

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY

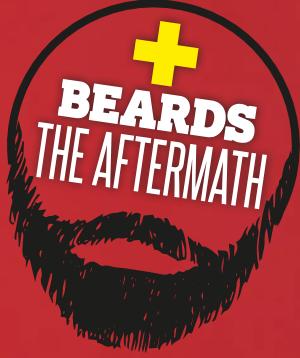
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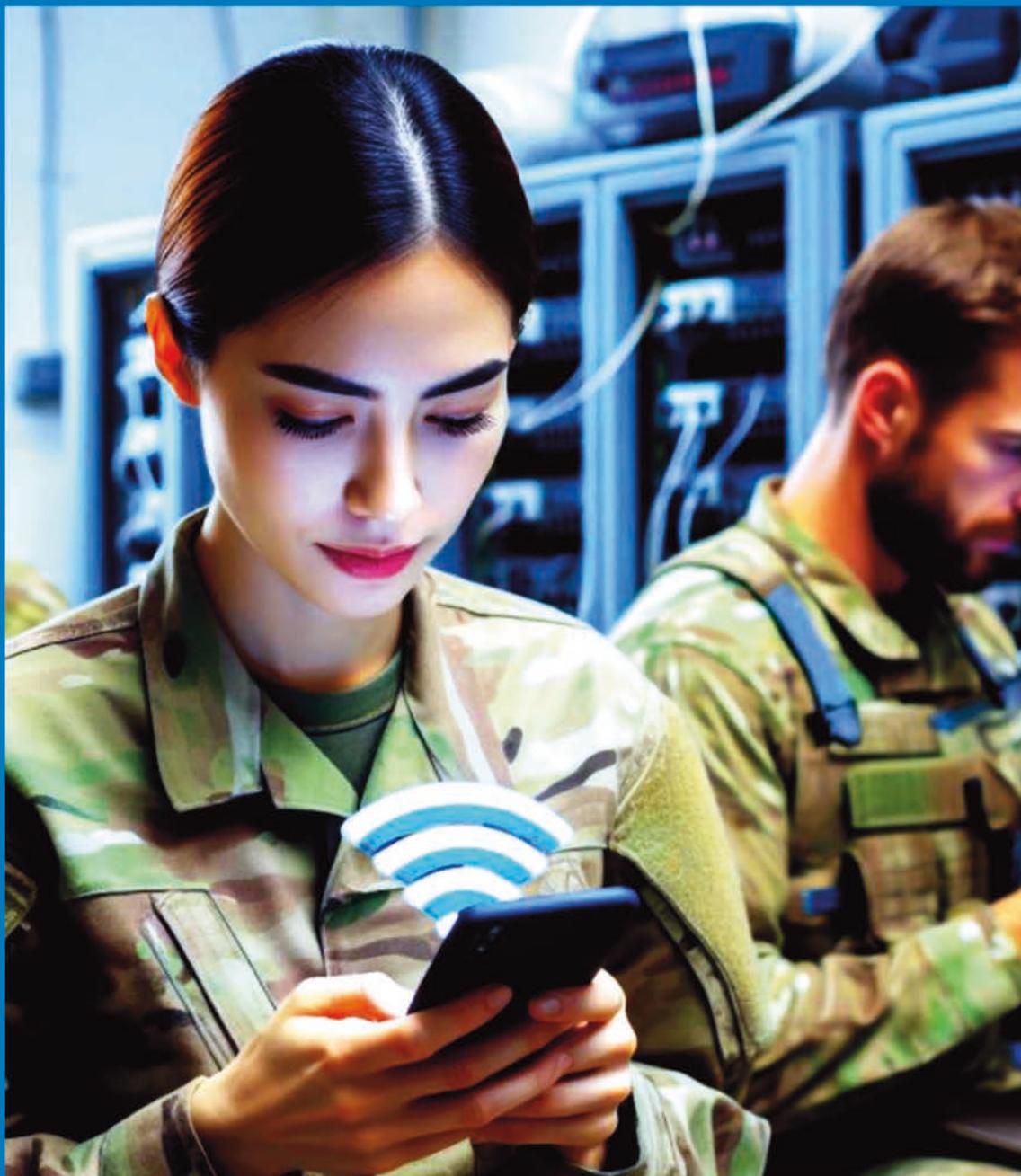


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COVER STORY





Plans for peak performance

AS an adage, the seven Ps have underpinned the way the Army has gone about its business for decades.

The mantra applies to all areas of military life, from the battlefield down, and was at the forefront for the men's rugby union team as they sharpened their focus at a training camp in Cyprus ahead of this month's Inter-Services.

Acting Maj Stu Cross (R Yorks) visited *Soldier* headquarters for a cover shoot before leading his side in their final pre-tournament fixture and their performance was anything but "piss poor" as they routed the Irish Defence Force (page 70) in Aldershot.

Preparations for the future have also been unveiled in the new land training system (page 7), which will see personnel spending more time on exercise, while plans for revamped cookhouses with sociable layouts are now bearing fruit at Middle Wallop (page 38), with further camps to follow.

And laying foundations for the troops of tomorrow was one of the many topics touched upon by the chief of the general staff in our exit interview (page 30), in which he states he has visited "more factories than foxholes" in an effort to regrow links with industry and ensure personnel are properly equipped in the years to come.

Big plans remain in place across the board, and we look forward to reporting on the performances that follow.

Richard Long • Sport Editor

Where to find *Soldier*

► Printed copies

Sent to Army sites at the start of the month.

► Facebook, X and Instagram

ALONG with news and glimpses behind the scenes at *Soldier*, we publish a link to the latest magazine at facebook.com/soldiermagazine and on X (formerly known as Twitter) (@soldiermagazine).

► Online

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'We'll become more lethal and effective'

Training shake-up will see troops spending more time developing skills out on exercises

ARADICAL training overhaul will see soldiers develop their skills by spending less time in the classroom and more hours on exercises in realistic combat scenarios.

The move is, according to Brig Nick Cowley, commander of the Combat Manoeuvre Centre, one of the most important initiatives in a generation.

"The new land training system (LTS) is a significant and positive change to the way we prepare the Army and will give our personnel extra time to train in order to become more lethal and effective," he told *Soldier*.

Spurred on by the need to make drills safer and more relevant to evolving threats, as well as finding efficiencies in equipment, people and classroom time, the Service spent 18 months developing the system, which has been divided into three phases.

The first, called Tradewind, allows troops to hone the tactical aspects of trade training while out on combined arms manoeuvre exercises.

Schools will be responsible only for teaching technical skills and doctrine that have to be delivered in a classroom, as well as leadership and professional military education.

The second phase, Cyclone, includes a ring-fenced block of up to ten weeks that will be allocated to each sub-unit every year to focus on whatever capabilities it feels are required.

It can be delivered anywhere in the world and structured so that soldiers and officers can master individual and collective skills and gain all necessary assurance qualifications in a combined

arms environment.

The plan is for 80 per cent of sub-units to have enjoyed protected training time between now and next spring, while virtually every sub-unit should be on the LTS schedule by 2026.

Finally, Storm exercises will build on Cyclone for those elements about to assume readiness for current and future operations.

They will provide demanding combined arms collective training objectives and a chance to further develop command and control and individual skills by pitting troops against a free-thinking enemy.

"The LTS is vital for the Army's future," said Lt Col James Hood (RL), head of training strategy at the Land Warfare Centre. "It provides stability for personnel as the entire programme has already been set out to 2030 so units know what they will be doing."

"Also, it's what Nato wants – more people, more ready – plus our soldiers deserve a better training experience, one that's resourced and protected."

"The nation expects us to be able to do our jobs safely and given proper resources for that."

And it's not just the full-time cohort who are the beneficiaries.

"This is a mechanism for protecting training for the whole Army including the Reserve," added Lt Col Hood.

"The LTS provides significant support for Reserve units, with options to train alongside Regulars to develop skills more efficiently as well as having the courses required to maintain competency built into the schedule." ■



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GLOBAL SITREP



Picture: David Adams

1. MARYLAND, USA COLLISION CLEARANCE

A BRITISH sapper on an exchange visit to the USA found himself in the global spotlight after joining salvage efforts at the Francis Scott Key Bridge.

Capt Dan Hoban was called to help American military colleagues at the remains of the structure in Baltimore, which collapsed when a support was struck by a 948ft cargo ship.

The collision on March 26 left six dead, with wreckage strewn across

the Patapsco River.

Teams including the US Corps of Engineers plus civvy specialists carried out hazardous work to clear the shipping channel.

Capt Hoban told reporters the scale and complexity of the task was unprecedented with safety key. His boss Lt Gen Scott Spellmon, USACE commanding general (shown), called it "immense and complex".



2. CALIFORNIA, USA WESTERN GUNFIGHT GIVES BACK

MEMBERS of the Army's experimentation unit, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment, have been sharing with *Soldier* some of the exciting lessons to have come out of their stint on Project Convergence at the Fort Irwin National Training Centre.

The soldiers deployed there to better understand how to integrate troops and technology in a multinational kill chain, along with elements of the 1st Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team. Personnel from the US Army's 82nd Airborne joined them to test unmanned ground vehicles and a cutting-edge comms network. Read more on page 42.



Picture: Cpl Paul Squires, RLC

3. KENYA SPEAR TO THE GROUND

TROOPS working within 11th Security Force Assistance Brigade have spoken of their satisfaction after a demanding training exercise.

Haraka Spear saw soldiers from 3rd Battalion, The Rifles – backed by logisticians, mechanics and medics – validated for the brigade as they were tested across a range of scenarios. These included live-fire platoon attacks – with mortar fire controllers using drones to cover a withdrawal from a mock enemy.

With their formation's remit to advise and train partner nations, the Brits

also got to work alongside Kenyan military counterparts.

Troops said they had learned a huge amount from a demanding operating environment.

Sjt Sheldon Williams (Rifles) said comms protocols had been one area of learning.

"It is a tough environment but it is not so bad when you get into it," he added. "And you work better as time goes by."

Armourer LCpl Ryan

Ward (REME) commented: "You definitely feel the heat. And the proximity you have to the wildlife in the country is really special."



Picture: Capt Michael Geering, REME

IN NUMBERS:

37,000

Ukrainian troops trained so far under Op Interflex – find out what Gen Sir Patrick Sanders had to say about the effort in his exit interview on page 30

5. GIBRALTAR

6. MOROCCO

4. UZBEKISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN

3. KENYA

4. UZBEKISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN

RIDE ON!

GLOBETROTTERS from the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment saddled up to pay a special visit to counterparts in the Uzbekistan National Guard and Ministry of Defence in neighbouring Turkmenistan.

Good ceremonial discipline was a key aim during the ten-day trip, which saw personnel talking shop and swapping their ideas.

It was part of a busy recent schedule for the outfit, which sent short-term training teams to Nepal and Trinidad and Tobago earlier in the year.



5. GIBRALTAR

ROCK AND ROLL

COMBAT engineers have been put through their paces with a real-world repair project.

Exercise Stronghold, run by the Royal Engineers Warfare Wing, saw junior officers put to work on the Northern Defences (shown) – historic fortifications that once protected Gibraltar from seaborne attack. Sappers have been helping to renovate the once-neglected area since 2015 and their efforts are steadily transforming it into a popular tourist venue.

The exercise, part of the corps' troop commanders' course, also saw students take part in the Rock Run and water sports.



Picture: Cpl Dave Blackham, RAf

6. MOROCCO

HOT TROTTERS

A SUPER-FIT military squad led by TV barrister Rob Rinder has raised a huge sum of cash for charity after a determined charge across the Sahara Desert.

Army Sergeant Major WO1 Paul Carney, Olympian Maj Heather Stanning (RA) and Cpl Natalya Platonova (QARANC) joined MC recipient Col Mark Nooney and the celebrity in the Marathon des Sables.

They took on a 250km route over five days in searing temperatures and as this issue went to press had raised £25,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund.

"Our Armed Forces represent who this nation is at our very best," Rinder said after the race. Search "Rinder's Run" at justgiving.com to lend your support.



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LONG-RANGE ROUNDS

ARMY boxers were testing their ring skills down under as this issue went to press, facing fighters from the Australian Olympic team as well as the Boxing Victoria programme. Read more on page 72





RETIREMENT OF COLOURS

■ THE laying up of the regimental colour of 6th Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment has taken place at St Mary's Church, Bury St Edmunds – 18 years after the Reserve unit was disbanded.

Troops from 3rd Battalion acted as the colour party.

PT DEATH: TROOPS DID ALL THEY COULD

■ MEDICS who battled to save an Army driver who collapsed after a PT session could not have done any more to help him, an investigation has found.

A service inquiry highlighted that comrades did all they could to treat Pte Joshua Kennington (RLC, pictured) – using a defibrillator, CPR and mouth-to-mouth when he lost consciousness after a loaded march in Catterick.

The 18-year-old told a friend he had been feeling unwell before the session on November 24, 2022 but did not report as unfit to health professionals.

A panel concluded the soldier – who had been serving with 35 Medical Squadron, 5 Armoured Medical Regiment – lost his life as a result of sudden arrhythmic death syndrome, an issue that affects the heart and can lead to cardiac arrest.

He was taken to hospital but died a short time later.

The panel recommended that the numbers of deaths from the condition be examined by defence health chiefs, allowing any trends to be monitored.

They also suggested a campaign telling troops to report to a medical professional if they feel unwell.

While there had been concerns about Pte Kennington's regular consumption of fast food and energy drinks, he had made changes to his lifestyle and these were ruled out of being a factor in his collapse. He had already started eating more healthily and was a frequent face in the gym with colleagues.

The soldier was a popular member of his unit, described by friends as good humoured with a likeable nature.



“I don't think it will make much difference to recruitment”

Beard rule change

Pictures: Graeme Main, Shutterstock, Cpl Becky Brown and Ssgt Dek Taylor, both RLC

From no to go – the full shave ritual might be optional, but commanders warn regs will be enforced



Love it or loathe it, facial hair is on. But there are rules...

BEARDS are now permitted in the Army – but the rules around their upkeep will be strictly enforced, troops have been warned.

Following a long-running campaign for the regulations to be reviewed, Service chiefs announced that soldiers would be able to sport facial hair from now on.

But in a video posted on Defence Connect shortly before Easter, Army Sergeant Major WO1 Paul Carney (pictured right) said it "wasn't a free-for-all" and personnel could expect to have their appearance kept under regular review.

The policy had come into effect in advance of the holiday "to allow those on leave who wish to stop shaving time to grow a beard," he revealed.

The historic news was welcomed by serving troops and veterans who had pushed for the decision. But subsequent discussions on social media forums suggested that some regiments were requiring their personnel to seek permission before growing facial hair.

Soldier also became aware of discontent around the lack of notice given to the chain of command.

But WO1 Carney said he had no direct concerns voiced to him, despite meeting several regimental sergeant majors shortly after the announcement was made. And he cautioned against "putting policy on top of policy" in the communication of such a clear and concise statement.



PRICKLY VIEWS

Troops react to a change of rules...



"As a young man one of your main focuses is appearance. Not being allowed tattoos would make or break it for me – it's the same with beards for other people."

Pte Joshua Ogilvie, Para

"If it doesn't affect soldiers' ability to do their jobs, what's the problem? As long as it's clean and presentable, it might make the difference in people wanting to join or stay, so it's a big win for something quite small."

Cpl Josh Branley, RE



"I can't really grow a beard, so I don't mind shaving – it gives you that discipline every morning. It's not much of a factor for me."

Pte Michael Cummins, Para





not a 'free-for-all'



The senior soldier continued: "Several stakeholders had to be consulted on the changes, including His Majesty The King, and the decision was made to tell the wider Army as soon as possible.

"We also wanted to ensure that it was not leaked. As it was, it took exactly 15 minutes for the video message I had issued on a closed internal channel to appear to the world on external websites.

"I contacted RSMs with a follow-up email immediately after the announcement to explain my rationale – I acknowledge that I do not have soldiers to look after, but no action was required by the chain of command."

Turning to the overwhelming support for changes addressed in a poll, WO1 Carney said some 40,000 serving and former personnel had



been surveyed with the majority calling for beards to be given the green light – a reflection of their popularity in wider society.

He also pointed out that until the policy update, Britain and its Five Eyes allies (America, Canada, New Zealand and Australia) were less enthusiastic about facial hair, whereas the majority of the overall Nato membership embraced it.

Stressing that looking professional was vital in the military world, he concluded: "Now that we have new regulations on beards, I expect individuals to take responsibility for their appearance and our NCOs to enforce the rules."

Defence Secretary Grant Shapps (above) – who called the ban "ridiculous" in a newspaper interview last year – said in a statement on X that he welcomed the sensible end of an "outdated" rule. ■

"As a balding man, the only hair I can have is on my face, so it would be nice to grow a beard. There are ways of making it neat. I've seen some horrific beards in the RAF so maybe they could sort themselves out. But I reckon the Army will make soldiers keep theirs tidy."

LCpl Jonathon Hall, RLC



"I'm not for beards. You get up in the morning, brush your teeth and have a shave, done. It's just regimental. I don't think the policy will make much of a difference to recruitment at all."

Sgt Colin McDougall, RAPTC



"Other armies allow it so I don't think Britain should be stuck on something decided hundreds of years ago. The world is changing, so why not change with it? As long as you don't look like a Viking."

Pte Emmanuel Karantzias, Para

“
I expect individuals to take responsibility for their appearance
”

APPEARANCE POLICY

- Only a full set beard will be allowed
- Length must be between grade one (2.5mm) and grade eight (25.5mm)
- Must be trimmed off of the cheek bones and neck
- No patchy or uneven growth
- No exaggerated colours



Read more in AGAI 59.04 HAIR

View from the GROUND

LONG-TIME facial hair lobbyist and founder of the Army Beard Network, Cpl Daniel Downing (Int Corps), welcomed the policy

change – but said it took far too long and this had been a factor in his decision to quit the ranks.



With beards already allowed for medical or religious reasons, he insisted a blanket policy should have been an easy decision. The 36-year-old, who leaves in August, added: "I've been saying this for years and advanced legal arguments to senior officers. All I've wanted is parity across the Service rather than a clumsy policy and I don't understand why there has been such a song and dance made about it."



Ground view

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

DEORATIONS have always been an important and emotive part of a career in uniform – you only have to look through the pages of this magazine and across social media to see the lively discussions they start.

The Wider Service Medal, announced late last month, has been no exception to this (*Soldier*, April).

It is being introduced to recognise those serving on deployments that don't carry the same risks of more kinetic operational tours.

This may include the likes of Estonia, where British personnel have been deployed with Nato for the last few years to deter would-be aggressors.

From my perspective, the award is good news.

The landscape of ops might have changed from the Iraq and Afghanistan era, yet our current work is no less important in terms of keeping citizens and national interests safe.

Any tour remains a significant ask for soldiers, whatever its nature. Spending six months away is tough on troops, as well as their families.

Cabrit is a case in point. While the current global situation has been

compared to the old Cold War, troops cannot take their loved ones with them as was the case in Germany in times past.

Security concerns mean they are more restricted in calling home and cannot go for a night out on a whim.

And all the while they are still rigorously exercising as they remain at high readiness to counter any potential threat.

The Wider Service Medal recognises this type of tour.

As with anything, it is not a perfect solution and I know, in particular, that there has been criticism that the earlier months of Cabrit are not covered.

This is because they happened before the idea was approved by Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

The eligibility for the award – for which you must complete 180 days of aggregated service – has also required careful consideration given it is tri-Service.

It has taken time to determine which deployments should be covered.

We are aiming to see the first of the new medals presented at ceremonies later in the year and I hope those receiving them will do so with pride.

The award reflects commitment and sacrifice.

As with anything, it is not a perfect solution



FOUNDATION STATIONS

IT'S been great to see changes to training at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (*Soldier*, April), giving officer cadets a broader perspective of military life and the combined-arms battle they will lead.

Commissioning course adaptations will help develop troops and reflect a wider spectrum of learning for new soldiers too.

It is important, however, that we don't lose sight of teaching the core disciplines that give personnel the

foundations on which to develop their careers.

These enable them – among other things – to rapidly understand and assimilate new kit as well as changes to doctrine.

Take tech such as the dismounted situational awareness tool; the first troops issued with this were quickly able to use it in the field because they already had the right basic soldiering skills in place. The same is true when new tactical approaches are introduced in more advanced training.



UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Q Did you have any pre-Marathon des Sables downtime?

A Yes – I spent it doing DIY. Very relaxing



I'll keep this brief, but now that beards are officially on I'd like everyone – of all ranks – to read up on the rules (page 11). There are boundaries of acceptability so my message is: if you wish to grow a beard, keep yourself properly groomed – it might be easier to shave than maintain facial hair to the standards. Also, I expect NCOs to ensure the regulations are properly enforced. The rules have changed; our duty to look professional has not.



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Many of those serving decide to leave before taking all considerations about their pension into account. Worse, many do not appreciate their worth, often underestimating their pension value. At today's values, a pension income of £20,000pa would require a pension pot of at least £400,000.

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Here's what one Society Member wrote to us recently:

"As I approach my final weeks in the Army, the Forces Pension Society has been amazing. Incredibly patient with my questions. A brilliant organisation, providing such important support to Service leavers. Thank you! "

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TIME WILL TELL ON OP PROSPER, SAY CHARITIES

■ MILITARY charities have welcomed a government scheme to help veterans find higher skilled and better paid employment on civvy street.

They said **Op Prosper** – which is underpinned by £2.1 million in cash – was a positive move in helping Service leavers find rewarding new jobs.

But they added they will be closely watching how the scheme is implemented – and whether it will be able to help the most vulnerable.

Launched by PM Rishi Sunak (above) and Veterans' Minister Johnny Mercer at the Royal Air Force Museum in London, it will offer support including employment professionals to help leavers land jobs in sectors such as cyber security, energy and finance.

Director of volunteer operations at SSAFA, Julie McCarthy, said: "We will be paying special attention to see how **Op Prosper** delivers to vulnerable and early Service leavers."

VETS BID FAREWELL TO HAULAGE HEAVYWEIGHT

■ FRIENDS and colleagues of a former soldier who used truck driving skills forged during his national service to help veterans with careers have been reflecting on his achievements.

Walter Ritchie, who died aged 92 in March, founded Glasgow-based Ritchies Training Centre in 1981 after a successful civvy career in the haulage industry. He first gained a truck licence and passion for vehicles while serving with the Royal Artillery.

Ritchie helped hundreds of Service leavers with his resettlement packages – assisting them with both driving and fleet management roles. His son Donald said: "His inspiration, passion and commitment came from a job he loved doing."



Picture: Graeme Main

“
They have brought back great memories
”

Maxton's medal, 75 years on

A SECOND World War veteran who served as a military reporter in the Middle East has received medallic recognition for his efforts in uniform – 75 years after leaving the British Army.

Stanley Maxton, a former staff sergeant in the The King's Own Hussars, reminisced on his time as a journalist with Forces title *Parade* for a feature in this magazine in 2022, and the process inspired him to apply for the medals he was due for his time in service.

Fast forward two years and the 97-year-old was presented with The War Medal 1939-45 and General Service Medal with Palestine clasp by Lt Col Graham Henderson (Scots, shown), commanding officer of Aberdeen and Tayforth Officers' Training Regiment, at his care home in Elgin.

Maxton joined the Army in September 1944 with ambitions of fighting on the front line with the Royal Armoured Corps.



But with a background as a newspaper reporter, he was posted to the Middle East and spent four years travelling to countries in the region to produce articles for *Parade* – some of which also appeared in *Soldier*.

During his chat with Lt Col

Henderson, he spoke of how he was in Palestine when the King David Hotel was bombed in 1946 and recalled how his prize for winning a cross-country race in hobnail boots was 100 cigarettes.

"I'm very pleased with the medals, and their quality, and am grateful to Lt Col Henderson for making the presentation," he said.

"They have brought back some great memories of the people I served with, places I visited and things that happened to me."

"Like many returning soldiers, I was more interested in getting home than receiving medals. However, the spread in *Soldier* re-awakened my interest and I was all for applying for them." ■



Picture: Royal Star & Garter



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■ FITNESS tactics like those used at Premier League football clubs are building resilience among airborne forces recruits.

Maj Tony McGrane, OC of The Parachute Regiment Training Company in Catterick, said joiners had been raising their game in initial drills using data on wristwatch-like devices.

The tech, called MyZone, flags up struggling soldiers, allowing help to be focused on their needs.

"The aim is to make individual adjustments on a week-to-week basis as the recruits progress through the course," he told *Soldier*.

"I'm a big fan of Liverpool Football Club and I looked closely at how their coaches work in delivering a more focused type of training to players."

"The data we've been getting back has helped us identify areas we need to address."

The watch provides constant feedback on physical activity, monitoring the likes of heart rate and allowing instructors to keep a close eye.

Its info has already prompted changes with mealtime menus, with instructors dialling up calorie intake while ensuing troops have quality recovery time.

"While we have always had a rule that everyone must be in bed by 2200, for example, the lights-out order is now rigidly enforced," Maj McGrane (pictured) added.

"There is a lot that we can learn from elite sport generally and apply it within the Army."

While it was too early to measure success, Maj McGrane said early results looked promising, with fewer injuries and more troops successfully passing.

They were also better prepared to face the arduous P Company course, he added, which all paras must pass in the second phase of their training.

"We are treating them as if they are professional footballers going into the first team," Maj McGrane concluded.



■ A WELSH Guardsman fires a 81mm weapon during a mortars course at the Combined Arms Manoeuvre School in Warminster, which provides specialist weapons training.

Picture: Sgt Donald Todd, RLC



Wi-Fi uplift makes an impact

DBI project is registering satisfied scrollers across the Army estate

THE mission to improve Wi-Fi across the Army estate is continuing at pace, with phase two of the project due for completion in September.

That will see 25,000 defence business internet (DBI) access points installed at sites across the country and overseas – adding to the 27,000 that were delivered in the first stage.

The third and final phase then follows, which promised enhanced provision across all 598 locations.

When announced, the overhaul was billed as the second biggest networking infrastructure project in the UK, covering offices, hangars, training facilities, workshops, and single living accommodation.

It has delivered multiple capabilities, including internet access for Modnet devices, non-Modnet training tools, surveillance services, smart buildings, car park monitoring, logistics and asset tracking and building management systems. It has also allowed soldiers to enjoy streaming and gaming services.

Given the scale of the project, connecting to domestic broadband supplies was not an option so networks and infrastructure had to be built – an effort that has been well received by those at the sharp end.



"More and more, we are asking our personnel to carry out training online," said Maj Liam Tosh (R Signals), who serves with 14 Signal Regiment at Cawdor Barracks, Haverfordwest – one of the sites covered.

"Prior to the roll-out of DBI, this training was restricted by access and availability problems, which have now been addressed.

"Feedback from our soldiers has all been positive. Many are reporting that they no longer need personal Wi-Fi due to the quality in all areas, which is a major positive in terms of welfare."

IN NUMBERS 4,000
Buildings on the Army estate that are now covered by the project

MyVoice Calling

A FREE Wi-Fi calling service has been rolled out as part of the scheme, which offers crystal-clear and secure voice communications via smartphone at MoD sites with DBI coverage. This is particularly important in areas with poor mobile signal. To use, enable Wi-Fi calling on your phone, access Wi-Fi setting and choose "MyVoice Calling". No login required. For more details email dbihelpdesk@bt.com

“Feedback has all been positive”



Pictures: Cpl Aaron Stone, RLC

Hit the ground running

HIGH-READINESS personnel from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles were put through their paces in a simulated evacuation of British nationals from a crisis zone.

Leading a battlegroup and backed by logisticians and medics, the Shorncliffe-based unit checked out kit and vehicles before boarding an A400M flight from RAF Brize Norton to Wattisham – simulating a friendly airfield in theatre.

Maj Andrew Emerson, OC C (Tamandu) Company, said the troops – part of 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team – had “hit the ground running”.



“
AT rewards shirkers and punishes grafters
”

Your letters – page 49

GENERAL FOR A DAY

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

THIS column lends itself to making sweeping changes, but the reality is that any change in the Army is very difficult to achieve without a significant bureaucratic fight – and there’s the point.

Initially, I would introduce a summary expulsion of “blockers”. The MoD is full of people saying no, finding reasons not to enable, or pushing forms and emails from one person to another with no skin in the game.

It’s made everything that we are mandated to do near impossible to deliver, and is costing us financially while reducing morale.

We always seem to be out of pocket with such difficult travel and subsistence rules, so I would put more trust and realistic limits on individuals so we don’t feel the pinch for being away from home.

Continual nights out of bed that don’t meet the threshold of allowances make family life hard. Some payment for these would be an easy win that would improve the morale of those who regularly spend three nights per week away and lessen the blow of claims not meeting the mark.

We appear to have teams of people checking claims and travel requests, yet have gapped the one person who manages in-year and thank you awards.

And while we struggle to



“
We always seem to be out of pocket
”

“

find the numbers of recruits to deliver operational effectiveness, some faceless entity has decided to reduce the offer to those remaining loyal. It’s self-defeating.

Another area I would look at is electric vehicle chargers. In Warminster there are three different types that each require a separate card or have become the sole property of an organisation. I would standardise things, like with Eric keys for fuel.

I would also try to encourage more troops away from their inboxes and back to building teams on Wednesday sports afternoons.

Name: Maj Mark Saunders

Cap badge: REME

Role: Late-entry staff officer leading the Land Equipment Audit Team and CEO of Army Motorsport

Age: 52

Years in: 35 **Deployments:** Include Northern Ireland and Iraq



TWO WORLDS MEET

■ KALVIN Neal is proud to have two strands to his public service – as a sergeant with the Army Reserve and as Lord Mayor of Hull.

But when the 59-year-old donned his regalia to take the salute from his own troops, the crossing of the two paths proved to be an unusual experience.

The memorable occasion saw his outfit – 4th Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment – exercise the Freedom of the City by ushering their colours through Hull's streets alongside the regimental band and 250 personnel from local units.

Addressing a later reception at the city's historic Guildhall, the Lord Mayor said it had been an honour.

"Being stood on that dais is an absolutely fantastic feeling," he concluded.

The ceremonial spectacle heralds the start of a busy few months for 4 R Yorks' parent 19th Light Brigade as its Reservists head to Germany on Steadfast Defender, Nato's largest multinational exercise in decades.



“
This building has 21,000 sensors, giving us a wealth of information
”



Main picture: Pippa Tanke

More smart SLA on the cards

A HI-TECH living quarter that adapts to the lifestyles of soldiers is set to become a blueprint for future bases, senior officers have said.

The newly opened Carne Building single living accommodation (SLA) at Imjin Barracks, Gloucester has a line-up of advanced smart features – with troops given control of their environment via touchscreen panels in ensuite rooms (shown left).

As well as setting heat and ventilation preferences, residents can run checks to diagnose the likes of water leaks. And with solar panels harvesting power using the latest nano crystal battery tech, the building can store energy to become self-sufficient of the National Grid in the summer.

Brig Pete Quaite (above), the recently appointed Army Infrastructure Plans boss, said the project would inform future block designs.

He added that the site, which is

named after VC recipient Gen James Carne and houses troops from Nato's HQ Allied Rapid Reaction Corps, was proving popular with occupants.

He said: "A typical building of this type has around 120 sensors – but this one has 21,000, giving us access to a wealth of information.

"These can, for example, detect when a room is vacant and lower the temperature before raising it to the set level when the occupant comes back.

"If there is a fault, then the system can report back to the relevant people."

The building, which was assembled around modules built off-site, has a state-of-the-art design. Read the September 2022 *Soldier* for more.

The brigadier continued: "SLA projects currently under way will deliver 1,000 bed spaces and we are aiming for 16,500 of them in total over the next decade with an Army investment of £1.4 billion." ■



COSTUMED CASH DASH SET TO TURN HEADS

A COMMITTED Reservist couple who have already raised hundreds of thousands of pounds for The Royal British Legion are hitting the road again for a fancy dress challenge. Capt George Harrill (RAMC), 58, and wife Dawn, 53 – a former volunteer with Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps – have been limbering up for the

Bristol 10K on May 19 and are looking to generate a healthy sum. And it should be hard to miss them en route as the serving FTRS officer with 243 Multi-Role Medical Regiment will be running in full Second World War battle kit, while his partner is dressing as a giant poppy. Search Dawn and George on [justgiving.com](https://www.justgiving.com) to lend your support.



FEARLESS FUNDRAISING



Pictures: Graeme Main

Hitting the mark

Marksman contest for instructors is already making their recruits better shots

THE launch of a shooting competition for instructors is being credited with helping to raise standards among new recruits.

Around 50 personnel took part in the Soldier Academy's first tournament last month, where teams of four-to-eight troops from different training establishments battled it out on Pirbright's ranges over three days.

"The motivation for the contest was to create a set of subject matter experts within training battalions who can run range days for other staff to improve skills," WO2 Paul Adamson (SASC), who organised the event, told *Soldier*.

"We want to inject more passion for shooting in instructors, who then pass that on to their recruits."

According to competitor LSgt Peter Sandison (WG), an instructor with Catterick's 2 Infantry Training Battalion, the event is already making waves.

"The recruits I train are now enjoying much higher scores on shooting drills than ever before, and I put that down to the tuition I've received in preparation for this event," he said.

"At Catterick I normally have about 40 trainees per group and we used to average ten first-time passes in the annual combat marksmanship test, with three or four reaching marksman standard. But after my month of dedicated marksmanship training, and a day of pistol shooting with a specialist from the SASC, my next group recorded 38 first-time passes.

"Not only that, but 16 of them reached marksman standard. That's quite a leap."

The NCO added: "Those of us on ITC's shooting team have also been

passing on our new-found knowledge and skills to other instructors based at Catterick, so all the recruits there are, effectively, benefitting from this event."

The competition sets far tougher tests than the standard marksmanship exam, with the shot from a sitting position fired at a target from 300m instead of 100, for example.

Targets are smaller, with shooters getting less time to fire their rounds, while often required to run 100m over rough ground before taking a shot.

"It's much tougher because we want to raise standards and this is our qualification event for the Army Operational Shooting Competition at Bisley," explained WO2 Adamson.

Next year's event will see the field doubled, with entrants from all three Services, Reserve training units and AFC Harrogate taking part.

"Shooting is a fundamental skill that every soldier should be interested in," added WO2 Adamson.

"We are making instructors more enthusiastic and that's now improving the standard of personnel joining the Field Army." ■

“
We want to inject more passion for shooting
”

SERGEANT MAJORS UNITE

TOPICS affecting troops around the world will come under the microscope at the annual RSMs' Convention – taking place as this issue hits barracks.

Guests, including representatives of Allied nations, will be attending the two-day event at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, themed "ready to fight, home or away".

Army Sergeant Major, WO1 Paul Carney, said findings would be put before Army top brass.



SHOT AT DAWN

A CASH drive has been launched to repair a monument remembering First World War soldiers wrongly sentenced to death.

The Shot at Dawn memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum stands as a tribute to troops who were executed for military offences such as cowardice.

But heavy rain and flooding at the Staffordshire site have taken their toll since it was built two decades ago, and £45,000 is now needed.

Maria Howes, head of marketing and business development, said visitors often commented on the poignancy of the location.

Many of those executed were underage or suffering from combat-related mental health issues and pardons were issued in the early 2000s. Visit thenma.org.uk

LGBT+ CONFERENCE

THE annual Army LGBT+ Conference will take place on July 17 in MoD Main Building in Whitehall, London.

The event is open to all Regular and Reserve personnel, civil servants and veterans with the theme "recognise, reflect, reconnect".

For details read ABN 7/2024

RANGERS VOLUNTEERS

A RESERVE company has been established to support the work of The Ranger Regiment.

The capability will be built gradually after a recent selection process for new recruits, with interim operational capability set for April 2025.

Military assistance to partner forces will be the unit's main activity, usually as individual augmentees within Regular Ranger teams.



THE BIG PICTURE

Gaza Strip

Drop zone

AMID continuing instability in the Middle East, the Royal Logistic Corps has been playing a critical role in dropping aid to civilians.

Troops with Brize Norton-based 47 Air Despatch Squadron worked as part of a huge Jordanian-led multinational effort to parachute in a ten-tonne cargo of food, water, baby formula and other vital kit – all on a single day.

The task, which coincided with the Muslim festival of Eid al-Fitr, saw the British personnel work closely with their Royal Air Force colleagues to drop the supplies from an A400M Atlas.

Pictures: AS1 Leah Jones and Cpl Tim Laurence, both RAF





L403A1 - AIV





NEED TO KNOW

WELFARE | SKILLS & DRILLS | MENTAL HEALTH | RULES & REGS | HEALTH

‘I get the jokes about motherhood better now’

This officer got creative with his shared parental leave – and learnt some vital lessons along the way



► DID you know that birth mothers are able to assign some of their maternity leave to their partners? It is called shared parental leave – and the Army allows the opportunity to most Regular and full-time Reserve service soldiers. Here, an officer tells us about his colourful six-month break from the day job...

How did you find out about shared parental leave?

It was my partner Wendy who first raised the idea having spoken to other wives.

When did you take it and how long for?

I took five months, with a bit of annual leave, to make a period of six months in the second half of last year when my youngest was three months old.

Did you know any other Servicemen who had done it?

No, but I spoke to a couple of colleagues and they seemed to regret not having taken it. This helped me realise what a good opportunity it was.

Were there barriers getting it past the boss?

None whatsoever. My chain of command were 100 per cent supportive. The policy is written in JSP 760 – any boss would need exceptional reasons to deny an application.

Were you worried about the impact on your career?

Yes. When Wendy first mentioned it I thought, “I can’t leave work for several months.” But she responded with, “it’s no different to women taking maternity leave”, and she had a very good point. I had some mental blocks around it, but spending every day for six months with my family was the most fantastic experience I could ever wish for. I have been there, watched my children develop, had so much fun and created memories that will last a lifetime.

Did it have a negative effect back at work?

Very minimally – other than returning to the office a little rusty and having to

catch up on six months of events. It was all relatively straightforward and I was back into the swing of things before I knew it.

How did it affect your pay?

There was no impact on my pay because Wendy was kind enough to share five months with me, meaning I was on full pay all the time. But this can be tailored for individual needs; the policy is reasonably flexible and allows the Service person to take unpaid leave while their spouse stays on paid leave.

How did it go being at home?

We didn’t stay at home for much of it! We spent three months touring Europe in our caravan, travelling from Dunkirk, through the Netherlands, Germany, the Alps and back through France and Luxembourg.

We then had a quick pitstop in the UK to catch up with family before flying to Bangkok for a week followed by six weeks on the Gold Coast of Australia and a brief stop via Abu Dhabi on the way home.

Were you the sole carer for your baby and how did that go?

Yes, there were a few weeks when Wendy went back to work and I had the baby to look after. It was challenging but fun; I found it important to stay focused on simple things like getting out of the house and to the park for some outdoor time. I did plenty of toddler groups where I was often the only dad. As a result I’ve come back to the workplace with a far greater understanding and appreciation of what it’s like for mums – I certainly get the jokes about motherhood far better now!

What is your attitude to shared parental leave now?

It took me a while to get my head around it despite it being our right to apply and supported by a JSP. But my attitude now is quite clear – why wouldn’t you look at taking it?



SITREP

Name: Maj Jon Leng

Age: 43

Cap badge: REME

Current posting: Military Aviation Authority, Abbey Wood

Family set-up: In a civil partnership with Wendy, an NHS dentist, with two daughters, aged one and three

Any advice to others considering it?

If it’s an option open to you, then take as much and do as much as you can – think big and be bold with your aspirations. Ignore any naysayers who might tell you what you can’t do. Be a part of your child’s life every day and teach them as much as you can about everything around them and enjoy watching them grow and develop. Things like this are a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, so do not pass it by too lightly.

Anything else to add?

Much of the training you will have received in the Army will give you the skills and confidence to plan something amazing for you and your family.

● To find out more about your options with shared parental leave, read chapter 27 of JSP 760

Sniper shots

What **3** things does it take to become a dedicated marksman? We asked snipers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment...

“
We have to be willing to put 110 per cent into everything we do
”

1

MOTIVATION

In this role we're frequently asked to do the difficult things. You could be concealed in a bush for two days, operating ahead of the battlegroup and often independently. This can make things like the med chain tricky, so self-starters need only apply

2

ADAPTABILITY

Snipers must be able to navigate and recce different environments. One minute we could be operating across urban terrain, and the next rural – usually in very small teams. Being flexible is vital

3

NO MOANING!

We have to be willing to put 110 per cent into everything we do. When other troops see that badge, they will often look up to us. It's important they don't hear us whining about things

Want to qualify as a professional marksman?

1 Candidates are **selected for the sniper operators cadre** based on a high level of soldiering ability. They will already hold **marksman** on the **annual combat marksmanship test**.

2 The soldier must pass **seven** sniper skills: **shooting, stalking, observation, judging distance, navigation, sniper knowledge** and **camouflage and concealment**.

3 They will **qualify as a number one** (firer of the .338 within the sniper pair), **becoming a number two or pair commander upon promotion to lance corporal**.

► HAVING worked at the sharp end of elite ops for more than a decade, then become a familiar face on TV, this man is the first to admit he has a bit of an ego.

But through practice, Fox says he manages to keep a lid on it – most of the time.

As he explains in his new book, *Embrace the Chaos*, it's important to be able to do so because having an overinflated sense of self-worth undermines teams and stunts personal development.

This is his advice for recognising egotistical traits in yourself and those you work with – as well as what to do about them...

Check the mirror

Signs of egotism include denial, a lack of empathy, holding grudges, a sense of entitlement, talking big without delivering, and a belief that the individual is better than everyone else. If you're unsure you possess any of these tendencies, try sending the list to your most trusted friends or colleagues and ask them to tick any that apply to you (anonymously if they want). Be ready for some brutal honesty.

If the problem is **YOU**

Bring a little humility into your life with one of the following ideas:

● Remember a time when you failed.

Don't dwell on the negative moments for too long, but recall an occasion when you were brought down a notch or two – in work, business or life. This will cool any delusions of grandeur. In a moment when you're tempted to act rashly, take a breath and recall this event.

● Volunteer your time to a good cause.

Not only will it help you to feel gratitude for where you are in life, it will distract you from the ego's biggest energy source – me, myself and I.

Ego Trips

Jason Fox on
how to manage
them in yourself
and others



● **Practise accountability.** If you screw up, take an honest look at what happened, accept ownership of the situation and don't make excuses or shift blame.

If the problem is **THEM**

Find yourself working with a Billy Big Bollocks? Try these tactics:

● Turn their ego into an advantage.

You'll never win them over by asking them to consider what success might do for the mission as a whole. Instead, highlight what their performance will do for them. For example, you might be in a team race. Create a prize within your group that celebrates the fastest individual and watch the egotist give it everything.

● Reframe your expectations.

If there's no way of bending the alpha character to the overall cause, shift your assumptions. They won't accept responsibility (unless the outcome has been amazing), they won't show empathy, they won't behave with modesty and they definitely won't give themselves up for the greater good, so don't bother thinking they will.

● **Bin them.** An egotist can be a toxic presence. If you're in a position to give them the elbow, it might be a wise course of action.



● Information taken from *Embrace the Chaos: 52 Tactics to Make Every Day Count* by Jason Fox – out now, priced £22

Facial hair care

Army Beard Network founder shares grooming tips after policy change

**Equipment**

Invest in a good quality, waterproof trimmer – it will make your life so much easier. You want a robust one, where the blades don't break from the slightest fall into the sink. A small beard comb will help you achieve a uniform finish, especially around the top lip.

**Method**

I find it easiest to do the initial overall trim in the shower to minimise clean-up.

Looking in a mirror, I will then use the trimmer with the attachment set to 1-2mm on my neck. For me, this leaves the least irritation on my skin, but you might find shaving or using a different length works best. You will need to do this far more often than trimming your overall beard.

Then precisely trim the cheeks, tops of sideburns and above the top lip, using a comb to help get that crisp, sharp edge.

Finally, pay attention to the bottom and sides of the beard, where it meets the neck. Use your trimmer to taper these with a slightly shorter length.

► AFTER much debate, the rules have finally changed to bring soldiers in line with their Royal Navy and Royal Air Force counterparts (page 10).

But a beard is not just an easy way out of shaving, says Cpl Daniel Downing (Int Corps). Growing a presentable one is still a disciplined process, as he explains here...

**Toiletries**

The hair and skin on your face and neck is different to other areas such as your head, so dedicated products may be needed.

Dandruff of the beard – or beardruff – is real. The last thing you want is flakes spoiling your new look. Plus it's untidy and we need to maintain high standards. I use a wash specifically for facial hair but have also had success with normal anti-dandruff shampoos.

If the first growth feels rough and itchy, find a dedicated oil, beard butter or moisturiser that works for you.

**Growth rate**

The average beard grows between two and 3.5mm per week. Everyone is different, so don't worry if you find yours is faster or slower. But take this into account when judging how frequently to trim it, especially when nearing the length limit of 25.5mm.

Sleep stats

The numbers behind a good night's kip

► PROPER shut-eye is something the Army wants troops to take seriously. It's vital to overall wellbeing, affecting mental and brain health, physical performance, the cardiovascular and immune systems and hormone regulation.

And yet it's common to self-sabotage quality slumber through habits such as drinking too much coffee or alcohol and spending too long on personal devices in the evening.

That's why good sleep hygiene is set to become part of the individual training requirement – and also why the Service is staging a series of online presentations for any personnel to tune into (see below right).

As the sessions highlight, once you delve into some of the facts and figures around sleep, it becomes obvious why not catching enough Zs makes you feel so rubbish...



7-9

Recommended number of hours sleep an adult should get. Work out your requirement based on whether you wake up feeling ready to go in the mornings, or hit the snooze button several times before you rise



76

Percentage increase in your likelihood of sustaining a musculoskeletal injury after just one hour less sleep. Drowsiness slows your reaction time and reduces stamina



40

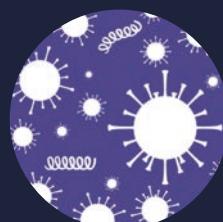
Per cent reduction in ability to retain new information that can occur due to poor kip. Sleep is when the brain sorts and stores memories. It does the same with emotions, which is why we are more likely to feel angry or tearful when we haven't slept well



FIVE

Ideal number of cycles – including rapid eye movement, lighter and deep sleep phases – a person should get per night. At times it isn't realistic to complete them consecutively, like when soldiers are on exercise or ops, so a good idea is to aim for as many cycles as possible, broken up into shorter naps

70



Percentage of your killer T-cells – the immune cells that attack and destroy infection – wiped out by just one night of fewer than four hours' sleep. This is why people tend to get run down when they're tired



12

Hours it can take some people to clear 110mg (about one cup's worth) of caffeine from their system. Everyone is different, so become familiar with your body's response to caffeinated drinks, cutting them out in the afternoon – or completely – if necessary

Want to know more?

See page 67 of **JSP 661** or visit the **Field Army Sleep Resource page** on SharePoint.

Sleep for Mental Resilience and Physical Wellbeing presentations are running online throughout May. Book a slot via the Sleep Resource page (accessible via Modnet devices)

Army head bows out with no regrets

INTERVIEW

The boss speaks with personnel at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst during a visit last year



“

There's nothing I have said or done in this job that I regret

”

IS two-year stint as chief of the general staff has been dominated by war in Europe and some headline-hitting home truths. Here, Gen Sir Patrick Sanders offers his thoughts on Army life in an exclusive interview with *Soldier* to mark him hanging up his uniform for the last time.

SOLDIER You leave the Army next month after nearly 40 years. What will be your legacy?

CGS I'm not a fan of that word, or even the idea of it, because it personalises things to me. Whatever has been achieved over the last two years has come about because everyone's done it. This is about what the Army has achieved, not me.

SOLDIER And what have we achieved?

CGS I took up this role four months after Russia invaded Ukraine, and that was a strategic shock – arguably the greatest geo-strategic catastrophe in Europe since the end of the Second World War. We had to respond to it and so, as I laid out in my speech at the Rusi Land Warfare Conference, that was about mobilising – in other words, making the most of the Army we had to ensure we were capable of deterring Russia and contributing to Nato's defences. That, I think, has been the single most important thing we've done over two years: we are more ready. And you can see the fruits of that in many areas. But to take one example, we currently have 16,000 troops deployed on the continent. And we couldn't have done that two years ago. That sends an incredibly powerful signal »

» about the Army's contribution to Nato and, I think, a really powerful one to Russia about our preparedness to respond.

Our training has also got better. We've adapted our system from one that was designed for a bigger Service in the early noughties into one that is more relevant to the changed context we find ourselves in. We will get people out of initial training and into the Field Army faster in a year's time. Companies or squadrons or batteries will find themselves having ten weeks of protected, resourced training to get themselves up to the right level. And we're already beginning to exercise at brigade and at divisional level, restoring that combined arms manoeuvre expertise that we've always been famous for, but which we have allowed to atrophy.

The other achievement I'd point to is our support to the 37,000 Ukrainians we have trained to the highest standard. We hear back from the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and indeed through intelligence from the Russians, just how valued that is. And of course, we have made a really significant material contribution too. We have given away our own equipment so that the Ukrainians can win, and that in turn is buying time for our own modernisation – an extraordinarily ambitious programme of change.

SOLDIER What have you made of the Interflex training you've seen?

CGS The Ukrainians are inspiring to train because they're so committed. Their courage and will is seriously impressive, but I'm equally impressed by the way our instructors throw themselves into it wholeheartedly and really, really care. Increasingly, as well, all of the lessons we're learning from Ukraine are being played out in our own training.

SOLDIER Can you give an example?

CGS I was in California recently visiting an exercise where we had 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment experimenting with drones and autonomous systems at battlegroup level (page 38). During those serials they were removing personnel from harm's way and replacing them with unmanned systems out in front of platoons and companies, which teaches you something about where we're going in future. Then there is our ability to take data off an aircraft like an F-35 and move that to a decision-maker in a command post, and then to an effector such as an artillery piece, all at machine speed. And we are seeing that data moving not just between domains, but allies too.

SOLDIER What's been difficult to achieve as CGS?

Anything you regret?

CGS The challenges are never with the people. Mobilise has made us the most productive Army in Europe – deployed in more places globally than any other, and delivering the same operational outputs as when we were 25,000 stronger back in 2012. That's demanding, and I really appreciate the commitment our people are putting in. The biggest frustration is the pace at which we've been able to drive our mobilisation

Gen Sanders has been 'seriously impressed' by activity on Op Interflex. *Right:* Chatting to troops at Army HQ last year



“
Our training
has got
significantly
better
”

and modernisation. And that comes down to simple physics, like industry's capacity to build equipment at the pace we need, but also – candidly – our ability to find the money for it and to get the approvals and the bureaucracy around resourcing this. I could point to other armies that have done this very quickly and very successfully. We've been very good at giving our stuff away – we haven't been quite as good as I would want at replacing it quickly.

SOLDIER Bureaucracy is something our readers tell us frustrates them too, with everything from claims to Teamwork days preventing them doing more green training. What do you say to that?



QUICKFIRE ROUND

We asked CGS for his...

BEST TOUR Telic 10

BEST SPORT Skiing

BEST FILM The Princess Bride

BEST DRINK Whisky

BEST COUNTRY (NOT UK) Norway –
I'm half Norwegian

BEST CAP BADGE I can't not say it.
You've only got one cap badge,
haven't you? I'm a rifleman.



CGS I'm the first to acknowledge that bureaucracy can always be stripped back further. But there are some things you can't strip away, such as safety. We need to be safe and look after our people when we're training. And I certainly wouldn't agree that Teamwork fits into the category of bureaucracy. If you look at what it is that's distinguished the Ukrainians from the Russians, it's been the moral component of fighting power. They are weaker numerically, and quantitatively with equipment, but immeasurably stronger in terms of their will and morale. Teamwork has been about making sure we have got the best performing teams, whether at fire team, section or battalion level, and reinforcing our values – what it is that we fight for and how we should behave towards each other. I make no apology for that. But the form-filling, some of the

claims, and so on, is just a constant battle for us to fight. I think mobilise has stripped a lot of that back. However, others may disagree.

SOLDIER What do personnel misunderstand about high command, do you think?

CGS I don't think I can speak for soldiers, but there are aspects of this job I wouldn't have understood as a platoon commander. For example, one of the things I've worked hard on in this role is to rebuild our industrial capacity in this country. When I joined the Army we had one of the world's leading sectors when it came to military equipment, lots of famous old names – Vickers Armstrong, Royal Ordnance and »

» the like. These were among the best in the world. For one reason or another, that has now shrunk. And it means we don't have a national sovereign industrial base we can rely on. That makes us weaker, because we can't be confident that when armoured vehicles or tanks are destroyed – as they will be in combat – they can be replaced quickly. It means we can't be confident that ammunition will be produced at the rate we need it. And that's not a good position to be in. As a result, I've visited more factories than I have foxholes in the last two years. I decided one of the biggest differences I could make was to ensure that over the next five or six years we regrow industry, so our soldiers are properly supported and equipped. That means I've had to get into the factories, but also find exports so we get the scale of orders that allows those places to keep producing. That's not something people in the Field Army will notice today, but they will in ten years' time. The timescales you must consider in this job are much longer than at unit or brigade level.

SOLDIER What about working with politicians? Tell the rest of us what that's like.

CGS It's easy to cast stones at our leaders, but my experience is that these are decent people who come into politics trying to make a difference and do the very best they can. And that's certainly been true of all the ministers I've worked with.

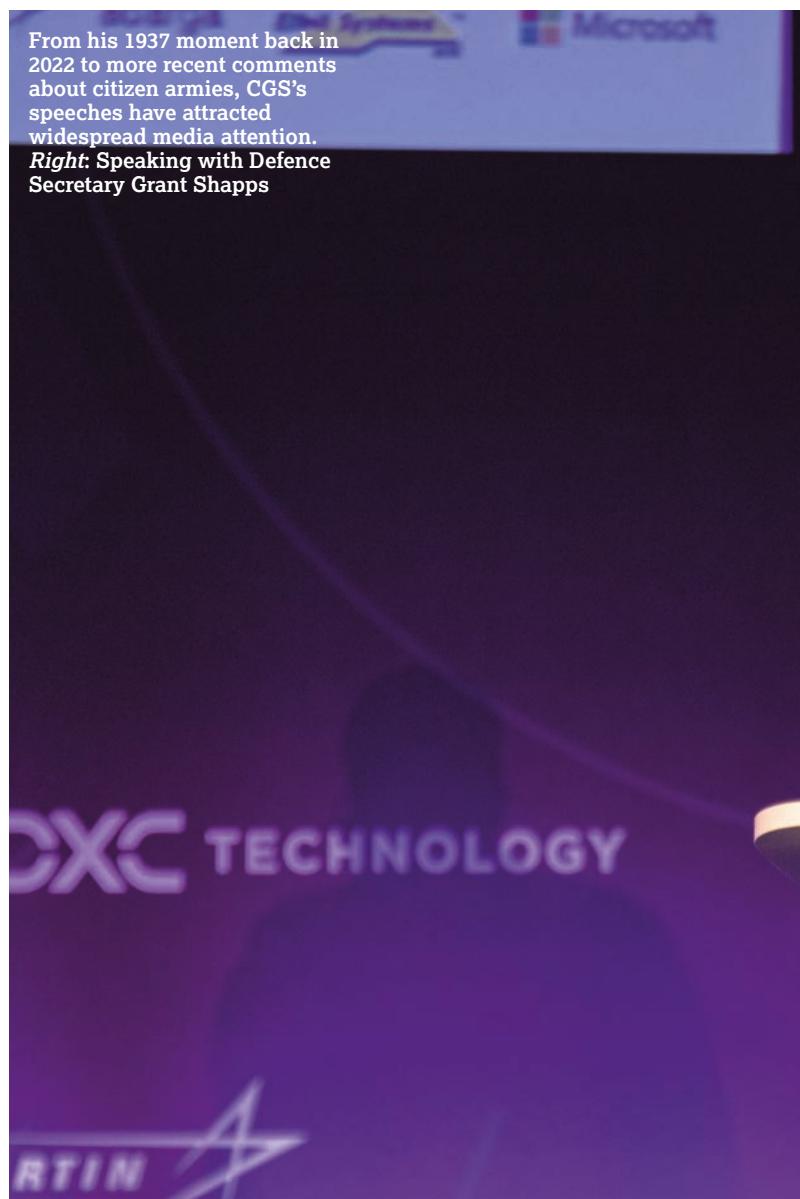
SOLDIER How do you feel about recruitment as you leave service? It's still not going brilliantly, is it?

CGS When I gave that speech at Twickenham – which got far more media coverage than expected, some of it misinterpreted – the next day we had the highest number of applications to join the Army than we've had in eight years. I think that's interesting, and tells you that people do want this adventure, this life, and that they see that sense of purpose in serving their country. Applications this year are at their highest in several years and this is an incredibly exciting – possibly quite dangerous – time to be joining the Army. But if you want fullness of life, this is the place to come. We have more people applying to join each year than there are in the entire Army, so I don't worry about the will. The bit that we still have to get right is the speed with which we bring candidates through that process, from applying to turning up at the front gate. And we're getting better at that. We've reduced that "time of flight" from sometimes close to a year, down to four or five months. And I want to drive it down further to about three months. If we pull all those levers correctly, then I'm confident that what we're already seeing as an improving trend will accelerate.

SOLDIER Would you recommend an Army career to a young Rfn or OCdt Sanders then?

CGS At the drop of a hat! I've had a life of adventure. It has been the most wonderful, wonderful life. Partly because that life has been in the company of soldiers, and I love the company of soldiers, but also because it's been exciting. There's a great Edith Hamilton quote that I love – "the fullness

From his 1937 moment back in 2022 to more recent comments about citizen armies, CGS's speeches have attracted widespread media attention. Right: Speaking with Defence Secretary Grant Shapps



of life is in the hazards of life". And there is no better reason to join the Army than that. It's been a great journey – just great.

SOLDIER Is there a particular role or posting you will look back on most fondly?

CGS This one – no one joins the Army and thinks that they're going to end up being CGS, least of all me, least of all my platoon sergeant and least of all my instructors at Sandhurst. Perhaps because all the good people left, or whatever, I've been lucky enough to end up in this role. And being at the head of an institution that I am extraordinarily proud of – and constantly amazed by the quality of our people, the commitment, the ingenuity, the initiative – that's been a thrill. The high point and low point of my career, both mixed together, was commanding the 4 Rifles battle group in Basra in



“
The day after that speech, we had the highest number of applications to join the Army that we've had in eight years

”



2007. That was a tough tour. We took a lot of casualties. But the resilience, courage, initiative and ferocious fighting spirit of all members of that battlegroup, and the brigade I was part of, was something I'll never forget.

SOLDIER Challenge culture is something you have talked about. But is it being embraced by those higher up the organisation?

CGS I think it's alive and well, and I've tried to set an example by being publicly challenging myself and by trying to accommodate and welcome challenge from people around me. But it's not something you can ever take for granted. And I don't underestimate we're a hierarchical organisation. There's a lot of gold braid on my uniform and that can sometimes be an impediment to people saying what they really think. Therefore

you've got to try and flatten the hierarchy as much as you can. I find that the best way is often to skip down through several layers of command, because quite often you'll hear things from a full screw or a staff sergeant that might not get put so directly from a colonel or brigadier. When I visit a unit, often the best nugget will come from a corporal, who might just say, "this is shit". Many of the mistakes we've made as an organisation, whether on operations or institutionally, have come about because people haven't felt able to challenge. That could be in procurement, or it could be a young soldier or officer with a map and no one's saying "I think you're going the wrong way".

SOLDIER How do you feel about Service accommodation – especially the situation with maintenance and repairs? The Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) says »

» **complaints are coming down, but images of horrific mould continue to fly around on social media.**

CGS I'm as frustrated as anybody with the fact we don't get the service we deserve. And I put DIO under pressure almost daily to manage those contracts properly. And we can only keep doing that. I think it's an improving picture, but not at a pace that we need it to be. There was a lot of noise around the new accommodation offer, now called the modernised accommodation offer, which is on pause as the department came under political direction to work some things through. So I don't want to go too much further into that. But I think it is important we preserve that social fabric of the Army as we widen entitlement. And we have to make sure that that widened entitlement is matched by widened supply – that was one of the problems that we encountered, it wasn't quite there. Also, I don't want any cohort to be disadvantaged as we shift to a new system. If we can achieve those three things, I think the new offer will be a great thing.

SOLDIER What about the performance of contractors?

Personnel have told us it breaks them that they can't just put things right themselves on their own estate.

CGS In a perfect world we would do everything ourselves. But that's not reality because the Army is designed to deploy on high-tempo operations, so contractors are a fundamental part of that. If there are frustrations, that's about how we are managing our contracts – not the contractors themselves. And we have some really good examples of where it works brilliantly, for example with our heavy equipment transporters which are managed by contractors who are also sponsored Reservists and will turn up when we need them on operations or in wartime. It's worth reminding ourselves that nations fight wars, not armies. If you go to war at scale, it is the nation that mobilises. That's the point that I was trying to make in my speech at Twickenham – making sure we lay some of the foundations for that. And contractors, part of the whole force, will be an absolutely fundamental part of that.

SOLDIER Is today's Army able to prioritise training against other commitments? Some have told us of their frustration that this is compromised, even in the face of Op Mobilise.

CGS It's true that the pressure of current commitments has eroded our ability to do collective training. We are very busy, deployed and stretched around the world in 102 different countries. But each of those individual commitments are often incredibly valuable. I'll give you an example of the Indo-Pacific. People often ask what can armies do in the areas where the map's blue – isn't this just where navies and air forces should play? But that's to misunderstand what we bring as armies. We have presence among the people, and it's among the people and on land that conflicts are settled.

The British Army is persistent – we don't come and go, disappearing over the horizon. We stay in one place and develop those relationships. We offer an asymmetric way of unlocking some of the anti-access area denial bastions that



“
I'd re-join at the drop of a hat – this has been the most wonderful life

”

the Chinese and Russians have put in place because they're optimised to defeat maritime and air threats. And you can unlock them through land. We're versatile – we can do lots of things that other services can't – and we're actually very good value for money. And in the Indo-Pacific, these small commitments add up to a large presence. We have a task force in Brunei and we train more than 22 different nations just with these small developing relationships, building their capacity, winning their trust. That contributes to deterrence. So the value of these deployments we have around the world are really important. But if you have too much – and arguably we are close to that at the moment – it erodes your ability to train in the way you describe. So that's why we have put a new land training system in place (page 7). This is a revolution in how we train, which will allow us to do so at every echelon from



The chief meets French troops guarding Buckingham Palace to mark the 120th anniversary of the Entente Cordiale last month

FINAL THOUGHTS

CGS SPEAKS OUT ON...

LIFE-CHANGING SERVICE

"The Army is the greatest accelerant of social mobility in the UK. Two statistics I'm always amazed by are that around one-third of the youngsters who turn up at Harrogate have been excluded from school. Yet all of them leave with a GCSE in maths and English. In the UK it takes five generations to move from the bottom of the income distribution curve to the middle. But if you join the Army you can do that in one, because if you serve and get to the rank of staff sergeant you are slap bang in the middle. And your children will also benefit from access to boarding school and education, if that's what you choose."

LIFE-CHANGING PEOPLE

"You sometimes hear this nonsense spoken about this being a woke generation, or the young not being what they used to be. But you don't even have to spend a day with our soldiers to realise how wrong that is. Service personnel will absolutely astonish you with their courage and humour. They're an amazing group of people to have served with."

division all the way down to platoon, in a way that is protected and prepares people for operations effectively. So our level of combined arms expertise will be significantly higher in two years' time.

SOLDIER You have talked about the importance of people leaving the Army well. How will you do this? What are your feelings about going?

CGS There's nothing I have said or done in this job that I regret. I've been incredibly lucky to have a life as full and as adventurous as this one over the last 40 years. And I'm excited about what comes next. I'm not quite sure what that's going to be yet. My immediate plan is to visit a festival with my son. Then I'll find a completely new chapter, a new adventure. ■



FOOD





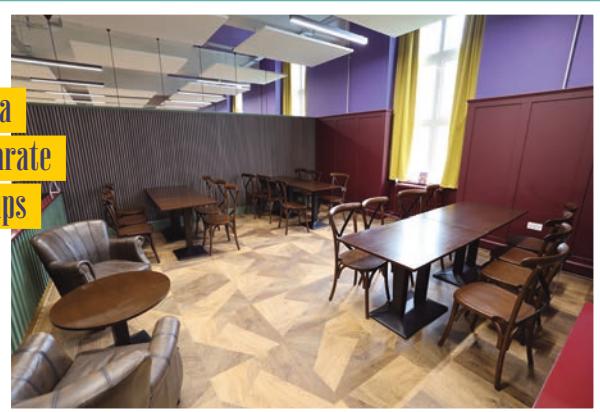
Acoustic panels to deaden echoing voices and create better environment for conversations



Soft seating to encourage hanging out and working on laptops while taking a break



Breakout area provides separate zone for groups



THOUGHT

Army dining is set to become far more sociable in future. Here, soldiers give their verdict on changes being made in the overhaul...

COOKHOUSES around the UK are in line for major refurbishments as part of a defence-wide catering shake-up (*Soldier*, April).

The overhaul could start to affect menus as this issue hits desks, with units inside the wire given more say over what is put on their plates and when it is served.

However, changes will probably take months to implement as base personnel and catering contractors get to grips with the new arrangements and appropriate supplies are purchased.

The modernisation of cookhouse buildings will take even longer. Makeovers inspired by commercial restaurants and more sociable layouts are major priorities under the new plan – as are opening hours being extended to suit today's lifestyles.

"The refurbishments are not simply an exercise in redecoration, they draw on the successes of the Army Eats trial that took place at six sites to examine how to create better, more modern dining environments," emphasises WO1 Wayne Young (RLC).

The former military chef with more than 20 years' experience in Service kitchens now works for the regional infrastructure cell at Army Headquarters, which is responsible for managing the catering

modernisation programme.

He told *Soldier* there will be no one-size-fits-all template for the look and feel of the next generation of eating facilities. Instead, each project will take into account the priorities and wishes of those who live and work at that particular camp.

"The aim is to transform these areas into more than just dining rooms, creating modern and inviting social spaces where troops can come to relax as well as to eat, while also providing facilities that will better support the new food model," he added.

"Where possible, units may also see other options such as shops and cafes clustered around the cookhouse area.

"The key to the success of these projects will be the engagement of units and their personnel."

The redevelopments are already under way at several sites, but many of the 65 or so establishments currently earmarked for these improvements won't be completed for at least three to four years due to the sheer scale of the £52 million project.

So what sort of changes can troops expect to come their way? And will they be worth the wait?

We visited Middle Wallop, one of the first bases to have its cookhouse revamped, to find out if Army Air Corps personnel felt it had made any difference to the quality of life on camp...



LCpl Connor Duffy



"It's a chilled-out environment now. It was dingy before – you ate your food and got out ASAP.

This has a pub-restaurant vibe and you can sit and have a proper discussion with your muckers while eating.

Acoustic panels make chatting much easier. Officers never used to come in here but now it's not unusual."



LCpl Sam Warters



"The new design feels like they are inviting people to stay.

Areas aren't reserved for a rank so you don't have to ask yourself 'can I sit here or not?'.

It feels much more relaxed."



Cpl Dan Harber



"I was on the mess committee and we asked for a decent shop and got it – we haven't had one for 15 years or so.

I showed the proposed design to colleagues and many didn't believe we would get it because there wouldn't be the money.

Now it's here most think it's a great facility."



CONVERSATION STARTER

SSgt Andy Ngugi (RLC), unit catering manager at Middle Wallop, explains how the sociable cookhouse was created

"We went to a couple of other sites to get some inspiration for our design. We used to have one big, wide-open space, but not anymore and I really like the acoustic panels we've installed as they make it far easier to hold a conversation by dampening echoes and background noise."

"Also, we didn't have a shop. We did a survey of people working here – and used messing meetings – to decide exactly what we wanted. The only decent shop was off-site at a nearby garage and the prices were pretty high so many personnel requested our own be built in the catering area. That was incorporated into the new design as a result."

"We also created separated areas for groups to congregate and dine together as we wanted to make it more comfortable to hang around, like in a modern restaurant."

"In the planning phase we got involved as a station – there were three designs shortlisted and personnel could nominate which one they preferred."

"This facility will be good for recruitment. We had a new soldier in here last week and she remarked that she was surprised by how nice our restaurant was, so I feel like we're on the right track."



AirTpr Abi Lowe

"I spend more time in here now as it's a more comfortable space than it was, which was like a school canteen."

I used to eat in the block mostly but don't anymore. I also use this space to have a coffee with friends during a break.

The new shop is great. I've had car issues so not having to go off camp for essentials has been a big advantage."



AirTpr Thomas Key

"It's the best Army diner I've been in to date."

The booths are great for eating in groups, and for a small camp it's very well equipped.

It's nice to have this area but the money we pay for meals is a bigger deal for most soldiers, especially ones on low wages."



Cpl Danny Hillyer

"It's a more communal area now where teams eat together, have a brew and chill out."

You see more troopers eating in here instead of back at the block, which used to happen a lot. They often bought takeaways and went straight to their rooms.

Anyone can come in here, which I think is good for the Service overall."





FOCUSING

on the fight

Two robotic dogs – nicknamed Bob and Alan – were assessed as remote radio rebroadcasting nodes and for clearing rooms prior to soldiers being sent forward. Inset: The tactical operations Centre at Fort Irwin National Training Centre





Troops tested passing various data through a new network hub



Trial system provides soldiers and commanders with clearest battlefield picture yet

THE barren landscape, dotted with robot dogs and tracked autonomous vehicles bristling with weapons and sensors, looks like a scene from a *Star Wars* movie. But for the British Army personnel on Project Convergence at the Fort Irwin National Training Centre in California's Mojave Desert, the most exciting plotline was played out in the drab interior of a small, tented command post.

That's because the star of their show was a piece of communications technology called Cain-X, developed by the Infantry Trials and Development Unit and SoldierWorks

"Networks were a key area for us on this package," says Capt Joe Mumford from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Yorkshire Regiment, the Army's experimentation unit.

Along with elements from the Experimentation and Trials Group and 1st Deep Recce Strike Brigade Combat Team, the Brits worked alongside the American 82nd Airborne and 1st Cavalry divisions and French personnel equipped with a fleet of medium unmanned aerial systems.

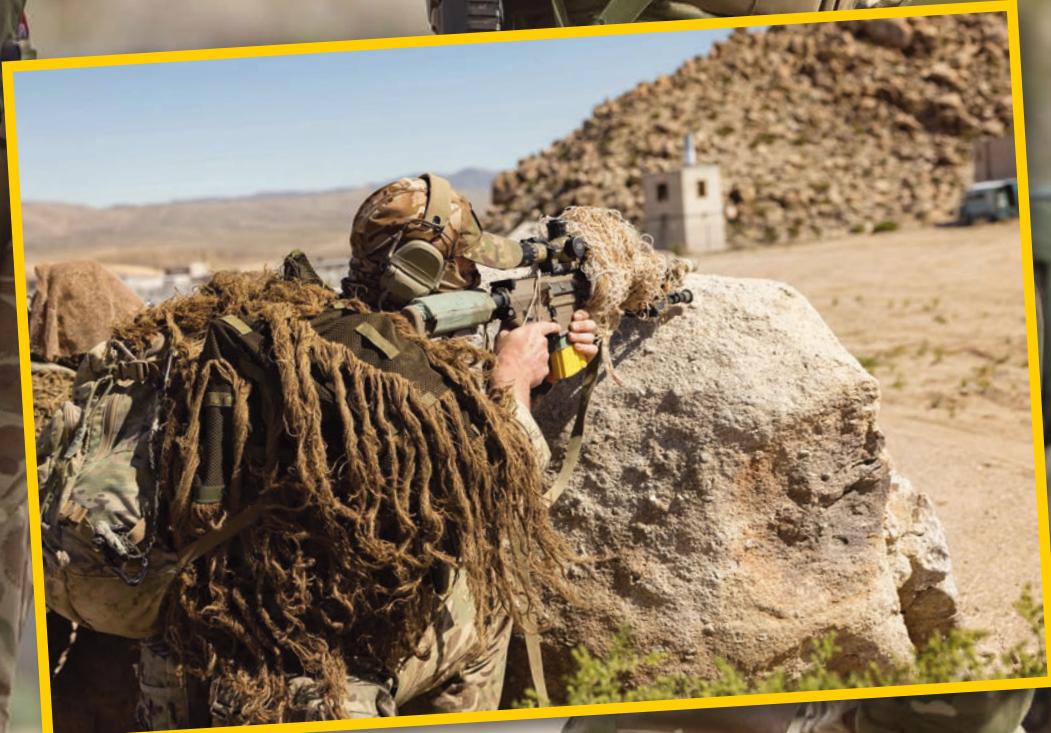
"We've been integrating, innovating and experimenting with robotics and autonomous systems on the ground and in the sky," says Lt Col Mike Wade-Smith, commanding officer of 2 R Yorks. "Operating with the French, for example, was important for us in working out how we pass over our targets from other nations' sensors to UK effectors.

"Developing interoperability with key allies is always a main aim of this package."

But this time around another key goal was to assess secure **»**

Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Cpl Paul Squires, RLC

Mortar platoon from 2 R Yorks test new target acquisition technology
Inset: Taking aim on the 'prison complex' in the mock town of Razish



“

Once you've worked out what their capabilities and limitations are they can be a fantastic asset

”



» communications between UK personnel, equipment and systems using various platforms, including Manet and high-frequency radios as well as Starlink and Viasat sat comms.

“We wanted to know if we could create a platform that marries together different data and comms feeds – a sort of electronic translator if you like,” continues Capt Mumford.

“Cain-X could be the answer as our trials revealed this kit is a massive step in the right direction.”

This novel system allows troops to use personal radios to feed data from Atak devices around the battlespace.

In California it managed to link multiple radio bearers and frequencies together, including TrellisWare 950 and MPU5 radios, other data radios and satcomms networks.

“Critically, Cain-X has given us Atak's real-time shared situational awareness across the battlegroup and all the way back to brigade,” says Cpl Kaelan Smith (R Yorks).

“The network is now user-friendly but has taken time to get right – however, that's why we're here.”

Cain-X's ability to handle different types of data has also made the sensor-decider-effector kill chain more efficient, something that was vividly demonstrated during a serial near Fort Irwin's huge mock town of Razish.

“Using mortars in the urban environment is a skill that we have been working hard to improve on,” explains Sgt Pierre Jassey (R Yorks).

“Being able to cam and conceal our barrels, then rapidly fire and get first round on target, then bug out to a layup point ready for the next mission is vital.”

“The Cain-X was great for this because it used the latest Manet radios to give us reliable voice and data right down to section level.”

“We networked our laser range finders and ballistic calculators into the kit which meant our shots landed on target first time without any adjustments from the fire control and mortar line.”

British personnel also took part in a US-led project called Share. Its goals are, in essence, similar to those of Cain-X, but on a larger scale. It incorporates the Atak system too and is designed to enable the Five Eyes nations – Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the USA – to pass vital information between each other.

The technology allows targeting information to be sent accurately and seamlessly during a joint operation as well as communicating troop locations to reduce the risk of fratricide.

“We could see the American locations and send them targets, and they were able to do the same for us,” says Cpl Smith.

“It sped up the kill-web, meaning we could be more lethal.”

“The value of this exercise, especially to a newly-qualified corporal like me, has been fantastic.”

“We have all worked hard and I've been able to take my skills learnt in the UK and apply them in a challenging environment against a proper enemy in their backyard.”

Capt Mumford believes the opportunity to work with key allies' own experimentation forces has become vital to the Service's Future Soldier initiative.

“At 2 R Yorks we aim to be involved in stuff that's three-to-five years ahead of where the rest of the Army is and there's no other arena that offers the same opportunities as Project Convergence,” he adds. »

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An unmanned ground vehicle with a mounted machine gun scans for potential threats
Inset: Sharing situational awareness data across the battlegroup



“
This kit is a massive step in the right direction
”

”The scale of the facilities at Fort Irwin for example, are on another level.

“The opfor brigade permanently based there really want to win against the ‘enemy’ and the value of that is immeasurable for exploring the potential of the new technologies and tactics we’re helping to develop.”

UGVs start to impress

“After three weeks of using unmanned ground vehicles (UGV) on Project Convergence they became an important part of our tactics,” Capt Mumford continues.

“It takes time to learn how to use them properly and assess how best to exploit what they offer, but once you’ve worked out what their capabilities and limitations are they can be a fantastic asset.”

An MRZR UGV was used by 2 R Yorks to charge the soldiers’ personal radios directly from the vehicle so they didn’t have to carry batteries around with them.

A flatbed style version was also employed to move casualties and ammo around the battlespace.

Another UGV had a Starlink connection attached so when troops were working over the horizon or in the next valley they

could still communicate with the brigade headquarters.

And an armed variant equipped with a general purpose machine gun that could be fired and driven remotely by an operator was deployed when personnel moved through urban areas to provide close-up fire support.

One was even fitted with a series of cameras on an extendable tower so troops could observe certain high-risk areas while remaining in a safe position.

“The ability of the soldiers developed throughout the exercise and by the end rolling the armed UGV around town in support of the troops on the break-in was achieved with ease,” says Cpl Bret Gibbs (R Yorks).

“With a 7.62mm GPMG it is good, but imagine it with a fifty cal or grenade machine gun. It would be fantastic to give that support to the rifle company in the close fight.”

A 3D printer was also deployed to produce replacement parts for the UGV.

“It’s the first time we’ve done this for such a platform,” says Capt Mumford. “It proved that we could fix this type of vehicle at range if we are pushed into it when deployed for a prolonged period of time – and that could be a major asset in a real combat situation.” ■



PATHFINDERS

"FIRST IN"



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PFSC 1/25: 08 Feb to 28 Mar 25
PFSC 2/25: 06 Sep to 24 Oct 25





Picture: Graeme Main

Making waves for adventurous training

ICANNOT understand why the Army insists on investing so much on adventurous training (AT).

Recruitment and retention are an issue, our estate is in need of refurbishment, and underinvestment and mismanaged procurement have created capability gaps.

While the government is desperately trying to balance the national budget the Army needs to get the maximum value out of every penny it spends. Yet we insist on frequent AT – the rationale being that it's "good for recruitment and retention".

Has anyone done a proper cost-benefit analysis to quantify what it actually does for the Service in this respect?

In more than 20 years of service I've never heard anyone say they joined for the AT or signed off as they don't get enough.

I have, however, seen soldiers and officers have their duties covered by peers while they are away on such activity.

Who is displaying "selfless commitment" in that scenario?

Soldiering is an "adventure" in itself. In my experience, realistic and challenging training for warfighting and ops is what gives personnel real job satisfaction and recruits and retains these warriors.

AT rewards shirkers and punishes grafters – and if it actually recruits or retains anyone, they are the wrong people.

– Name and address supplied

Col Neil Wilson, Commander Army Adventurous Training Group, replies:

It is a great shame you feel you have not benefitted from the opportunities that adventurous training provides.

It is worth remembering that its primary purpose is leadership training and resilience building, with

additional and tangible benefits of retention and recruitment. It is a fundamental part of the offer.

There are numerous academic papers articulating the benefits of outdoor, challenging activities where individuals are stretched in testing and often alien environments.

The perception of fear from conducting risk-to-life activities builds confidence and robustness. Furthermore, the challenges faced, and comprehensive planning required to conduct a successful expedition, deliver leadership experiences that are very hard to replicate during combat drills.

It is a superb means of enhancing operational capability and the Armed Forces continuous attitude survey has consistently shown adventurous training rates in the top five reasons for personnel retention.

In addition, only recently *Soldier* published an article on the benefits of AT where several individuals who were willing to push themselves out of their comfort zone were extolling the virtues of its impact on their morale and future intentions.

It also offers outstanding value for money. Some 40,000 Regular and Reserve soldiers experience AT every year, with approximately 10,000 attending courses and 30,000 on challenging expeditions.

It takes courage and commitment to apply and attend one of our individual courses.

We would welcome you to join us and see for yourself the benefits it can bring.

“
I've never heard anyone say they joined for the AT
”

YOUR letters provide an insight into the issues at the top of soldiers' agendas... but please be brief. Emails must include your name and location (although we won't publish them if you ask us not to). We reserve the right to accept or reject letters, and to edit for length, clarity or style. Before you write to us with a problem, you should first have tried to get an answer via your own chain of command.

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COMPETITIONS

MARCH 2024

HOAY winner (Majority internet radio music system): Steven Ware, Portsmouth

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WELFARE

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

Army HIVE

These centres provide information for the whole military community on a wide variety of topics affecting their everyday life, including relocation, accommodation, health and well-being, finance, non-UK nationals, education, employment, deployment, resettlement, military discounts and local area information.

army.mod.uk/hives

Forcesline

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

0800 731 4880

ssafa.org.uk/get-help/forcesline

Advertise in Soldier

advertising@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Army Welfare Service

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

ALCOHOL AND SMOKING

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

Drinkline

A free, confidential helpline
0300 123 1110

NHS support

nhs.uk/livewell

BULLYING/HARASSMENT/ DISCRIMINATION

Army Mediation Service

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

Army Speak Out Helpline

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

Defence BHD Helpline

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

CHILDCARE/CARING/FAMILIES

Army Families Federation

The independent voice of Army families, offering confidential advice and support
01264 554004
aff.org.uk

Flexible working has been introduced by the Army to help personnel tailor their work-life balance. This includes arrangements such as remote working, variable finish times and restricted separation. Read more in the *Flexible Working and You* guide on Modnet.

Regulars can find out how this impacts pay and benefits at discovermybenefits.mod.gov.uk

DEBT AND MONEY PROBLEMS

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

Forces Pension Society

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

Joining Forces Credit Union

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

Money Helper

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

National Debtline

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

nationaldebtline.org

StepChange Debt Charity

The UK's leading debt charity offering free, confidential advice
0800 138 1111
stepchange.org.uk

GAMBLING

National Gambling Helpline

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

GRIEF

Cruse Bereavement Support

0808 808 1677

SSAFA support groups

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

HOUSING

Joint Service Housing

Advice Office

The MoD's tri-Service focal point to provide Armed Forces personnel and their dependants with civilian housing information
07814 612120
rc-pers-jshao-0mailbox@mod.gov.uk

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services

01748 833797

spaces.org.uk

Veterans Gateway

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

INJURY/SICKNESS

Personnel Recovery Centres

These centres can be found across the United Kingdom. To find out more about your local service, speak to your unit welfare team, search for Army Recovery Capability on Defence

Connect or send an email to
rc-pers-arc-0@mailbox@mod.gov.uk

LONELINESS

Armed Forces and Veterans

Breakfast Clubs

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

Samaritans

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

The Royal British Legion

Contact the friendly team for information about local groups and

support services
0808 802 8080
britishlegion.org.uk

MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

There's always someone you can talk to. Speak to your friends or family, boss or padre, unit welfare staff (details above), medical officer or GP. There are a number of charities and other organisations that can also provide support and they include...

Combat Stress 24/7 Helpline
0800 138 1619

Headspace
All British Army personnel and

civil servants can access this mindfulness app for free with an @armymail.mod.uk email address work.headspace.com/britisharmy/member-enroll

Mind – The Mental Health Charity
0300 123 3393
mind.org

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

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

Samaritans
116 123 samaritans.org

The Ripple Pond

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

Togetherall

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

> **continued overleaf**

HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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MAJORITY



TEN details have been changed in this image of the Army men's doubles pairing in action during the Inter-Services Table Tennis Championships in Aldershot – where the soldiers won the men's and women's team competitions (page 64).

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 984, Soldier, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU along with your contact details – including email address – by May 31. A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

Alternatively, email a photograph of the image highlighting the differences to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk

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

> continued from page 51

RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWN/ABUSE

Aurora New Dawn

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

ManKind

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

Relate

Relationship support relate.org.uk



REUNIONS

The Artillery Clerks' Reunion and Association Dinner for all members and partners at Larkhill on June 21-23. Visit artyclerkassn.org to sign up and see who else is attending.

Royal Hampshire Territorials and Hampshire Companies, The Wessex Regiment 77th post-war reunion luncheon. Saturday September 21, 2024. To be held at The Winchester Royal Hotel. Contact Jim Cooper (convener) on 023 9281 6165. Email rhwxtar@yahoo.com



SEARCHLINE

Applications are open for the SSAFA short break scheme. Free trips to the Lake District and Exmoor for serving (inc Reservist) families with a child with developmental, emotional, behavioural or physical additional need. Activities include kayaking, climbing, horse riding and archery. For details visit ssafa.org.uk

WHAT'S ON AT MILITARY MUSEUMS

Imperial War Museum North

Northern Ireland: Living with the Troubles runs until the end of September, shining a light on the 38-year Op Banner deployment. iwm.org

Imperial War Museum London

Storyteller: Photography by Tim Hetherington showcases the celebrated photojournalist's images and films. Runs until September 29. iwm.org

National Army Museum

Ex-Guards officer Maj Gen Peter Williams recalls Balkans ops on May 24. Entry to *Peacekeeping in Bosnia: A Tragedy Recalled* is free. nam.ac.uk

Norfolk Tank Museum

Fans of military vehicles are gearing up for Armourfest, a two-day festival on August 17-18. Find out more at norfolktankmuseum.co.uk

Syd Taylor is trying to track down

Peter Snape, who served in The Staffordshire Regiment in the 1980s. Contact sydtaylor000@gmail.com

RESETTLEMENT

Last year the **Career Transition**

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

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

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

3. Avoid making snap decisions.

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

4. Identify what skills gaps you might have and give yourself time to mitigate against these through some vocational training or a civilian work

attachment. The CTP can advise and offer a wide range of qualifications and experience for you to add to your already considerable bank of transferable skills.

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

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

Where to start with resettlement

– Speak with your local unit resettlement information staff, who can offer advice on your entitlement.

– Contact your Service resettlement adviser (SRA) to discuss your resettlement package and available funding. You can find their details on ctp.org.uk/contact-us/sra-contact

– Register with the CTP via JPA and one of the team will contact you to book your first appointment.

CTP TRAINING COURSES 2023/24

- LCL L3 Certificate in Refrigeration, Air Conditioning & Heat Pump Systems
- Domestic Electrical Installation Full Scope
- 18th Edition Wiring Regulations
- C&G 2391-52 Level 3 Award in Inspection and Testing
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- EAL L3 Certificate in Traction and Rolling Stock Systems
- EAL L3 Award in Programmable Logic Controllers
- IMI L3 Certificate in Cycle Maintenance
- Hard Landscaping and Bricklaying
- Plastering
- Plumbing
- Property Maintenance
- Cisco Certified Network Associate
- CompTIA A+
- CompTIA Network+ and Security+

- CompTIA Cyber Security Analyst
- Strategic Finance for Non-Financial Managers
- Executive Mini MBA
- Director Development Programme
- QMS ISO 9001:2015 Lead Auditor Level 3
- Level 5 Certificate in Service Improvement (Lean Six Sigma – Green Belt)
- APMG Change Management
- Management of Risk
- IWFM L4 Certificate in Facilities Management
- CIPD Level 5 Associate Diploma in People Management
- First Aid at Work Level 3 Award
- Managing Safely (IOSH)
- NEBOSH National General Certificate (SQA Level 6)
- NEBOSH Certificate in Fire Safety
- NEBOSH Health & Safety Management for Construction

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

CTP provides support for up to two



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

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To access the referral form use the QR code, or copy and paste the URL into your browser: <https://rbs.army.mod.uk>

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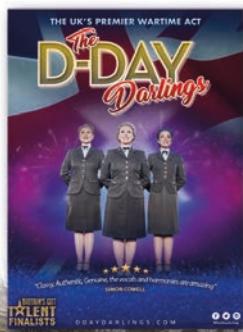


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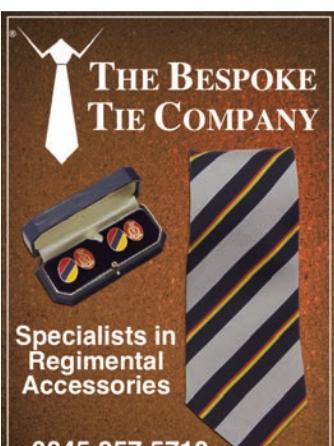
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REVIEWS

BOOK OF THE MONTH

Nuclear War: A Scenario

By Annie Jacobsen

THE American satirist and musician Tom Lehrer once penned a darkly comic ditty from the perspective of an Allied serviceman fighting in World War Three.

Entitled *So Long, Mom*, the song reflects the enthusiasm of a US bomber pilot en route to deliver his nuclear payload into the heart of his Soviet adversary. As he signs off telling his folks not to worry, he promises that he will look for them at the end of the conflict "an hour-and-a-half from now".

The 1950s piece – delivered in the style of *Pack Up Your Troubles* – might have been written in irony, but its promised timeframe is played out almost to the minute in *Nuclear War: A Scenario*, which sets out a vision of Armageddon in a far less humorous tone.

Perhaps aiming it at the generations that have grown up after the Cold War, journalist Annie Jacobsen pulls no punches as she describes the appalling effects these weapons have on human flesh, their colossal destructive power and the irradiated realities of a post-conflict world.



Pictures: Freepik

BOOKS

Drawing on interviews from across the military, political and scientific spectrum, the result is a brutal narrative that applies real-world thinking to a plausible fictional situation.

In so doing, the Pulitzer Prize finalist lays bare flaws in the doctrine of deterrence, the dangers of rogue states acquiring weapons of mass destruction and the potential for miscommunication between leaders with already strained relationships.

Whereas it has been largely assumed that an escalating conventional war would come before a nuclear confrontation – buying time for reflection – Jacobsen's premise is that of an out-of-the-blue strike involving a limited thermonuclear launch on the USA.

In this case North Korea, which is believed to have long been developing nuclear warheads plus the intercontinental ballistic missiles to deliver them, attacks first as it targets the seat of American power in Washington.

As a shocked White House administration begins implementing the response protocols, Nato invokes article five of the North Atlantic Treaty – which specifies that an attack against a member represents a strike on all.

But in an unforeseen turn of events, American military planners realise that their full-on counterstrike is sending a volley of intercontinental ballistic missiles in a trajectory over the Russian Federation, with deadly consequences.

The whole serial – all 72 minutes of it – is spelled out chapter-by-chapter as the nightmare unfolds. The fiction is punctuated by forays into the science behind the weapons, historical contexts and current political realities.

It is a horrifying read. Yet it is also almost impossible to put down until the situation is concluded in all its graphic and awful detail.

Jacobsen then embarks on a vision of the world beyond, where vast swathes of the planet's surface are destroyed and survivors face a new struggle.

In an age in which conventional wars between nations are again being waged and nuclear options openly touted via the media – arguably with a far more casual tone than they deserve – this narrative is a reminder of basic realities, especially given today's weapons are many times more powerful than the bombs dropped on Japan in 1945.

The author sets out this hopelessness at the outset. Temperatures hotter than the core



of the Sun, people instantly reduced to atoms, winds of hundreds of miles per hour tearing down buildings at distances well beyond the point of detonation – and all this before the fallout settles and more perish from the agonising effects of radiation poisoning.

A talking point at the height of the old East-West standoff, this threat has never disappeared – it has merely become part of the background noise.

Jacobsen reminds us that ambivalence should not be an option and that there will be no winners if deterrence fails and the nuclear option is used. ■

VERDICT:

A terrifying tale, solidly researched
★★★★★



Nuclear War: A Scenario by Annie Jacobsen is out now and priced £20

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER

MORE TOP PICKS

MOVIES



Ukraine: Enemy in the Woods

Out on BBC iPlayer

► FILMED late last year in woodland north-west of Kupyansk, this unflinching documentary follows the Ukrainian Berlingo Battalion's mission to defend a small section of railway that could enable the Russians to advance on Kharkiv.

Bodycam footage interspersed with interviews shows the troops – some as young as 19 and at least one of whom was trained in Britain under Op Interflex – killing and being killed in the snow-covered forest.

Here a drone captures the last moments of enemy soldiers before it drops its lethal payload on their position. There, a seriously injured Ukrainian groans as his comrades drag him to the aid post.

This is modern conflict up close and extremely personal – a sobering, disturbing watch that should be compulsory viewing for all Nato personnel, as well as their leaders.



Review: WO1 Mike Owens, RE





GAMES

Llamasoft: The Jeff Minter Story

Out now on all formats

» PROGRAMMING prodigy Jeff Minter grew up in the shadow of the defence sector – his father Patrick worked at the Atomic Weapons Establishment in Berkshire.

The legendary game designer cites his dad – and an unconventional childhood backdrop – as key influences in a working life that tracks back to the arcade explosion of the late 1970s and the home computer boom that followed.

Now his long career – and game design firm Llamasoft – are featured in this interactive documentary that includes a huge playable slice of his portfolio plus interviews with industry heavyweights and a wealth of memorabilia to view.

Minter's often psychedelic work includes a stack of influential shoot 'em ups including *Gridrunner* and *Attack of the Mutant Camels* plus outings for gaming giant Atari – notably with reworkings of coin-op classic *Tempest*.

Intelligently put together and well presented, this foray into Minter's life and work has plenty to offer anyone with an interest in the wider video game field.



Review: Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



South Park: Snow Day

Out now on consoles

» THE animated comedy show that follows a group of foul-mouthed kids living in a perpetually frozen Colorado community continues its console outing in this latest squad-based brawler.

Snow Day sees Cartman, Kenny and other much-loved characters bag themselves a day off school after the town is hit by the worst storm in history.

It's an opportunity for a violent showdown and a fight for territorial supremacy.

The story is played out across five



MUSIC

Mother

The Wandering Hearts

» THIS Brit band's latest contribution to the Americana scene more than holds its own, demonstrating the folk/country blend typical to this type of music.

All three singers' voices are capable enough to stand alone but, put together, their harmonies beautifully deliver catchy tunes and deep lyrics. With highlights including *About America* and *Dance Again*, this offering is great for relaxing afternoons at home or listening to on a long drive.

The **Wandering Hearts** are comparable to a modern, laid back **Fleetwood Mac** – I'm sure that as this genre grows in popularity in the UK the band's fanbase will too.



Review: CSgt Liam Compson, RCAM

chapters, each progressively longer than the other. Battles are pacy but there are only three melee and ranged weapons in use while the endless hack-and-slash action can be a tad repetitive.

Yet the PS5 version we sampled was fun – and best enjoyed in multiplayer mode. A team of four is a good laugh and is well worth your time. Fans of the show will appreciate the humour, although with ten hours of play it's a pretty short game and some DLC would be appreciated.



Review: SSgt Degsy Jones, QRH

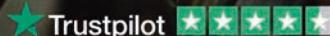
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SOLDIER SPORT

REACHING OUT »

THE new sport climbing season got under way at the Army South Championships in Swindon. The event is a key fixture in the effort to attract new people to the sport and a host of personnel competed for the first time. Read about their experiences on pages 66-67...





POSITION OF STRENGTH HELPS REDS TO TITLE DOUBLE

THE Army celebrated a successful outing at the Inter-Services Table Tennis Championships in Aldershot as they claimed both titles on offer.

Having ended the dominance of the Royal Air Force last season, the men's A team again reigned supreme as availability issues hampered their rival's bid to reclaim the silverware.

Further evidence of the soldiers' talent pool was seen in their B team, who also defeated the airmen on their way to finishing runners up.

It was a similar story in the women's event, where the Service's strength in depth proved to be the determining factor despite the best efforts of RAF sensation AS1 Darcie Proud, who is ranked among the top 50 players in the country.

Proud later defeated Sgt Hilary Greig (AMS) to take the women's title and also added the doubles trophy to her haul.

Lt Ben Avery (RLC, pictured above left) triumphed over

teammate LCpl Dom Weston (RE, main picture) to claim the men's individual honours and the duo combined their talents to secure the doubles crown.

"It was a bit of a surprise," Capt Matt Hutson (REME, pictured right), chair of the Army Table Tennis Association, told *SoldierSport* as he reflected on the men's team victory.

"The RAF are usually close contenders, and we were expecting them to come out of the blocks in an effort to win the title back.

"They have always held the trophy and last year we finally took it off them.

"But they were missing a couple of key players, and our availability was very good.

"We were able to field strong A and B teams and they played each other in the final, meaning it was a clean sweep for us.

"There were similar issues in the women's competition, which meant it was a fairly straightforward win.

"That was a shame; Darcie Proud was absolutely brilliant but the RAF did not have the numbers to challenge."

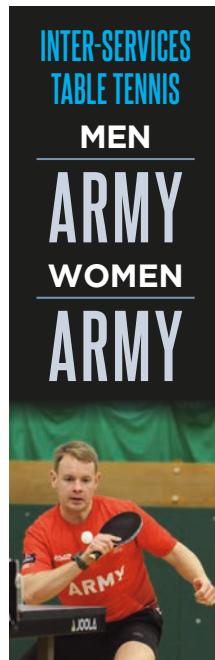
Hutson praised the efforts of Reservist Avery, who was playing his first table tennis in four months, and said a training camp at UK Armed Forces level is now being looked at in a bid to increase female participation across the other teams.

However, he was keen to stress the sport is in a healthy state in Service circles, with more than 100 personnel attending a training week ahead of February's Army Championships.

"A lot of people could not make that event but we still had strong numbers," he added.

"We have a good base of players coming through and that bodes well for the future."

The set-up hosts its annual round-robin tournament in Aldershot in late September and will then send teams to compete at a tournament in Washington DC in November. ■





TAKE YOUR SEAT: FOR DETAILS ON THE DAY AND TO BUY TICKETS VISIT INTERSERVICEST20.CO.UK

» CRICKET



DEARDEN PRIMED TO LEAD AT LORD'S

A NEW-LOOK Army men's team will take to the hallowed turf of Lord's this month on a mission to defend the Inter-Services Twenty20 Cricket Championships title.

The soldiers triumphed via the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method as heavy rain hampered last season's showpiece and they will be calling on a host of fresh faces in their latest bid for glory as six regular players from the 2023 campaign are unavailable due to deployments.

Among them is skipper Sgt Jay Boynton (REME) – a matchwinner on numerous occasions over the years – meaning WO2 Ross Dearden (RE, pictured) will step up to lead the side in his absence.

"There will be a lot of opportunities for those who have been around the squad," the new captain told *SoldierSport*. "We are lucky to have the depth that perhaps the other Services lack.

"You cannot replace Jay's

experience, but we are in a good position to crack on. We will rotate people in the initial warm-up games to give everyone exposure and I am confident they will hit the ground running."

With the Lord's schedule revamped to include a UK Armed Forces women's match, the Army face the Senior Service in their opening match at Middleton-on-Sea on May 14 before locking horns with the RAF at the home of cricket two days later.

Dearden has served as Boynton's vice-captain for a number of seasons and has experience of leading his corps side, meaning he isn't daunted by the step up.

"You don't want to take it on because someone is away, but from a personal point of view I am very proud," he added.

"Playing at Lord's feels the same now as it did ten years ago. There are question marks due to the experience we have missing, but we have enough quality in the squad." ■



**"WE ARE
LUCKY
TO HAVE
DEPTH"**

SPORT SHORTS



Infantry on the up

THE Milton Keynes Bowl was the setting for the Infantry Road Cycling Championships, with 40 riders battling for individual and unit honours.

With four Army athletes among the starters, the A race proved to be the most highly contested in the competition's history as a sprint finish determined the podium placings, with Cpl Sean Dodsworth (Lancs) taking top spot ahead of LCpl Lewis Hale (Rifles) and WO2 Iain Evans (PWRR).

Hale was under-23 champion and there was a victory for Capt Hannah Knapton (Para) in the women's event.



Picture: Chris Cope

Joy for Jackals

THE British Army Jackals celebrated their first competitive victory as they triumphed over the Ipswich Cardinals in a match dedicated to the late Capt Chris Butcher (RA).

After a disappointing 2023 – which saw them miss out on honours in the inaugural Inter-Services American Football Championships and suffer defeat to Bristol Apache (pictured) – the soldiers made the ideal start to the new campaign as they ran out 42-7 winners in Abingdon.

The players return to action as the UK Armed Forces face the United States visiting forces in a flag football game at RAF Lakenheath on May 17.



WALL TO WALL SUCCESS

NOVICE INFLUX BOOSTS SPORT CLIMBING SCENE AT SEASON OPENER

NOVICE athletes were at the forefront as the new sport climbing season got under way at the Army South Championships.

A healthy percentage of the 56 personnel in action at Swindon's Rockstar Climbing Centre were testing their skills in a competitive environment for the first time, with a series of challenging indoor walls forming the perfect introduction to the discipline.

Additionally, the event featured open and elite categories and formed a stepping stone to bigger tests to come in the shape of the Army and Inter-Corps Championships, which will be followed by the Inter-Services.

It also came hot on the heels of a successful bouldering campaign that reached its conclusion in February.

"We are talent spotting," organiser and Army team member WO2 Rob Taylor (RE) told *SoldierSport*.

"We are looking for climbers in all age categories, especially the under-25s, and there are individuals we have seen here for the first time who we can push forward."

"It is a chance for us to attract novice climbers. We want to be inclusive, but we have to provide a decent competition element as well."

"There are five qualification routes that get progressively harder, and everyone has two minutes to get as high as they can on each."

"There are routes here today that have stumped people; they are not unachievable but have certainly thrown a few. That is what we are looking for."

"Climbing is as much an

individual sport as it is a team one. It is a community in which everyone chats to each other and they are so supportive, which means it is a perfect place to learn."

Cpl Matt Williams (RE, pictured near bottom left) won the men's novice final, with Cpl Rachel Bowyer (AGC (SPS)) taking the women's title.

Cpl Dean Neville (R Signals) and Sgt Jade Cannan (RLC) were crowned men's and women's open champions, while Lt Josh Thorn (AAC) claimed the elite honours.

The Mercian Regiment also caught the eye, with an eight-strong contingent taking part having only formed a team one week earlier.

They entered five climbers in the novice field, three of whom progressed to the final.

"The battalion is trying to get people back into weekly sports sessions as we have been pretty busy and spread to the winds in recent times," explained Lt Oliver Sherwood (Mercian).

"I'm a climber myself so I thought I'd start a team."

"The fear factor makes it a challenge and it is great for fitness, particularly in terms of upper body strength."

"I think this is a brilliant competition and brings credibility to Army climbing. It is a lesser-known sport, and it is great to have the knowledge and experience of the organisers to tap into."

"We've had good interest, with 14 people involved already with a mix of abilities. I've been surprised by how well it has gone; we have an affiliation with a local gym and hope to run regular sessions. I'm also booked on a rock-climbing



"IF I GET
TWO
THIRDS
UP THE
WALL
I'LL BE
HAPPY"

supervisors' course with a view to taking this outdoors.

"Hopefully we'll come back next year, and we also want to take part in the Armed Forces Bouldering League. The most important thing is getting those qualifications so we can keep moving forward."

Pte Joe Farrell-Webb (RAVC, pictured left) was another attending the Army South Championships for the first time having been invited by a colleague from 104 Military Working Dog Squadron.

With a background in bouldering, he went on to qualify for the novice final and is eyeing progression to the elite ranks in the years to come.

"I have done better than I expected," he said ahead of his final climb of the day.

"I thought I'd only be able to do the first route, so it has been a bit of a surprise. If I get two-thirds up the wall in the final, I will be happy."

"I've been very impressed. The Army generally focuses on team sports, so I was not expecting climbing to have so much support."

"There are dozens of people here who are interested in the same thing as me and if you are struggling on a wall, they will shout out help and that has been useful. But it's not just about hearing what they have to say – watching them climb has been so beneficial."

For details on how to get involved click on the "sports climbing" link at britisharmysport.com ■



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MEDALS FOR MASTERS DUO AT HOME WORLD CUP

HOCKEY aces Lt Col Nic George (R Signals) and SCpl Annabel Lamb (RCAM) starred on the international stage for the England over-40s team that secured a bronze medal at the Indoor World Cup.

A mainstay of the England masters set-up, George was named captain for the home tournament in Nottingham and saw her side emerge from the group stages with two wins and two losses – including an 11-1 triumph over Wales.

However, they crashed to a 5-2 defeat to Germany in the semi-finals before George opened the scoring in the bronze-medal match against Spain, with England eventually winning 4-3.

“You always think you can do better but in hindsight we were pleased to come away with a medal and this gives us something to build on in future years,” the 44-year-old (main picture), who finished the competition with four goals in

seven matches, told *SoldierSport*.

“The European nations, especially Germany, play a lot more indoor hockey and their tactical experience is far greater than ours.

“England masters tend not to focus on it as much and this was my first opportunity to play indoors with the team, so we went in not really knowing what the standard would be like.

“But representing your country is always amazing and to lead the team out was especially memorable for me.”

George will return to the England fold in the outdoor format when she competes at the Four Nations tournament later this month.

She has also been included in the squad for the World Cup in South Africa in October.

“We will be favourites for both,” the officer continued. “During my time with the over-35s and over-40s we have come away with the gold every time we have entered those events and I expect us to



**“I HAVE
LEARNT
SO
MUCH”**

be exceptionally competitive this time round.”

Lamb (pictured left) made her England debut in Nottingham having excelled in trials ahead of the tournament and the experience has left her with a taste for further involvement.

“Indoor hockey has been a long journey for me,” she said. “It is a totally different game and I have learnt so much through my 18 years of playing for the Army. This was the culmination of all that hard work, and it was a massive privilege to be able to represent my country.

“Tactically it was very different to what I have done before but the players around me were amazing. I went from sitting on the bench, learning and getting a few minutes of play to being named player of the match in the bronze-medal game.

“This has given me new motivation. The coach has already asked me along to the next outdoor trials and I want to get on that team.” ■



REDS HIT TRY TRAIL AHEAD OF SERVICES OPENER

THE running power of the backs proved to be the headline act of a stunning victory for the Army in their final fixture ahead of this season's Inter-Services campaign.

The impressive Reds crossed for 12 tries in an 80-8 mauling of the Irish Defence Force in Aldershot – a result that saw them bounce into their pre-tournament training camp in Cyprus full of confidence.

Bdr Owain Davies (RA) was among the many standout performers, with the fullback running in for a hat-trick, while there were braces for centre pairing Tpr Levi Roper (QDG) and LCpl Solo Radianirova (REME), as well as wing Rfn Verimi Qorowale (Rifles).

The searing pace of Qorowale proved to be a threat from the outset and he posted the soldiers' opening score in just the second minute after Cpl Iferemi Boladau (R Signals) punched a huge hole

in the Irish defense.

A slick offload from Radianirova allowed Spr Jack Johnson (RE) to jink home under the posts moments later, and the hosts were 21-0 up in the eighth minute as Qorowale raced through with relative ease from the halfway line.

Davies opened his account midway through the half as a strong carry from flanker SSgt Matt Dawson (Int Corps) allowed him to touch down in the corner.

More hard running from Dawson paved the way for Fijian sevens star Radianirova to score three minutes later before a yellow card for LCpl Kody Vereti (REME) formed the basis for the one spell of concerted Irish pressure on the night, which eventually resulted in a try.

Further efforts from Roper, Davies and Radianirova stretched the Army's lead to 54-8 at the interval but they then had to wait until the 56th minute to further

add to their tally, when Roper profited from a faltering Irish lineout for a simple score.

Front rower Sgt Gareth Smith (R Welsh) was the next to go over, the replacement showing a decent turn of speed out wide to reach the line, and LCpl Pita Ratukadreu (REME) then collected a smart kick from Johnson to run in for the penultimate try of the game.

Davies had the final say as a swift passing move from left to right allowed him to touch down in the corner.

Speaking afterwards, head coach Lt Col Tim Osman (RA) said he was pleased with the performance against what proved to be limited opposition.

"You can only play what's in front of you and we knew they were struggling with injuries and players being unavailable," he told *SoldierSport*.

"It was a chance to display some of the running skills we



know we have and there is plenty to take in before we head to the training camp.

"There is a long way to go but this is good preparation."

Ill-discipline proved to be a crucial factor in last season's defeat to the Royal Navy and the Reds saw two players yellow carded against the Irish, much to the coach's annoyance.

"It is something we are working on," he added.

"The players were on the end of some short, sharp words at half-time and they improved after the break."

Attention now turns to preparations for the Twickenham clash on May 4, with the tournament concluding against the Royal Air Force at Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium a week later.

"They will be working hard in Cyprus," Osman continued. "It is about refining a few things, as well as priming ourselves physically and mentally.

"We will review the way we have been playing and then look to put a gameplan together to beat the Navy.

"Obviously, I'm hoping to go one better than last year. It is an absolute privilege to be involved in this and it's also a lot of fun. We want to see an improved performance, then hopefully the win will come." ■



RUGBY IN NUMBERS

POINTS FROM THE BOOT OF FLY HALF SPR JACK JOHNSON IN THE ARMY'S WIN OVER THE IRISH DEFENCE FORCE

20

WINS FROM NINE MATCHES FOR THE REDS IN THEIR INTER-SERVICES BUILD UP

6

POINTS CONCEDED IN THE ARMY WOMEN'S LOSS TO ENGLAND U20S

99

TRIES SCORED BY STAR FORWARD BDR BETH DAINTON AS THE SOLDIERS THRASHED THE NAVY 67-5 LAST SEASON

4



Picture: Cat Gorni/Allison Photography

WALES WIN BOOSTS MORALE

HEAD coach WO2 Sarah Mitchelson (RLC) told *SoldierSport* the Army women's rugby union team are ready for the Inter-Services challenge after they concluded their preparations with victory over Wales under-20s.

Tries from Sgt Lou Dodd (QARANC), SSgt Sarah Batley (AGC (RMP)), Lt Hannah Gilmour (RE) and Pte India King (RLC) helped the Reds to a 24-17 win in Aldershot, a result that formed the perfect response following a heavy defeat to England under-20s last time out.

"We were looking to progress from what we produced against England," Mitchelson said.

"We achieved our goals and a lot of girls stepped up after what happened in that game. They were completely different, more ruthless and there was real desire in the team."

The Royal Air Force downed the Royal Navy 34-12 in the

Inter-Services opener on the same day, meaning the soldiers were able to get a close look at what lies in wait.

However, the coach insisted her focus is firmly on the Army players and what they are able to deliver.

"We are sticking to our goals," she continued. "We believe that if we play the best we can, we will walk away as champions. We have seen what the RAF have got and there will be a few things to look at, but we are concentrating on ourselves."

"The result against Wales gave us confidence and there is a good vibe in the camp."

Tickets for both the men's and women's games against the Navy at Twickenham on May 4 can be purchased at [eticketing.co.uk/rfu](https://www.eticketing.co.uk/rfu) ■

They then face the RAF at Gloucester's Kingsholm Stadium on May 11. Tickets for those matches are available at [glosrugby.co.uk](https://www.glosrugby.co.uk) ■



BEST OF THE BEST

MODERN pentathlon's 2Lt Kerenza Bryson (RLC) added another accolade to her haul after she was named UK Armed Forces sportswoman of the year.

The Reservist was presented with the Army's equivalent award before Christmas following a sensational 12 months of action – the highlight of which saw her win a bronze medal at the sport's world championships, an effort that saw her hit the qualifying mark for the Paris Olympics.

Bryson was unable to attend the ceremony, but in a recorded message she said: "To be nominated is amazing, so I feel truly honoured to be chosen as the winner. It has definitely given me the boost I need running up to the Olympics."

Elsewhere, the Army women's tug of war team were crowned team of the year following gold medals at the British and Irish Championships, together with a bronze on the world stage.

Rugby union ace Spr Cameron McDonald (RE), who scored a hat-trick in last season's Army-Navy game, was named runner-up in the sportsman of the year ranks, a feat matched by cricket umpire WO1 Ben Hood (AGC (RMP)) in the official of the year category.



PERFECT TONIC IN DOWN UNDER TEST



**"THEY
HAVE
PLENTY
OF
YEARS
AHEAD
OF
THEM"**

A TRIP down under was billed as the ideal boost for the Army boxing team following their disappointment at this season's England National Amateur Championships.

The fighters were facing off against elite athletes from the Boxing Victoria and Australian Olympic programmes as this issue went to press, with a 20-strong squad set for action.

Their departure came just days after their bid for national honours fell short, with the Reds' four male qualifiers exiting the competition at the quarter-finals.

Head coach SSgt Shane Sadler (RAPTC) was in a philosophical mood while reflecting on the results, telling *SoldierSport* the latter stages of the tournament have become an increasingly difficult challenge.

"It was a first championships for three of them and they all performed well," he added. "Cfn Leon Moulds (REME, pictured above) lost to a really good lad.

"Pte Lewis Harvey (RLC) has the talent to go all the way but he just needs more experience at this level. We thought Fus Matty

Calderwood (RRF, pictured left) won the first and third rounds of his bout but he had two points deducted and lost via a unanimous verdict.

"The good thing is the fact they are all young and it doesn't happen straight away.

"They have plenty of years ahead of them and they have the potential to become champions."

Defending champion Cpl Terri-Leigh Stuart (REME) suffered a split-decision defeat in her women's semi-final, with LCpl Chelsea Tiller (RAMC) exiting at the same stage. Therefore, the Australia tour came at the perfect time for the group as a whole.

"At this stage of the season, if you haven't been selected for the championships it can be difficult to keep morale high, so this trip has plugged a gap," Sadler said.

"Lewis Harvey has been matched against an opponent who has qualified for the Olympics and has won all 29 of his fights – but he has the opportunity to go in there and perform well.

"It will be great experience for everyone involved." ■

MONTH IN SPORT

May's key dates...


WHAT:

Army FA Cup final

WHEN:

May 1 (1900 kick-off)

WHERE:

Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW:

The highlight of the Army football season, this showpiece fixture is now in its 123rd year. Who will take the trophy from 2023 champions 3 Para?


WHAT: Inter-Services Basketball Championships

WHEN: May 9 to 10

WHERE: Portsmouth

NEED TO KNOW: The Army men ended the Royal Navy's winning run with a 91-68 victory in last season's final. Can they defend their title? And will the women avenge their loss to the RAF?


WHAT:

Inter-Corps Hockey Championships

WHEN:

May 13 to 15

WHERE:

Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW:

The Infantry prevailed in a penalty shootout to lift the men's trophy last time out, while there was a routine win for the Adjutant General's Corps in the women's final. Who will triumph this year?



Pictures: Lee Crabb/Allison Photography

JAMES STARS AS TROPHY DROUGHT ENDS



PREMIERSHIP CUP FINAL
R WELSH

25

STORMERS

15

THE long wait for silverware finally came to an end for 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh as they reigned supreme in the Army Premiership Cup final.

A 25-15 victory over defending champions the Stormers – comprising personnel from 12 and 16 Regiments, Royal Artillery – saw the Tidworth-based outfit lift the trophy for the first time in 14 years while also avenging the defeat suffered to the same opposition in last year's showpiece.

Gnr Soni Tagitiumua opened the scoring with a routine penalty in front of the posts before Fus Aaron James (pictured left) drew the sides level with an expertly judged kick from wide on the left.

The Stormers crossed for the first try of the afternoon as the Royal Welsh defence failed to gather a wayward penalty attempt from Tagitiumua, leaving Gnr Antonio Rede with the simple task of touching down for a converted score.

However, their lead was reduced before the break as

a swift cross-field attack saw James release LCpl Isaveli Lolomoa on the left and the winger duly crossed in the corner to close the gap to 10-8.

James was in the thick of the action just minutes after the interval, the fullback collecting a high kick downfield before breaking the lines and sparking the move that saw centre Fus Ben Bulubuluwale sprint home.

Man-of-the-match James added the extras to put his side 15-10 ahead and his boot produced further magic moments later as a deft grubber kick resulted in a third try of the afternoon from Fus Dan Moore.

Rede crossed for a second time to cut the deficit, but James had the final say with a sweetly struck penalty from range to complete the scoring.

“It’s taken so long to get my hands on the trophy,” said victorious captain, and Army forward, Sgt Gareth Smith. “There are so many people in this team who are leaving this year, and it is great to send them out with a big win.” ■



Rib-eye steak with potato wedges, peppercorn sauce and a nice salad on the side. I love steaks and will be pushing for more of them to be on our menu in the future.

SSgt Andy Ngugi, RLC



I'm not after anything too fancy – give me a really well-cooked, high-quality burger with lean chicken or beef and I'm happy.

AirTpr Sam Harris, AAC



I want more roast dinners with lots of choice – lamb, chicken and beef, with all the trimmings, Yorkshire puddings, roasties, cauliflower cheese and veg. I'd also like more variety with puddings too – tiramisu is the top of my list but it's never served here.

AirTpr Nicole Marshman, AAC



You can't beat good old fish and chips when it's done well. At the moment we get pollock, which is okay but I'd love a chunky piece of cod or haddock in a beautiful beer batter, crispy chips and some minted mushy peas. It makes the perfect meal any day of the week.

Cpl Dan Harber, AAC

Interviews: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main



A high-quality breakfast spread with lots of choice is what I'd vote for. We have really nice full-English breakfasts and the omelettes are great, but I'd like to see a wide selection of fruits, nuts and yoghurts provided every day, which are not only healthier but give you more energy for longer.

Cpl Danny Hillyer, AAC



A good roast dinner served at least once a week is what I'll be pushing for. We do get really good roasts but not often enough for my liking. It's definitely my favourite meal.

AirTpr Thomas Key, AAC

DREAM DISHES

Units now have much more say over what's on the cookhouse menu (page 38), so we asked personnel at Middle Wallop what their best bites would be...

I'd really love to see peri peri chicken on the menu more often. When they serve it here it's really good and so tasty – it's like having a Nando's at a fraction of the cost.

AirTpr Abi Lowe, AAC



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