going on."

While coordinating the defence against cyber threats is one side of the job, knowing the enemy – and understanding the complex hacking community – is also a key area for JSyCC staff.

Maj Chris Ward, R Signals, a threat response expert, said monitoring websites used by hackers was often as important as keeping up to date with official information sources.

"Part of the department here is focused on hacker methodologies," he said. "Obviously hackers do things for different reasons and we are looking at their intent."

"We look at both trusted and untrusted sources, including websites viewed by hackers. If there is a virus incident we then have the information to pass an alert down the chain of

command and warn if a particular patch or anti-virus software is needed."

But Maj Ward was keen to reiterate that the chain of command, from senior officers to junior soldiers had to remain vigilant to the threat.

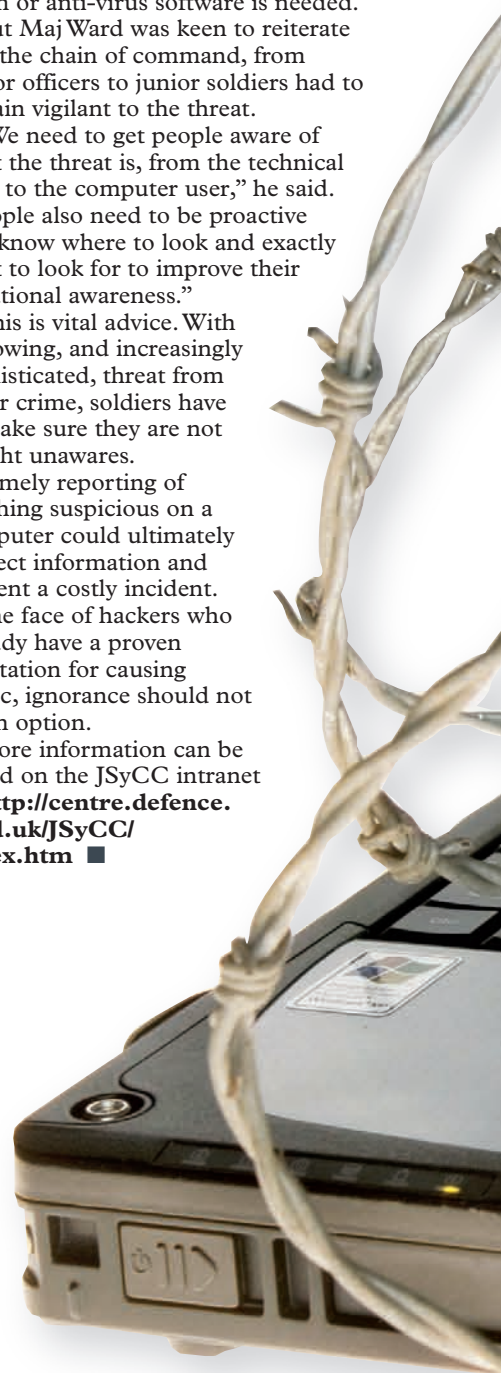
"We need to get people aware of what the threat is, from the technical guys to the computer user," he said. "People also need to be proactive and know where to look and exactly what to look for to improve their situational awareness."

This is vital advice. With a growing, and increasingly sophisticated, threat from cyber crime, soldiers have to make sure they are not caught unawares.

Timely reporting of anything suspicious on a computer could ultimately protect information and prevent a costly incident. In the face of hackers who already have a proven reputation for causing havoc, ignorance should not be an option.

More information can be found on the JSyCC intranet at <http://centre.defence.mod.uk/JSyCC/index.htm> ■

'Not long ago the hacking interval was 331 days, now it's just six'



Threat down the wire: An increasingly sophisticated breed of hackers, malicious viruses and those involved in computer espionage require the development of ever more robust protective measures





Not in our backyard

**Territorial Army pioneers join the battle to
curb Jamaica's violent lawlessness »**





Report: Andy Simms
Pictures: Mike Weston

WITH dazzling white beaches and crystal clear waters, images of Jamaica have long monopolised the covers of holiday brochures.

But in stark contrast to the rum cocktails and luxury of Montego Bay's all-inclusive resorts, there are aspects of island life better suited to the pages of a Quentin Tarantino screenplay.

A violent lawlessness, characterised by impulse shootings and gangland-style executions, has given the Caribbean island the dubious honour of boasting one of the world's worst murder rates.

In 2005 the number of killings hit a record high – nearly 1,700 recorded deaths from a population of just 2.7 million. A harrowing statistic which prompted the arrival on Jamaica's sun-kissed shores of a specialist contingent from 168 Pioneer Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps (V).

During a four-week stay on the island, a hand-picked 22-man team of project managers, welders, carpenters and brickies designed and built an Urban Training Facility (UTF) for the

nation's overworked internal security forces – the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) and Jamaica Defence Force (JDF).

Swapping the hard hats of their civilian jobs for their military berets, the British soldiers transformed a 150m by 100m site of wasteland in the grounds of the Police Training Academy into Jamaica's answer to Copehill Down.

It is a training asset that the Territorial Army unit hope will help bring peace and tranquillity back to a country which has become a victim of its own geography.

Situated midway between Columbia – the great producer of cocaine – and the US – the great consumer of cocaine, Jamaica's recent history has been blighted by the evils of drug trafficking.

As little as three years ago, the birthplace of Bob Marley and Reggae played temporary host to around ten per cent of the 1,000-plus tonnes of cocaine produced in Columbia annually, before it continued its journey into the veins of users in America and

Britain. And although a concerted security effort, including advances in drug detection technology at airports and the introduction of a stringent visa regime, has since dramatically reduced the flow of drugs through Jamaica, the violent clashes between the gun-toting gangs who once handled them persist.

The majority of this crime is played out on the streets of Jamaica's sprawling capital, Kingston, and nearby Spanish

Town where "rival" communities, governed by Mafia-style dons and harbouring opposing political allegiances, live cheek by jowl.

Characterised by a warren of narrow, unmapped alleyways and

rusting corrugated iron fences, these impoverished backyards constitute a difficult and dangerous badlands for the police – a fact highlighted by the number of those who have died doing their job.

In 2004, 11 JCF officers were gunned down in the line of duty and a further ten were killed off duty.

Inspector Lloyd Thomas, JCF, told *Soldier*: "Whenever we can we patrol in

'Within minutes of an incident here in Kingston revenge can be taken on the streets of London'

Main picture, precarious pastime:
Members of the Jamaica Constabulary Force patrol the impoverished streets of Spanish Town, Jamaica

Right, management team: Project leaders WO2 Roy Flanagan, 100 Pioneer Squadron, RLC, and Capt Steve Hulme, 168 Pioneer Regiment, consult the site plan for Jamaica's Copehill Down



of internal security – recommended the building of a UTF.

Modelled on, and built on the outskirts of, Spanish Town, the 168 Pnr Regt-constructed UTF will play host to internal security cadres, allowing members of the JCF and JDF to hone their extraction, house-clearance and patrol tactics, before stepping foot on their treacherous beat.

Project manager Capt Steve Hulme said that the biggest challenge faced by his team during the build, which involved the laying of more than 250m of road, had been abandoning the Army's usual approach to such tasks.

"As soldiers and skilled tradesmen we are used to delivering a polished product," he said, "so recreating something as ramshackle as Spanish Town goes against the grain.

"In the beginning it will look brand new but over time it will weather and look more like the conditions found downtown."

It is a facility that Insp Thomas believes will become a potent weapon in the fight against crime.

"The training village being built for us by the British soldiers is long overdue," he said. "It will help prepare our young recruits and give them an idea of what to expect and do. Above all, it will help to save lives."

However, it is hoped that the success of the new "fighting village" will be felt not only in the Caribbean.

With more than 600,000 Jamaicans currently living in the UK, Britain has a vested interest in clamping down on the holiday island's law-breakers.

Yardies, the name given to gangsters with Jamaican links operating in Britain, control the distribution of crack cocaine in the UK and have a reputation for ruthless violence that rivals those of the Triads and Mafia.

And the cost of keeping Jamaican drug dealers and couriers in British prisons runs into the tens of millions.

Assistant commissioner of police Les Green, a former Metropolitan Police officer now serving in the JCF, told *Soldier* that there was a direct link between criminal activity in the UK and Jamaica.

"Although not as well organised as East End gangland crime, Jamaican gangs are far from being disorganised," he said. "Within minutes of an incident here in Kingston revenge can be taken on the streets of London and vice versa."

A sentiment not lost on Cpl Bob Strong, 168 Pnr Regt, who works as a construction site manager when not in uniform. "We know that we're not just here for a summer camp and to bang up a UTF village," he said. "We are here to help stem the flow of drugs and gang warfare – to strangle the problem where it starts and stop it spreading to the UK.

"If we didn't feel we were making a difference we wouldn't have volunteered for the job. As tradesmen in England we earn a lot more in a week than the TA pay us, so we're certainly not over here for the sunshine.

"If it was a holiday we were after we'd have spent two weeks working in the UK and brought our whole families out to Jamaica." ■

armoured vehicles. We have to be very careful because there are many armed men and many hiding places.

"The biggest problems come about when we need to go into these areas to arrest a suspect. . . when you corner a cat it tends to retaliate."

It is with such incidents in mind and with a view to improving the training of the security forces that a scoping team from The Royal Irish Regiment (Home Service) – the British Army's masters



Apache power

The men, women and technology
behind the airborne warrior »

Pit stop: Air Tpr "Lovie" Lovence,
3 AAC, gives Apache a quick
but thorough once-over to ready
it for another mission





Report: Karen Thomas
Pictures: Graeme Main

SKILLFUL piloting, pinpoint accuracy, split-second timing and ground crews working round the clock were critical to keeping Apache flying and firing in the US desert state of Arizona.

For every hour Apache remained airborne in the inhospitable climate, 3 Regiment Army Air Corps and REME ground personnel worked 25 hours to service the weapons platform they described as a “flying laptop”.

Both human and machine were pressed to their limits battling the intense heat and pervading dust but Sgt Stephen Lillie, REME, told *Soldier* the harsh environment had been excellent preparation for their deployment to Afghanistan in May.

“We’re out here to look at dust erosion and solve the problems of operating in a desert, including creepy-crawlies such as

black widow spiders hiding in boxes and people treading on rattlesnakes.”

Even without the dust, extreme heat and wildlife, maintaining Apache’s sophisticated electronics and weapons systems brought its own challenges, as crews adapted their technological and mechanical skills to the needs of the helicopter. Sgt Lillie stressed the importance of the exercise and the engineers’ task of keeping the aircraft at maximum effectiveness once they arrive in theatre.

He said: “What would happen to the pilots if Apache suddenly stopped

flying mid-mission? And the Royal Artillery ground troops will also be depending on us when they call on Apache for air support.”

So, fighting the debilitating temperatures, blistering sun and blinding dust clouds, the small but dedicated team repeatedly rehearsed booting up their supreme warrior. ■

‘Apache is like a flying laptop – every now and again it needs re-booting’



SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army

Hot spot: Pilots and ground crew swelter on the pan as Apache gets the quick turnaround treatment

Gigabyte flight

COMPUTER consoles flashed and hardrives whirled as the 3 AAC operations room for Apache shifted into digital gear.

Nestled in the corner, the pilots assumed a familiar hunched position as they scrutinised the mission planning station computer screen. Maps, routes and call signs were uploaded onto a data card, taken to Apache and fed into its computer.

The helicopter's cutting-edge avionics – its electronic and computer elements – which enable pilots to meld with their aircraft and its weapon systems, would not be out of place in the latest Hollywood sci-fi blockbuster.

Helmets displaying data readouts on a single eyepiece, mini-computer consoles capable of throwing out thousands of pages of information and a cannon controlled by head movement make for a futuristic flight deck.

The 3 AAC pilots told *Soldier* the piggyback arrangement of the cockpits meant the commander and gunner had to almost read each other's thoughts.

"Unlike flying the Lynx, there's much less talking between the two of us, as we're too busy working in either our commander or gunner roles. You need to know your partner really well, as you can't read their body language other than in a small rear-view mirror."

The advanced technology places an increased dependency on the Apache's computer rather than on the pilots and ground crews to diagnose the causes of problems. "We'd be chasing around forever if we didn't have the computer because the aircraft comes up with what it thinks is the fault," explained Sgt Ian Scriven, REME, adding that the Arizona training had put everyone's experience of working with Apache on a level footing.

"We're learning something new every day and finding things that people have never seen before, giving us a better understanding of the systems. Apache is like a flying laptop – every now and again it needs re-booting."

Fuel and fire

TOUGHING out the shimmering heat on the helicopter pan, 3 AAC and REME technicians bustled around the menacing aircraft named after the legendary Native Americans.

They had just 40 minutes to turn Apache round with no margin for error – incorrectly loaded fuel could cause an imbalance and missiles to miss their targets.

At the forward arming and refuelling point, Sgt Darren Wight, 3 AAC, described his team's role as similar to that of a Formula One pit-stop crew.

"We can have up to four teams of seven personnel lead by a corporal working simultaneously on the Apaches. The aircraft is made safe so the crew can work round it, establishing if it needs more weapons or if it has taken any hits. It's then re-fuelled for up to two-and-a-half hours flying time."

Crew members detailed to load the Hellfire missile were testing skills developed from a specific and advanced Apache training course. And personnel spent up to two hours on the helicopter pans as everyone was testing their heat-tolerance limits.

Supervising the maintenance of the Apache airframe, Cpl Amy Jones, REME, agreed all the ground personnel were taking extra care in the Grand Canyon state's 40C heat. But she was more concerned with the dust, an adversary that will be ever-present in Afghanistan.

"The new problems come from the environment and the cleanliness out here. It's all dusty and the blade points degrade so the general husbandry of the airframe is important. If we keep on top of all the smaller faults, hopefully they won't develop into something bigger."

Below left, key strokes: Software replaces paper as Sgt Garry Jackson, 3 AAC, plots a flight path at the mission planning station

Below, easy does it: The delicate touch of Sgt Ian Scriven, REME, maintains the Apache's advanced electronics



Garrison guide

Aldershot

COMEDY

Monday, Jan 1 – The New Statesman: Rik Mayall, Trafalgar Studios (formerly Whitehall Theatre), London

Tuesday, Jan 2 – Jerry Sadowitz, Soho Theatre, London

Thursday, Jan 4 – Electric Mouse Comedy Club festival, guest comedians – The Halfway House, London

Friday, Jan 19 – No Agenda: Omid Djalili, Wycombe Swan Theatre, High Wycombe

Saturday, January 27 – Gag Reflex: Jimmy Carr, The Anvil, Basingstoke

LIVE MUSIC

Monday, Jan 1 – New Year's Day Concert: St John's Chamber Orchestra, Norden Farm



Basingstoke-bound: Stand-up comic Jimmy Carr

Centre for The Arts, Maidenhead

Friday, Jan 12 – The Chevrons, The Henny Swan, Sudbury

Monday, Jan 15 – Blues Night: Uncle Junior, The Boileroom, Guildford

Thursday, Jan 18 – Kerrang! Tour 2007: Biffy Clyro + The Bronx + the Audition, Southampton Guildhall, Southampton

Sunday, Jan 21 – The Cavern Beatles, Theatre Royal, Windsor

THEATRE

Monday, Jan 1-25 – Twelfth Night, The Camberley Theatre, Camberley

Monday, Jan 1-6 – The Borrowers, Haymarket Theatre, Basingstoke

Wednesday, Jan 10-13 – An Evening With Anthony Trollope, Yvonne Arnaud Theatre and Mill Studio, Guildford

Friday, Jan 12-13 – The Truman Capote Talk Show, Yvonne Arnaud Theatre and Mill Studio, Guildford

Friday Jan 19-21 – The Chinese State Circus, New Wimbledon Theatre, London

Colchester

COMEDY

Thursday, Jan 4 – Juliet Myers, Tony Cowards plus guests (The Comedy Hat), Ha! Ha! Bar & Canteen, Colchester

Tuesday, Jan 9 – Headliner Plus Night (The Comedy Hat), Ha! Ha! Bar & Canteen, Colchester

Friday, Jan 19 – The Laughter Zone, Colchester Arts Centre, Colchester

Thursday, Jan 25 – The Funny Farm Comedy Club: Debra-Jane Appleby, Griff Griffiths and Mike Belgrave, Wivenhoe Town FC Clubhouse, Colchester

Thursday, Jan 25 – The Comedy Club: John Ryan plus guests, Kidspace, Romford

LIVE MUSIC

Thursday, Jan 18 – Mozart by Candlelight, Mercury Theatre, Colchester

Thursday, Jan 25 – Martin Dobson, The Henny Swan, Sudbury

Friday, Jan 26 – Hundred Reasons, University of Essex SU, Colchester

Friday, Jan 26 – Red Mock Chilli Peppers, Riverside Snooker Club, Stowmarket



Colchester classic: Mozart by Candlelight will illuminate the Mercury Theatre on Wednesday, January 18

Wednesday, Jan 31 – Clocks + Grace, St Mary's Art Centre, Colchester

THEATRE

Monday, Jan 1-27 – Dick Whittington: The Rock 'n' Roll Musical, New Wolsey Theatre, Ipswich

Saturday, Jan 6-20 – Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, Erith Playhouse, Erith

Wednesday, Jan 10-13 – Aladdin and His Magical Lamp, Leiston Film Theatre, Leiston

Saturday, Jan 20 – A Celebration of Jane Austen (Elizabeth Garvie and Anton Rodgers), Mercury Theatre, Colchester

Wednesday, Jan 24-Feb 3 – Camelot (Colchester Operatic Society), Mercury Theatre, Colchester

No.1 for Entertainment

Ents24 is the UK's number one entertainments listings and ticketing resource, constantly updated with the latest gigs, theatre, club/bar and comedy events. For the most up-to-the-minute information, and for details about your local cinema listings, visit www.ents24.com or call our ticket hotline 0870 380 0017 to book your tickets now.

Bulford/ Tidworth

COMEDY

Sunday, Jan 14 – The Cosmic Sausages, The Bell, Bath

Friday, Jan 19 – The Comedy Bar: Big Gig, Nuffield Theatre, Southampton

Saturday, Jan 27 – The Ornate Johnsons, Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham

Saturday, Jan 27 – Gag Reflex: Jimmy Carr, The Anvil, Basingstoke

Sunday, Jan 28-31 – Steve Day, Leanne Diggins, Marlon Davis and Tony Dunn, The Railway Inn, Winchester

LIVE MUSIC

Friday, Jan 12 – Cellar Bar: Bob Bowles (Bowles Blues), The Bear Hotel, Devizes

Thursday, Jan 18 – Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly – Southampton University SU, Southampton

Saturday, Jan 20 – Whole Lotta Led, The Lights, Andover

Saturday, Jan 20 – Cellar Bar: Ben Mortimer and the Lizard Kings, The Bear Hotel, Devizes

Saturday Jan 27 – Bon Jovie, The Point, Eastleigh

Catterick

COMEDY

Wednesday, Jan 10 – Silky, Joshua Howrie and Pierre Hollins, Indaba, Darlington

Friday, Jan 19 – Funny Bones Comedy Club, Gala Theatre, Durham

LIVE MUSIC

Friday, Jan 5 – The Glenn Miller Orchestra UK, Harrogate International Conference Centre, Harrogate

Saturday, Jan 6 – Das Wanderlust, Georgian Theatre, Stockton-on-Tees

Monday, Jan 8 – New Year Viennese Spectacular, Civic Theatre, Darlington

Friday, Jan 26 – The Commandments Rhythm and Soul Band, Rudds Arms, Middlesbrough

SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army



Super sound: Get Cape. Wear Cape. Fly will be on stage at Southampton University on January 18

THEATRE

Monday, Jan 1-28 – White Christmas: The Musical featuring Craig McLachlan, Lorna Luft, Mayflower Theatre, Southampton

Monday, Jan 15 – Sleeping Beauty: Russian State Ballet of Siberia, Wyvern Theatre, Swindon

Thursday, Jan 18 – Ted Hughes' The Iron Man, Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham

Thursday, Jan 25 – Return Journey, Ashcroft Arts Centre, Fareham

Saturday, Jan 27 – Arabel & The Escaped Black Mamba, The Lights, Andover

Wednesday, Jan 31 – The Drifters, Civic Theatre, Darlington

THEATRE

Tuesday, Jan 2-3 – Twelfth Night, Oddsocks Theatre Company, Saltburn Community Centre, Saltburn-by-the-Sea

Monday, Jan 15-20 – Chicago: The Musical, Grand Opera House, York

Monday, Jan 15-28 – Aladdin, Alhambra Theatre & Studio, Bradford

Tuesday, Jan 16-21 – Cinderella featuring Denise Welch and The Krankies, Civic Theatre, Darlington

Tuesday, Jan 30-31 – Derek Acorah, Grand Opera House, York

DEFENCE DIARY

FEBRUARY

3-April 29: Witness 2: Highlights of Second World War Art. Imperial War Museum North, Manchester.

JUNE

12: Tickets for the Household Cavalry Pageant in London are now on sale. The event, which will be staged for one night only, will mark the official opening by the Queen of the Household Cavalry Museum on Horse Guards Parade.

Highlights will include a recreation of the Coronation Procession of Charles II and the 50-yard cavalry charge that preceded the capture of the French Eagle by The Royal Dragoon Guards at Waterloo.

The pageant will involve more than 200 horses, two mounted bands, 50 armoured vehicles and a camel, which will take part in a re-enactment of how men of the Heavy Camel Regiment would have been used in action in the Relief of General Gordon in Khartoum in 1884.



Over the hump: Camels will be used in a spectacular recreation in June on Horse Guards Parade of the mission to rescue General Gordon from Khartoum in 1884

Picture: Cpl Richard Cave, London District

Book online at www.ticketmaster.co.uk or call 0870 4000 848 (24 hours). For group bookings call 0870 594 9494. Tickets are priced £20, £40, £60 and £80, plus a booking fee.

Funds generated will help finance the move of the Household Cavalry Museum from Windsor to Horse Guards.

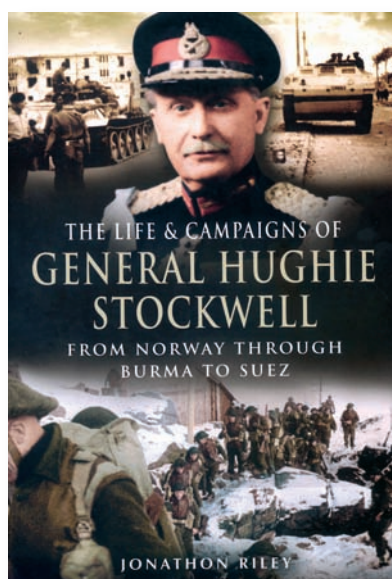
JULY

14-15: Royal International Air Tattoo, RAF Fairford. www.airtattoo.com

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to diary@soldiermagazine.co.uk

Books

JANUARY REVIEW



Didn't he do well? According to received wisdom Stockwell, who was not a Staff College graduate, "should never have achieved as much as he did".



Monty's man

'Adored' Suez commander defied convention to achieve greatness

The Life and Campaigns of General Hughie Stockwell by Jonathon Riley (Pen & Sword, 319pp, £25.)

Review: Chris Horrocks

SOON after becoming Chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1946, Field Marshal Viscount Montgomery held a series of exercises at the Staff College, Camberley, designed to give generals command training and set out a tactical doctrine for the post-war Army.

Among the "trainees" was Maj Gen Hughie Stockwell, then commanding 44th Division, who had a background in amphibious operations ranging from Norway in 1940 to commanding a battalion

in 29 Independent Brigade during the invasion of Madagascar in 1942.

During an exercise dealing with amphibious warfare, Monty noted that Stockwell had commanded a West African division and remarked: "Bow and arrow soldier, is he? Let's see what he can do."

Jonathon Riley reports in this richly detailed biography: "Of course, there were few generals with as good a grasp of amphibious operations as Stockwell – and Monty remembered."

"When a replacement for the GOC 6th Airborne Division was required, Monty put the finger on Stockwell, who had become one of his protégés."

There were many more strings to Stockwell's bow, leading to his command of the Anglo-French land force during the Suez invasion 50 years ago, a political disaster from which he emerged with his reputation for exceptional military leadership intact.

"Exceptional" is almost inadequate to describe Stockwell's meteoric career. This book's subtitle, "From Norway through Burma to Suez", merely skims the surface.

Initially an officer in the The Royal Welch Fusiliers, he rose from major to major general in four years during the Second World War and was awarded the DSO, CB, CBE and three Mentions in Dispatches. As GOC 6th Airborne Division he was knighted for his part in operations in Palestine.

The author notes: "According to received wisdom, a man like Stockwell, who was not a Staff College graduate, should never have achieved as much as he did."

Montgomery was Stockwell's greatest military hero and it is not difficult to draw comparisons between the two men – for their leadership skills as much as their war-fighting prowess.

Riley writes: "His personal courage was legendary, while his magnetism, leadership, humour and grasp of command in battle made him quite simply adored by those

Soldier ordering service

BOOKS mentioned on these pages are available from Helion & Company, who can also supply 14,500 in-print military books and operate a free book search; p&p is extra. Major credit/switch cards taken. Allow 28 days for delivery. Helion & Company, 26 Willow Road, Solihull, West Midlands B91 1UE, England (tel 0121 705 3393; fax 0121 711 4075). Email books@helion.co.uk Website <http://www.helion.co.uk>

On the ground: A British patrol passes a burned-out car after the landing at Port Said. The military aspect of the Suez operation, under Gen Stockwell, went like clockwork



he commanded." His assessment is backed up by Sir Richard Worsley, who served under Stockwell at Suez. "He was extraordinarily wise, and very shrewd," he recalls in the book. "He was no intellectual, but he thought things through and his judgement was absolutely sound.

"He understood the role and place of the staff and although he always led the appreciation process he was a very good listener. He handled people wonderfully well, no matter what service or nationality they belonged to: quite simply, we all loved him. And he was tremendously good with the rank and file, who always remembered him and knew exactly who he was.

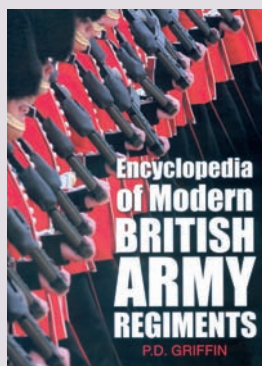
"He was, no doubt, a great leader and a great commander."

But if Suez was one of Stockwell's finest hours in the military sense, it had a sting in its tail. In November 1986, in failing health at the age of 83, he insisted on giving an interview on the 30th anniversary. The effort took its toll and he died in hospital two days later from a heart attack.

The author, currently Senior British Military Adviser to US Central Command and himself a serving major general, has produced a long overdue tribute. The fact that he also gives a deep insight into the art and practice of command is a huge bonus. ■

For more reviews, go to
www.soldiermagazine.co.uk

SOLDIER - Magazine of the British Army

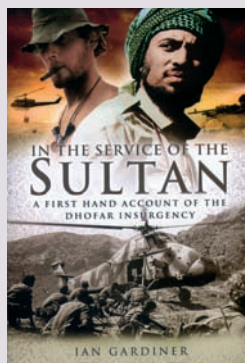


Encyclopedia of Modern British Army Regiments

by P D Griffin

BOOKS on modern British Army regiments need to be works in progress in these post-Future Army Structure days, but this one is as up-to-date as it could be. Published in December, it misses by a whisker the formation of The Rifles from the regiments of the Light Division. There is a mass of detailed information, including a useful at-a-glance family tree showing the lineage of most modern regiments from their original formations. Potted histories, precedence, dress, music and customs fill in the picture.

Sutton, 216pp, £25



In the Service of the Sultan

by Ian Gardiner

A NEW and first-hand account of the Dhofar insurgency, during which a small number of British military personnel led and fought shoulder-to-shoulder with Muslim soldiers to defeat a Communist attempt to seize the Sultanate of Oman, a strategic gate to the oil-rich Arabian Gulf. The author was commissioned into the Royal Marines, saw active service in the Dhofar War and the Falklands, and retired in 2001 as a brigadier.

Pen&Sword, 189pp, £19.99



Heart of a Dragon

by W Alister Williams

THIS is a fresh examination of the Victoria Cross actions and lives of 39 men who were awarded the VC between 1854 and 1902. Not all of them are Welshmen, although they were either born in Wales, died in Wales, had Welsh parents or won the VC while serving with a Welsh regiment. Included, of course, are the famed defenders of Rorke's Drift. Illustrated, with more than 400 photos and prints, the book is available from Royal Regiment of Wales Museum, Brecon LD3 7EB or swb@rrw.org.uk

Bridge Books, 229pp, £30

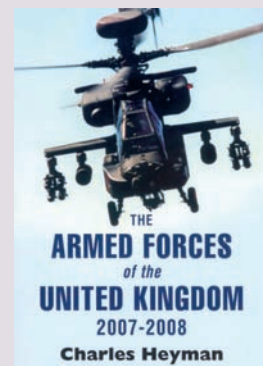


Killer Elite

by Michael Smith

CLAIMED to be the inside story of America's most secret special operations team, this authoritatively-sourced paperback was pieced together by the respected defence correspondent of *The Sunday Times*. Smith spoke to former members of "The Activity" to unveil undercover operations ranging from Beirut in the 1980s to the capture of Saddam Hussein, from strikes against Al Qaeda to the war on South America's drug barons.

Cassell, 336pp, £7.99

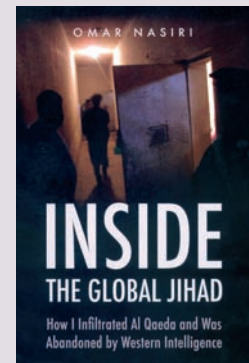


The Armed Forces of the United Kingdom 2007-2008

by Charles Heyman

SMALL but very useful, this pocket-sized guide provides up-to-date details of all Britain's military organisations and structures. Charles Heyman also edits the equally small but very successful **British Army: A Pocket Guide**, now in its eighth edition. A massive amount of instant reference information is packed between its covers. It touches on everything from the management of UK defence to its mission and its assets – and just about everything in between.

Pen&Sword, 256pp, £6.99



Inside the Global Jihad

by Omar Nasiri

NASIRI (not surprisingly, this is not the author's real name) describes life inside the Afghan training camps and the process by which young men become Mujahadeen. His chilling story is subtitled "How I Infiltrated Al Qaeda and Was Abandoned by Western Intelligence". He recounts an accident involving a "trainee" rushing out of a laboratory with an overheating liquid bomb. It exploded, blowing off his arms and destroying one eye. The "brother" survived to preach in London mosques. His name was Abu Hamza.

Hurst, 336pp, £16.95

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SOLDIERSPORT

Big-hitters: For the 23rd successive year the British Army fielded a team at the World Elephant Polo Association championships in Nepal Picture: Mike Weston

**SUPER-SIZED
SHOWDOWN**
Brits battle for
heavyweight crown



Halliday hell

Army referee on the pressures and pitfalls of being a Premiership official

Interview: Richard Lenton
Picture: Graeme Main

IN a split second last September, WO2 Andy Halliday's world was turned upside down.

He attracted a barrage of criticism and incurred the wrath of the red half of the city of Liverpool by making an honest mistake.

For serving soldiers, such decisions can mean the difference between life and death. However, this misjudgement had nothing to do with Halliday's career in the British Army.

As a Premiership assistant referee, his "crime" was to give an incorrect decision that ultimately cost Liverpool victory in their showdown with Bolton at the Reebok Stadium.

But, when one former Reds manager, the late Bill Shankly, argued that "football isn't a matter of life and death, it's much more important than that", it spoke volumes about the mentality of this football-mad city.

Halliday (APTC) incorrectly ruled that Liverpool goalkeeper Jose Reina had handled the ball outside his penalty area, awarding Bolton a free kick, which Gary Speed fired home.

And when Ivan Campo made it 2-0 after the break, the knives were well and truly out for Halliday as football pundits and newspaper reporters joined in unison to launch a series of scathing attacks on the 40-year-old.

"Getting the decision wrong was absolute hell," he told *SoldierSport*. "As an official I want to get every decision right and it killed me to get that one wrong. At the end of the day it was just a case of human error."

"What hurts me the most is when managers and pundits say things like 'these referees can go home after a game, have dinner with their wife and children and forget about it'. That is not the case."

Having worked hard for 12 years to reach the highest echelon of the English game, Halliday, who also referees at Nationwide Conference level, suddenly found himself officiating Football League games.

"The step down was to help build up my confidence when all I really wanted

was to get straight back in at the sharp end and be in a pressure situation again. I think that's what any psychologist would advise. If you fall off your bike, the best thing to do is to get straight back on again."

The subject of using video technology in football is raised on an almost weekly basis, but, despite being punished for one decision that could have been reversed by a quick peak at a monitor, Halliday opposes any such changes.

"There are already so many cameras trained on us," he said. "Where's it going to end? Pundits have got all these gadgets, all these cameras and all the time in the world with which to scrutinise decisions, and even then there are times when they can't agree on an incident."

"I believe video technology would kill the game. If pundits take six or seven looks at a decision and still disagree on the outcome then what chance has an official with a video replay got of pleasing everyone all of the time?"

Despite the intense scrutiny, Halliday is adamant that being part of the Premiership is a pleasure. Although he insists that his motivation for pursuing a career in refereeing had nothing to do with wanting to rub shoulders with multi-millionaire footballers.

"It all came about because I was struggling to stay in the corps team out in Germany," explained Halliday, who is originally from Newton Stewart in Scotland. "There were talented youngsters coming through who were better than me, and I was hardly getting a game."

"I thought if I can't play I may as well referee, and I also wanted to give something back to the game."

"I did the level three course in Germany in 1994 – and once you've done that you're qualified to referee."

"With the right breaks you can get from the grass roots to the Premiership in between eight and ten years. There's a mentoring system where people above you, past referees, supervise you, watch you and give you coaching points."

Halliday's refereeing debut was a stark contrast to the glitz and glamour of the Premiership as he took charge of an Army game in Gütersloh.

"It was daunting to say the least," he said. "And what happens to most referees happened to me. I blew the whistle for the first time and then suddenly thought 'what have I blown it for?'"

Despite more than a decade of hard work, it is unlikely that Halliday will fulfil his dream of becoming a Premiership referee because of the mandatory retirement age that forces the men in black to hang up their whistles at the age of 48.

A challenge to the ruling in the European courts has been mooted, but Halliday believes that the system is "about right".

"By the time I'm experienced enough for the Premiership I'll not be far short of 48 so it doesn't look as though it will happen for me," said Halliday who has served in the Army since 1985.

"I think 48 is probably about right because the level of fitness required is so high. We train every day, sticking to a strict regime, and have to send data back to our sports scientist on a weekly basis so they can ensure that our fitness levels are right."

Sheffield United manager Neil Warnock was recently quoted as saying that "because referees have never played the game they don't know what a fair challenge is". It was the latest in a long line of calls for more ex-players to train as referees. However, very few have taken on the challenge.

"Players know how hard it is and don't want to do it," said Halliday.

"We're a different breed to players. They think we want to be the centre of attention but that's not true. We just do our best to get decisions right." ■

Whistling lessons

THE Army Football Association will be running a series of week-long basic referee courses (level 7) in 2007.

Course dates include: February 19-23 (Herford); March 12-16 (Aldershot); July 2-6 (Aldershot); September 3-7 (Aldershot); September 17-21 (Aldershot).

For further details on all these courses, which cost £57 (£30 returnable on completion of ten referee appointments), call mil 94740 3120; email armysenrec.edinburgh@afco.mod.uk or visit www.army.mod.uk/armyfa

SHORTS

Expert instruction

ENGLAND'S senior squash tutor, Gary Batchelor, will be running a day-long referees' and markers' course on January 22 at Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre.

The Army Squash Association-organised event represents the first step on the road to becoming an international referee and graduates will be awarded a county-level grade, which allows holders to officiate county championship matches.

The free course consists of a theory syllabus, exam and a practical assessment under match conditions. For more information contact Maj Simon Frost on mil 94222 3570 or Lt Col Tam Tervit on mil 94229 5243.

Strong defence

SAPPERS from 25 Engineer Regiment continued their rugby defence of the Army Community Cup with a convincing 39-19 win over 3 Scots.

The engineers opened the scoring with a penalty from the boot of team captain LCpl Bokka Viljeon, who then extended his side's lead, collecting a well-placed box kick from scrum half Spr Mike Lawton before touching down and converting his own try.

Continued pressure from the defending champions was soon rewarded with a second try, Army cap Cpl Ben Hughes adding his name to the scoresheet.

However, the Scots did not surrender without a fight, scoring a try of their own before the break and crashing over the line twice in the second half.

Having won out over all their Northern Ireland-based rivals, 25 Engineer Regiment now await their fourth-round opponents when the competition moves to the mainland later this month.

Courting new players

ARMY volleyball boss Sgt Chris Teoh is on a mission to draft in reinforcements in a bid to bring an end to his team's Inter-Services losing streak.

The newly-appointed manager plans to hold a series of training sessions ahead of May's Crown and Inter-Services championships and wants to hear from anyone with court experience.

Any Regular or Territorial Army players interested in joining the Army squad and receiving professional coaching should contact Sgt Teoh by email at chris.teoh769@land.mod.uk or by calling mil 94660 5320.

Whizz round Paris

A CHARITY that aims to improve life for disabled youngsters has appealed for super-fit soldiers to help raise much-needed cash.

Whizz-Kidz, which provides mobility kit for the children, is offering troops places in the Paris Marathon this April – and can help pay their travel costs if they manage to raise £1,000 or more.

A spokeswoman for Whizz-Kidz said that soldiers had previously run for the charity in the New York Marathon, but this was the first time the French event had been offered.

Anyone interested can email the charity on events@whizz-kidz.org.uk

Online strike

THE Army Judo Association website has been relaunched. Visit www.judo.army.mod.uk for the latest judo news, views and interviews.

Super-sized showdown

British Gurkhas KOd by heavyweight opposition

Report: Andrea Webb
Picture: Mike Weston

CHARGING after a small ball with a big stick doesn't sound like a high-adrenalin sport... until, that is, you add into the equation being strapped to the back of an elephant as it thunders towards goal in the final seconds of a world cup match.

Indeed, so intense is the thrill of competing in the World Elephant Polo Association's annual tournament, played out against the stunning backdrop of the Royal Chitwan National Park in south-west Nepal, that it attracts competitors from across the globe.

And, for the 23rd year in the event's 25-year history, a team from British Gurkhas Nepal took part.

SoldierSport caught up with the British Army's squad at Meghauly airfield to get the lowdown on what

is arguably one of the biggest and most bizarre events in the sporting calendar.

"You just can't describe it," explained team skipper Capt Sarah Marshall (RLC). "You think it's going to be so slow, but when an elephant starts shifting, you really know about it."

Although elephant polo was first played in India at the beginning of the 20th century by members of the British aristocracy, the modern game was founded in 1982 by Jim Edwards, owner of Tiger Tops Jungle Lodge, which hosts the annual tournament, and James Manclark, a Scottish landowner and former officer in the Life Guards.

The rules of this surreal sport – regarded as an Olympic event in Nepal – are largely based on its equestrian equivalent but include a few elephant-related adaptations.

For example, these giants of the animal kingdom are forbidden from lying in front of the goal, they may not pick up the ball with their trunks during the game, and if they foul on the pitch – which they do regularly and in great quantity – teams of pooper-scoopers,

operating in pairs, scurry forth to swiftly stretch off the steaming mounds lest they obstruct play.

Unlike horse polo, the elephants are driven by mahouts who sit on the animals' necks and communicate verbally and by applying pressure to the back of their mounts' ears with their feet.

It is each player's responsibility to let the mahout know his or her game plan.

The pitch is smaller than a standard polo pitch because of the slower speed of the elephants, and the sticks – made of bamboo with a polo mallet on the end – range in length from five to 12 feet depending on the height of the elephant.

There are four elephants per team and each match consists of two ten-minute chukkas, with a 15-minute interval during which time the teams swap elephants and ends.

Play is fast and furious and competition is fierce.

"We've played some very tough

'These giants of the animal kingdom are forbidden from lying in front of the goal'

games against a hard core of elephant polo teams who travel to competitions in Sri Lanka and Thailand," Marshall told *SoldierSport*.

"There are some really outstanding players, many of whom play horse polo at a high level, which is a massive advantage.

"We came from a complete standing start having never played before," added Marshall, who oversaw four defeats and whose sole success as team captain came in the form of a 3-3 draw against all-female side International Tigresses. "We are a far cry from being crowned world champions, but I'm thrilled with our performance."

Maj Jim Thornhill (Int Corps) was also quick to highlight the size of the challenge faced by the Army outfit.

"It was brutal," he conceded after watching Scottish side Angus Estates crowned champions for the third successive year.

"You end up in mass tussles where everybody is locking onto the ball, the sticks are getting caught, all the elephants are colliding and you are trying to hang on for grim life.



Elephant encounter: Maj Jim Thornhill (Int Corps), right, attempts to mount an attack during British Gurkhas Nepal's 4-3 defeat to Chopard Hong Kong

"Once you're in the middle of the squabble, you don't think of anything else except the ball until it breaks away. "It is physically tough," he added. "You'd think that ten minutes each way wouldn't be a problem, but trust me it is really draining."

"I had one of the faster elephants and was involved in a lot of the action. I was still shaking ten minutes after the game ended from the exertion of leaning over. "The sticks are about nine feet long so it's a lot of weight to swing around."

But despite the bruises and the team's eventual wooden spoon standing, Marshall insisted her elephant polo career was far from over.

"It's not like other ball sports where if you mess it up it's your own fault," she said. "With elephant polo there are so many variables – such as the size and speed of the elephant and how good the mahout is."

"It's a very frustrating game but it is also massively exciting and totally addictive. I'm definitely coming back next year."

And, according to Marshall, plans are already afoot for Wednesday afternoon

polo practice at Kathmandu zoo using its only elephant resident.

"The only other option for training is standing on the roof of a Land Rover in camp and hitting balls off the ground," she joked. "Ideally, we would like to get elephant polo accepted by the Army Sport Control Board. We could then ask

for funding to buy two elephants, stable them at Pokhara and train weekly.

"I don't think elephants cost that much to buy, but I'm sure they cost an absolute fortune to feed."

"Questions would definitely be asked if 300 tons of sugar cane mysteriously appeared on the ration account." ■

RESULTS

FOOTBALL: Massey Trophy – RA 2 (Gnr Gordon and Cpl Young) R Signals 2 (LCpl Hankey (2)); RE 1 (Cfn Gournal) REME 1; RAC 2 (Tpr Hobson (2)) Int Corps 1 (WO2 Brewster); RE 4 (Newell (2), Lawson and Regan) R Signals 4 (Sgt Stephenson (3) and LCpl Hankey); RLC 3 (Sgt Langford, Pte Durdey and Cpl Spires) RA 0; APTC 4 RAC 0; REME 1 (Sgt Lynch) R Signals 0; RA 1 (Gnr Pollitt) RE 2 (LCpl Newell and Spr Knapp); CAMUS 0 APTC 10 (Sgt Beverley (6), Sgt Leare (2), Sgt Richardson and Sgt Harris); AAC 5 (WO2 Smith (3), Air Tpr Wood and og) Int Corps 0; AMS 3 (Capt Chikusu, Pte Pimlott and Pte Schraader) RLC 9 (WO2 Hope (3), Sgt Langford, Pte Baffourasare, Pte Brown, Cpl Sharif, LCpl Douglass and Cpl Brough); AAC 2 (WO2 Smith) AGC 5 (Sgt Moore (2), Cpl Taylor, LCpl Emerson and Sgt Wilson).

■ Email results@soldiermagazine.co.uk

MASSEY TROPHY – DIV 1

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
R Signals	6	3	2	1	6	11
RA	6	3	1	2	4	10
REME	5	2	2	1	3	8
RE	5	2	2	1	3	8
RLC	5	2	1	2	5	7
Infantry	4	2	0	2	-2	6
AMS	5	0	0	5	-21	0

MASSEY TROPHY – DIV 2

	P	W	D	L	GD	Pts
APTC	5	5	0	0	20	15
RAC	5	4	0	1	4	12
AGC	5	3	0	2	12	9
AAC	5	2	0	3	8	6
Int Corps	4	0	0	4	-9	0
CAMUS	4	0	0	4	-35	0

SPORTDIARY

ANGLING

January 18-19 – Combined Services v SAMF v Police v Fire Service (Great Yarmouth).

ATHLETICS

January 24 – Army modern biathlon championships (RMAS).

February 7 – Army cross country finals (RMAS); 16 – Inter-Services cross country championships (RAF Halton); 17-18 – British modern tetraathlon championships (University of Bath); 28 – Inter-corps cross country championships (Minley).

BADMINTON

February 5-9 – Army championships (Grantham); 17-March 3 – Army tour to Canada (Montreal/Toronto).

BASKETBALL

January 24-26 – Army women v Wiltshire select (Tidworth Leisure Centre), Army v Coventry Crusaders (Grantham).

February 24-25 – Warrior weekend tournament/Army v Southern All Stars (Aldershot).

BOXING

February 2 – Army v London Select (Croydon); 13 – Army v Police Community Clubs (London).

CANOEING

January 13-14 – Army wild water racing championships (Barnard Castle).

CLIMBING

January 27 – Army bouldering championships (Anglesey).

CYCLING

January 6-7 – Cyclocross national championships (Southampton); 7 – MTB winter challenge (Erlestoke); 14 – Cyclocross national trophy, round 5 (Derby); 20 – Cyclocross world masters championships (Mol); 21 – Cyclocross inter-area team championships (Bicton Arena).

FENCING

January 13 – Aldershot open (ASPT).

FOOTBALL

January 11 – Army v Fire Service (Away, ko 1430); 13 – Army youth v Berks & Bucks (Away, ko 1400), Army Crusaders v Int Corps (Aldershot, ko 1400); 14 – Army youth v Berkshire senior schools (Aldershot, ko 1100); 16 – Army U21 v Bournemouth (Aldershot, ko 1930); 17 – Army women v Gloucestershire (Away, ko 1930); 21 – Crusaders Vets v Guildford Saints (RMAS, ko 1330); 24 – Army women v Hampshire (Aldershot, ko 1930); 25 – Army v Civil Service (Chiswick, ko 1430); 27 – Army Crusaders v Cambridge University (Aldershot, ko 1400).

February 3 – Crusaders Vets v Barclays Bank Eagles (Ealing Cricket Club, ko 1400), Army v Devon (Aldershot); 5 – Army U21 v Oxford University (Iffey Road, Oxford); 10 – Crusaders v RMCS (Shrivenham), Army youth v Cornwall (Aldershot); 11-25 – Army women's tour to Canada; 13 – Army v Met Police (Aldershot); 17 – Crusaders v Charterhouse (Away); 18 – Crusaders Vets v HAC (RMAS, ko 1300), Army youth v Royal Navy (Aldershot); 21 – Army v Sussex (Lancing); 27 – Army U21 v Sandhurst (Aldershot).

HOCKEY

January 10 – Army v Cambridge (Aldershot); 21 – Army veterans v Wales (Cardiff).

February 4 – Army women v Bournemouth (Aldershot); 6 – Army v London University (Away); 25 – Army veterans v Warlocks (Aldershot).

continued opposite . . .

Prime time

Squash vet proves he's world class at age of 70

Interview: Richard Lenton

Picture: Graeme Main

WHILE a vintage claret nurtured in the oak barrels of Bordeaux may improve with the years, the same theory rarely applies to sportsmen, whose careers tend to hit the buffers by their mid-30s.

However, one man bucking the trend is former Royal Army Ordnance Corps officer John Woodliffe, who put men half his age to shame with his exploits at the over-70 World Masters squash championships at the Western Province Cricket Club in Cape Town.

The former chairman of Army squash, who embarked on a six-week training programme before the event, followed up his British Open triumph of last September with an unexpected victory over highly-fancied South African Brian Heath in the competition's final.

Woodliffe had looked dead and buried as Heath stormed into a seemingly unassailable 2-0 lead in the best-of-five-set final, but his training regime under coach Lt Col Tam Tervit (RAMC) began to pay dividends as he levelled proceedings at 2-2.

Heath, the number two seed, roared back in the decider, but Woodliffe survived two match points before clinching the title after a gruelling 75-minute battle.

"One hour and 15 minutes is a long time on the squash court at my age," said Woodliffe, who fully intends to defend his crown in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2008.

"I thought I'd had it, but I managed to hold onto myself and kept going. It's surprising how much adrenaline you can muster.

"I had some coaching for the first time in 30 years, and working with Tam really helped me. He works me hard, which is what I need.

"Winning was a great feeling because it's the first time I'd ever beaten Heath."

Woodliffe turned 70 last June, and admitted: "Reaching 70 was an odd moment. At the age of 68 and 69 you don't feel any different physically, but when you reach an actual marker like 70 then you take it more seriously.

"I was very conscious of the milestone, but there's no reason to stop playing, because over the last 20 years there's been a remarkable change.

"When I was 45 and 50 there were people over 55 who could still play a fair game, but not many a great deal older than that. Fifty-five was the top age group but as the years have gone by you now have British Open over-70s and World Masters over-75s."

Woodliffe claimed his first title as an over 70 at the British Open in Nottingham, where the family achieved a record-breaking double, with son Mark winning the over-45s crown.

"It was the first time that a father and son had won titles at the same event, so it was a very special moment for us as a family," Woodliffe told *SoldierSport*.

"Unfortunately, because of work commitments, Mark was unable to travel to Cape Town for the World Masters where he would have stood a good chance of winning," added Woodliffe, who has previously won bronze and silver medals in the over-65s category at the biannual Masters event.

Despite his on-court prowess, it is

by no means certain that Woodliffe would have ever picked up a squash racquet had it not been for a career in the Army.

"I played tennis and table tennis as a young man, but it was only when I began my National Service in 1957 with the REME that I started playing squash," explained Woodliffe, who was brought up in Egypt before moving to Lincoln at the age of 16.

In 1964 the veteran squash player transferred to the RAOC, where he remained until 1990, serving all over the world and reaching the rank of lieutenant colonel.

After ten years as a civil servant, Woodliffe finally retired in 2000. However, he resolved to remain active and, if anything, his squash game has improved in the intervening years.

"I have more time to play and train and I'd like to play for as long as I can. You see people at the age of 80 who can still play a good game," he said.

"I'll be going for the British Closed Championships in Manchester in February, where I'll have a real challenge against Pat Kirton who's an England player and plays to a tremendous standard.

"At the end of the day I really enjoy the game and I like competing, but what I like most is that feeling of satisfaction in the shower after a match and then having a pint of beer." ■

'I'm very conscious of the milestone, but there's no reason to stop playing'



Golden oldie: Former Army squash chairman John Woodliffe shows off his world championship medal

Binns set to bash Boks

SANDHURST-bound netballer Jo Binns will star for England in this month's test match series against South Africa.

The combative centre's call-up to the 13-strong senior squad follows her on-court heroics with TeamBath last season.

Despite having to deal with the disappointment of missing out on last summer's Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Binns played a pivotal role in securing for her club netball's inaugural Superleague title.

Binns, who recently completed a year-long Army undergraduate placement with 92 Squadron,

9 Supply Regiment RLC in Hullavington, is no stranger to the international set-up having helped England to silver at the 2005 World youth championships in Florida.

However, the University of Bath student knows that a strong showing against South Africa will go a long way to cementing her place in England's squad for this summer's world championships in Fiji.

The three-test series gets under way at the NIA in Birmingham on January 22, and is followed by matches at the MEN Arena in Manchester on January 25 and at Wembley Arena on January 27.

SPORTDIARY

continued . . .

LAWN TENNIS

January 13 – Army v Westside (Aldershot).

February 10 – Army v Civil Service (Aldershot).

MARTIAL ARTS

January 20 – Army judo championships (Aldershot).

February 24 – Army closed championships (Aldershot).

NETBALL

January 13 – Army v CD Phoenix (Aldershot); 14 – Army v Southwick (Aldershot).

February 3 – Army v Worthing (Aldershot); 4 – Army v Shorwell (Aldershot); 24 – Army v SAS (Aldershot); 25 – Army v Rushmoor (Aldershot).

REAL TENNIS

January 14 – Army v T&RA (Queen's).

February 9-11 – Combined Services championships (Queen's).

ROWING

January 17 – Combined Services indoor rowing championships (HMS Nelson, Portsmouth).

February 4 – Thames Valley head trial (Dorney); 17 – Henley fours head (Henley).

RUGBY UNION

January 10 – Army Academy v Wales (Away), Army women v Ulster (Ulster); 14 – Army Academy v Somerset (Weston); 15 – Army v Army vets (Aldershot, ko 1830); 24 – Army women v RMAS (RMAS); 28 – Army Academy v EC (Aldershot); 31 – Army v Cambridge University (Cambridge, ko 1915).

February 2 – Combined Services U23 v Scotland Universities (Edinburgh); 7 – Army women v RMAS (Sandhurst, ko 1400); 10 – Army Vets v Sevenoaks (Aldershot); 13 – Army v Oxford University (Oxford, ko 1930); 17 – BA(G) v Luxembourg (TBC); 18 – Army Academy v Kent (Kent); 23 – Combined Services U23 v Irish Colleges (Dublin); 28 – Army v Germany (Aldershot, ko 1930), BA(G) v Denmark (JHQ).

SHOOTING

February 1-4 – Small-bore/target pistol intershoot (The Hague); 16-18 – British airgun championships (Bisley).

SQUASH

January 5-7 – Army tour of Newcastle (Newcastle); 8-12 – Inter-unit knockout competition (Aldershot); 17 – Army v Oxford University (Oxford); 24-26 – Army championships (Aldershot).

February 6 – Combined Services women v Hampshire (RAF Halton); 7-9 – Inter-Services championships (RAF Halton); 14 – Army v Cambridge University (Cambridge); 19-23 – Inter-unit regional knockout competition (Harrigate).

WINTER SPORTS

January 8-12 – Army novice cresta championships (Switzerland); 8-13 – Army ice sports championships (Germany); 13-23 – Div Alpine/Nordic ski championships (France); 24-Feb 2 – Army Alpine championships (France); 24-Feb 8 – Army biathlon championships (Germany); 25 – Inter-Services cresta championships (Switzerland).

February 2-8 – Inter-Services biathlon championships (Germany); 3-10 – Inter-Services alpine/snowboarding championships (Italy); 20-28 – British ice sports championships (Austria); 25-March 4 – Army TA and Reserves alpine championships (Scotland).

■ Got a date for the diary? Email details to fixtures@soldiermagazine.co.uk