

# SOLDIER



MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

JUNE 2020



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## VIRTUAL PLATOONS

Training through the lockdown

## WARD WARRIOR

The Reservists using Army skills on the NHS front line

# TESTING TIMES

SERVICE GOES MOBILE IN COVID FIGHT



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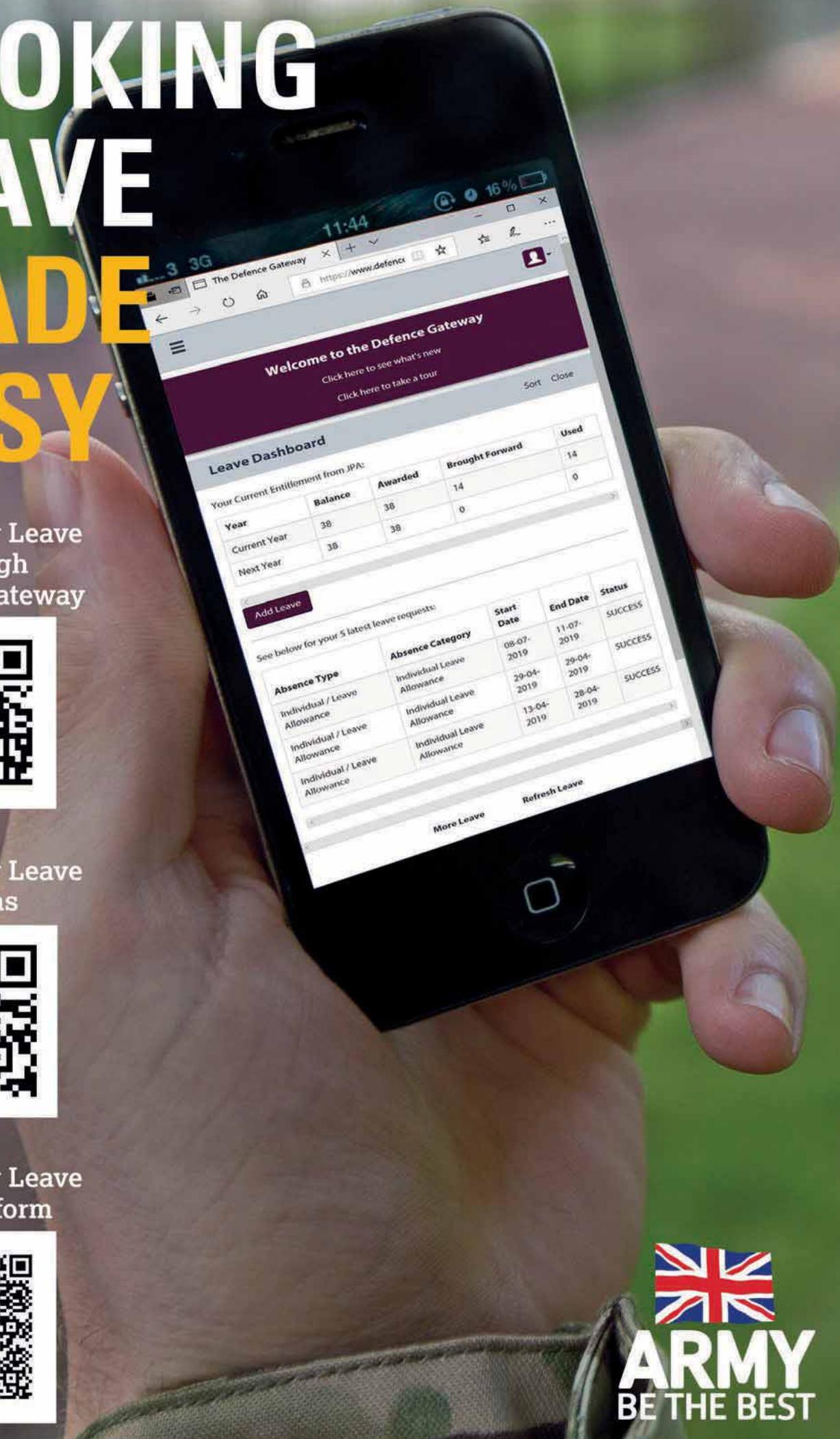
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ARMY  
BE THE BEST

# CONTENTS



Cover picture: Greene Main

COVER  
STORY

## FEATURES

- 17 On the run**  
Allies gain advantage over Japan
- 30 Mobile manoeuvres**  
Troops expand Covid testing
- 35 Altered states**  
Reservists boost medical front line
- 41 Wired up warriors**  
Celebrating the Signals' centenary
- 45 Bright sparks**  
Young soldiers think outside the box
- 49 Virtual vision**  
Training continues in the online world

## REGULARS

- 7 The Informer**  
Top stories from across the Service
- 22 Need to Know**  
Essential tips for today's personnel
- 53 Bullet Points**  
Troops' intelligence assets
- 59 Reviews**  
Music, books, movies and games to fill your downtime
- 74 Final Word**  
REME troops talk teamwork

## SOLDIERSPORT

- 68 Cycling**  
Riders compete in new arena
- 70 Tae kwon do**  
Athletes await combat return
- 72 Rugby union**  
New coach reflects on task ahead



“  
Army methods  
are tried, tested  
and work well  
in a demanding  
situation  
”

Altered states – p35



17



30



41



49



59



68

72

## New beginnings



THE reduction in size of the Covid Support Force is a clear signal that the first phase of the coronavirus pandemic is over for the British Army (page 13).

Commanders now have to conduct a delicate balancing act, with continuing support for the NHS, especially around testing (page 30), on one side and a pressing need to restart, in a safe and responsible way, certain activities crucial to maintaining the capability of the Service on the other.

One priority is the induction and training of new recruits, which has been continuing on a virtual basis during the lockdown thanks to some remarkable ingenuity (page 49).

The resumption of other training is now being scheduled and will take place under strict guidelines (page 10), as well as the unfreezing of assignment moves in a series of planned phases over the summer (page 7).

Only time will tell how significantly the need to retain protective measures will impact on the return to normal duties in different areas, but one thing is clear; some of the lessons being learnt about online working, training and communications in particular, are going to change the way the Service does business for a long time to come.

Steve Muncey • Managing Editor

### Where to find *Soldier*

#### ➤ Printed copies

Sent to Army sites at the start of the month.

#### ➤ Facebook, Twitter and Instagram

ALONG with news and glimpses behind the scenes at *Soldier*, we publish a link to the latest magazine at [www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine](http://www.facebook.com/soldiermagazine) and on Twitter (@soldiermagazine).

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# Service back on the move

**M**OST soldiers and officers in the Service will begin a graduated return to routine assignments from July 1.

There are approximately 5,000 Army personnel who, with their families, were due to move between March 23 and June 30 this year but were affected by an assignment freeze.

The measure was introduced as a response to government guidance to stay at home to protect the NHS and comply with the restrictions on non-essential travel.

Those due to move in April will now

move in July; May will become August and June will become September.

Some personnel will be permitted to move earlier – in June – and those who fall into this category will be informed by their career manager or chain of command.

Troops who were scheduled to move from July 1 onwards are not affected and will move according to their original plans.

For more information search for "graduated return to routine assignments" on internal channels such as Defence Connect.



**We asked Maj Fran Sykes (RA), at the Army Personnel Centre, about the return...**

### Why is it being done in phases?

**FS:** The Army needs to move personnel in a controlled and deliberate manner to ensure that contracted services such as Amey, Mears and Agility are available for everyone and to sequence the availability of Service family accommodation if it is needed.

### What if a soldier's next move is to Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales, where lockdown rules may be different?

**FS:** Personnel must follow guidance from the devolved powers. If movement restrictions

are stricter in the location they are due to move to, they may have to wait before they can move to their next assignment.

### How will those moving overseas be affected?

**FS:** These could take longer than those within the UK. They are also subject to restrictions that the host nation may impose and will possibly need to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Personnel should speak with the local administrative unit in country and their current chain of command for more advice.

### Can someone move before or after their allotted date?

**FS:** Individuals can request a change of movement date with their chain of command. All requests will be carefully considered but limitations on the availability of accommodation

and removals may prevent early movement.

### Will social distancing measures affect removals?

**FS:** Agility is the defence contractor for removal services. Social distancing measures will continue and require a modification to the normal processes. The company will provide guidance to explain the specific preparations and procedures that are required.

### What if a soldier and his or her family are isolating due to Covid-19 but are due to move?

**FS:** They should not move and must inform their chain of command. If contracted services are required, Amey, Mears and Agility should also be informed. Movement dates should be adjusted accordingly.

**“Social distancing will continue”**

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A taste of the Army's activity across the UK

# NATIONAL SITREP

## 1. CARDIFF

### GROUND CREW CALL

PERSONNEL from 3rd Battalion, The Royal Welsh helped in the supply of personal protective equipment as they unloaded vital supplies from specially chartered flights landing at Cardiff Airport.

The Reservists assisted in the distribution of 660,000 fluid resistant gowns that had been flown in from China and Cambodia to replenish stocks for NHS workers and social care staff.

"We are happy to be here supporting the country and doing the things that need to be done during these essential times," said 2Lt Jack Clare.

"As a platoon commander, working on this task has really helped my managerial skills."



## 2. FOLKESTONE

### GURKHAS SET THE PACE

SUPER-FIT soldiers pounded out the miles for the NHS – after embarking on a run covering the distance from Lands End to John O'Groats.

The troops, from 1st Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles, set out to raise £3,000 for their local William Harvey Hospital in Ashford, Kent, during the mammoth five-day phys session.

They took it in turns to complete the required 815 laps of their base at Sir John Moore Barracks, Shorncliffe, clocking up 1,215 miles.

Organiser Cpl Naresh Rai – whose wife is a nurse at the hospital – said it was a chance for the unit to show its appreciation to NHS colleagues.



Picture: Manchester United



## 3. MANCHESTER

### PASSING THE TEST

THE iconic Old Trafford stadium formed the backdrop for personnel from Burma Company, 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment as they manned one of the mobile testing units being used in the fight against Covid-19.

The hard-working troops completed a three-day deployment at the home of Manchester United as part of their ongoing support in the crisis, which has since seen them run similar facilities in Blackpool and Moston.

"It has been a positive experience for us," said Kgn Joshua Beardwood.

"It is hugely rewarding to help others, especially in our local area.

"What we do here matters and helps the NHS and government fight Covid-19".



## INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

“  
We are making a  
tangible difference  
”

Troops go mobile in Covid  
fight, pages 30-34

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### 6. LONDON TRADITIONAL TREATS

MEMBERS of the Hindu community in London laid on a free lunch for the Army's mobile testing units in Harrow and Barnett.

The BAPS Shri Swaminarayan Mandir, popularly known as the Neasden Temple, served up a traditional Indian spread for troops from the Grenadier Guards to thank them for their work.

Mr Girish Patel, community liaison volunteer for the temple, said: "We wanted to ensure the reassurance and confidence to members of the public the soldiers are providing at mobile testing units was recognised."



### 4. DAVENTRY LEADERS IN LOGISTICS

RESERVISTS Maj Ed Dutton and Maj Eb Mukhtar (both RE) have been using the logistical skills mastered in their day jobs to boost the NHS supply chain.

Maj Dutton, an operational manager at Amazon, led a small team of soldiers at the national hub, where they helped deliver clinically assured personal protective equipment to NHS trusts across the country.

A logistics expert at Google, Maj Mukhtar worked with the NHS and partners including eBay and the Royal Mail to design an e-portal system which will manage deliveries to individual customers such as GP surgeries and care homes.



### 5. CATTERICK ON THE PROWL

MORALE levels in Catterick have been given a boost thanks to the dinosaur-related antics of Cpl Kyle Miles (RL).

The soldier has been donning a Tyrannosaurus Rex suit for twice weekly runs round the garrison with his husky Nanook, and the duo have formed a welcome sight for local residents stuck at home during the lockdown.

"There was a postman walking round in a pit bull costume cheering people up," Cpl Miles explained.

"I thought it was hilarious, so I decided I would try and do something similar."

"On every estate there's clapping or horns beeping. The majority of people I know, kids as well, love dinosaurs. A little bit of happiness makes the day go better."

## SELF-HELP SITE GOES LIVE

■ A NEW mental health fitness website has been launched to help tackle the additional challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

HeadFIT for Life is designed specifically for defence personnel and offers a range of self-help tools and techniques that can easily be integrated into everyday life to improve confidence, mood and motivation, while reducing levels of stress and anxiety.

The MoD initiative, developed in conjunction with the mental health campaign Heads Together, is accessible on Defence Connect and [www.headfit.org](http://www.headfit.org)



## Pensioners pass

TEN pensioners from the Royal Hospital Chelsea have died from coronavirus-related causes.

The institution announced that five of its 290 residents had passed away within its own on-site medical facilities, with a further five succumbing at the local NHS hospital.

A total of 45 pensioners have recovered from confirmed diagnoses of Covid-19, while another 29 have overcome symptoms of the virus.

In a further development, the organisation is working with Chelsea and Westminster Hospital to explore how pensioners could wear trackers to remotely measure their temperatures, pulse and respiratory rates.

The system could give doctors early warning if residents start to fall ill and discussions were ongoing as this issue went to press.



Pictures: Pte Yogi Rana, 10 QOGR



**“The supply chain could not react quickly enough”**

ONE of the first units tasked with helping the Army's response to the Covid-19 crisis is continuing to offer support to Operation Rescript – nine weeks after it was initially called to action.

Personnel from RV Troop, 1 Squadron, 10 Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment deployed to Bury St Edmunds on the day lockdown measures were announced, when they were charged with bolstering an NHS supply chain that was struggling to cope with an extraordinary scale of demand.

Based at the town's NHS distribution centre, the soldiers provided a welcome boost to civilian staff who are responsible for the provision of medical supplies to GP surgeries, walk-in clinics and hospitals across the east of England and north London.

"The warehouse was three days behind its orders and simply could not cope with the spike," troop commander 2Lt Charles Anderson told *Soldier*.

"This was partly due to the clamour for personal protective equipment, but also a result of hospitals bulk ordering a variety of other items, meaning the supply chain was overloaded and could not react quickly enough.

"This is where, as professional

logistic supply specialists, we were able to have a beneficial effect."

The Gurkhas bolstered each of the site's three eight-hour shifts and accounted for around a third of the workforce. As a result, the centre increased its output from five-days-a-week to become a 24/7 operation, meaning the backlog was countered.

With the mission complete the loggiers returned to their base in Aldershot three weeks later and are now supporting the Army's efforts through the provision of critical stores via the squadron's custodian account.

The system supplies units from across the Service with everything from standard military kit to PPE as they maintain the coronavirus battle.

And RV Troop continues to be held at 24 hours' notice in case another distribution centre requires the same military assistance.

"The troop has responded really well," 2Lt Anderson added. "All the training and exercises we do are geared towards us going abroad and facing an adversary in a warzone."

"It was quite different to be called upon to do this at home on UK soil."

● Under pressure – pages 24-25



## SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS FOR RETURNING TO WORK

■ THE Army has issued health protection instructions for personnel returning to work and training. The essential requirements are:

- Continue to apply two-metre social distancing at all times
- Continue to apply good hand-hygiene – wash with soap and water for 20 seconds
- Continue to frequently clean high-touch surfaces

The use of personal protective equipment (PPE) follows government guidance – it is not routinely required as a protective measure (even when two-metre social distancing cannot be maintained) unless individuals are Covid-19 facing – i.e. routinely working within two metres of known cases. Face coverings are not considered as PPE and are not to be used as a control measure in Covid-19 risk assessments for activities when the two-metre social distance cannot be achieved or maintained.



# Ground view

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Gav Paton, offers his take on Service life...



Contact Gav on Defence Connect



**A**NOTHER month has passed in the campaign against Covid-19 and – despite adaptations to the lockdown – we still face a situation that is both testing and unpredictable.

Our Army continues to be flexible and adept at rising to any challenge in this crisis. Most recently we have seen troops running mobile testing sites, while maintaining their assistance to civilian colleagues on other taskings.

Soldiers are also being supported by an excellent command and control structure, which has been serving us well in everything from assembling new hospitals to marshalling help for ambulance crews and delivering personal protective equipment.

But behind the scenes the outbreak has also forced the Army to reflect on the future. Remote working has made all of us think and act differently.

I don't think that we are going to return to life as it was

before. We are likely to emerge into a new normal, and one where the focus will be less on time spent in a physical workplace and more on outputs.

For example, I have just spent some three hours meeting Army cadets online. If I had done the same job in person, it would have involved a long time on the road and a hotel overnight.

Earlier, I arranged for every regimental sergeant major to be online with the chief of the general staff and we achieved the desired results.

Elsewhere, there has been some great work to keep our essential training on track with troops assigned to virtual platoons to maintain vital skills. And I have even managed to do some online phys with 1st Battalion, Irish Guards.

While my pace has slowed down in the sense that I am not travelling all the time, I am far busier and seeing more people.

Nothing can replace face-to-face meetings, but we have proved that meeting virtually is a close second.

**“**  
**We are likely to emerge into a new normal**  
**”**

## UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



**Q** What is the biggest plus about virtual meetings, and what are you missing most under lockdown?

**A** There's no 0400 taxi runs to the airport, but I do miss a quiet pint in the pub



## Growing reputation

OUR support to civilian colleagues during the Covid-19 crisis has put the Army in the spotlight – with troops praised for their efforts.

But as we begin moving on from near-total lockdown, CGS has stressed that he expects the very highest personal and professional standards from everyone. Our reputation has been boosted – we must make sure we protect it.

We all have a part to play and it is important that we watch what we say and do, including on social media.

In the end, reputation reflects reality.

The situation has also

put a significant strain on the normal Army rhythm – so staying up to date and making sure your admin is sound are vital.

Everyone should sign up to Defence Connect. This provides a reliable source of information, plus resources in areas such as mental health.

It is also important that we use the Covid reporting tool on the opening page.

You must fill it in if you show symptoms, have been diagnosed or are isolating. When you no longer fall into these categories, make sure you close the case.

Accurate information about how the virus is affecting us is critical.

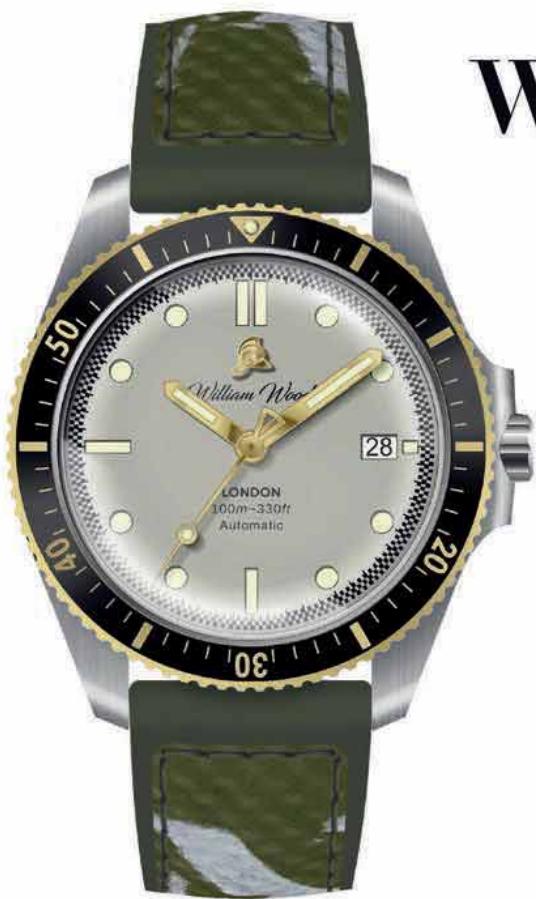


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Troops from 4 Close Support Squadron, RLC delivering ventilators

## Covid support force unloads personnel

**T**HOUSANDS of troops have been stood down from the Covid Support Force by the MoD.

Around 20,000 personnel on high readiness to deal with the coronavirus pandemic will be reduced to roughly 7,500, but the figure will be kept under review as the response continues.

Those released will return to normal duties but defence medics will continue to offer assistance to the NHS, while other personnel will carry on delivering protective clothing and maintaining the Covid-19 testing capacity – around 90 military crews manning mobile testing units were operating across the UK at the time of writing (see pages 30-34).

The majority of the 3,000 or so Reservists called into action have also been told to stand down.

Individuals with specialist skills provided medical and logistical support to the NHS, helping with tasks such as the distribution of essential kit and constructing Nightingale temporary hospitals across the UK.

Teams of Reservists also provided much-needed support at stretched headquarters around the country, with

two prime examples being the 30 personnel employed in the operations room at Brecon Barracks – the British Army's headquarters in Wales – and the 20 or so who augmented staff in the capital.

"Across London District we've used Reservists in roles such as liaison officers, to help communications with NHS England and the ambulance service, as planners in our ops room and to distribute kit into various locations around the region," Maj Blair Addison (R Signals) told *Soldier*.

"They've been terrific as they've been force multipliers for our department, bringing with them their expertise from various civvy street roles and sometimes a refreshingly different view."

In announcing the demobilisation Maj Gen Celia Harvey, Deputy Commander Field Army, said: "There is no doubt that the Army Reserve has proved itself to be ready and responsive when needed."

"Alongside the challenges and tragedies that have accompanied Covid-19, many positives have arisen from this experience."

**A BACK-BREAKING** effort by troops from 22 Field Hospital saw them take the world record for the longest continuous CPR session, which was previously six days and four hours. Two teams of four soldiers managed to graft non-stop for seven days. They took on the challenge to highlight the tireless efforts of their civilian counterparts and raise money for NHS Charities Together.

**IN NUMBERS:**  
**2,016,000**  
Number of chest compressions completed

**120,960**  
**SEVEN**  
The time in days of longest ever CPR session

Ventilations in the process

## PAY SLIPS GO ELECTRONIC

■ THE production and distribution of hardcopy pay statements has ceased.

Personnel now have two routes to accessing their pay statement – through JPA or the Defence Gateway. Soldiers can access the latter from any internet connected device and can register for an account using a Service or staff number.

They can then download the pay statement app that allows them to print a certified true copy in PDF format. Alternatively, troops can use JPA by going to "self service employee", then selecting "pay roll information", then choosing "payslip".

Certain personnel will continue to receive hardcopy statements from Defence Business Services because of security restrictions.

## INSECT SPRAY TESTED

■ EXPERTS at the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory are conducting further tests into the use of mosquito spray as a defence against Covid-19.

Troops in the coronavirus response were issued the repellent as an additional precautionary measure after advice from military medical chiefs.

The Surgeon General said that, albeit in lieu of conclusive research, Citriodiol would do no harm and should be used on a precautionary basis, as an additional layer of protection against exposure to Covid-19.

## AFCAS RESULTS IN

■ THE latest Armed Forces Continuous Attitude Survey has been published. While satisfaction with Service life remains unchanged from last year, at 45 per cent, there was an improvement in views in areas such as flexible working and pay. To read the document in full go to [www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/armed-forces-continuous-attitude-survey-2020)

“  
The Reserve proved itself ready  
”

## Arise Sir Tom Moore

CENTENARIAN fundraiser Capt Tom Moore (ex-DWR) is to be knighted.

The veteran's bid to walk 100 laps of his garden before his 100th birthday raised more than £32m for the NHS and prompted calls for him to be awarded the honour.

The Queen approved a special nomination from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who described him as a "beacon of light" during the coronavirus pandemic.

Speaking to the BBC, Moore joked that he hoped the Queen would not be too "heavy handed with the sword, as I'm a weak soul".





## FRINGE BENEFITS

■ ARTISTIC troops are being urged to set their sights on the Edinburgh Fringe in a special competition.

They are being encouraged to put together an original piece of creative work, under the broad theme of the Army since 2014.

Plays, dance performances, music and installation pieces are among the formats permitted, with the winning entry unveiled at the world-renowned festival next year.

The contest forms part of the wider [Army@thefringe](#) scheme, under which soldiers have performed at the Scottish festival since 2017.

Submissions are being encouraged from individuals and groups. Regulars and Reservists with at least a year of service left are eligible to take part. For more details email [armyandhearts@gmail.com](mailto:armyandhearts@gmail.com)



Pictures: ITV



## COMPLAINTS SCRUTINY

■ DEFENCE chiefs will work with Armed Forces Ombudsman Nicola Williams (below) to ensure Service complaint mechanisms are as robust as possible.

In a statement, MoD officials said they would consider the findings of Williams' latest report, in which she claimed that systems for handing gripes were still not "effective, efficient or fair".

While accepting that there had been improvements, the ombudsman strongly suggested that "fundamental structural change" was still required.

The time taken to resolve complaints and the impact this had on the wellbeing of individuals were key issues.

But Williams said: "With the support of the Ministry of Defence and the single Services, I am confident we can build a better system."

A spokesman for the MoD said fairness was the department's prime concern. "We care about our personnel and complaints are always considered carefully," he added.

Some 766 complaints were deemed admissible across the Services last year.

The largest number of these – 37 per cent – were about career management, while a quarter related to bullying, harassment and discrimination.

“We changed our song at the last minute”



## Talented soldiers await their fate...

■ SINGING duo Cpl Lee Day and Sgt Vince Fountain (both R Signals) are eagerly awaiting news of their fate on *Britain's Got Talent* after excelling in the show's audition stage.

The Soldiers of Swing received four yeses from head judge Simon Cowell and his panel after impressing with their rendition of Frank Sinatra's *Luck Be A Lady*.

But with a date still to be confirmed for the programme's deliberation stage, they are yet to learn whether they'll be given an opportunity to perform at the prestigious live shows.

However, their bid for glory may well have ended at the first hurdle had Cowell not offered the pair a second chance after a far from impressive opening number.

"At the last minute we decided to change our song to *That's Amore*," Cpl Day (pictured above left) told *Soldier*.

"We went on stage and sang that, but it was terrible – the sound levels were wrong, and we were dreadful.

Simon said the song choice wasn't right and they gave us another opportunity. That's when we performed *Luck Be A Lady* and it was perfect from the off.

"It was horrible. You watch the show and see the bad acts getting stopped and we thought we had become one of those. But somehow we managed to turn it round."

The Reservists, part of the 37 Signal Regiment recruiting team, started singing together in 2018 following a squadron function with karaoke.

Since then they have performed to veterans in care homes and at theatre shows and festivals and hope their exposure in front of a national television audience will lead to bigger and better things.

"We want to get a record deal and have the chance to do this properly," Cpl Day, who was a Regular for ten years, added. "It could work well for both the Army and ourselves – we're excited to see what comes from it."

## ROBOTS SUCK UP HOURS SPENT CLEANING WORKSHOPS



■ ENTERPRISING troops have made a sweeping change to their daily roster after deploying robots to take on the grind of cleaning their workshops.

The soldiers – from Stafford-based 16 Signal Regiment – recently handed over the daily task to the four machines now performing the role with distinction. The doughnut-shaped devices – about the size of a car tyre – automatically scour the floor and can pick up objects such as rogue bolts and screws.

As well as freeing up human broom handlers, the robots have allowed the signallers to reinvest the hours sucked up by cleaning in extra professional development.

Commanding officer Lt Col Pete Brunton told *Soldier* that the idea of bringing the machines on board was put forward by a young NCO.

Initially used on loan to see if they were up to the cut, the devices were then bought with cash from a £15,000 innovation grant to units from Commander Field Army.

Lt Col Brunton added: "On a serious note, this is all about reducing overheads where we can – people were spending 90 minutes each day cleaning."



French troops  
on an Operation  
Barkhane mission  
in Mali

Main picture: Shutterstock

# Brit plans major operation in Mali

**A** BRITISH officer at the heart of planning the French Army's largest manoeuvre in living memory has spoken out about the challenges that will face UK personnel when they eventually deploy to Mali.

Around 250 mainly Infantry troops were scheduled to arrive in the region this summer – although the move has been delayed by the Covid-19 crisis.

Lt Col Paul Harrison (RA, above) is the only British exchange officer working at the headquarters for France's long-running counter-terrorism campaign in north Africa, Operation Barkhane. International burden sharing is a major theme and the UK has three Chinook helicopters in the country operating with the French Army Aviation Regiment.

Based at N'Djamena in Chad, Lt Col Harrison was selected to put together Operation Monclar, which involved the simultaneous deployment of 1,700 French soldiers and 3,000 troops drawn from the Malian, Nigerien and

Burkinabe armed forces.

"It was a real privilege to be trusted to plan this and a great experience to deploy on operations with the French, our primary European partner," he told *Soldier*. "I have planned similar operations before, but not in this part of the world and not involving so many partner forces."

The push was coordinated with the United Nations stabilisation mission and a large number of insurgents were neutralised and resources seized or destroyed, including 80 motorcycles, a pickup truck armed with a heavy machine gun and large quantities of armaments, ammunition and material for making explosive devices.

"The French headquarters and units on Operation Barkhane are a well-oiled machine," Lt Col Harrison continued.

"When the British Army arrives it will be operating in a region that's relatively new to us, so understanding the population and securing their confidence will take time."

**It was a privilege to be trusted**

## Into Africa

**Lt Col Harrison describes the main challenges that British troops will face when they deploy to Mali...**

### Communications

"Most locals speak a dialect and/or French, but very few understand English."

### Environment

"Men and machines will suffer. It is hot and dusty in the dry season and humid and sticky in the wet season. Movement off road is especially difficult between July and September."

### Supply chains

"These get really stretched as the distances are vast; logistics is a key constraint we always respect."

### Insurgents

"The armed terrorist groups here are capable and organised. They are locals, know the ground and people intimately, and learn quickly."

### Support

"There will probably be less support available than in Afghanistan and Iraq where we had lots of unmanned air vehicles, close air support and attack aviation."



## Ready for the call

**TROOPS** from 16 Air Assault Brigade kept up to date with their high readiness capabilities on two training packages in Norfolk.

Exercise Black Flight saw airborne logisticians and medics parachuting a lifesaving surgical capability from a Royal Air Force C130 Hercules onto an airfield, while during Exercise Green Shield, soldiers from 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment conducted urban operations on Stanford training area.

Scenarios were conducted in-line with the new government social distancing guidelines and ensure the brigade retains its immediate global defence capability.



## CHALLENGER CHALLENGE

■ THE Norfolk Tank Museum has launched a GoFundMe project with a target of £60,000 to purchase and renovate the first ever prototype Challenger 1 tank.

Fully restored, it will take centre stage in the museum's unique tank display and form part of an interactive exhibit.

To donate visit [www.gofundme.com/f/help-ntm-rescue-the-challenger-1-prototype](http://www.gofundme.com/f/help-ntm-rescue-the-challenger-1-prototype)

## LOCKDOWN LEARNING

■ REGULAR and Reserve Royal Signals personnel have completed 3,600 courses, totalling more than 11,000 hours of tuition during the lockdown.

Spanning topics such as business and IT management, cyber security and network engineering, the courses fall under a project called Caduceus, which is developing training to meet constantly evolving requirements.

Career structures are also being overhauled to make them more dependent on technical education and training.

"This shows that our soldiers are keen to professionalise and willing to take an active role in their own development," said project leader Lt Col Mark Brookes (R Signals).

For more information, search "Caduceus" on Defence Connect.

● Corps of Royal Signals 100th anniversary – pages 41-44



## CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE

■ THE system for claiming standard learning credits (SLC) has been altered so that courses not previously covered are now available to personnel.

Learning no longer has to lead to a nationally-recognised qualification, although it must continue to directly benefit the Service in some way.

SLCs provide up to £175 towards the cost of learning opportunities and must be authorised in advance by Army Education Centres. See **ABN 068/2020** on Defence Connect for details.

These policy changes will apply for learning commencing before July 31, subject to further review.

## CENTURY FUND RAISER

■ THE Royal Signals are celebrating their centenary by raising money for the Royal Signals Charity. The #100for100 challenge involves covering a distance of 100km using any form of exercise (adhering to government guidelines) and can be completed in one day or spread over the whole month with partners and children taking part. To donate visit [www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/100for100](http://www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/100for100) and upload photos and videos to social media using #RoyalSignals100



“  
This will  
give us  
greater  
clarity  
”

## New muster app now ready to roll

A NEW tool is being rolled out that will make it easier for soldiers and the chain of command to plan ahead.

Trials of the My Muster app will begin early this month for personnel involved in the Covid-19 response, and go live to the wider Army from July.

The application will be accessible via troops' mobile devices and will act as a one-stop shop for them to view personal information, including their readiness for deployment, as well as their unit's forecast of events.

Meanwhile, commanders using a linked desktop version called Muster will have better oversight of their soldiers' deployability and will be able to quickly communicate changes in programmes, although these should reduce as the tool comes into effect.

Users will receive notifications on their phones and more functions will be added over the coming months, including links to training courses, pay statements and career information.

My Muster is part of a suite of systems such as Opus and Churchill that are designed to cascade information and taskings downwards – a move Service chiefs believe will revolutionise Army business.

Brig Greg Wilson, Assistant Chief of Staff Transform at Field Army, explained that Operation Rescript had accelerated the delivery of the applications.

He said: "This will give us greater clarity, at all levels, of when, where and who is involved in what assigned task – increasing situational awareness, reducing repetitive data entry and enabling smarter use of resources."

## Promotion policy changes are in the offing

THE Army policy on accelerated promotion is being updated.

The new regulations will be live from July 1 for Regular and Reserve personnel and come into effect from the 2020-21 annual reports.

Soldiers graded with a potential recommendation of "exceptional for promotion one rank up" in their annual report, short tour or duty period report

and special circumstance report will be considered for early promotion if they have completed the military training and education required for their current rank.

No other cap badge policy, processes or restrictions will be implemented in addition to this policy.

For more information search for **ABN 071/2020** on Defence Connect.

We asked Maj Rob Sharrock (RE) in the personnel policy department at Army Headquarters about the implications of the revised policy

### What's the rationale for the change?

**RS:** Opportunities for accelerated promotion differ across cap badges, which creates confusion and stops the Army maximising its talent. This change will end that and allow soldiers with exceptional potential to compete for promotion based on their suitability for the next rank. This will ensure we have the right people, with the right skills, in the right jobs.

### How will it work?

**RS:** The new policy recognises the difference between performance and potential, removing the requirement for an "A" overall performance grade. With a recommendation of "exceptional for promotion one rank up" soldiers will be able to compete on merit with those eligible for advancement at the promotion selection board.

# SOLDIER

THE BRITISH ARMY MAGAZINE



## ONE YEAR

On 6 June 1944 the first Allied assault troops landed on the Normandy beaches. The bell had rung for Hitlerism to depart from the face of this earth.

On 6 June 1945 the published prints all over the world carried the headlines "Hitler's Reich Now ceases to exist." Field Marshal Montgomery, General Eisenhower, General Zhukov and General de Lattre de Tassigny sitting in Berlin had issued a joint declaration assuming complete and absolute control of every branch of life in Germany.

In all history there has been no victory so complete, so vast, so all-embracing.

Look now at the man on the immediate right of this column. Private Brain, man of Oxford, symbolises that victory.

In the midst of our many preoccupations here in B.L.A., among our thoughts of leave and home and a rest from the wearying struggle, there is space — and a goodly space — for Pte. Brain.

There he stands, grey and grim, with fatigue and with the filth of battle in Burma still heavy upon him.

For him the task is not yet ended.

Nor, friends, is ours.



## ON THE RUN

The Germans had been defeated and now Japan's resistance was all that stood in the way of peace...

B.L.A.  
EDITION

THE conflict in Europe may have officially ended on VE Day – May 8, 1945, but the following month the staff at *Soldier* were as determined as ever to produce required reading for troops.

They published revelations about some of Britain's amazing military engineering feats of the war. These included a number of innovations that had helped the invasion of Europe on D-Day and other, previously secret, devices that had been lying in wait for the Nazis if they'd invaded the UK back in 1940. ▶



### Burning the Sea

HAD the Germans attempted to invade Britain they would have been met by a Wall of Flame on land and sea.

Britain's first line of defence against invasion in those dark days of 1940 was a sea-flame barrage. The pressing of a button at a moment's notice would have turned the sea into an all-consuming inferno.

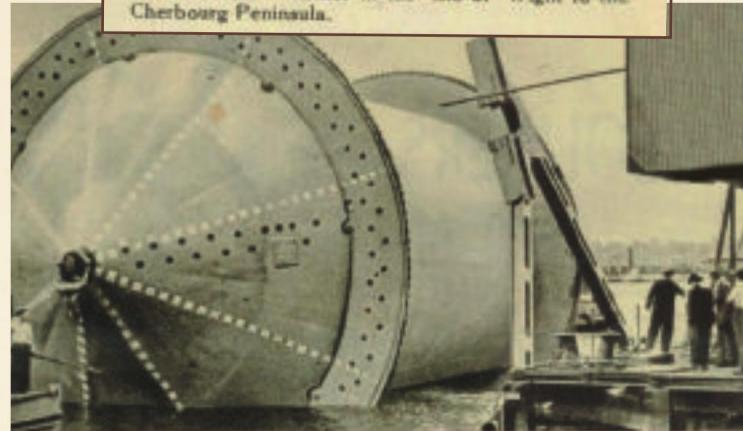
Petrol pipes, some of them hidden in the tubular scaffolding on the beaches, were laid from concealed storage tanks and carried oil under the sea ready to be discharged and set on fire when it rose to the surface. The aim was two-fold — to force the enemy assault craft into lanes where they could have been dealt with by shore defences, or to explode the oil at the last moment and destroy them by flame.

A score of secret flame-weapons formed part of our defences on land.

### Petrol by Pluto

PLUTO — the Pipe Line Under The Ocean — is one of Britain's greatest military engineering feats which kept our Armies supplied with the petrol on which they depended for their drive into the heart of Hitler's Reich.

Force PLUTO went into operation shortly after D-Day when the sea-lanes to Cherbourg had been swept clear of mines, and pipe-lines were laid on the sea bed from Ventnor in the Isle of Wight to the Cherbourg Peninsula.



HMS Conundrum — one of the 1,600-ton floating drums on which the petrol pipelines were carried across the Channel. Each drum transported 70 miles of piping



Two hundred miles of three-inch hollow steel cable stretch into the distance at a pipeline storage facility



Oil projected into the sea from pipelines formed a continuous line, ready to be ignited



» It also printed the first pictures of Japan's rocket-propelled suicide plane, the Baka, that was terrorising shipping in the Pacific as part of its reporting on the continuing bloody conflict in the Far East.

The 14th Army – the largest Commonwealth force ever assembled containing 340,000 Indian, 100,000 British and 80,000 other Commonwealth troops – was making strong headway under the command of Lt Gen William Slim.



## JAP DEATH PLANE — details

**S**OUDIER publishes the first pictures of the remarkable new Japanese rocket-propelled piloted bomb, which has been in use against the Allies in the Pacific in the past few months.

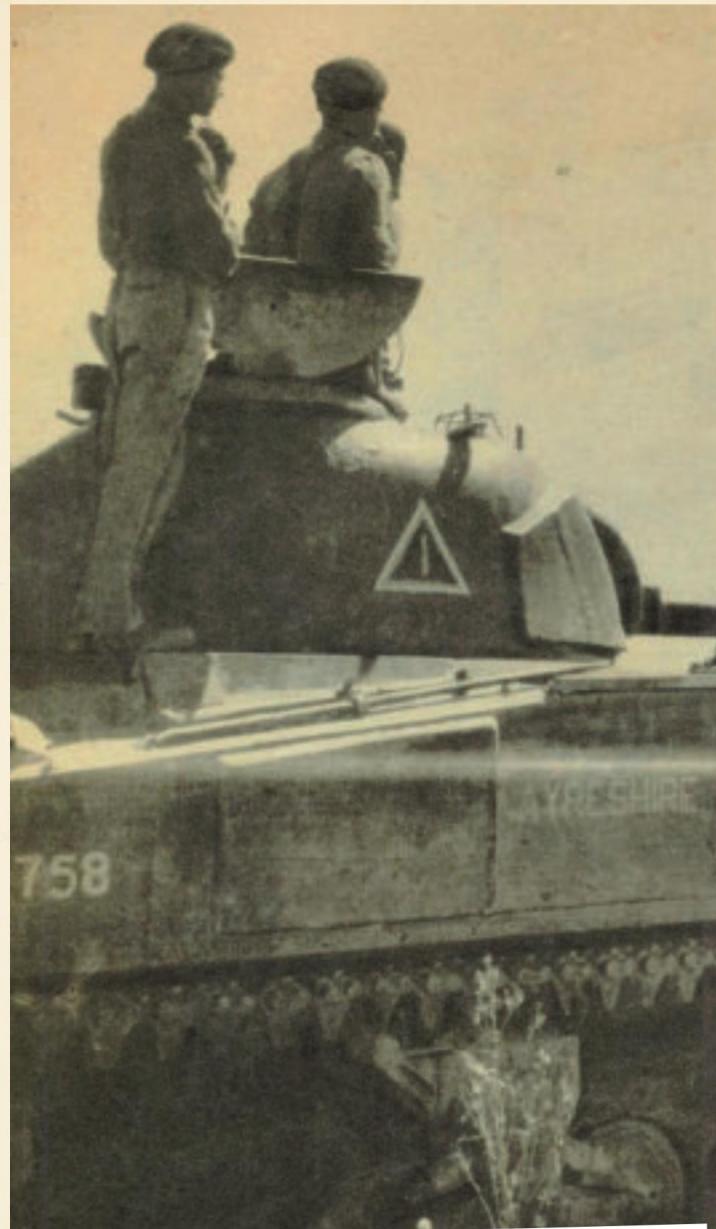
Known as the "BAKA" — Japanese for "Fool" — this latest type of "suicide" plane is in reality a midget air-launched aircraft with a heavy explosive warhead.

"BAKA" is a low-wing monoplane, only 19ft 10 in from nose to tail and with a span of 16 ft 5 ins. The warhead fairing is over 6 ft long and forms the complete nose section of the plane. It is here that the high explosive charge is carried.

While being carried on its parent aircraft "Betty", the "Fool" plane's cockpit fits into the bomb bay, as seen in the pictures on the left, which also show a captured specimen.

"BAKA's" three rocket propellant units are carried behind the cockpit, two on the bottom of the fuselage and the third at the top.

A control column and rudder bar, which the "suicide" pilot can use after "BAKA" is jettisoned from "Betty", can also be locked while attached to the parent plane.





**Left:** Personnel of an Indian cavalry regiment in their Sherman tank, as they look at the horizon, beyond which lies their objective – Meiktila

**Below:** A 14th Army column in central Burma taking part in the push which cut Japan's main supply artery. During the attack airborne infantry were brought up to consolidate the ground gained by the armour

**Right:** "V Force, Burma", by one of Soldier's artists, Cpl Eric Earnshaw, May 1946



Fierce fighting had just taken place in central Burma, where the strategically vital cities of Meiktila and Mandalay had been captured from the Japanese in March 1945.

The route south to Rangoon had been opened, and it was a race between the 14th Army and the start of the monsoon season. A combined air and seaborne assault on May 4 led to the defeat of the enemy in the country's capital and principal port, allowing the Allied force to be properly supplied.

These decisive battles effectively ended Japanese hopes of retaining control of the country.

The momentum had truly swung the Allies' way and the enemy was now fighting an increasingly desperate battle to avoid defeat. ■

# NEED TO KNOW

7 QUESTIONS / SKILLS & DRILLS / FITNESS / NUTRITION / MENTAL HEALTH



# No regrets

Former Royal Marine and extreme adventurer Aldo Kane reveals how he found a new purpose after the military

## Profile:

**Name:** Aldo Kane

**Age:** 43

**Military career:** Served in the Royal Marines from 1992-2003

**Operational tours:** Iraq and Northern Ireland

**Civilian role:** As the owner of Vertical Planet, Kane provides safety and security services for film and TV productions in hostile or remote locations. His portfolio includes Steve Backshall's *Expedition* series, *Driven to Extremes* with Tom Hardy, *First Man Out* with Ed Stafford, the BBC's *Tigers: Hunting the Traffickers* and *Inside the Real Narcos* on Channel 4

## ► What did you learn from your time in the Forces?

My time in Iraq taught me that I needed to be in control of my own destiny. You see how fragile life is when you are at war and although every battle is different for every soldier, the stuff you learn about yourself and the coping mechanisms and strategies have always stayed with me.

## Do you ever regret leaving?

Military life has underpinned everything I've done since I left, but I do miss the camaraderie, which can be difficult to replicate as a civilian. I have been lucky to find a channel, and a fix for the adventure and travel and learning. Having a purpose has such an impact on your mental health and how happy you are. Unfortunately, a lot of people don't get that when they leave. The reason I left was really the same as what made me decide to join up in the first place – it wasn't because I didn't enjoy what I was doing, it was just that I wanted to push on and travel more, do more expeditions and have more adventures. I have the same curiosity about life now as I did then.

## What have been the highlights of your civilian career?

There's been so many, but the row across the Atlantic Ocean with Team Essence was absolutely amazing. We set a Guinness World Record for being the fastest crew to row non-stop and unsupported from Portugal to Venezuela.

## As an ex-Royal Marine what do you think are the differences between the Royal Navy and the Army?

Obviously when you are serving there's a lot of banter between the Services, but once you leave, and particularly in my line of work, you don't differentiate. It makes no difference whether someone was in the Army, Navy or Royal Air Force, ultimately, I know that if I'm working with someone who served in the British Armed Forces I'm going to get 110 per cent and they will come with the mindset of getting things done. In comparison, civilians are more of an unknown quantity.



## ► 7 QUESTIONS

Pictures: Rob Sixsmith



### **You've recently taken up the sport Parajet, what's that like?**

It's basically personalised flight and is absolutely amazing. You're attached to a canopy and a petrol-powered propeller which is portable, and you can stay up for hours. Skydiving gives you an immediate rush, but this is much more heightened and prolonged and it just opens up another massive avenue of exploration and adventure.

### **You're also an ambassador for the charity Veterans for Wildlife, why is their work so important?**

It's two-fold. Leaving the military can make people feel slightly worthless so it really helps those struggling with mental health issues – especially ex-soldiers – to find a purpose again. Secondly, the rehabilitation work the charity does, particularly in hunting the traffickers, makes a massive difference in terms of conserving wildlife and the environment.

### **So how are you coping with social distancing and what are you doing to keep busy?**

It's actually a bit like what life can be like in the military sometimes – you just have to get on with it. I've been going out for runs and following my eight-week, expedition-fit bodyweight programme and I'm able to watch TV and stay in touch with family and friends – so it's really not been that difficult. I only got married in December and because I'm normally away a lot, it's really nice to have an opportunity to spend time together. I'm also writing a book, so I have a chance to dedicate some time to that at the moment.

# Under pressure

There's nothing like a fastball to focus the mind, as these Servicemen found during the Covid-19 response

► **OPERATION Rescript** has certainly thrown up a few high-profile, short notice taskings for the thousands of troops involved in the battle against the coronavirus.

For 2Lt Charles Anderson (QOGLR) it came when he was called upon to bolster an NHS distribution centre in Suffolk within hours of the lockdown being announced, while welder LCpl Matthew Hannah (RE) found himself designing, from scratch, a prototype vehicle for use with the mobile testing units (MTUs).

Here, they reveal their five main takeaways from being thrown in at the deep end during a national crisis...





**Name:** 2Lt Charles Anderson  
**Unit:** RV Troop, 1 Squadron, 10 Queen's Own Gurkha Logistic Regiment  
**Age:** 31

## Compassion

“Having this for those in your command cannot be underestimated – treating each soldier as an individual, understanding them, their abilities, their story, background and personal situation. At the time we deployed, personnel were leaving their families when the supermarket shelves were empty and there was a lot of uncertainty around. This is unlike anything the Army has seen in a generation as your friends and family are also being affected. Respecting this, and having compassion towards the soldiers, was vital.”

## Building relationships

“This was especially important. The NHS supply chain suddenly had a group of soldiers arrive in their warehouse and I was the face of that. I was asking myself ‘how can the Army add value?; how do we help, but not take over?; and how do we offer solutions, advice and support?’”

## Managing expectations

“Doing this for both the soldiers and the NHS staff we were supporting, was a difficult day-to-day task. As the troop commander, I found myself balancing very carefully what information was reliable and could therefore be briefed to my team, and what was unreliable and, if communicated, could result in unnecessary apprehension or frustration.”

## The quality of Gurkha soldiers

“They are among the best in the British Army and it is a pleasure to serve with them and command them. They already have an outstanding reputation which was the reason I chose to commission in to 10 QOGLR, however, it has still been impressive to see their unbeatable



work ethic, maturity, professionalism and overall approach.”

## Caring about what we have been asked to do

“I saw how powerful and important it is to care – I sense that as a leader and officer, this will be fundamental throughout the rest of my career. During our time in Bury St Edmunds, I cared about my soldiers and was always thinking about how I could look after them more. I cared deeply about the task at hand and how to complete it to the best of our ability with the resources and manpower we had available. This, it strikes me, must be the starting point for everything.”



**Name:** LCpl Matthew Hannah  
**Unit:** 516 Specialist Team Royal Engineers, 66 Works Group  
**Age:** 26

## Creative thinking

“We had been told what the testing site would look like and that the MTUs needed to be able to set up in 15 minutes. The kit also had to fit into the compartments without touching or contaminating anything, and the surfaces had to be wipeable – so we went with stainless steel, which doesn’t rust or scratch. We had lots of ideas of what we could use, from burger vans to ice cream vans, but in the end we decided on a white transit van we had on camp. After stripping out all the parts we didn’t need, we rebuilt it, put shelves in and made sure it met the clinical requirements.”

## Performing under pressure

“Trade-wise, welding is something that I do every day but there were a lot more high-ranking people inspecting my work, so I had to get it right first time. The team couldn’t do much until I had done the floor, for example, so there was pressure to get stuff finished.”

## Teamwork is key

“It’s given me an insight for the future in terms of don’t ask anyone to do anything that you wouldn’t do yourself. Usually it’s like: ‘right, you’re the lowest rank – you do this’, but I’ve never seen so many people dig in at once. The officer commanding was painting, and you never normally expect to see that. But we knew we needed to get it done and it was nice to see everyone working together.”

## Nothing can stop you

“As cheesy as that sounds, you can always find a way to make things work. Sourcing materials was the biggest issue to start with. It was a bank holiday weekend so it was hard to get hold of things and we had to find it from wherever we could. We were working from 0800 through to 0200, so everyone was tired, but we were buzzing because we were doing something to help. We got the task on the Sunday, had the prototype signed off, did the build, and by the Thursday we’d handed the keys to the Infantry and the van was being used around the south east. It was a mad few days, however at the end it was a bit of a masterpiece and we were pretty happy. To have such a high-profile task go well was a massive confidence boost.”

# Setting the pace



With running proving a popular exercise fix during social distancing, Army men's cross country and road race manager WO1 Dave Branfoot (AGC (SPS)) offers some top tips to help budding athletes reach the next level

► **For consistent running it is important you have a good fitness base to work from. Once you have that, you need three runs in a weekly cycle:**

## Power

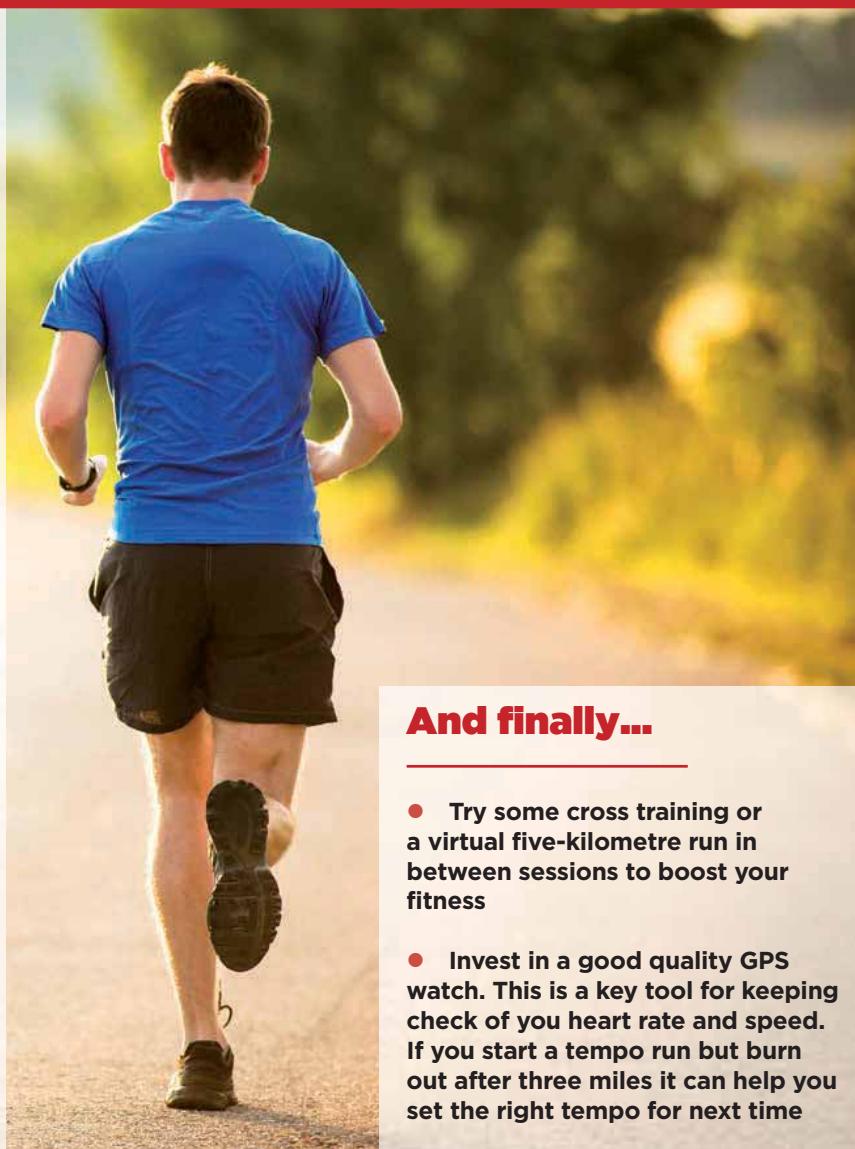
On the first Tuesday (for example) of each month run 400 metres, followed by 800 metres the next week and then a mile. This should be at maximum velocity and will give you an idea of basic lap speed, while helping the coordination between your brain and arms and legs. The final week of the month should be a "peak week", in which you run a time trial over your desired distance - whether that's three or five kilometres, or further - to test your fitness. Then start again the next month

## Efficiency

Thursday is about tempo running. Cover five miles at 85 per cent effort; this is a good way of getting the heart and lungs working effectively and helping to transport all-important oxygen and fuel around the body

## Endurance

Sunday is a day for endurance and that long run. Go out for about 12 miles at a reasonably quick pace, but not pushing too hard. Turn your watch on at the start and forget about the time, just enjoy the distance and the scenery



## And finally...

- Try some cross training or a virtual five-kilometre run in between sessions to boost your fitness
- Invest in a good quality GPS watch. This is a key tool for keeping check of your heart rate and speed. If you start a tempo run but burn out after three miles it can help you set the right tempo for next time

# 5 Foods to boost your IMMUNE SYSTEM

► WHILE good nutrition alone won't protect you from Covid-19 or even the common cold, a healthy and varied diet is one of the ways you can give your body a head start in fighting off all manner of nasties.

Age, exercise, sleep and whether or not you smoke all influence immune function too.

And while the science around so-called "superfoods" is iffy to say the least, you could do a lot worse than chuck one of these vitamin- and mineral-packed items into your next meal...



## Broccoli

Worth including in your five-a-day, this stuff is loaded with fibre, potassium and vitamins C, B6 and A. And it's versatile too. Throw it into everything from stir-fries to roast dinners

## Mushrooms

A good source of zinc – which is needed for white blood cell production to fight off infections – there are numerous varieties of these from button to Shiitake, to the strong, nutty Porcini

## Yoghurt

Steer clear of the overly-sugary fruit varieties and opt instead for yoghurt that contains "active" or "live cultures" to help your immune system fight bad bacteria in the gut. Yoghurt also contains vitamin D, which helps regulate the immune system

## Watercress

There's stacks of vitamins and minerals packed into this peppery, watery plant – especially if eaten raw. It can make a delicious substitute for lettuce in salads

## Sunflower seeds

A great snack that can be sprinkled on yoghurt or salads, and high in vitamin E, which is thought to help immune function – particularly in older people

## Remember!

A balanced diet is the key to boosting immune health. Don't overdo any single item for a quick fix as you may end up doing more harm than good.

Zinc, for example, is important but overdose on it and it will actually suppress the immune system.

For information on putting together a healthy diet visit the NHS website or contact the Defence Nutrition Advisory Service.

# Caring FOR THE carers

How the military's trauma risk management system is helping civilian medical personnel face the coronavirus pandemic

► JUST a few months ago, as the first reports of a virus in China began to circulate across television screens and in newspapers, it was easy to underestimate the devastating effect Covid-19 would have on the rest of the world.

But as the deadly infection spread across Europe, field hospitals and temporary mortuaries were built to cope with the overwhelming number of critically ill and dying patients.

When the plans for Nightingale hospitals were announced in the UK, Carol Betteridge, head of welfare and clinical services at Help for Heroes, saw many similarities between the situation that front-line medical staff now faced and that of military personnel deploying to theatres of war.

"They are putting on a uniform and are going into an unpredictable environment against an unpredictable enemy and putting their own health at risk," Betteridge explains.

"They are leaving their families and some are likely to be isolated away from them for an unspecified amount of time – and while many are used to dealing with emergency scenarios this is a prolonged situation, unlike anything we have ever faced before."

As a former Royal Navy captain and commanding officer of the military hospital in Afghanistan, Betteridge has been advising the NHS about some of the techniques that she and her colleagues used on operations.

These include balancing out different levels of experience, qualifications and character traits among teams, as well as the importance of the buddy system.

"The level of protective gear that medical staff wear is really demanding physically," she points out.

"Having lots of layers is restrictive, puts an added psychological burden on those wearing it and makes it hard to communicate properly – that's where the buddy system comes in, so people can spot who is flagging."

Another key method that has helped to shape NHS working practices is the debrief, something that Betteridge's team did after every shift in Afghanistan.

"That element is something Forces personnel do a lot and is really important," she continues.

"It's a chance to identify what went well, what didn't and how we can improve for next time."

Betteridge (pictured below) is also acutely aware of the psychological impact that prolonged exposure to dealing with seriously ill patients can have on those providing the care.

Her thoughts turned to the booklets developed by experts at the charity's Recovery Colleges – where traumatised veterans are given skills to manage their own mental health – and realised that they could be adapted to improve the psychological wellbeing of the nation's health workers during the pandemic.

"The guide was co-produced

“  
They are going up against an unpredictable enemy  
”





by personnel who have experience of trauma," Betteridge says.

"It contains techniques that have helped veterans and hopefully now can help the other heroes of the NHS.

"If you don't look after yourself then you can't look after others. You need to care for the carers."

Ex-soldier Andrew Taylor (pictured above) understands only too well how important self-help tools are during periods of high stress.

The former Army medic was left with severe physical and psychological injuries after a suicide bomb attack in Afghanistan and was supported by Help for Heroes throughout his recovery.

As an ambassador for the charity, Taylor helped develop the Recovery College curriculum and has been instrumental in ensuring the guides are now accessible online to healthcare workers.

"The techniques focus on body, emotions and mind," he explains.

"It could be doctors, nurses or cleaners working with high levels of apprehension, anxiety and grief.

"Some of those may be used to dealing with elements of these, but the sheer scale of the impact of Covid-19 is unprecedented and it's likely to be an ongoing process."

The booklet includes relaxation, breathing and meditation techniques and while he acknowledges not all methods work for everyone, just using one could be enough to help someone cope with the additional workplace pressure.

"There are many parallels with the situations NHS staff are dealing with and what veterans have faced on the battlefield and it's important to encourage people to come forward and ask for help," he adds.

"It's not a one-size-fits-all approach, though. Above all, people need to remember to be kind to themselves – not just to others."

## Accessing help

Physical symptoms of stress include an increased heart rate, sweating, feeling light-headed or shaky, changes to vision and being unable to think clearly.

The good news is that many of these sensations can be calmed by soothing breathing which shifts our attention away from troubling thoughts.

A guided breathing exercise and other helpful videos are available via **helpforheroes.org.net**. Navigate to the "Get Support" page and click on "Support during the coronavirus outbreak", where you can also download the workbooks: *Field Guide to Self-Care: Body, Emotion and Mind in Action*.

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I'm really  
enjoying the  
experience  
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# MOBILE MANOEUVRES

Personnel hit the road to deliver Covid-19 testing in places of most need

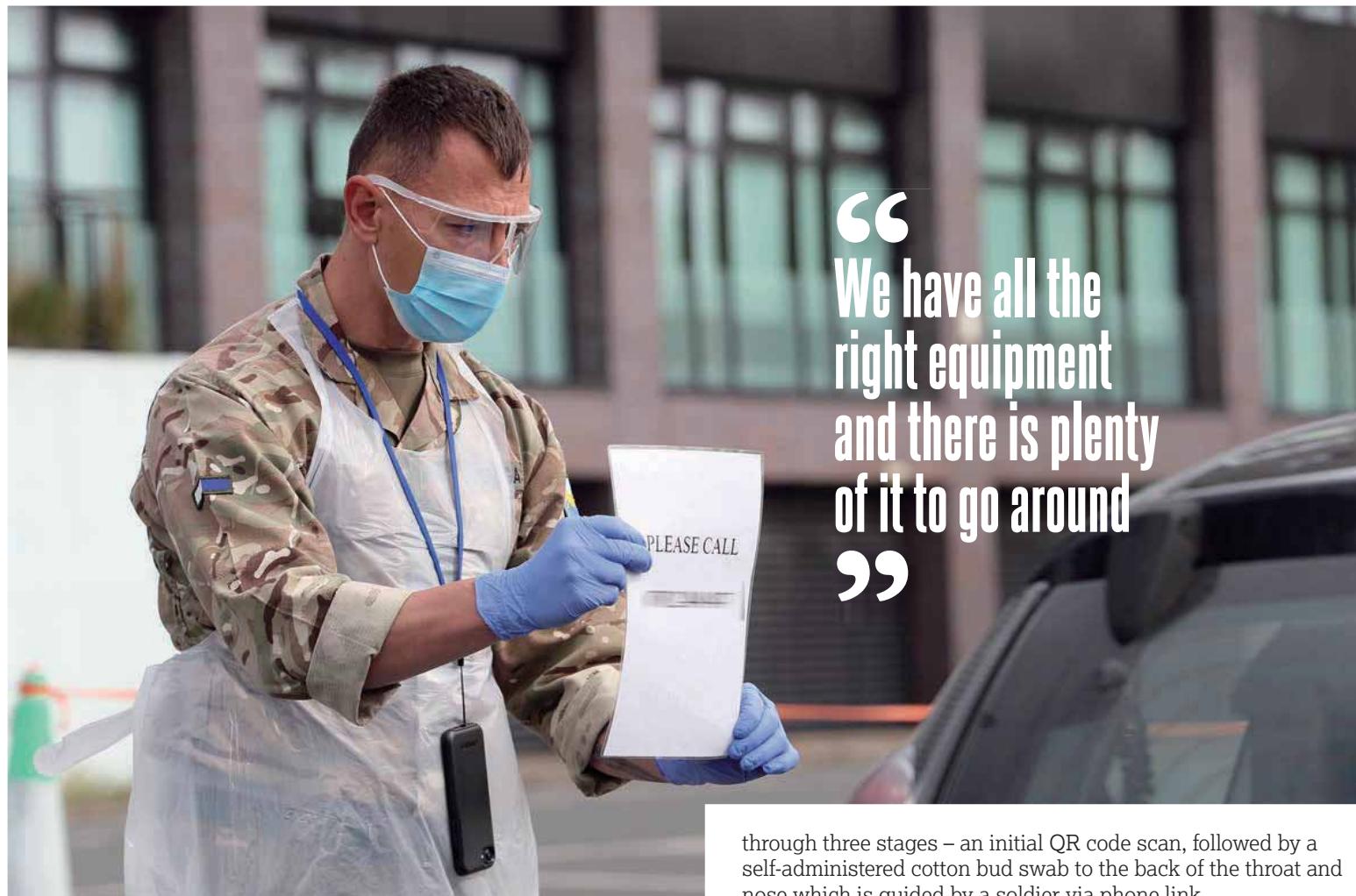
**T**HE Army's response to the Covid-19 crisis has been wide and varied, from bolstering NHS supply chains and delivering personal protective equipment to aiding in the construction of Nightingale hospitals and re-rolling as first responders.

But when the government announced an initial target of completing 100,000 daily coronavirus tests, a figure that was later increased to 200,000, personnel suddenly found themselves adding new strings to their bows.

In the space of just one week, the military rapidly generated 92 mobile units that have since been travelling the length and breadth of the country to reach essential workers in areas where there is high demand for testing.

With each able to test approximately 300 people per day, they are working alongside colleagues at drive-through testing sites as the Service's support to the nation continues.

*Soldier* joined troops from two formations selected to perform this role to learn more about their new life on the road. »



“  
We have all the  
right equipment  
and there is plenty  
of it to go around  
”

» **Signal of intent:** The Covid-19 outbreak marked a swift change in direction for Stafford-based 16 Signal Regiment.

Just six weeks earlier a squadron had deployed to Germany in preparation for Exercise Defender Europe 20. But, instead of pushing themselves in a joint training mission featuring 37,000 personnel from 18 countries, they were recalled for an altogether different fight on home soil.

When the order came through at just 48 hours' notice, the signallers completed a training package in Grantham and were then performing their new testing role across the Midlands in a matter of days.

“I'm proud of the work our soldiers are doing – this is a completely new situation in a strange time, in which I find myself commanding a regiment from my kitchen,” said commanding officer Lt Col Pete Brunton.

“The response of personnel to this task shows their adaptability and flexibility. We've ramped this up quickly – the testing units they are looking after did not exist until April and the Army generated 90 of them.”

The formation has nine crews performing such tasks at present, one of which was joined by *Soldier* as they carried out tests at the University of Wolverhampton's Walsall Campus.

They are largely comprised of Servicemen and women from 16 Signal Regiment, although a squadron from 22 Signal Regiment and mobilised Reservists from 37 Signal Regiment have boosted the effort.

Once on site, those being tested pass

through three stages – an initial QR code scan, followed by a self-administered cotton bud swab to the back of the throat and nose which is guided by a soldier via phone link.

The process is completed at a drop-off point, where checks are made to ensure protocols have been correctly followed.

This is all done from the safe confines of their car.

Overall, up to 150 personnel are involved and more are progressing through the training pipeline.

“Our first group trained on a Sunday and were out on the Tuesday of that week,” Lt Col Brunton added.

“They have a demanding job. We should not forget that they also have the same personal challenges as others in the country. Some have partners working from home and there are children needing to be home schooled.

“But we are helping each other through it all. We have initiatives to assist with mental health and PTIs are keeping us physically fit – albeit remotely.”

Cpl Lee Veringa (R Signals, pictured below) is one of those who answered the short notice call and he felt well prepared as he headed out to conduct his new duties for the first time.

He said the signallers could be carrying out this important work for a couple of months but insisted if that is the case it would not be a problem.

“The training was excellent – we have all the right equipment and there is plenty of it to go around,” he added.

“I've served for nine years and completed three tours in Afghanistan. It is different being out on the streets of your own country – in theatre you are aware of where the threat could come from but Covid-19 is invisible.

“You could say this is almost like a war – and we are making a tangible difference.”

LCpl James Wood (R Signals) has been working at the initial stage of the testing process, where he scans the





codes of people arriving at the site through a car window.

"I'm enjoying the job – it is good to be serving the country in this way," he explained.

"I've only been at the regiment for three months, so it is a great way of getting to know the people I'm going to be working alongside in the future."

The unit receives its daily taskings from a main hub at Edgbaston cricket ground in Birmingham and the junior NCO revealed his colleagues have swiftly adapted to the new routine.

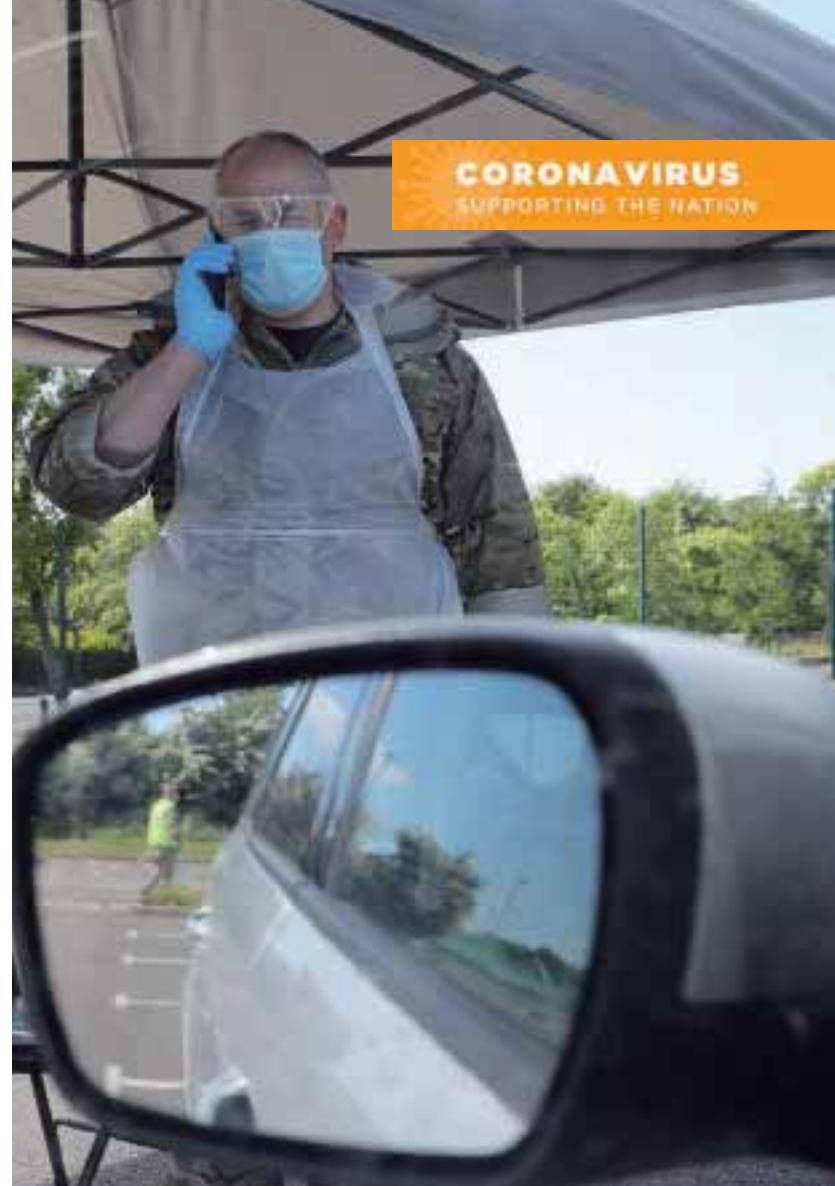
"We deployed at short notice but, as soldiers, we are ready if our country needs us," he added. "Here in the UK the Army already has a really good relationship with the blue light services, having helped in emergencies such as flooding.

"So, this is a great opportunity to strengthen that."

**Reservists re-roll:** Deploying as part of the Covid-19 Support Force came at a busy time for the Reservists of 4th Battalion, The Mercian Regiment.

They were honing their skills on Exercise War Hammer (pictured below), a ten-day test that featured live firing on Javelin, the GPMG and mortars, when the lockdown was announced.

With the exercise complete they immediately began the RSOI package for the coronavirus response, after which the personnel swapped infantry drills on Warcop training area



for a public-facing role in Cumbria.

"It shows that we can pivot seamlessly from a hard effect, kinetic capability to the soft effect approach that is needed on Op Rescript," commanding officer Lt Col Fraser Cuttle told *Soldier*.

"The switch in mindset was superb. Our people put their weapons down and quickly focused on what needed to be done in the community."

The battalion has been running nine mobile testing units, as well as delivering and collecting kits to and from care homes.

Personnel have also been trained on the invasive testing procedures conducted at static sites, although they have yet to perform this role.

Lt Col Cuttle believes the tasking is perfect for Reservists as it allows their Regular counterparts to return to a normal footing and he said the unit has revelled in the role.

"We've had a few people who have been furloughed so they have been able to mobilise with us," he added. "We've also seen long-term non-attenders reappear – they are coming back as they want to make a difference in the community."

"We have deployed people according to their skills and experience. They are not constrained by rank. That has been really important."

"If they work in logistics in the day job, they can come and do that here."

Pte Wayne Goldie (pictured left), a Regular »





» soldier from 2 Mercian, was pulled off his recruiting role to join the tasking.

Having completed ten days' training, which included how to show people to self-administer tests, he deployed with small teams from the unit.

The 30-year-old has been responsible for the check-in and check-out system used at the facilities and told *Soldier* a variety of individuals have passed through the process – from the elderly to factory and industrial workers.

"Some people can struggle when in the car, which means we have to just be patient, reassuring and then try to calm them down," he explained.

"It is about talking them slowly through the test, while keeping a two-metre gap from the vehicle.

"They are allocated half-hour slots, but if they are a bit stressed and take longer that is fine – we can give them the extra time they need.

"I'm really enjoying the experience and how different it is from the normal type of work that soldiers do."

Pte Goldie, who has previously deployed to Afghanistan and South Sudan, has also enjoyed working with his Reservist counterparts and believes their combined efforts have helped portray the Service in a positive light.

"It's great to see the military helping out in this crisis, and the more we are being seen in the news the better the perception is of the Armed Forces," he explained.

LCpl Nicola Shenton (RAMC, pictured right), a student nurse on civvy street, is the attached medic with 4 Mercian's C Company – a role that sees her performing regular checks on her fellow soldiers to ensure they are fit and healthy.

Deploying with the mobile units has given the 36-year-old, who is currently studying for an MA in adult nursing at the University of Lincoln, a greater insight into the Army's Covid-19 response having already carried out invasive tests on civilians alongside personnel from 1st Battalion, The Duke of Lancaster's



Regiment in Manchester.

"That is really intimate because you have to put the swabs deep into the throat," she explained. "You have to be able to build up a bit of trust with the person and reassure them, particularly with the elderly, who can be more nervous."

"But generally, I think people find the military presence and uniform reassuring. You try and have a laugh and this helps to put them at ease, although that can obviously be difficult with the PPE on."

LCpl Shenton, who joined the Reserve in 2004 and counts Uganda and Canada among her deployments, has managed to maintain her studies throughout and believes the skills gained in her day job have helped in a military setting.

And, like people across the country, she has faced the prospect of being isolated from loved ones as the pandemic continues.

"My family are a bit worried about me, but at the same time they're really proud that I'm helping out with such an important role," she added. "Obviously, we're all doing this in a bid to keep people safe."

"I'm not allowed home for at least four weeks, which is strange because you don't expect to be deployed in the UK."

When you're overseas you know you will be away from your family, but this is certainly a unique time.

"It's strange having my mother down the road and not being able to visit her, and my sister has a new baby that I can't see, but I think it's worse for them."

"However, the morale here is really high, we're all happy to be playing our part and it's good to get out and talk to people, rather than being stuck at home." ■



Interviews: Cliff Caswell | Pictures: Graeme Main, Maj Vardita Ralhan, RAMC

# ALTERED STATES

Two of the many Reservists working in the NHS reveal  
how they've been adapting to a new front line »

**S**OUND appears to have been disconnected; the world is completely silent. A stained-glass window set high into the wall glows ice blue then a threatening red. There is nothing overwhelmingly scary about these sights and sounds – they are just odd.

Back in reality, medical teams in the intensive care unit (ICU) of East Surrey Hospital in Redhill are fighting to save my life following complications after emergency surgery – plunging me into sepsis and near death.

A tube has been pushed down my throat and a ventilator is breathing on my behalf – I've been intubated. This term is not yet in common speech but soon, when the phrase Covid-19 also enters our collective vocabulary, the media will speak of little else.

My experience, during an emergency operation last year, has given me some appreciation of the suffering of numerous patients around the country.

"The visions you experienced probably came from a condition called delirium – it is common and can cause hallucinations," Maj Vandita Ralhan (RAMC, pictured right), an Army Reservist and NHS doctor working in intensive care at Stoke Mandeville Hospital near Aylesbury, tells me. "It can be really scary if it happens to Covid-19 patients."

Army clinicians like Maj Ralhan, who is with 306 Hospital Support Regiment, have honed battlefield ICU drills on exercise and saved lives on global operations. Their experience is proving decisive at the sharp end of a very different front line.

With the Covid-19 outbreak turning normality on its head, her suggestion that Service planning techniques could help in intensive care has been taken on board.

Business in the unit now has the feel of a military action. Using the nine areas of the Army's command and organisational system ensures clinicians can be rapidly sighted on critical issues including staffing, security, planning and communications.

Intensive care shifts open with bird table-type meetings, with each broad heading methodically considered. Using the model gives a snapshot of the current status and where there are potential gaps in areas such as personnel and kit.

Although there are adaptations for the civilian environment, Maj Ralhan says the model has been enthusiastically embraced by NHS bosses.

"The Army methods are tried, tested and work well – particularly in a demanding situation," the officer adds. "Even if you are familiar with a hospital environment, you'd find it hard to recognise intensive care at the moment."

"The unit was changed for the Covid-19 outbreak and is now very different – there are zipped fabric doors everywhere and some patients are on ventilators."

"Relatives cannot visit and are staying in contact with apps such as Facetime." »

“  
 There are still many mysteries about Covid-19 and a great deal we have to learn  
 ”





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“

Although dealing with serious traumatic injuries is different to nursing in a pandemic, the importance of teamwork and good planning do not change

”





» In an environment in which medical staff are masked behind a raft of personal protective equipment (PPE) – which makes speaking with colleagues more difficult – Maj Ralhan says military thinking is particularly paying off.

“At the start of each shift we put on our PPE and enter spaces split into clean and dirty areas,” she adds. “Straightforward communication is difficult.

“But we have put some very clear protocols in place, for example, with our paging systems and internal phones, which make it easier to work in these conditions.”

Having clear procedures is also important in a situation in which mitigating infection risks mean tasks can take longer than normal.

“Doing a round of between 20 and 25 patients takes a while, and you then have to go through your thorough decontamination drills,” the Servicewoman continues.

“We’re working well in some testing conditions.”

Despite the challenges, Maj Ralhan – who became a Reservist before qualifying as a doctor in 2012 – believes clinicians are rising to the Covid-19 challenge.

She feels the mutually beneficial relationship between the Army and NHS, which has been forged over decades, is saving lives at a critical time.

But the officer also stresses that the combined talents of health professionals will be needed to tackle – and defeat – coronavirus in the long term.

“There are still many mysteries about Covid-19 and a great deal we have to learn,” Maj Ralhan concludes. “We are finding out that the disease is complex – but thankfully we have skilled and committed people on our side.”

### Keeping calm, carrying on

AS commanding officer of 306 Hospital Support Regiment, Col Helen Singh (QARANC, pictured below) is not afraid of comparing the ongoing Covid-19 fight to a major operational deployment.

Armed with many years of civvy critical care experience, she helped treat casualties on tours in both Iraq and Afghanistan and that hard-won experience has been paying off in the current crisis.

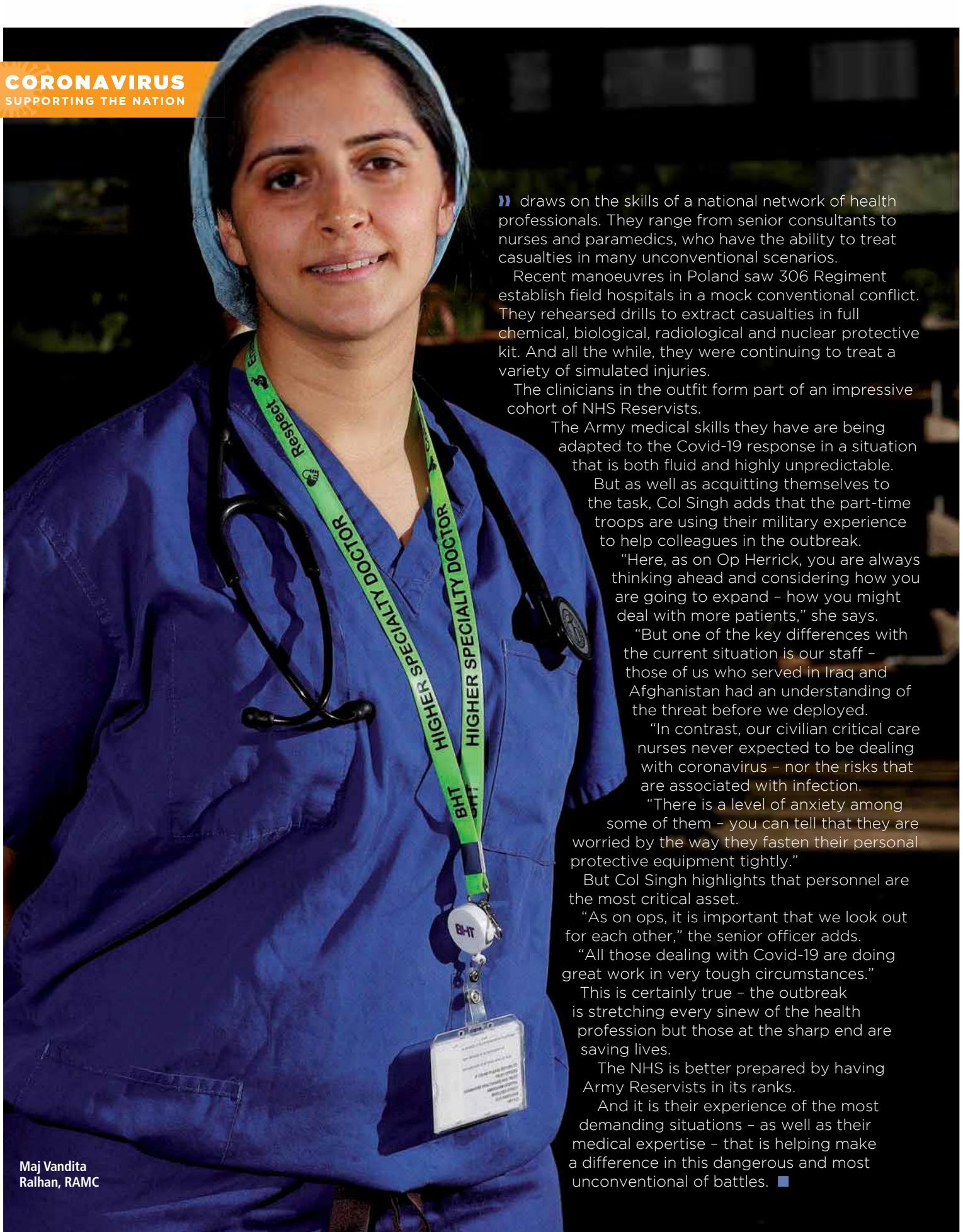
“The situation we are facing is like an operational tour of sorts, albeit one where you do get to sleep in your own accommodation each night,” the health professional points out.

“Although dealing with serious traumatic injuries is different to nursing in a pandemic, the importance of teamwork and good planning do not change.”

As a senior intensive care nurse in civvy life, Col Singh works at the Royal Infirmary and Western General Hospital in Edinburgh. She also helped set up the temporary Louisa Jordan medical facility for Covid-19 patients in Glasgow.

The York-based Army unit she oversees »





Maj Vandita  
Raihan, RAMC

» draws on the skills of a national network of health professionals. They range from senior consultants to nurses and paramedics, who have the ability to treat casualties in many unconventional scenarios.

Recent manoeuvres in Poland saw 306 Regiment establish field hospitals in a mock conventional conflict. They rehearsed drills to extract casualties in full chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear protective kit. And all the while, they were continuing to treat a variety of simulated injuries.

The clinicians in the outfit form part of an impressive cohort of NHS Reservists.

The Army medical skills they have are being adapted to the Covid-19 response in a situation that is both fluid and highly unpredictable.

But as well as acquitted themselves to the task, Col Singh adds that the part-time troops are using their military experience to help colleagues in the outbreak.

"Here, as on Op Herrick, you are always thinking ahead and considering how you are going to expand – how you might deal with more patients," she says.

"But one of the key differences with the current situation is our staff – those of us who served in Iraq and Afghanistan had an understanding of the threat before we deployed.

"In contrast, our civilian critical care nurses never expected to be dealing with coronavirus – nor the risks that are associated with infection.

"There is a level of anxiety among some of them – you can tell that they are worried by the way they fasten their personal protective equipment tightly."

But Col Singh highlights that personnel are the most critical asset.

"As on ops, it is important that we look out for each other," the senior officer adds.

"All those dealing with Covid-19 are doing great work in very tough circumstances."

This is certainly true – the outbreak is stretching every sinew of the health profession but those at the sharp end are saving lives.

The NHS is better prepared by having Army Reservists in its ranks.

And it is their experience of the most demanding situations – as well as their medical expertise – that is helping make a difference in this dangerous and most unconventional of battles. ■

# WIRED UP WARRIORS

Signallers became a corps in their own right 100 years ago this month and since then they've become an increasingly vital part of the front-line fight

**I**N THE space of 100 years the Royal Corps of Signals has evolved from being a relatively small band of men helping commanders communicate via lamps, carrier pigeons and rudimentary wireless sets to a cutting-edge offensive formation that has the potential to defeat an enemy before a bullet is even fired.

The power of cyber warfare is at the heart of this capability and UK defence is rapidly ramping up its skills in this area – with the Royal Signals at the very heart of the new structures.

Next month 13th Signal Regiment is being reformed and will operate as part of the Defence Cyber Security Operations Centre (page 44). It will be a key component of 1st Signal Brigade, which itself is a major cog in the Service's latest hybrid warfare formation, 6th Division. »



A signals unit erecting a radio mast on one of the Normandy beaches, June 1944

» This is also made up of 11th Signal Brigade, 1st Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Brigade, 77th Brigade and the Specialist Infantry Group. It is the Army's first designated information warfare group whose specific task is to keep pace with the increasingly sophisticated and ever-diversifying range of electronic and online threats.

Announcing the formation of 6th Division, Commander Field Army, Lt Gen Ivan Jones, said it would help address the "grey zone" of actions by state and non-state adversaries which do not fit into the normal designations of combat.

"We must be equally comfortable operating both above and below the threshold of conflict," he added.

The Royal Signals personnel have certainly demonstrated this through the years and their influence on events on the battlefield has steadily risen to the highpoint they enjoy now.

The Telegraph Battalion of around the turn of the 20th century had 12 officers and 331 soldiers. It went on to become the Signal Service, under the Royal Engineers, and during the Battle of the Somme in 1916 erected 43,000 miles of overhead wire and 7,000 miles of buried cables. By the end of the First World War it had 70,000 men.

Improvements in transport and the development of aviation called for a more innovative approach to communications and it was realised this should be the responsibility of a service in which signalling developments would have top priority.

On June 28, 1920 a separate Corps of Signals was formed and within six weeks was designated "Royal", with King George V approving the corps motto of "swift and sure" in 1929.

The corps' personnel served with the Army everywhere, often in small numbers and desperate situations – in Burma and Palestine, for example – and on expeditions through the North African desert, to Mount Everest and to the Arctic and Antarctic. Praise was given for their admirable work during the disastrous earthquake at Quetta, in what was then British India, in 1935.

When the Second World War began the corps comprised 2,000 officers and 35,000 soldiers.

By its end there were 8,518 officers and 142,472 men, excluding the Indian Signal Corps. Radio and radar had matured and the armoured command vehicle, in which the commander conducts the battle sitting beside his radio operators, had been developed.

The 1944 D-Day assault was based on radio communications, as was the rapid advance eastward across Europe.

Cable and landline carried crucial administrative traffic, while committed despatch riders kept the personal service alive – and carrier pigeons were still being used.

One, William of Orange, retained in Arnhem by signalmen who remained with the wounded after the withdrawal of airborne troops, was awarded the Dickin medal (the animal VC) after flying 260 miles to England in 4hrs 25mins.

Since the Second World War the corps has »

# From mirrors to megabytes

In the past century the Royal Signals have developed a wide diversity of skills in communications, electronic and cyber warfare and countermeasures. Some of the technologies they have adopted and adapted over the years to enhance command and control include...

## Wireless

For the first decades of the new corps' existence the telegraph line remained the primary form of communication and traditional means such as despatch riders, pigeons, flags, lights and mirrors (heliographs) continued to be used, but were slow. To enable command and control in mobile and distant operations the Royal Signals developed their expertise in wireless communications. In North Africa the Long Range Desert Group (formed by a Royal Signals brigadier) worked the No. 11 Set – designed with a range of 20 miles – over distances of up

to 1,000 miles by bouncing the radio waves off the ionosphere. Armoured command vehicles were also fitted with radios and revolutionised communications on the move by keeping close to the tank squadrons and ensuring good communications between the units.



## Mobile trunk systems

The corps' planning wing realised that replacing line connections with inter-connected mobile radio links could lead to a resilient and mobile trunk telephone and telegraph system. The Bruin was mounted in both wheeled and tracked vehicles and connected formation headquarters and units by transmitting both voice and teleprinter traffic using multi-channel ultra-high frequency radios. It came into operation with the British Army of the Rhine in 1968 and remained operational until 1985.



## Radio relay

Until the 1950s, wireless comms were high frequency but prone to interference and had a tendency to fade. Very high, ultra high and super high frequency (SHF) transmissions were far clearer, but their range was limited. A solution was to link headquarters with radios in relays. The No. 10 Set was the technological wonder of its time, the first multi-channel SHF radio relay equipment in the world, proving its worth during the advance into Germany in 1945. On many occasions it provided the only communications between the main and tactical headquarters. By the end of the

Second World War a chain of No. 10 Set relay stations stretched from Luneburg, in Germany, to Brussels. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery said: "No other army, allied or hostile, possessed equipment equally effective in the role."



## Voice encryption

Using machines, like the German Enigma, or paper based systems to code messages was a laborious and time consuming process. Automated encryption, making voice or data sent by radio or telephone line secure, speeded up the process considerably. The BID/150 Delphi (pictured below)

created the first secure speech system. It was in service from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. Also in the mid-1960s, the Alvis BID/610, in conjunction with the BID/700, went further and encrypted the silences between messages, as well as the messages themselves. This stopped the enemy gaining intelligence by spotting patterns.



## Satellite communications

Long distance communications from overseas back to the UK had, since the Second World War, relied on high frequency radio but that all changed with the advent of satellite communications. In 1966 the corps participated in the first US military satellite system and then later established two transportable satellite communications TSC 500 stations. These were very large and when one of the stations

deployed on exercise to Kenya in the early 1970s, it took one Belfast and four C-130 transport plane lifts to get it and the crew there. The Royal Signals and Radar Establishment (RSRE) then developed a boxed satellite communications station, the TSC 502, and a vehicle-borne set, the VSC 501. The TSC 502 was first deployed on operations in Zimbabwe in 1980 and then to the Falklands in 1982.



## First mobile phone system

When Ptarmigan entered service in 1984 it was the most advanced communications tool in the world. It was a digital, mobile, encrypted, battlefield-wide area network system that incorporated an early form of email. It also provided a single channel radio access terminal with the first direct dial digital mobile phone system. The main difference when compared with today's smartphones is that each

unit weighed around 3.8kg. As personnel moved through an area they would automatically pick up a signal from the closest base station which each served an area of around 15km radius – just like today's mobile phone network.





## Software-defined radio

The limiting factor with traditional military radio was that if you wanted to move to a new frequency band or modulation type then you usually needed to change the radio. This meant keeping a family of different devices, but software-defined radio enables a single device to deliver communications across the spectrum and be switched around according to the conditions. The AN/PRC-117F device can be carried in a backpack or mounted in a vehicle or aircraft. It provides

secure line-of-sight data or voice communications for up to 20km, or over the horizon using its satellite communications function. Weighing just 5.5kg with batteries, it is smaller and lighter than rival systems and allows Nato partners to talk securely with each other. The 117F became the lynchpin of communications in Afghanistan due to its ability to provide voice communications across terrain where normal radio communications would have been almost impossible.

## Data networks

With military operations becoming ever more reliant on digital systems, building robust networks has become critical. High-capacity data radio sets, developed in around 2005, radically increased the amount of information – data or voice – that could be transmitted at any one time across the Bowman radio network. Providing a step change in sharing information on the move, the devices automatically form fully connected and autonomous ad-hoc networks (which means they do not rely on pre-existing infrastructure, such as routers or

access points). The networks are self-forming and self-healing, meaning soldiers aren't required to spend time creating new communication links.



been actively employed wherever the British Army has been operating, including Korea, Malaya, Kenya, Cyprus, Suez, Brunei, Borneo, Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Germany and Northern Ireland.

It also worked on many other outposts and projects, such as the nuclear tests in the Pacific region during the late 1950s.

Over the last couple of decades major developments in radio technology, especially with the advent of satellite-based communications, and the internet, have led to the corps becoming a very sharp part of the Army's teeth – and it is now equipped with some of the most highly advanced hardware in the Service.

"Over the past century, we've transitioned from despatch riders and cable layers to becoming specialists in cyberspace operations and information warfare ready to counter the increasingly complex threats of the modern era," said Col Jason Gunning, Corps Colonel Royal Signals.

"This year, we not only remember our history, but also celebrate our people and their achievements, and look forward to an exciting future as we adapt to meet the rapidly changing and complex challenges of the 21st century". ■

## Signal regiment's new pulse

13th Signal Regiment is reforming in response to the development of cyber capabilities within defence.

In addition to the provision of specialist technical support, it will have an added cyber capability provided by 224 Signal Squadron, which contains cyber protection teams.

Meanwhile, 233 Signal Squadron will focus on supporting information communication systems, while 259 Signal Squadron will have a mixed focus, including whole force capability development and support to global communication information services.

"In today's ever more connected world, protecting our assets has never been more important," Lt Col Edward Swift, Commanding Officer of 13th Signal Regiment, told *Soldier*.

"This unit will contribute to the Defence Cyber Security Operations Centre allowing us to enhance our capabilities, both at home and abroad. This means we can better protect the Army's digital enterprise and offer more training and real-life deployment opportunities, in addition to exercises."

The history of the regiment, which was disbanded following Army restructuring in 1994, lies in the growth of wireless technology in the First and Second World Wars, when it was known as the 1st Special Wireless Group, before being renamed 13th (Radio) Signal Regiment in 1959.

Brig John Collyer, Commander 1st Signal Brigade, said: "13th Signal Regiment will provide a pivotal capability within 1st (United Kingdom) Signal Brigade.

"Its reformation is an exciting step forward as the Royal Signals, Army and wider defence drives up its potency and resilience in the information environment and cyber domain."

- Many thanks to Nick Kendall-Carpenter, director of The Royal Signals Museum, for his help with this article. The museum is located at Blandford Camp in Dorset and in normal circumstances is open to the public. For information go to: [www.royalsignalmuseum.co.uk](http://www.royalsignalmuseum.co.uk)



# BRIGHT SPARKS

Empowerment comes to life in engineering exercise

**E**MPOWERING leadership is at the heart of the Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Mark Carleton-Smith's strategy for maximising talent.

Encouraging input, collaborative planning and allowing others to contribute, rather than just following blindly, are all part of the latest thinking – and one unit of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers has taken this philosophy on board in the latest evolution of its training programme. »



» The officer commanding 10 Armoured Company, 4 Close Support Battalion, REME has overseen the adaptation of an exercise previously aimed at vehicle recovery mechanics to bring personnel from all the corps' trades together to train in a more integrated way.

The aim is to have young, relatively inexperienced troops feeling free to think laterally, challenge established procedures and cross-germinate ideas between personnel, says Maj David Reith (REME, pictured below), the organiser of the package.

"In combat it's not neat and tidy, it's chaotic and messy and soldiers need to think on their feet and utilise every strength and resource around them," he adds.

"The induction phase and core trade training provided at MoD Lyneham is great for processing people through to the Field Army and arming them with the knowledge they will need in order to do their jobs, but what it lacks is context and that's what we are aiming to provide here."

Literally just days before the lockdown period began, the unit created a three-week package, starting in Longmoor Camp, near Bordon, to stretch the troops at a crucial career point – as they move from class three personnel, who know the fundamentals of the trade and can follow detailed instructions, to class twos, able to lead a team and solve problems without close supervision in a complex environment.

Around 100 soldiers from all REME trades trained together and the first segment of the exercise contained challenges designed to polish individual knowledge and skills.

"We focused on boosting their trust in themselves by pushing their own ability, so they have the knowledge and confidence to think through problems on an individual level," says Maj Reith.

"Then we moved on to building those same values within a small team.

"Lots of people in the Army talk about empowerment but you can't achieve that if you don't have trust in yourself – you need to be able to contribute with confidence and not worry about what your superiors think about you.

"I kept saying 'I want people to make mistakes in training because in my experience that's how you learn quickly and most safely'.

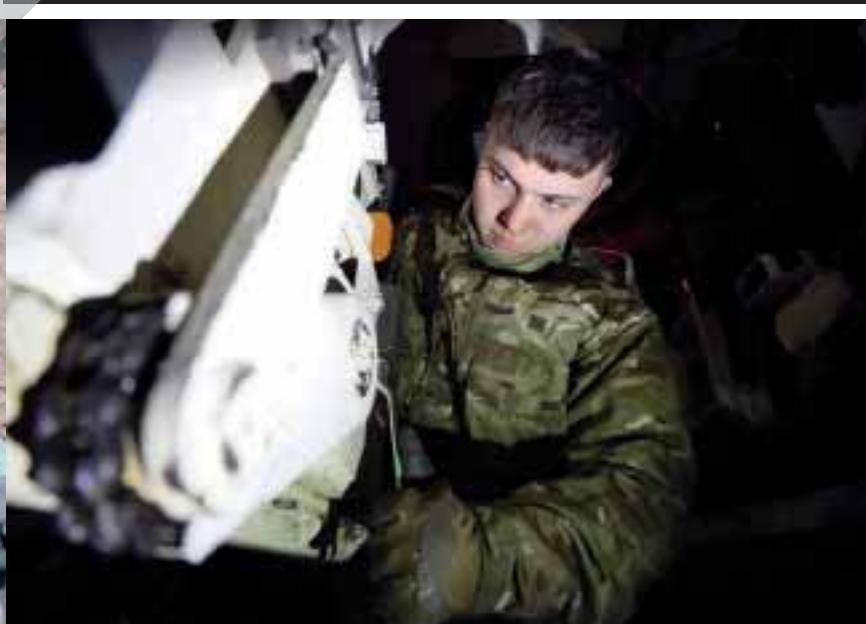
"When it goes well you might feel glad, but you don't reflect on why it went well and it could have been 90 per cent luck."

"We want to see improvement and innovation, so for every 100 things they try to innovate, 99 will probably fail and if we're fortunate we'll end up with one that works.

"But we need to understand whether it was down to luck on one occasion or is it an innovation that really works and we should keep?"

Armourers, some of whom could be deployed with specialised infantry, received tuition on foreign weapon systems from members of the elite Close





Protection Unit – Royal Military Police who specialise in protecting high ranking military personnel and VIPs.

Meanwhile, metalsmiths and recovery mechanics rotated through various training scenarios, the latter engaging in complex off-road recoveries with winches and cranes under minimum supervision.

Small teams of electronics technicians were challenged to build bespoke printed circuit boards, while vehicle mechanics expanded their knowledge of replacing suspension, steering, engines and transmissions.

The last part of the exercise moved to Tidworth and was designed to test the soldiers' acquired training, knowledge and new-found confidence to extract the most from a multi-disciplined team.

While the serial was curtailed due to the untimely arrival of the coronavirus restrictions the basic principle remained in place – young platoon commanders given teams of mixed trades and a list of very difficult, maybe impossible, challenges to solve in 24 hours.

“It’s about using their own brain power and tapping into their colleagues’ as well,” says WO2 Alex Lambert (REME).

“They were given tasks such as vehicles broken, bogged down or damaged by an IED strike and these tested not only the junior soldiers but the command cells because they needed to prioritise – do they tow or transport the assets in, or are some repairable with salvaged parts?”

In one case a laptop connection in a logistic support vehicle used for diagnostics broke apart, but the electrical technicians worked out where the circuits were routed in the interior and wired in another contact point.

“That was a real eye-opener for some,” says Maj Reith.

“If you put a small team of very inexperienced soldiers of different trades, who are each maybe less than a year into their careers, together on one platform there is probably not a single technical problem they couldn’t solve. »

» "More often than not they simply lack the self-assurance to have a go because they haven't tried it before and are not used to listening to someone from another trade group give their view, so it's about giving them confidence to work with others."

"The earlier we get our soldiers to realise how bright and capable people in all of our trades are and how they can work with each other, the more effective they will be in the field."

Cfn James Chant, a class three recovery mechanic, was one of those who believes the exercise has accelerated his knowledge and development.

"I went there almost straight from initial training and learnt loads through the whole experience," he says.

"It taught us that the standard way of doing things isn't always the best way.

"We were encouraged to come up with ideas, think differently



about problems and if that was simply stupid the instructors would tell us. However, if it was workable, but different to what we're used to, then they would advise us on the safety factors we had to consider.

"There were lots of complex jobs – we had one vehicle on top of another and had to work out how to get it off and rescue it in the pitch black.

"The indirect pulls were challenging too; we were required to get a Land Rover out of a ditch but there were no trees so we had to put an anchor bed tool into the ground using nine large pins to secure it.

"We also had to do tree hopping, where in a dense forest you have to keep moving the pull (of the vehicle) from one tree to another to get it closer to the road.

"I feel loads more confident as a result of this – if I'd been sent out on a job before I wouldn't have known how to take the lead and get it done, but that's not the case now."

The intention is to stage this exercise again next year – and hopefully it can be completed unhindered by pandemics.

Commanders around the Field Army are already taking an interest in the concept and results of this package and want to see if it can be adapted to exercises involving other disciplines.

With the empowerment of junior soldiers viewed so positively by both senior officers and recruiters, the lessons learned by Maj Reith and his REME associates could yet have a major influence on future training doctrine. ■

# VIRTUAL VISION

Instructors and pupils have been getting creative to keep the training pipeline open...

**T**HE lockdown period may have forced training establishments to send their students home, but the full syllabus of courses has continued – the cracks of SA-80s replaced by clicks on a keyboard, the shout of “Yes Sir” supplanted with “Ack” in the comment box.

Approximately 3,700 soldiers and 500 officers attending Regular basic training have been part of virtual platoons since the end of March, using well-known online conferencing platforms and intranet sites such as Defence Connect to not only converse with instructors, but participate in group tuition and receive feedback. Reserve training has also been administered and delivered successfully using similar methods. ■

Report: Steve Muncey



» While working from home would seem a natural fit for the theory-based segments of these courses, the same can't be said of some of the more practical elements, but Capt Joe Read (AGC (ETS)) at Initial Training Group, who has been providing support to instructing staff in making online sessions feasible, says precious little of the syllabus has had to be left out during the lockdown.

"We've found that the only part of basic training we could not fully touch upon was shooting," he adds.

"However, what we have been able to do is host rifle lessons, so the students discuss and learn about different aspects of the weapon and how it works.

"Instructors have also managed to cover things like voice procedures using conferencing platforms as a 'radio', fire control orders through shared screen landscapes and some have even done CBRN lessons.

"A group of Winchester trainees had two section commanders delivering the training over a virtual meeting platform, one provided commentary while the other demonstrated how to use the full CBRN gear through a live video feed.

"Between them they talked the trainees through the kit and even how to apply Fuller's Earth for decontamination."

The virtual sessions have been supervised by around 1,000 training staff spread across Army Recruiting and Initial Training Command (ARITC), including The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the training regiments at Pirbright and Winchester, the Army Foundation College at Harrogate and the Infantry Training Centre at Catterick.

The instructors received assistance early on from ARITC in adapting their standard courses and programmes for an online environment.

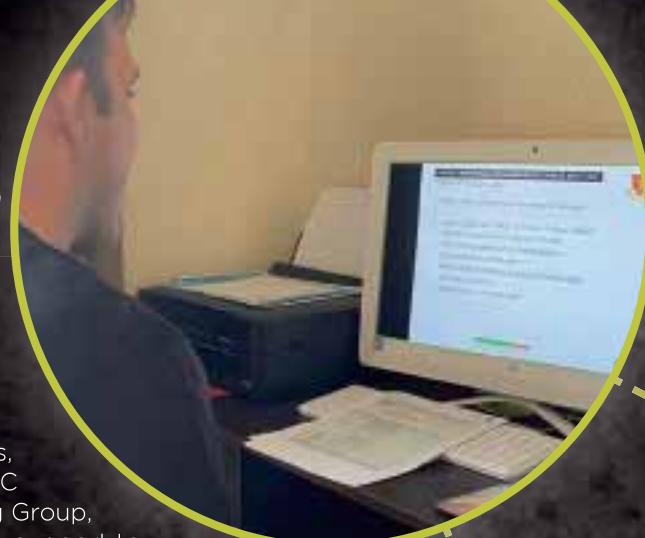
"We realised we needed to enable trainers to work in a different way," says Lt Col Pete Firth (AGC (ETS)), head of learning and development at ARITC. "So, we provided a dedicated online hub that has all the resources and links the staff need to upskill themselves."

However, commanders at ARITC have not been overly prescriptive in what and how the instructing teams should teach lessons.

"A lot of the virtual platoons are doing things very differently and we're happy with that – it needs to work for them because trainees will be coming back to establishments in stages so virtual training will be around for some time," adds Lt Col Firth.

"Also, we are dealing with trainees at all the different stages in the training process."

At AFC Harrogate, the age of the junior soldiers alone meant instructors had to put a lot of thought into the style and structure presentations.



"With this audience, creativity is key," explains Cpl Peter Tague (R Signals), one of the instructors at the college.

"The generation Zers coming through now were almost born with a phone in their hand and we know they are used to learning via YouTube videos, with research showing they tend to look for the shortest one but not necessarily the most comprehensive.

"Apparently, you only have eight seconds to get their attention so we've had to think long and hard about that."

Cpl Tague decided to produce a series of his own video blogs to supplement the live conference sessions.

"I made my own films where I've used drones to make my presentations more dramatic and employed special effects and music to make them more engaging, or funny, where appropriate," he explains.

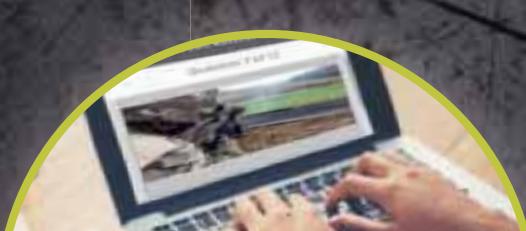
"I've then shared them with the junior soldiers via private Facebook groups and have also put them on Defence Connect."

Only time will tell how successful they've been but the feedback so far is positive, with more than 90 per cent of 1,557 students surveyed by ARITC saying that staff had been able to motivate them to do some of their best work while virtual training.

Rct Dominic Payne, who was four weeks into his phase one course at Pirbright when he was sent home, doesn't feel his progress has been slowed by the move online.

"Maybe some of the practical elements have suffered a little but we've got around it when we can," he adds.

"For battlefield casualty drills, for instance, we've been





given a scenario – a deep laceration of the right thigh and severe abdominal bruising – and been asked to submit videos from home showing how we would treat the casualty.

"I constructed a 'body' by attaching a balloon with a drawn face to a pillow dressed in a hoodie and rolled up towels for legs and used household cable for a tourniquet. It worked really well."

OCdt Victoria Rawding-Guille, whose commissioning course at Sandhurst started in January, has found that her presentation skills haven't been tested as much as they might have been, however.

"Talking about your project into a device is not the same as standing up in front of a class full of people," she says.

"But, on the other hand, we've had extra time to explore core elements of the course, such as combat estimates, for example, much more widely than would normally have been the case."

"Also, the virtual platoon has kept us all in the loop and feeling connected."

"We've been doing more stuff online together, such as viewing webinars with different leaders to learn about and discuss their theories, and that's been a really positive aspect of all this for me."

The lockdown has had silver linings elsewhere in the training pipeline too, believes Capt Read.

"For phase one recruits it's advanced their collaborative nous as they've completed projects and had to present results to instructors in groups on screen," he says.

"They will be asked to develop these sorts of skills further into their careers through PNCO cadres and leadership training so it's all good prep for later on."

So much has been learnt about the potential of virtual training through the Covid-19 era that the whole area is going to be re-examined in the near future.

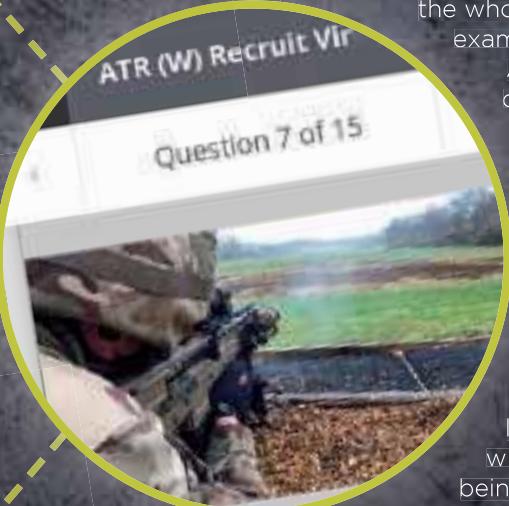
ARITC plans to look at how online sessions could be provided to new recruits in those days and weeks between signing on the dotted line to join up and physically arriving at a phase one training establishment.

"This whole experience has changed the way we are thinking and we are looking at what we can do with these soldiers-to-be before being allocated to a cohort and actually on-boarding," comments Lt Col Firth.

"We intend to conduct a pilot study some time later this year because there is a lot more we want to do on this front in the future."

"It's been a successful experience and it's definitely one that we want to develop further and take forward." ■

**“This whole experience has changed the way we are thinking”**



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### RMA SANDHURST

**June 1: Commissioning Course Short.** The course for Reserve and professionally qualified officers will not recommence before the above date.

**September 1: Late Entry Officers Course.** The course is suspended until the above date.

### INITIAL TRAINING GROUP

**June 1: Sport Coaching and Officials Courses.** All sport courses delivered by the Army School of Physical Training and the Army Sport Control Board are suspended and will not recommence before above date.

### ARMY PERSONNEL SUPPORT GROUP

**June 1: ALDP Military Education (ME).** This is currently suspended, training will not recommence before above date.

a. **Cpl ALDP ME** is suspended until September 30. An e-Learning course will be available to all cpl's from **October 1 until October 1, 2021**. This will replace Cpl ALDP ME delivery in an Army Education Centre.

b. **Sgt ALDP & WO CLM Pt 3** are suspended with courses due to recommence not before June 1.

c. Soldiers who will require an extension of ALDP/CLM deadlines owing to Covid-19 and/or service on Op Rescript will be eligible to apply for an extension of six months in addition to the existing extension policy.

**June 1: Military Analysis.** All courses are suspended with training not due to recommence before the above date.

a. The requirement to complete two MA modules to filter for promotion to major will be waivered with those running to BeL21 (November) required only to have completed one MA module.

**June 1: Junior Officer Leadership Programme 3.** All courses are suspended with training not due to recommence before above date.

a. A waiver will be in place to

### SCHEDULED RESUMPTION OF TRAINING as of May 22, 2020

allow Regular officers to attend JOTAC and/or promote to captain without JOLP3. All those receiving a waiver must complete JOLP prior to attendance on JCSC(L).

**Officer Commanding Discipline and Administration.** Remote delivery using the MK platform is currently being explored to best prepare those going into sub-unit command and adjutant appointments. OCDA must be conducted by those going into sub-unit command and some elements are required for adjutant appointments.

**All Arms Adjutant Course.** Is now scoping remote delivery of elements of the course dependant on the duration of social distancing restrictions. Officers must complete outstanding elements of the course at next available opportunity.

**Sub-Unit Commander's Management Course.** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before June 1. Officers must complete the course at the next available opportunity.

**ALDP Military Training (MT).** Courses (including distributed training outside the LWC) will resume at the earliest opportunity, though not before June 1, to maintain the flow of qualified commanders. Any changes to ALDP delivery must be endorsed by the TRA and authorised by LWC as the the Training Delivery Authority.

### JUNIOR STAFF CENTRE

**June 29: Junior Officer's Tactical Awareness Course.** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before above date.

a. Those (Regular and Reserve) due to promote to captain during 2020 will be eligible for promotion without attendance on JOTAC. However, JOTAC must be completed prior to filtering for the BeL.

**June 29: Junior Command and Staff Course (Land).** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before June 29.

a. The requirement to have JCSC(L) to filter for promotion to major will be waivered for those running to BeL21 (November). Those selected

on the BeL without JCSC(L) must complete the course prior to confirmation of sub-promotion.

### DEFENCE ACADEMY

**June 1: Battlespace Technology Course.** Will commence on above date initially using e-Learning with the residential phase commencing on July 6.

**Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land).** 16B course is continuing with the course delivered using distance learning. Options for the delivery of ICSC(L) 17, if social distancing guidance is still in place, are being considered and will be promulgated in due course.

**September 30: Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land Reserves).** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before above date.

**Advanced Command and Staff Course.** Has continued using distance learning and will conclude in July as originally scheduled. ACSC 24 will commence in September, if social distancing guidance is still in place the course will start using distance learning prior to switching to a residential course when conditions allow.

### GENERAL STAFF CENTRE

**September 8: Commanding Officer Designate Course.** Is currently suspended and residential training will not recommence before above date. Virtual delivery of key elements of the course is being explored and further details will be promulgated to those booked on the June course. Officers **must** return to complete remaining elements of the course at next available opportunity, additional capacity will be provided on the September and February courses.

**November 19: One Star Commander's Briefing.** Is currently suspended and residential training will not recommence before above date. A virtual briefing day was conducted on April 29, officers **must** complete outstanding elements of the course at the next available opportunity.

**General Staff Induction Course/ Army Generalship Programme.** Will recommence with the next

courses on November 2 and January 18, 2021 respectively. Officers must complete the course at the next available opportunity.

### ARITC STAFF LEADERSHIP SCHOOL

**June 1: Army Trainer Mentor.** Courses are to resume at the earliest opportunity, not before above date, to ensure continuity of the development, assurance and mentoring of Army trainers to enable the recovery phase and sustainment of inflow to the Army.

**June 1: Army Instructor Leader.** Courses are to resume at the earliest opportunity, not before above date, to ensure continuity of the development, assurance and mentoring of Army trainers to enable the recovery phase and sustainment of inflow to the Army.

**September 28: Regimental Sergeant Major Course.** Is currently suspended and training will not recommence before above date.

### ADVENTUROUS TRAINING GROUP (ARMY)

**June 15: Adventurous Training.** Courses are currently suspended and instructor training will not recommence before above date to provide the capacity and currency to recommence courses not before June 29.

a. The UATO course will be delivered remotely. If an individual's qualification has expired and there is a requirement for the award, HQ ATG(A) will issue, on application (during Covid-19 to [Gary.Logan303@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Gary.Logan303@mod.gov.uk)), a six-month extension on a case by case basis.

### FUNCTIONAL SKILLS

**Functional Skills support** is being delivered remotely; personnel should contact their local AEC for further information. In the event that Covid-19 significantly impacts on the ability of personnel to meet the

**Continued on page 54**

## SCHEDULED RESUMPTION OF TRAINING CONTINUED

FS promotion requirements outlined in ACSO 3225, a policy waiver may be possible to enable individuals to be considered at promotion boards. Where waivers are granted, any soldiers provisionally selected for promotion must attain the relevant qualification prior to substantiating in rank. The requirement to hold the relevant FS qualification prior to attendance on ALDP ME has not changed. This guidance is valid until June 30 and will be reviewed at this point. Waivers to any requirements in FS policy may only be granted by Army HQ Pers Pol, AH L&D (TRA). If granted, Pers Pol will notify the relevant APC desk officer.

## APPRENTICESHIPS

Apprenticeship delivery will continue where feasible to do so. Where this is not possible, apprenticeships will be suspended in accordance with Department of Education direction for suspensions of apprenticeships which has been promulgated separately. Where apprenticeships are linked to soldier career progression, individual cap badge waiver policy applies. New enrolments will proceed in line with the restart of ITT and STT.

## DIRECTORY

**ABF The Soldiers' Charity:**  
020 7901 8900;  
[www.soldierscharity.org](http://www.soldierscharity.org)

**Armed Forces Buddhist Society:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;  
[www.afbs-uk.org](http://www.afbs-uk.org)

**Armed Forces Christian Union:**  
01793 783123;  
[www.afcu.org.uk](http://www.afcu.org.uk)

**Armed Forces Muslim Association:**  
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;  
[www.afma.org.uk](http://www.afma.org.uk)

**Armed Services Advice Project:**  
0808 800 1007;  
[www.adviceasap.org.uk](http://www.adviceasap.org.uk)

**Army Families Federation:**  
01264 382324;  
mil 94391 2324;  
[www.aff.org.uk](http://www.aff.org.uk)

**Army LGBT Forum:**  
[www.armylgbt.org.uk](http://www.armylgbt.org.uk);

[chair@armylgbt.org.uk](mailto:chair@armylgbt.org.uk)

**Army Libraries:**  
01252 340094

**Army Ornithological Society:**  
[www.armybirding.org.uk](http://www.armybirding.org.uk)

**Army Welfare Service:**  
01904 882053;  
[www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support](http://www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support)

**Big White Wall:**  
[www.bigwhitewall.com](http://www.bigwhitewall.com)

**Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:**  
020 8590 1124;  
[www.blesma.org](http://www.blesma.org)

**Blind Veterans UK:**  
(formerly St Dunstan's)  
020 7723 5021;  
[www.blindveterans.org.uk](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk)

**Care After Combat:**  
[www.careaftercombat.org](http://www.careaftercombat.org)

**Career Transition Partnership:**  
020 7469 6661

**Children's Education Advisory Service:**  
01980 618244;  
[dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk](mailto:dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk)

**Combat Stress:**  
24-hour Mental Health Helpline for service personnel and their families  
0800 323 4444;  
[www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)

**Defence Humanists:**  
[www.defencehumanists.org.uk](http://www.defencehumanists.org.uk)

**Erskine:**  
0141 814 4569; [www.erskine.org.uk](http://www.erskine.org.uk)

**Family Escort Service:**  
020 7463 9249

**Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:**  
07713 752901;  
[www.felixfund.org.uk](http://www.felixfund.org.uk)

**Forcesline:**  
UK – 0800 731 4880; Germany – 0800 1827 395; Cyprus – 080 91065; Falklands – #6111; from operational theatres – Paradigm Services \*201; from anywhere in the world (CSL operator will call back) – 0044 1980 630854

**Forces Pension Society:**  
020 7820 9988

**Help for Heroes:**  
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;  
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**Heroes Welcome:**

[www.heroeswelcome.co.uk](http://www.heroeswelcome.co.uk)

**HighGround:**  
[www.highground-uk.org.uk](http://www.highground-uk.org.uk)

**Joint Service Housing Advice Office:**  
01252 787574

**Medal Office:**  
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

**Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):**  
[www.mutualsupport.org.uk](http://www.mutualsupport.org.uk)

**National Ex-Services Association:**  
[www.nesa.org.uk](http://www.nesa.org.uk)

**National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:**  
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;  
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**PoppyScotland:**  
0131 557 2782;  
[www.poppyscotland.org.uk](http://www.poppyscotland.org.uk)

**Regular Forces' Employment Assn:**  
0121 236 0058;  
[www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk)

**Remount:** 01451 850 341;  
[www.remount.net](http://www.remount.net)

**Royal British Legion:**  
0808 802 8080;  
[www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)

**Royal British Legion Scotland:**  
0131 550 1583;  
[www.legionscotland.org.uk](http://www.legionscotland.org.uk)

**RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:**  
01622 795900;  
[www.rbli.co.uk](http://www.rbli.co.uk)

**Scottish Veterans' Residences:**  
0131 556 0091;  
[www.svronline.org](http://www.svronline.org)

**Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:**  
01748 833797;  
[www.spaces.org.uk](http://www.spaces.org.uk)

**SSAFA:** 0845 1300 975;  
[www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)

**Stoll:**  
020 7385 2110;  
[www.stoll.org.uk](http://www.stoll.org.uk)

**The Not Forgotten Association:**  
020 7730 2400;  
[www.nfassociation.org](http://www.nfassociation.org)

**The Poppy Factory:**  
020 8940 3305;  
[www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)

**The Royal Star and Garter Homes:**  
020 8481 7676;

[www.starandgarter.org](http://www.starandgarter.org)

**The Veterans Charity:**  
01753 653772;  
[info@veteranscharity.org.uk](mailto:info@veteranscharity.org.uk)

**Troop Aid:**  
0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260;  
[troopaid@icloud.com](mailto:troopaid@icloud.com);  
[www.troopaid.info](http://www.troopaid.info)

**uk4u Thanks!:**  
01798 812081;  
[www.uk4u.org](http://www.uk4u.org)

**Veterans Welfare Service:**  
0808 1914 218 (from the UK);  
0044 1253 866043 (from overseas);  
[www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service](http://www.gov.uk/government/groups/veterans-welfare-service)

**WRVS Services Welfare:**  
02920 232 668



## SEARCHLINE

Hugh Corby is trying to trace the military medals and citations of his late father, **Capt Eric Corby (RA)**, who served as a forward observation officer during the Second World War. Anyone with information is asked to ring him on 07961 606766.

**The Women's Royal Army Corps Association** has launched a campaign to find the oldest British female Second World War veteran. To nominate someone you think may meet the criteria visit [www.wracsassociation.org](http://www.wracsassociation.org) or use #FindOurOATS on social media.

Anita Louise Watson is trying to trace her father, **James Watson** who served as a lance corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers during the 1970s. Anyone with information should email [anitawatson164@gmail.com](mailto:anitawatson164@gmail.com)

Jacqui Ritchie, general manager at **St John's Wood Care Centre, 48 Boundary Road, London** is trying to find more information about the building's former life as an Army barracks. The centre celebrates its 20th anniversary in October and is keen to invite veterans to the celebration. Anyone with memories to share should email [stjohnswoodmanager@bondcare.co.uk](mailto:stjohnswoodmanager@bondcare.co.uk)

The Air Training Corps, now part of the Royal Air Force Air Cadets, will celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2021. To help mark the occasion, they would like to interview those who were cadets when it launched in 1941 to capture memories of those early days. Email [al.munns@btinternet.com](mailto:al.munns@btinternet.com)



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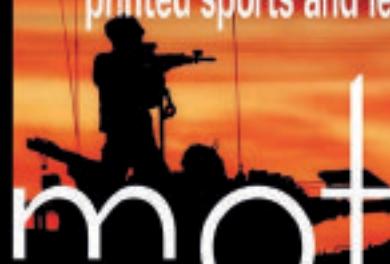
   
   
   
 

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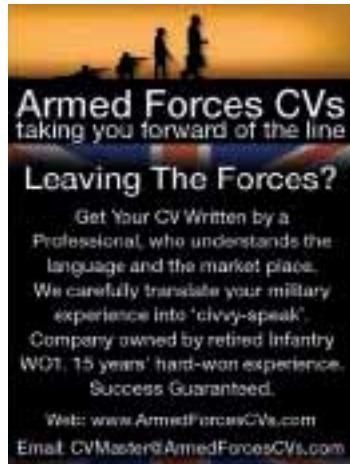
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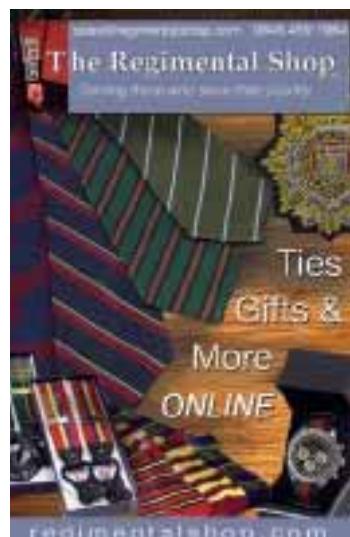
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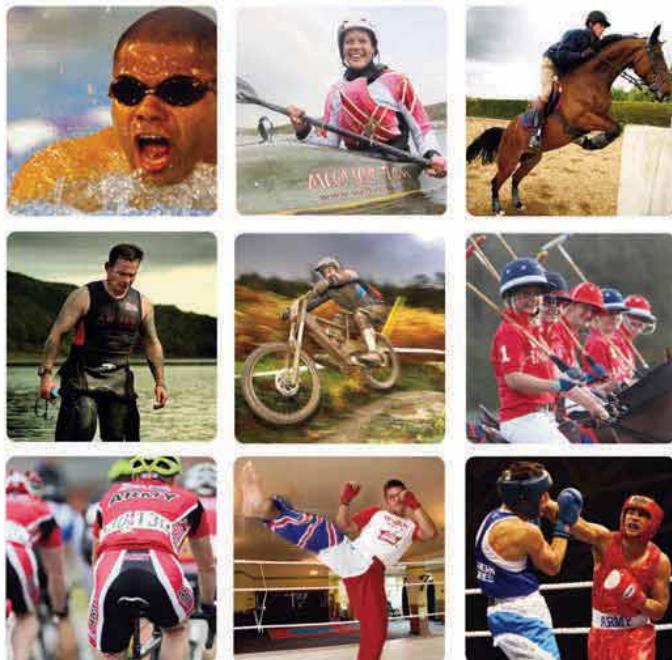


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# REVIEWS



**P61**  
BOOKS

**P63**  
MOVIES

**P65**  
GAMES

## MUSIC

### GETTIN' WILD

**Soldier-turned-DJ adds to the summer vibe on new track**

MUSIC producer, DJ and Army officer Maj Nick Burdick (RA) is back with his latest dance track, *Gettin' Wild*.

Featuring on Toolroom Records' highly anticipated summer soundtrack *House Party*, the artist, who performs under the name Kid Cut, described his latest offering as "still fun, but with a slight twist of sophistication".

Despite the music industry being one of the latest casualties of the global pandemic and amid wide-scale event cancellations, the crisis actually provided an unlikely opportunity for the Royal Horse Artillery battery commander.





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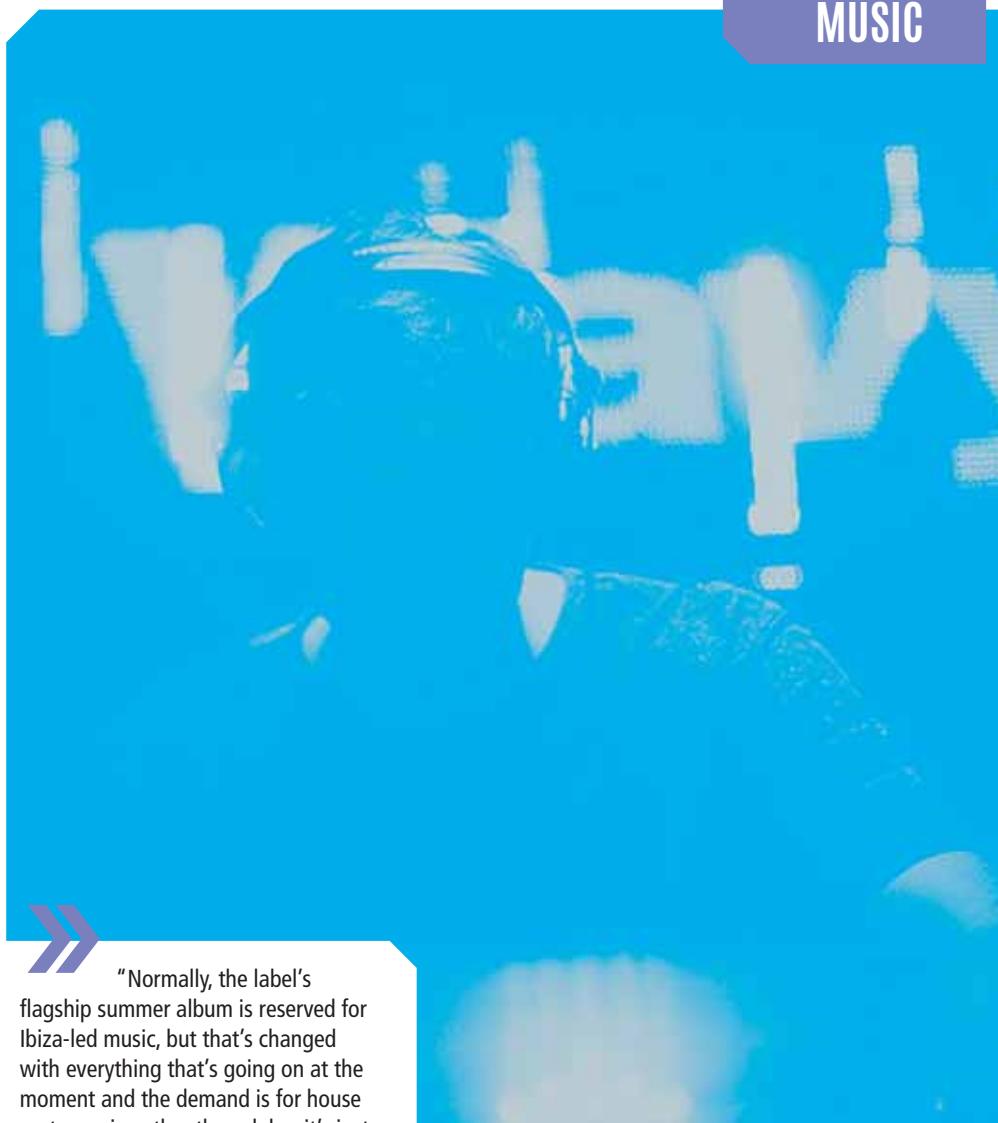


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## MUSIC



“Normally, the label’s flagship summer album is reserved for Ibiza-led music, but that’s changed with everything that’s going on at the moment and the demand is for house party music, rather than club – it’s just more current,” he explained.

Since his last appearance in *Soldier* Maj Burdick has taken a year-long career break from the military to focus on music full-time.

In addition to studying online and improving his production skills at his home studio, he managed to fit in some globe-trotting adventures and attended music conferences and networking events in Amsterdam and Ibiza – the latter of which provided the inspiration for *Gettin’ Wild*.

“I wanted to produce something that took me back to the dance floor in Ibiza,” he said. “I wanted to make something that would put a smile on people’s faces.”

So how does he feel now he’s had a taste of life in the music world and is back in the Army full-time?

“It feels great actually,” the Serviceman explained. “To return as a

battery commander and be in charge of my own unit is a huge privilege, particularly with everything that’s going on in the world at the minute.

“It couldn’t be a better time to be back in the military.

“But I’m also really grateful to the record label for all the effort they’ve put into me.

“I’m still making music in my spare time and I’m hoping to have something else to release later this year.” ■

• *House Party* is available to stream/download on all the major music services. Search for “Toolroom House Party” or visit [toolroom.lnk.to/House\\_PartyTS](http://toolroom.lnk.to/House_PartyTS)

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INTERVIEW: GEORGINA COUPE, *SOLDIER*

## BOOKS

### BOOK RELEASES



**Roger So Far**  
by Nick Kendall-Carpenter

AMPS and ohms are not normally subjects to stir the interest of military historians, but the author of this title, by cleverly interspersing the “dry” bits with factual nuggets and personal anecdotal evidence, has succeeded in creating a highly readable and informative book. This is not a traditional history of the Royal Corps of Signals, more a coffee table-style offering, that will appeal to the cognoscenti and younger readers alike. It provides a wealth of information and the format breaks a very detailed account into digestible chunks. Well illustrated and filled with fascinating photographs, it comes highly recommended.

**Alistair Clark, ex-R Signals**



**Patrol and Warrior for the Working Day**  
IWM Wartime classics

THESE latest releases in the Imperial War Museum’s continuing wartime classics series bring two different theatres of the Second World War to life through fictional accounts. In *Patrol*, a jaded company commander draws on his last reserves of strength and courage to lead six men on a dangerous mission. Based on author Frank Majdalany’s own experiences in North Africa, the authenticity and realism shine through. It is a great read and certainly worthy of inclusion in the collection. Likewise, *Warrior for the Working Day*, by Peter Elstob, is a rare piece of prose. A thinly disguised biography of his time with the 3rd Royal Tank Regiment, it focuses on the campaigns from Normandy through to Germany, but very much from the perspective of an individual crewman. As such, it is easy to read and believable, powerfully portraying a soldier on the edge of his mental and physical limits. Both of these books get top marks from me.

**Andy Kay, ex-RS**



● *Lancaster: The Forging of a Very British Legend*, published by Simon and Schuster, is available now and priced £20

## PICK OF THE MONTH:

# LANCASTER

## Bomber Command veterans recall their war

IT WAS a grim nightly ritual at the height of the Second World War – aerial armadas from the Royal Air Force streaming into the heart of the Third Reich.

Droning thousands of feet above occupied territory and enduring frostbite-inducing temperatures of -40 degrees Celsius, the Allied bomber crews were hammered by flak and fighter attacks as they headed for targets deep in the enemy heartland.

When the conflict was over, 55,000 of the 125,000 young men who had served with the force were dead and more than 8,000 had been injured. Some 10,000 survived being shot down to become prisoners of war.

Estimates suggest that between 300,000 and 600,000 German civilians lost their lives in the

raids – a statistic that would mire those who served in controversy and leave them facing uncomfortable questions for generations to come.

Casting its silhouette over this whole episode is Bomber Command's workhorse, the Avro Lancaster. And writer John Nichol uses the story of this iconic aircraft – as told by the few remaining veterans who flew in it – as the means to provide a fresh insight into what was one of the war's most brutal campaigns.

"The situation was horrific, both for aircrews and people on the ground," the author highlights. "But from the outset the attacks on cities were designed to hit the enemy's industrial centres – there was no other way to prosecute them."

"Back in the 1940s there were none of the laser guided bombs or precision munitions that we have today – those flying were also at the forefront of a fight against another nation state; they were in a battle for survival."

With an average age of 22, the Lancaster airmen were drawn from every civvy street niche, from butchers to bank clerks – coming together to face a proven enemy. Of nearly 7,400 aircraft built, half were destroyed by enemy action.

"Many of the former crewmen I interviewed had very little experience of life when they joined Bomber Command," recalls Nichol, himself an

ex-RAF Tornado navigator who endured Iraqi captivity during the 1991 Gulf conflict.

"They were not much more than teenagers when they went to war – being so young they had such little experience of life yet massive exposure to death.

"One veteran told me about his feelings as he floated down in a parachute towards Berlin after his aircraft was destroyed – thinking he might not survive he suddenly realised that he had never had intimate relations with a woman."

While Bomber Command's tactics had been criticised during the war, the ordeal of the airmen continued long after the battle as the huge civilian cost became clear. Their campaign went largely unrecognised and was far less discussed for decades.

It took until 2012 for a memorial to the force to be unveiled in London's Green Park – with a clasp for veterans to wear with the 1939-45 Star instituted the following year.

*Lancaster: The Forging of a Very British Legend* tackles a complex subject with sensitivity, plus an impressive level of empathy for the era in which the events happened.

As well as drawing on material from his interviews with some 30 Bomber Command veterans, Nichol uses harrowing accounts from German civilians caught up in the destruction of major cities such as Hamburg.

With a sound grasp of aviation history, he additionally provides an overview of the developments leading to the European air war and its wider context.

Despite being focused on a machine, *Lancaster* is – at its heart – a very human story of courage and tragedy that deserves to be preserved for future generations.

"It is important that we understand the reality of what these men were asked to do," Nichol concludes.

"They did understand the effect of their actions, and that people under the bombing were being killed in the thousands."

"They were sometimes fearful, and they did think deeply about what they had been called upon to do – but this was the way of their war and the reality they had to face."

### VERDICT:

A harrowing story of courage and tragedy, very well told



INTERVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER



## PICK OF THE MONTH:

## THE LAST FULL MEASURE

Stirring war drama tells real-life tale of courage

► BASED on true events, this is the story of the quest to see a pararescue jumper properly recognised for his heroic deeds in Vietnam.

Department of Defense lawyer Scott Huffman (**Sebastian Stan** – *The Avengers* franchise) is tasked to ensure that the Medal of Honor is awarded to William H Pitsenbarger (**Jeremy Irvine** – *War Horse*) for his actions in the battle of Xa Cam My.

On April 11, 1966, during Op Abilene, Airman First Class Pitsenbarger dropped in to aid the men of the 1st Infantry Division, waving off his helicopter to remain with the troops on the ground after their medic was injured.

Huffman's part comes 30 years later as he tracks down the surviving veterans of the mission, including an all-star ensemble of **William Hurt, Samuel L Jackson, Ed Harris** and **Peter Fonda**, in his last, posthumous role.

They tell him they owe their lives to "Pits" and the fight begins to uncover official documents that had been buried by the same Pentagon officials who downgraded his original medal to the Air Force Cross.

He also meets with Pitsenbarger's mother (**Dianne Ladd**) and father (**Christopher Plummer**), who by now is suffering with terminal cancer.

The movie had several military advisers, including Dale Dye – who previously leant his expertise to *Band of Brothers* and *Saving*

*Private Ryan* – and retired Air Force senior master sergeant John Pighini, a decorated Vietnam veteran.

Their input no doubt ensured the authenticity of the epic battle scenes and the actors' performances during combat sequences.

But this is by no means a traditional war movie. Instead, its strength lies in the story of the veterans, who in trying to see justice delivered to one of their comrades, must relive the events and trauma of the conflict years later.

As such it is a must-watch tale of heroism and valour of the highest order.

It is one of those films that compels you to Google the real characters afterwards and my research found that "Pits" is regarded as a legend in pararescue jumper circles.

His legacy embodies the ethos of the "PJ" community and is now preserved in this remarkable true story of war and its aftermath.

I highly recommend it. ■

## VERDICT:

A moving tale of courage and sacrifice



REVIEW: SGT ADAM JACKSON, PARA



● *The Last Full Measure* is now available in digital download

## DVD/DIGITAL



**Trick or treat**  
Out now

SET in present-day Blackpool amid a surreal and sinister gangland underworld, this offering is ironic in a very British

way. Greg has unexplained visions, probably owing to substance misuse paranoia. His former life of crime has come home to roost and he is the apparent victim of his feckless brother's infidelity and historical dodgy dealings. Filmed entirely at night, with a moody soundtrack, it splices together a macabre torture scene with no shortage of implied and very real violence, along with some genuinely rib-tickling British one-liners that may go over the heads of overseas audiences. This had me grimacing, belly laughing and wincing throughout. One to savour.

**Maj Neil Johnson, AAC**

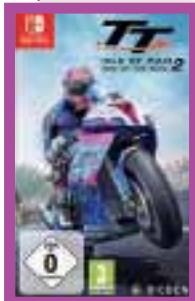
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## GAMES



### PICK OF THE MONTH:

## TT ISLE OF MAN - RIDE ON THE EDGE 2

### Motorcycle mayhem hits the Switch

WHILE ranking among the most exciting and dangerous of world motorsport events, the Isle of Man TT has rarely been reproduced on the video game scene.

Rallying, Formula One and motorcycle track racing have all seen outings in various forms on consoles – but the Manx competition is not so often seen, much less on handheld format.

But now virtual petrolheads can try their hand at the 37.73 miles of the Snaefell Mountain Course with a new build of *Ride on the Edge 2* for Switch.

While the real-life TT – which was due to be taking place as this issue went to press – is now chalked up as another Covid-19 cancellation, the Nintendo incarnation allows two-wheeled enthusiasts to play out what might have happened to their hearts' content.

Developed with French pro-rider Julien Tonutti and English biker Davey Todd, there is certainly enough here to keep players occupied with a combination of team management and fast-paced racing action.

In addition to opportunities for one-off outings on 17 UK and Irish circuits, as well as the Manx territory, there is a career mode plus open spaces for honing skills.

Hardcore fans should be pleased with the 27 recognisable riders and there are more than 20

examples of top-marque metal to take to the road. The most experienced players can also set up their mounts to optimise performance.

While *Ride on the Edge 2* was released on full-size consoles earlier in the year, the Switch version has clearly been well thought out and is a credible offering.

The graphics are first rate, with the course beautifully rendered in digital form, while the overall riding experience is well recreated. The helmet camera view is particularly impressive and adds to the realism.

However, you should be warned that this is not a straightforward arcade outing that is easily picked up and put down. Even on the most forgiving settings, the fiercely realistic motorcycle dynamics matched with a terrifying level of speed will see casual gamers unceremoniously dismounted at the first bend.

But preparation, as they say, prevents poor performance. While mastering *Ride on the Edge 2* will undoubtedly take time, working through the tutorial and perfecting motorcycle handling opens up a game with plenty to offer.

That said, this is likely to be most appreciated by simulation fans and die-hard bikers. ■

### VERDICT:

A polished product that rewards persistence



REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

## GAMES RELEASES



### Someday You'll Return

For PC

I AM a big fan of small, independently developed games, and *Someday You'll Return* fits right into that category. Set in the

Czech Republic, this wonderfully atmospheric psychological thriller sees you step into the shoes of Daniel, the father of a young girl who has unexpectedly fled from school and into an eerie ancient forest. With a knack for crafting tools, a handy smartphone, some skill in herbalism and a good pair of eyes, it's down to you as a dutiful dad to use everything at your disposal to find the youngster as the woods grow dark. The gameplay is simplistic, the visuals sublime and the story compelling enough to keep you hooked without any combat. This offering is all about being curious and creative as you investigate and comes highly recommended.

David McDougall, civvy



### Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee

for Nintendo Switch

PLAYSTATION generation elders tend to have a soft spot for *Oddworld* games. With a combination of bizarre characters, off-the-wall humour and total originality, they rapidly became hits after the first iteration appeared some 23 years ago. But this Nintendo Switch remix of *Munch's Oddysee* – originally launched back in the mists of 2001 – also serves to show how much the world has moved on. While the Nintendo incarnation is technically sound and highly playable, the format of this 19-year-old game feels dated, while the plot is linear and lacks any open world feel. Fans will enjoy this one, but it is unlikely to win *Oddworld* many new converts.

Cliff Caswell, Soldier



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# SOLDIER SPORT

## ◀ VIRTUAL REALITY

WITH real-life sport still on hold, Army rider Sgt James Bevan (REME) is among the many cyclists who have migrated to the online world in search of competitive action. Read about how the training app Zwift has allowed soldiers to take to the saddle during lockdown on pages 68-69...





# SPORT'S NEW FRONTIER

ATHLETES FIND FRESH CHALLENGES IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD AS REAL-LIFE COMPETITION REMAINS ON HOLD

WITH Service sport on hold until June 30 at the earliest, athletes have been looking to the online world to boost their fitness levels and scratch that competitive itch.

One of the biggest beneficiaries of the move has been the Army Cycling Union, which has seen hundreds of personnel taking to the saddle for races staged on the virtual training app, Zwift.

Navigation to the system has allowed the set-up to host the annual Army Cycling Road Race Series, usually held at real-life venues across the country, from the comfort of a rider's home – where they tackle each contest on a training bike with performance levels monitored by the technology.

The competition has already featured two events and with a further five due to be held by July those in charge are hoping to capitalise on the rapidly growing momentum.

"In the seven years that I've been involved in cycling I have not seen an uptake like it," one of the organisers, Capt Mark Greenwood (RAPTC, pictured far left), told *SoldierSport*.

"We've had 200 people riding in an Army race at the same time and that is fantastic – it has really taken us by surprise.

"There have been lots of requests for advice on things like equipment and nutrition, as well as from those who want to know how they can log on to get involved.

"It is not just for seasoned cyclists and racers. We've had a real mix of young and old, as well as athletes from other sports who are looking for a way to keep fit. Plus, with

people now working from home, it is very convenient."

As with the regular series, the competition features prizes for the top corps and unit teams, plus the leading individuals. The races also include three categories that are tailored to varying experience levels.

The contest has been the traditional proving ground for those with aspirations of representing the Service's men's and women's teams and these elite outfits have also made a successful transition to the virtual world.

Racing on Tuesdays and Thursdays, they have been able to lock horns with civilian rivals while also accumulating points in the UK Armed Forces league.

"It has been a great opportunity for us," said women's team member Capt Rosie Wild (RA). "We had just completed a two-week training camp in Cyprus when the lockdown was announced.

"All of a sudden racing wasn't happening anymore. Zwift have events all the time, that is nothing new, but British Cycling launched an eight-week series and that is similar to the racing we would be doing.

"It allows people to have that competitive element and race feeling when we cannot do it properly. It is pretty spot on in terms of how an event is ridden and we can talk to each other to discuss tactics and what to do next.

"On the start line you can see people around you and when you set off it seems like an actual race. You have the peloton, with individuals making breaks, and the turbo trainer changes resistance depending on the terrain. It is



**"PEOPLE CAN FEEL AS IF THEY DON'T HAVE A GOAL"**

really tactical as well."

Wild (pictured left) stems from a triathlon background and this is her first season with the Service's cycling team.

And while she has missed out on an opportunity to perform on the road she believes the alternative approach has been a benefit to the group.

"People who are working from home, or are not working at all, can feel as if they don't have a goal," she explained.

"This is an opportunity that you would not get in other sports to carry on. The women's team have pushed hard to get this set up and it is a fantastic way to stay in touch and have something interesting to do."

Reservist Capt Bexy Dew (RAMC) managed to bolster the team's efforts while juggling the pressures of her day job as a junior doctor at Southampton General Hospital.

She has been treating Covid-19 patients in the facility's accident and emergency department, where her military background has proved vital.

"There are certain areas where we have to wear full PPE including hair nets, tight fitting masks and visors," she explained. "It means the working conditions are very hot, so we can only do it for a maximum of four hours."

"As a Reservist I have done CBRN training and have had experience of caring for patients, although not real, in that kit. That exposure has really helped."

Despite this, Dew has been a mainstay of the Tuesday races and helped the Army women to top spot in the UK Armed Forces league. →



→ “Ideally, we want to be racing on the road, but this is the best alternative and as a team we have thrown ourselves into it,” she added.

“I had never tried Zwift before and was a bit reluctant at the start, but it is a really good form of training.

“The races are hard work, with lots of short, sharp effort, which makes them similar to real life.”

The men’s team were also victorious in their respective military competition.

One of their star performers has been Sgt James Bevan (REME), a cyclist who is making waves on Zwift’s world scene.

The soldier is currently ranked among the top-ten international, elite-level riders and it was his continued success that helped inspire the Service’s migration to the platform.

He now combines his own commitments with commentary duties on the corps series and has been impressed with the talent on show.

“This is all about developing riders with the potential to progress to the elite level,” he said. “It has been interesting. We cannot see them on the road so it

is hard to know exactly how their skills would transfer. However, we can see who is consistently racing at the front and it is a good way to spot people for the future.”

The online approach has also been embraced by the Army Athletics Association and its virtual race series was due to reach a conclusion as this issue went to press.

Soldiers have been challenged to complete a five-kilometre run and post their times on Open Track, where organisers will be able to determine unit, corps and Inter-Services champions.

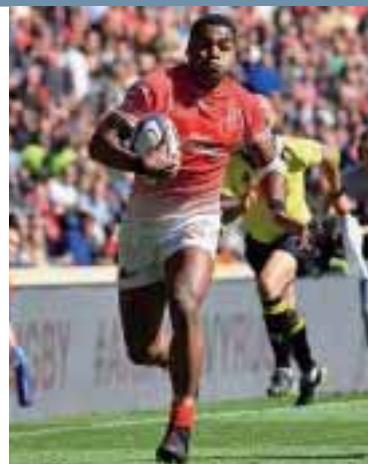
“It gives those who would not usually run for their unit or corps a chance,” said Army men’s road race manager WO1 Dave Branfoot (AGC (SPS)).

“They can go away and do this in their own time in a local area when it is convenient. And we are finding new athletes that we would not normally see by traditional methods.

“There have been some outstanding performances from individuals we had not heard of. With a bit of training and by giving them more opportunities, we can hopefully get them in the Army squad.” ■



**“IT GIVES THOSE WHO WOULD NOT USUALLY RUN A CHANCE”**



## NAULAGO MOVES ON

RUGBY league sensation Pte Ratu Naulago (Yorks) has switched codes to sign for Premiership outfit Bristol Bears.

The winger, who will complete the move at the end of the current Super League season, scored 17 tries in 21 appearances during a stunning debut campaign with Hull FC and it was this form that brought him to the attention of the rugby union world.

The 28-year-old is no stranger to the game and has previously won the Premiership Sevens title with Saracens. He was also part of the Army team that defeated the Royal Navy at Twickenham last year on their way to claiming the Inter-Services title.

He joins Reds teammates Cpl Lewis Bean (Rifles), LBdr Ifereimi Boladau (RA), LCpl Lloyd Wheeldon (Para) and LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) at the sport’s elite level.

“Bristol Bears are really starting to make their mark both in the English Premiership and European competitions,” Naulago said on completing the deal.

“They play a really attractive brand of rugby which I think will suit me and get the best out of me as a player.”





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**TAE KWON DO**



## GETTING SET FOR COMBAT RETURN

**H**AVING started the year in style the Army's tae kwon do set-up is looking ahead to a successful return to the mat once the coronavirus restrictions are lifted.

The squad completed a week-long training camp and grading process in Aldershot just days before the lockdown took hold and, having missed out on a host of events since, they have set their sights on the British Championships in November.

"Everyone on the course progressed," said OIC Maj Stephen Gibbons (R Signals). "At the end of the week we hosted the Army open and those who took part showed that indomitable spirit we are looking for."

Elite performers Pte Sophie Bladell (AGC (SPS)) and Sgt Yami Guba (RA) have been among the flagbearers for the discipline in recent times but Gibbons is pleased to report that a new talent

pool is emerging, particularly among the Gurkhas.

"They are young, fast and dynamic – which is everything we look for in tae kwon do players," he added.

"However, we want anyone with an interest to get involved. Yes, we've got established members in the squad, but we want to build on that."

The team has been unable to compete and train together since the camp, so members have been working on home programmes.

"Every single squad in the country is in the same position," Gibbons explained. "We cannot get close to anyone to focus on the combat side of the sport.

"The patterns are not a problem, but we are a fighting force and want that contact.

"For now it's all about individual training and when we get the green light we'll see where everyone is." ■



**"WE  
CANNOT  
FOCUS  
ON THE  
COMBAT  
SIDE"**



● THE Army Football Association has announced that the Massey Trophy, women's corps league and regional leagues have been declared null and void for the 2019/20 season. However, it is hoped that successful conclusions can still be reached in a host of cup competitions, including the flagship Army FA Challenge Cup.



## TRACK CALL ISSUED

THE Army bobsleigh set-up has issued a fresh call to arms as it continues preparations for another winter of adrenalin-fuelled action.

Boasting a novice training camp that leads into full Army and Inter-Services Championships, as well as a push track competition in Bath, the sport offers a host of opportunities in a campaign that gets under way in October and concludes in March.

The squad enjoyed a successful 2019/20 season with 25 personnel attending the initial camp in Igls, Austria – a number of whom went on to the Army Championships.

And while the soldiers missed out on collective honours at Inter-Services level they were able to celebrate individual success as the pairing of LSgt Lamin Deen (Gren Gds) and Pte Olly Butterworth (Para) topped the men's standings.

"The serious nature of this adrenalin sport sets it apart from any other," said Army Bobsleigh Association secretary Capt Sarah Smith (AGC (ETS)) as she appealed for more personnel to get involved. "Once you have felt that rush it is difficult to forget."

For more information email [bobsleigh@awsa.org.uk](mailto:bobsleigh@awsa.org.uk)





# PRIDE IN THE JERSEY IS KEY FOR RUGBY'S TOP MAN

**N**EW Army rugby union head coach Capt Mal Roberts (RLC) has spoken of his desire to see players expressing themselves on the field of play – as and when they return to action.

The former fullback, who was capped 26 times by the Reds in an illustrious playing career, succeeded Maj Burnie Burnard (REME) at the end of last season and is now laying the foundations for a debut campaign at the helm – despite not yet being able to train with the squad.

The ongoing lockdown and social distancing criteria have resulted in the athletes working on individual training plans from home, a move that has allowed Roberts to focus on the other elements of his new role.

"You could sit around and look at the situation in a negative way," the ten-time Inter-Services champion told *SoldierSport*. "But I see it as a chance to get a lot of

the off-field stuff sorted.

"I can look at things like structures and team plans without the pressure of having to deliver a rugby output.

"It is almost an extended pre-season. We have sent training programmes out and have been in touch with our contracted and professional players. I've done a lot of the admin that would not normally be a priority.

"I'm coming into this with different ideas and have a fresh outlook on things. It is about challenging the players and making them want to pull on that red jersey and play with passion."

Tentative plans are already in place for clashes with Oxford and Cambridge Universities later in the year and Roberts intends to pick his strongest squad from the outset, rather than experimenting with fringe players.

"It will be good to get the Army brand back to where it should be," he explained. "We want to go



**"IT IS  
SELFISH  
TO  
SIMPLY  
STEP  
AWAY"**

out and win games.

"We'll get those fixtures under our belts while the universities are preparing for the varsity match, so we will be facing them when they are stronger.

"It is about giving our players that exposure as early as possible as it will take a while to get back into the flow of things.

"There will not be massive changes in terms of style, perhaps a few bits and pieces here and there. Rugby is quite a simple game that is sometimes overcomplicated by coaches.

"Players need a certain amount of structure, but I think they enjoy it more when they're allowed to express themselves.

"That is when you get the best from people, rather than having them shackled by processes."

Roberts (pictured left, and right in his playing days) inherits a squad that boasts Premiership talent in the likes of Cpl Lewis Bean (Rifles), LBdr Ifereimi

Boladau (RA) and LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) and he believes they will play an important role.

"We are quite fortunate in the Army in terms of the guys who are getting professional contracts are such good lads," he explained. "They are decent people and decent soldiers – that is key. They sell the Service brilliantly and in the right way.

"I also had the privilege of being the under-23 head coach so I know what talent is out there – we have got some really good youngsters coming through. It is an exciting squad."

Since retiring as a player in 2009 the officer has forged an impressive coaching CV. His pathway started at corps level and later saw him work as an assistant with the Army's senior team and as head coach of the under-23 set-up.

Promotion to the top job has always been a target and Roberts said it has been a privilege to follow in Burnard's footsteps.

"I'm honoured and humbled to be given this opportunity," he added. "It has always been an aspiration and is a natural progression once you finish playing – you want to give back to the game.

"The Army invests a lot of time and effort in people on the sports side and I think it is selfish to simply step away and not offer something in return." ■



## BURPEES IN NUMBERS

ARMY PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE MATCH-DAY CHALLENGE

**99**

COLLEAGUES FROM THE ROYAL NAVY TAKING PART

**68**

THOUSAND BURPEES COMPLETED - MORE THAN DOUBLE THE INITIAL TARGET

**165**

THOUSAND POUNDS RAISED FOR NHS CHARITIES TOGETHER

**18**

WINS FROM FOUR MATCHES FOR THE ARMY WOMEN IN 2019/20

**3**



## REDS STAR IN BURPEES BID

THEIR Twickenham debut may have been cancelled due to the Covid-19 outbreak, but the Army women's rugby team found an alternative way to test themselves against their Royal Navy rivals.

Instead of running out at the home of English rugby, players from both squads embarked on a bid to complete 82,000 burpees and raise money for NHS Charities Together.

The brainchild of Reds' stars Capt Erica Mills and Capt Gemma Rowland (both RA), the quest rapidly snowballed and saw more than 160 personnel performing the punishing exercise in a variety of settings, including at home, in camp and at the workplace.

"It gained a lot more momentum than we anticipated," Mills (pictured above) told *SoldierSport*.

"I personally completed 2,000 burpees. It was a case of grinding it out for more than

six hours and I went through the full scale of emotions.

"We had a WhatsApp group for those taking part and there was a live Zoom meeting, which was great for morale.

"Every time I took a break I could see how well we were doing, the total grew exponentially and that was a huge motivation."

Mills admitted missing out on the high-profile fixture had been a blow but hopes the team can take centre stage at the iconic stadium in 2021.

"This is something the Army women have been working towards for 20 years," she explained. "There was an initial feeling of disappointment, especially for those who have been involved for quite a few seasons.

"But given the situation we're in, and the fact nurses from our team have been involved in the coronavirus response, we have to appreciate the bigger picture."

# Final Word



It's important to gain trust in yourself and one another. So you need confidence in your own ability, as well as the knowledge and skills to do the job.

**LCpl George Conway**



Actively invest your time with individuals to understand what drives them, who they are and what they want to achieve. Communication has a huge role and all team members should be included with every decision made. Finally, building trust and having clear goals, both as an individual and collective, gives the team purpose and motivation.

**Lt Darren King**

Interviews: Steve Muncey



You need people to possess genuine commitment, be reliable and be willing to take responsibility. There needs to be mutual loyalty and respect.

**Cfn Grady Farrell**



Good communication is vital, so everyone knows what's happening and what they must do. Each member also needs to trust in each other's abilities, so you know the person next to you can get the job done.

**Cfn Dominic Mainon**



**Solid leadership, communication, resilience and trust are the key ingredients to a successful team. But most importantly we need to enjoy what we do.**

**Capt Rob Richards**



Quality individual and collective training is vital as that builds confidence in each other and in one's own ability. This will lead to an effective, motivated group that is capable of innovation and lateral thinking when faced with difficult tasks.

**WO2 Tony Cotty**

# Team talk

We asked members of 4th Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers what they believe is key to building a great working team

Taking the time to get to know each other's individual strengths and weaknesses is crucial. Most importantly, listen to everyone, both in and out of the workplace, and maintain good communications.

**Cpl Kim Watt**



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# LEVEL PEAKS



# What are you most looking forward to?

While we're still waiting for the country to get back to normal, we're all daydreaming about the things we'll do when the UK gets moving again.

Getting through a crisis is all about keeping in touch, so RIFT has been reaching out to our staff and customers to find out what we're all looking forward to the most once the restrictions ease up. Here are the top 5 answers we got back:

- ✓ Going out to the pub or for dinner
- ✓ Taking a trip to visit the family
- ✓ Going away on holiday
- ✓ Hitting the gym
- ✓ Having friends round for a barbecue party

An average Armed Forces tax refund comes to £793 a year right now, so the good news is you'll have cash to splash with your family and mates again. Better yet, to thank you for coming back to RIFT for your refund claim, we're cutting our fees for returning Armed forces customers to just 25%.

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