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Image: Ben Rishton & family, Andy Garthwaite and Les Fryatt, Soldiers' Charity beneficiaries

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To be involved in a proper
operation after just two years in
the Reserve is fantastic
”

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“ We played some good hockey in the build-up to this competition ”

Reds rout rivals at Inter-Services – p76

100 battles later...



THIS month's magazine hits the shelves as the Army's rugby union team prepare to face

their Royal Navy rivals.

The showdown at Twickenham on April 29 will be the 100th clash between the two sides, and as ever it promises to be a colourful and much talked-about event, where the soldiers will be keen to improve on last year's draw.

Read more from page 69, where you can find the rest of this month's sporting headlines, from the latest hockey results to highs and lows on the football pitch and in the boxing ring.

Is there something we have missed in the issue?

Contact the team using the details over the page.

As ever, we hope you enjoy the magazine and look forward to hearing your entertaining and informative feedback.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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DIGITAL versions of current and past editions are available on the Army website at www.soldiermagazine.co.uk. Just click on "read it now".

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Pictures: Graeme Main

First on the scene

Ex-soldier in desperate bid to save fallen policeman

FORMER Army boxing coach Tony Davis has spoken to *Soldier* about the "fight or flight" moment that saw him run to the aid of PC Keith Palmer in the immediate aftermath of last month's terrorist attack in London.

The ex-Serviceman was leaving a community event at the Houses of Parliament with the British Lionhearts boxing squad when he saw Khalid Masood attack the officer with a knife having just ploughed his car into pedestrians on Westminster Bridge.

With confusion and panic rapidly spreading Davis hurdled a fence and sprinted to the scene before mounting a swift bid to save the victim.

"Everything happened so quickly," he explained. "It was a fight or flight response. I was only a few metres away and saw there had been some kind of fracas; I assumed it was a student rally or

Greenpeace demonstration.

"But I saw a guy with a knife come through the gates and start to attack the policeman."

Masood then ran towards Davis, a former staff sergeant in the Royal Army Physical Training Corps who also served in The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, before being shot by armed police officers.

Having arrived at the stricken body of PC Palmer the coach quickly identified where he had been stabbed and checked for a pulse before trying to stem the bleeding with his jacket.

Further help arrived in the shape of ex-Royal Tank Regiment officer Mike Crofts – who passed through Sandhurst during Davis' time as an instructor there – and MP Tobias Ellwood, a former captain in The Royal Green Jackets and a current Reservist.

It later emerged that PC Palmer had served in the Royal Artillery before joining the police.

"They were tragic circumstances but I don't think I did anything out of the ordinary," Davis added.

"Being in London and at the Houses of Parliament at the time of a terrorist attack is something I'll never get over."

“
It is
something
I'll never get
over
”

SOLDIER

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A taste of Army events across the world

GLOBAL SITREP

IN NUMBERS:

75

years since Operation Chariot, the British amphibious raid on St Nazaire during the Second World War. Troops from 24 Commando Engineer Regiment were travelling to France to take part in commemorations as this issue went to press



1. FLORIDA HIGH FLYERS

DAREDEVILS from the Joint Service Parachute Wing tested themselves in the skies above Florida during a training camp with their US Army counterparts – The Golden Knights.

A 15-strong contingent – including two Reservists – took part in the trip, which featured two weeks of instruction followed by a series of jumps from the Homestead Air Reserve Base.

At the end participants were awarded their US Army military freefall wings.

"We were welcomed by what was, hands down, the most professional parachuting organisation I have ever seen," said wing 2iC Capt Graham Jackson (RE). "The experience within the team is extraordinary."



2. FALKLAND ISLANDS KAYAK QUEST

FORMER Royal Marines Mick Dawson and Steve Grenham were nearing the end of their attempt to kayak round part of the Falkland Islands as this issue went to press.

The duo are veterans of the conflict and embarked on the challenge to raise awareness of post-traumatic stress disorder. Donate at www.justgiving.com/fundraising/cockleshell-endeavour

3. ASCENSION ISLAND MENTALITY

FIFTEEN Reservists from 254 Medical Regiment completed their summer mountain foundation qualification during a week-long adventurous training package on Ascension Island.

The group practised navigation route planning, hazard awareness, water purification and casualty extraction scenarios.



4. GAMBIA PEACE PREPARATION

SOLDIERS of The Royal Gibraltar Regiment have been providing pre-deployment training to members of the Gambian Armed Forces to prepare them for their peacekeeping mission to the Darfur region of Sudan.

Two short-term training teams delivered instruction in the tactics

of peace support operations and camp security.

Their time in country coincided with a time of heightened political sensitivity as a result of presidential elections.

Capt Elvis Pearce said: "The deployment of Gambian troops to Darfur is a critical component of the UN operation.

"We have ensured the high standards of British Forces training is built into their capability."



1. FLORIDA



Serving and former troops are gearing up for the Marathon des Sables. Capt Nick Wright (RA), James Yeardley (ex-R Signals) and Huw Lewis and Brian Edwards (both ex-RWF) are taking on the 156-mile, six-day race in aid of a variety of charities. The event will take place in the Sahara desert this month in temperatures of up to 50 degrees Celsius.



2. FALKLAND ISLANDS

INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

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5. ITALY FALLEN TROOPS INTERRED

THREE soldiers who were killed during an attack on a hill in southern Italy during the Second World War have finally been laid to rest after nearly 75 years.

LCpl Ronald Blackham and two unknown colleagues from 3rd Battalion, Coldstream Guards were buried with full military honours at the Salerno War Cemetery following work by the MoD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre to identify the bodies.

"My parents never emotionally recovered from his loss and I am so pleased that I have been able to help close this door," said LCpl Blackham's brother, Douglas, whose DNA helped in the identification process and who attended the ceremony.



6. MALI TRAINING TEAMS

UK TROOPS serving on the European Union Training Mission in Mali have handed over to their replacements after six months in theatre.

Based near Bamako, the team of four taught courses on areas such as counter-IED techniques, first aid and dismounted close combat, as well as modules covering the law of armed conflict and combating sexual and gender-based violence.

"This is all about leading and teaching by example, with an audience that do not have the advantages of western training aides," said CSgt Karl Chambers (R Anglian, pictured above) of his stint in country.

"Simplicity and delivering the basics well are what is needed."

Established in 2013 to help the Malian Army counter growing instability in the region, the mission involves some 575 troops from 28 nations.

As well as the four trainers, the British contribution – known as Op Newcombe – includes two additional officers attached to the EU and two based with UN forces.



7. ESTONIA BALTIC MISSION BEGINS

THE first 120 soldiers – and some 300 vehicles – have arrived in Estonia to lead of Nato's enhanced forward presence there.

Members of the 5th Battalion, The Rifles Battlegroup are setting up the formation's headquarters in the Baltic state before a further 680 personnel join them this month in what will be the biggest British operation to the area in decades.

The UK troops will work alongside French forces during the six-month mission.

"In the face of an increasingly assertive Russia, Nato is stepping up its commitment to collective defence," said Defence Secretary Michael Fallon.

"Our rising defence budget means we can support those deployments in the long-term and strengthen our commitment to European security."

Further multinational manoeuvres are being staged in Latvia, Lithuania and Poland.



Picture: Cpl Mark Webster, RLC

Light Dragons prep for Poland
Stepping up for Nato role – page 34



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Numbers will go up, say chiefs

ARMED Forces chiefs are working on plans to reverse the decline in the numbers of new recruits and improve retention of existing personnel.

Figures released to Parliament earlier this year showed there was a recruitment shortfall of around 2,900 troops – nearly 30 per cent below target – in 2016.

Across the Armed Forces retention figures are also down, with 15,140 Regular personnel leaving in 2016 compared to 13,450 joining.

Brig Chris Ghika, director personnel capability, told *Soldier*: “Some of the press reported this in a misleading way but it’s no secret we’re two thousand or so down on where we want to be.

“It’s due to a combination of factors; a loss of profile after Iraq and Afghanistan, the outflow of people who have completed full careers,

some people thinking the offer is no longer working for them and a perception among the public that we are no longer recruiting.

“But we do have a detailed plan to bring us back to full strength.”

A new joiner offer is planned for launch for 2019 (see page 18), just one of a number of initiatives it is hoped will stimulate recruitment.

“We are examining a revised proposal that is able to change during the course of service,” the officer continued.

“Things that are important to an 18-year-old private soldier probably won’t be to a 35-year-old senior NCO and recognising that is a significant departure for us and a positive move.”

Top brass are hoping the future accommodation model and flexible engagement system (see page 15) will also help bolster manning levels.

“We have a plan to bring us back to full strength”



■ A CHARITY that provides activity breaks for wounded soldiers is giving away two all-inclusive cruises.

Organised by Reservist Maj Robin Hood (RLC), the competition is open to anyone who served in Northern Ireland, Iraq or Afghanistan.

Southwest Scotland RnR has teamed up with tour operator Fred Olsen to offer four holidays for two people on the company’s liner *Black Watch*, which sails to destinations

such as Norway, Croatia and the River Seine.

Two slots have been filled but two more are still up for grabs on cruises departing from May onwards.

The prize includes a twin or double room, with food and drink expenses covered, but winners must fund their own travel to the departure port and any onshore excursions.

For further information and to put yourself or someone you know forward email robinjohnngerardhood@gmail.com



PAY PINCHED (AGAIN)

■ THE latest Armed Forces pay award has been announced.

From this month, Service personnel will see a one per cent increase in their base pay, allowances and most recruitment and retention payments.

Service family accommodation charges will rise by one per cent and the daily food charge will remain at £4.79.

The changes – broadly the same as last year’s – were revealed shortly after the UK inflation rate reached its highest level since September 2013, meaning troops will once again be left out of pocket as fuel and food prices continue to climb.

E-BLUEY REPLACEMENT

■ BRITISH troops deployed overseas will be able to receive longer letters and better quality photographs from loved ones from this month, following the replacement of the e-bluey service.

The new system, called imail INtouch, allows friends and relatives to send up to eight pages of text or uploaded documents such as PDFs.

E-blueys, which were scrapped last month, allowed only single pages and did not support high-resolution pictures.

Use of the service had fallen by 98 per cent since 2007, meaning it was poor value.

The MoD’s new contract with digital communications provider Neopost is expected to save half a million pounds.

It will be available in all theatres with access to the internet, including Estonia.

PLANE PLUNGE SACKING

■ A ROYAL Air Force pilot has been sacked after he caused a passenger plane to plunge more than 4,000 feet in a matter of seconds during a flight to Afghanistan.

Ft Lt Andrew Townshend pleaded guilty to a charge of negligently performing his duty during a court martial hearing last month, when he was dismissed from the military and given a four-month suspended prison sentence.

The incident happened in February 2014 when his camera jammed in the controls of a Voyager aircraft carrying 198 passengers and crew, including many soldiers.



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Picture: The Tank Museum



Nightmare of Tiger tanks

SOME 75 years after German Tiger tanks were striking fear into British soldiers, their surviving drivers have revealed how they are the ones suffering nightmares.

The veterans have shed light on their experiences in the Second World War as part of a new exhibition at The Tank Museum.

It features stories about how these troops were made to feel superior to their comrades – and even received special front-line parcels from Hitler.

Waldemar Pliska (shown now and then), who served on the Eastern Front, described his battlefield encounters as “terrible”.

“I often dream of them still. I wake up drenched in sweat because I can’t forget,” he said.

Another Tiger veteran, Wilhelm Fischer, added: “Each month I got four

packages from Adolf Hitler; they had chocolate in, cigarettes, sausage; we even got cured sausage every now and then.

“When I was younger, lying in bed, I would wake up in the morning soaking in sweat because I thought the Russians were coming.”

Visitors can learn about the experiences of Britain’s enemy crews at the Bovington-based centre from April 6.

The Tiger Tank Collection exhibition includes the

museum’s own Tiger I, two King Tigers and a Jagdtiger, along with the Elefant – which is back in Europe for the first time since the end of the conflict after being shipped from the US.

“Hearing the voices of these veterans really helps us to understand the war from both sides,” said curator David Willey.



“I wake up drenched in sweat”



SPINE LINE COMPETITION

WIN



LAST month’s spine line clues were inspired by our interview with *Mutiny* star Ant Middleton. (Jason) Fox, (Colin) Maclachlan and (Matthew) Ollerton all appeared alongside the reality television presenter in Channel 4’s hit show *SAS: Who Dares Wins*.

This month *Soldier* has teamed up with Gore-Tex and outdoor footwear supplier Meindl (www.meindl.co.uk) to offer two readers a pair of Patrol Gore-Tex Extended Comfort Footwear boots (RRP £265).

Lightweight, breathable and waterproof, this kit is engineered for use in hot and humid conditions, with reliable protection against sand, dust and water.

To be in with a chance of scooping a pair, tell us what links the words on the side of this issue.

Answers to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 28.



HELP FOR HIS HIGHNESS

■ PRINCE Harry could soon be among those making use of an anonymous online support service for people feeling anxious or like they are not coping.

On a recent visit to the HQ of Big White Wall (www.bigwhitewall.com), the former Army Air Corps officer commented: “I love this; I might sign up for it myself.”

The prince has been a leading advocate of improving treatment for mental health problems and breaking down stigma.

EYES DOWN

■ THE eyesight standards for Reservists applying to join the Army Air Corps have been lowered. Unlike their Regular counterparts, part-time personnel do not get the chance to become aviation crew or pilots, so they no longer have to meet the higher benchmark. The move follows a review which found the rule was preventing significant numbers of would-be recruits from enlisting in the corps.



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Fightback on flexibility

A TRIAL of flexible duties for Service personnel is not about saving cash, a senior Army officer has insisted.

It follows press speculation that the system – which allows troops to take stints of unpaid leave and reduce their liability to deploy – is just another way for the MoD to balance its books.

But Col Steve Davies (pictured right), assistant head of employment in the Army's Directorate of Manning, told *Soldier* it was about helping

personnel with short-term issues or needs so that they can remain in the military (see below).

Anyone interested in taking part in the scheme can apply until the September 2018 deadline.

It will run until 2019 but participants must commit to a minimum period of six months that must only cover their current assignment.

For more details of the trial read **2017DIN01-006**

SOLDIER'S QUESTIONS, PUT TO THE EXPERTS

Col Steve Davies, assistant head of employment, spills the beans on the flexible working trial...



So is this trial really not about saving cash? At all?

It's not about saving money, but rather providing serving personnel with an option which might better support their circumstances at a particular stage in their life. This is about retaining highly trained and motivated soldiers and officers.

Why introduce the policy now then?

The Army needs to reflect society and continue to evolve existing flexible working practices. This trial will inform future policy that allows the Service to be a more modern and flexible employer whilst preserving operational capability.

But aren't you just making things easier for personnel who are not fully committed to the job?

There's nothing easy about military service. The needs of the individual are an important consideration in how we operate. Flexible duty, which doesn't attract any negative career implications, permits highly committed soldiers and officers to remain in service when they may otherwise be forced

or inclined to leave.

If you want to stop good people leaving, wouldn't it be better to sort out deteriorating accommodation and improve pay and allowances?

This will help motivate and retain good people who are well trained. It is one of a number of initiatives under the People's Programme, including the future accommodation model and Pay 16, which collectively will improve the offer.

Will soldiers be allowed to work in civilian jobs during unpaid leave?

In certain circumstances, yes. This is positive for the Army. It can widen opportunities by allowing soldiers and officers to invest in new skills, maintain professional competency and broaden experience.

Won't this also undermine our operational readiness?

No. The trial will only suit a select cohort of people who can revert to full commitment as the terms are sufficiently agile to meet the tempo of operations.



“This is positive for the Army”



DON'T LOSE YOUR VOTE

■ TIME is running out for soldiers wishing to have their say in May's local elections

The deadline for registering to vote is April 13 in England and Wales, and April 17 in Scotland.

Applications for postal voting must be in by April 18 and for proxy voting by April 25. Visit www.aboutmyvote.co.uk for more.

ARE YOU OPSEC AWARE?

■ SERVICE and civilian personnel have been reminded about the importance of following MoD rules when it comes to speaking to the media, and the part that plays in maintaining operational and personal security.

Read the guidance in **2016DIN03-29**.

MUSLIM MEET-UP

■ THE Armed Forces Muslim Moral Leadership Conference will take place on May 10-12 at the Armed Forces Chaplaincy Centre near Andover.

Personnel of all faiths are welcome and to attend contact Imam Ali Omar, Muslim chaplain to the Armed Forces, on military 94631 3252.

CLASSROOM KUDOS

■ NOMINATIONS are being sought for the 2017 Army Education Champion of the Year Award.

The accolade honours the soldier or officer who has had the biggest impact on developing their unit's troops – from apprenticeships to IT, literacy or numeracy.

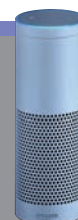
The competition begins at brigade level, with winners shortlisted for a main prize.

Nominations should be submitted by May 5 using JPA form S004.

IN THIS MONTH'S REVIEWS



"I read the script and wanted to do it"



"I asked for shoe repairers in Teddington and it gave me instructions on how to make a hot toddy"

PAGE 61



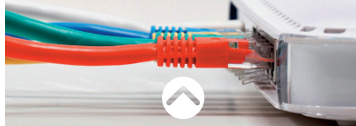
"I didn't want to have any regrets"

– Why sign up? page 82

GOOD DRILLS

BROADBAND BOOST

TROOPS no longer have to cough up cancellation fees for their broadband if posted. Thanks to the Armed Forces Covenant, companies including BT, EE, Plusnet and Virgin Media have agreed not to penalise personnel moving to areas that are not covered by their provider.



PTI PASSES

SERGEANTS Daniel Yexley and Mark Henshaw have become just the second and third Reservists to receive the Royal Army Physical Training Corps cap badge. The duo passed out from their instructor course last month and follow in the

footsteps of Sgt Dave Snowling last year.



SCHOOL FEE FAUX-PAS

AN Army court martial has sentenced a senior officer who wrongly claimed an education allowance to pay for his two sons' school fees. Brig Charles Beardmore, of the Defence Medical Services, admitted one count of negligently performing his duty and will have to forfeit all seniority as a brigadier and pay £11,750 to the MoD.



BAD DRILLS



Picture: Graeme Main

Situational awareness: Reservists like those above will be able to get their hands on vital training information

Keeping Reserves in the loop

ONLINE tools designed to keep Reservists plugged-in to Army business are being introduced across the Service.

Defence Connect, which is available through the Defence Gateway website, allows personnel to view official information without a DII terminal.

From this month a series of workshops will demonstrate how to get the best out of the system, which is compatible with smartphones and tablets and is available 24-hours-a-day, all year round.

It provides updates on things like courses, events diaries, part one orders and training requirements.

"Essentially, we need to stop soldiers talking business on insecure

social media platforms and get them communicating on the secure Defence Gateway using their own devices," said Col Adrian Walton from the Army Training Branch.

Clinics demonstrating the new Reserves Attendance and Pay Services app are currently being held around the country.

This will eventually replace paper-based record keeping and automate the processing of pay that is linked to attendance using Churchill, the Army's principle planning tool, and JPA.

To get further information visit <https://jive.defencegateway.mod.uk/groups/defence-unit-digital-champions> using the Google Chrome browser.

BAND REUNITED – 50 YEARS ON



Picture: Steve Dock

■ DECADES after conquering the Army's answer to *The X Factor*, a group of ex-soldiers are preparing to reunite their band for the final time.

Shades of Blue featured on *Soldier's* front page in 1967 when we correctly predicted that they would win the Army Beat Group Competition – an initiative set up to boost recruitment and let troops showcase their musical talent.

The four-strong Germany-based group, whose repertoire ranged from covers of The Beatles to their own material, will come together at the end of this month in South Shields – albeit without their instruments.

"Back in the day the competition was huge," said ex-lead singer and guitarist Mike Trehwella (ex-R Signals, shown left and right in yellow jersey).

"We carried on playing for a while after but the Army split us up.

"I'm sure lots of ex-soldiers will remember us from their time in Germany and a couple of our old fans are coming along to the reunion. To see them after all this time will be wonderful."



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All data subject to official tests and certification. A vehicle's actual fuel consumption may differ from that achieved in such tests and these figures are for comparative purposes only.
*Terms and conditions apply. Savings correct at time of print.





“My ex-Army mates have been behind me”

– Trans trials, page 42



MEMORIAL UNVEILED

■ THE Queen has unveiled a £1 million memorial to honour Armed Forces personnel and civilians who served in the Gulf and Afghanistan.

Located at the Victoria Embankment Gardens in Westminster, it features two large stone monoliths – one representing Iraq, the other Afghanistan – that support a bronze medallion and was designed by sculptor Paul Day.

More than 2,000 guests attended a service of dedication.

APPRENTICE AWARDS

■ THE Army has launched its first ever Apprenticeship Awards to recognise those who have sought qualifications and new skills while in the military.

News of the scheme was announced during National Apprenticeship Week and the accolades will be presented to the winners in 2018.

The MoD is the largest provider of apprentices in the UK.

GURKHAS ON TARGET

■ TOP marksmen from 16 Air Assault Brigade tested their aim at the formation's annual operational shooting competition.

Staged at Fingringhoe and Middlewick Ranges, the three-day event assessed accuracy with the SA80 A2 assault rifle and Glock 17 pistol.

The best unit prize was claimed by 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles. Cpl Bipin Nembang from the same unit was named best shot.



IN NUMBERS

30

Percentage of Armed Forces officers who have progressed from the lower ranks. The figure was revealed by Defence Secretary Michael Fallon last month.



In step with the times

RADICAL changes to the terms and conditions of service for future recruits will not affect existing soldiers, the MoD's chief of defence people has reassured.

In a written notice to MoD staff, Lt Gen Richard Nugee (pictured below) explained that the so-called new joiner offer, which is still in the early stages of development, will only apply to those enlisting in the Armed Forces from 2019 onwards.

He said that although the package will use ongoing changes to terms and conditions of service (also known as the new employment model) as a starting point, the

outcome could be very different from what is currently offered to troops.

“Our research shows that the next generation of recruits have a different expectation of what they want from a career, with a greater focus on variety, choice and flexibility of employment,” he explained.

“Designing a new offer gives us the flexibility to respond to these changes in expectations, and to ensure our offer does not become out of step.”

Lt Gen Nugee added that the project was not about changing the size of the Armed Forces.

More details will be announced later in the year.



“The next generation have a different expectation”



Building-site bomb

■ ARMY bomb disposal experts made safe a 500lb Second World War bomb after it was uncovered at a building site in Brent, London. Around 15 personnel from the Royal Engineers and 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps helped to defuse the device before it was handed over to Royal Navy experts for destroying. Nearby homes, businesses and schools were evacuated as a precaution.



Picture: Stephen Sweeney

Grim up north, study finds

RESearch from Combat Stress has found that Scottish veterans are at greater risk of deprivation than those in the rest of the UK.

More than 3,000 former personnel registered with the charity took part in the study, which found that those based north of the border face increased hardship when it comes to income and employment opportunities.

It also revealed that half of Scottish veterans live in the country's three most deprived areas in the urban parts of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

"The findings highlight the significant challenges that ex-soldiers face in Scotland," said Combat Stress chief executive Sue Freeth.

"The 71 per cent increase in referrals that we have experienced in the past five years illustrates the rising demand for our services.

"We hope that government, support agencies and charities can work together to minimise the challenges faced by veterans who are already dealing with complex issues."

Combat Stress used the UK Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation, which measures different social and economic deprivations such as finance, health and education, to assist its research.

It was also supported by data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.

“The findings highlight the challenges that ex-soldiers face in Scotland”



Picture: Mark Owens

DEFENCE Secretary Michael Fallon thanked Scottish personnel for the "incredible" job they do during a visit to Edinburgh. The politician met troops from various units and praised their work countering Daesh as well as on other recent overseas training missions.



A personal view from Sara Baade, Chief Executive of the Army Families Federation...

SCOTLAND'S STORY

THERE are about 4,100 Service personnel based in Scotland and the Army Families Federation recently undertook a survey to try and discover what their families think of the posting.

While we had a lot of positive comments from those who loved the culture, the way of life and the outdoor opportunities, there were some key areas of concern.

Not unexpectedly, education came up.

In addition to starting school a year later at five years old, Scotland's youngsters face a markedly different curriculum and families were worried that they would be a year behind academically once they returned to England.

Childcare was another concern, with 45 per cent of respondents struggling to find places when moving north.

With the additional year before school begins, parents are having to fund an extra 12 months of childcare, which can be difficult.

The other issue that affects Scotland is distance from family and friends, and the cost for them to visit. Almost half rated this as a real concern and negative aspect of the posting.

AFF is aware of these problems, and the survey has helped us report back to the chain of command, and focus our work far more clearly.



www.aff.org.uk



“My leg and arm come off at night, no biggie”

– Shark-attack philosophy, page 44

FEARLESS FUNDRAISING

Target:

£50,000

For: ABF The Soldier's Charity



EVEREST TAKE-TWO

A FORMER soldier who was wounded in Afghanistan will attempt to conquer Mount Everest for the second time from this month after he abandoned his last trip to save the life of a fellow climber. On reaching an area known as The Balcony, 500m short of the summit, back in 2016 Les Binns (ex-LD) rescued a collapsed Indian woman who had been scaling the summit ahead of him. The former Serviceman, who was blinded in one eye by an IED blast in 2009, gave the woman his spare oxygen bottle and helped her down to safety. To sponsor the veteran's latest mission visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/EH2017

Help for homeless



In aid of: Soldiers Off The Street

EX-SIGNALLER Mark Gibson embarks on a walk from John O'Groats to Lands End this summer to raise awareness of homeless veterans. To get involved visit the Walk the Walk 2017 Facebook page.



Picture: Graeme Main

Teetotal at Twickers

“We have decided to opt for a complete ban”



FANS at this month's Army-Navy showdown face the prospect of a dry Twickenham Stadium as the Service ups the ante in its campaign to make personnel healthier.

It is believed that more beer is bought and consumed during this single match than on all of the England rugby union team's annual home fixtures combined.

While this volume of drinking makes for impressive reading, it has prompted action from the chain of command, who are concerned that the military mantra of being “fit to fight” could be at risk.

So instead of downing pints as players take to the turf on April 29, fans will be encouraged to opt for a refreshing array of alcohol-free cocktails at the venue's bars – with the Shirley Temple, Cherry Sparkle and Pussy Foot expected to be particularly big sellers.

As the showpiece fixture is celebrating its 100th match this season, Brig Sam Adams, the senior officer overseeing the Twickenham booze ban, believes

the time could not be better to move in a new direction.

“Personnel have traditionally enjoyed a drink while watching the match and rightly so,” he said.

“But we feel consumption is getting a bit out of hand.

“If the Army is to maintain its high standing in modern society our soldiers must be a beacon of health and fitness at all times – not just while on duty.

“We have therefore decided to opt for a complete ban at this year's event.

“Let's be honest, there's no reason why chugging back the Cherry Sparkle cannot boost morale as well.

“If we can usher in a new era of abstinence – a teetotalitarian state, if you will – it will make us even more fit to fight.”

The move has been welcomed by the sport's purists, who believe alcohol-fuelled revelry in the stands distracts from the action on the pitch.

Senior officers also hope it will deliver a decisive blow in the fight against streakers, who have become a common sight at Twickenham in recent years.



Helping you understand your AFPS pension means answering some fundamental questions affecting you and your family



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THE BIG PICTURE

STONEHENGE, WILTSHIRE

IMMOVABLE FORCE

THE Army boxing team line up at the prehistoric site of Stonehenge during their Combined Services training camp. The soldiers were in action against their Forces rivals as this issue went to press and were determined to extend one of the longest winning runs in military sport having recorded 33 consecutive victories in the tournament. Read the next issue for all the results and reaction.

Picture: Graeme Main

UP FOR THE



CHALLENGE



Personnel join ranks to polish their tank commander skills

Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main

“

IT'S a completely different ball game to simulator training, where you have a map in front of you and can see your call sign and the direction you're going," explains Cpl Andrew Shaw (QRH).

He is one of the latest batch of Challenger 2 commanders completing their final test exercise on Salisbury Plain Training Area.

"You don't have that on the platform itself," he continues. "So navigation is a big challenge – you get out your map and GPS and have to work it out

as you go.

"As a commander you also need a clear picture in your head of where the other Challengers are."

Nine corporals and three officers are being assessed on a scenario staged by the armoured wing of the Reconnaissance and Armoured Tactics Division and supported by Ajax Squadron of the Royal Tank Regiment.

It caps a six-week tactics phase that is the final part of the six-month Challenger 2 commander's course, which is undertaken by all newly-commissioned officers →



joining an armoured regiment and NCOs who have been hand-picked for the role.

While much of today's focus is on situational awareness, the early stage of the package saw candidates taught the broader, essential skills needed to oversee these complex platforms – gunnery, loading ammunition, driving, mechanics and operating the internal and external communications systems.

Then they completed a live-firing package at Lulworth.

The ultimate aim is to produce Service personnel who can operate these 60-tonne leviathans in just about any combat situation and, in the officers' case, lead a troop of them safely and effectively.

But that's no easy task with an asset as complex as the Army's main battle tank

"I've been fortunate enough to be a Viking commander as a trooper but this is a major step up," Cpl Shaw (shown below right) tells *Soldier*.

"There is so much to focus on; where you want the driver to go, where the gun should be pointing, monitoring both the squadron and battlegroup radio networks and looking for targets.

"The multitasking that's required is pretty daunting."

The final validation exercise tests the students to the limit in this respect.

Firstly they are required to fend off a theoretical foe on the open ground of Salisbury Plain before supporting an Infantry unit as it attacks the enemy's command and control centre in a building in the middle of Copehill Down's urban training area.

The Challenger 2 wasn't specifically designed for this environment, and the complexity of the terrain means that situational awareness, safe manoeuvring around dismounted troops and communication skills are at an absolute premium.

"Moving as a squadron and conducting close-quarter urban operations in a combined arms move has been a real challenge," admits 2nd Lt Rupert Knight (RTR).

"The mental load is tremendous – it takes a couple of exercises to get used to it."

Just to add to the pressure, the students have an experienced commander on-board with them who

scrutinises their every move.

"These mentors are usually highly experienced personnel – officers, corporals or sergeants," says Lt Richard Carter (RTR), who has taken on the role on a previous course.

"They may provide hints and tips, pick them up on certain mistakes, maybe ask them questions along the way to make them think when they are in danger of making the wrong move.

"Then they provide feedback during a student debrief after the exercise."

However, it's not just the mentors who provide advice. One of the advantages of having NCOs and officers together during this final training phase is that they can learn from each other.

"The officers go more in-depth in certain parts of this course because we have no prior experience," says 2nd Lt Knight, who graduated from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst last August.

"The corporals have a shorter gunnery course, for example, because they've operated these platforms for some time.

"But the fact we come together here is really beneficial because the NCOs have lots to offer us regarding the technical aspects of the tasks we face, while we are maybe more well-versed in the tactical side of things and so can advise them in those areas.

"I've found that there has been a really good two-way exchange of knowledge."

With nine years on Challenger 2s already under his belt, Cpl Shaw is one of those who knows the hardware inside out.

But he admits he still had lots to learn about conducting armoured operations.

"I've surprised how technical it is working in a tight urban environment like this," he continues.

"For example, as a gunner I know the stand-off rules for this vehicle when it comes to firing at a high rise building; I know how far back we have to be and the angle of the elevation so in that situation I know position is a critical factor.

"But I've learnt loads about working as a group, how to move across ground in different areas and things like protecting the vehicle and crew from potential attack by using buildings as cover."

With the course concluded, this latest cohort are well and truly ready to deploy on exercises or operations while dealing with the various pressures of controlling a Challenger 2.

"It's a lot of responsibility and there's a lot to think about but it's all been good," comments Cpl Craig Ratcliffe (RTR, shown left).

"Being a vehicle commander is a very demanding role in terms of testing your mental agility, but it's the spot you want to be in because it really is the best job in the whole regiment." ■





“The multitasking
that’s required is
pretty daunting”



Making tracks: The trainee Challenger 2 commanders move swiftly through Copehill Down (above) as part of a complex urban operation involving Infantry troops; it was a steep learning curve for Cpl Andrew Shaw (left) and Cpl Craig Ratcliffe (far left)

Having a reaction to shellfish saved soldiers' lives.

Haemostatic bandages contain a shellfish substance that becomes sticky on contact with blood, reducing the risk of soldiers bleeding to death.



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Report: Sarah Goldthorpe Pictures: Graeme Main

ON A WHINNY STREAK

How an old
married quarter
is providing
troops with
unique urban
ops training...





Urban operators: Phase one recruits get stuck into their first experience of fighting in a built-up area thanks to the low-level urban skills trainer

A NY soldier who has deployed to Cenzub – the biggest urban warfare training camp in Europe – will probably feel a bit deflated on arrival at northern England's answer to the French complex. Whinny Hill takes the form of some tired old Service accommodation on a blustery hillside in Catterick Garrison.

But looks can be deceiving, and behind this humble frontage is a facility that, in fact, personnel are queuing up to use.

"Anybody can train here," explains retired warrant officer Pete Rigby (ex-Rifles), the man charged with the day-to-day running of the complex.

"Soldiers love to work here. If they could, they would use it every single day of the year."

The centre, which has been around since the 1980s, features various structures on which soldiers can hone their skills and drills when it comes to operating in built-up areas – fighting houses, patrol bases, high-rise buildings, wire obstacles, an underground tunnel system and CCTV network, to name a few.

And as if to prove the point about how in-demand it is, Rigby breaks off from his *Soldier* interview to take a tense-sounding booking enquiry.

"Yep, yep I understand that mate, but if he's pulling the ops card he needs to speak to someone higher up than me."

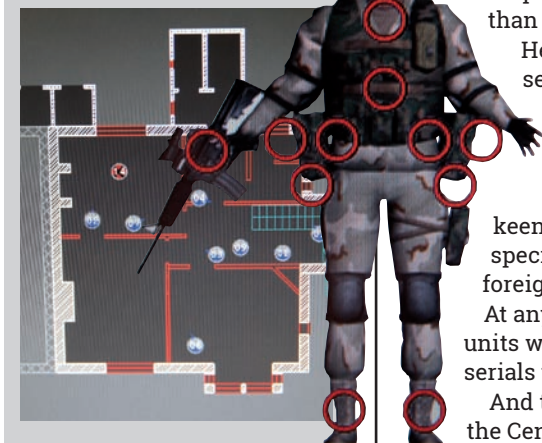
He hangs up. Soldiers are fighting – literally it seems – to get inside this place.

Lucky then, that the 12-acre site is owned by Catterick Training Area and, as such, its facilities are available to any team that thinks it could benefit, from phase one recruits keen to get their first taste of urban fighting to specialist users, the emergency services and even foreign forces.

At any one time, Whinny Hill could have several units working on anything from public order training serials to obstacle courses.

And the thing that sets this site apart is that, unlike the Cenzubs of this world, it is not purpose-built.

Sensors carried by troops feed their every move back to a computer which allows an after-action review to be carried out on a large screen

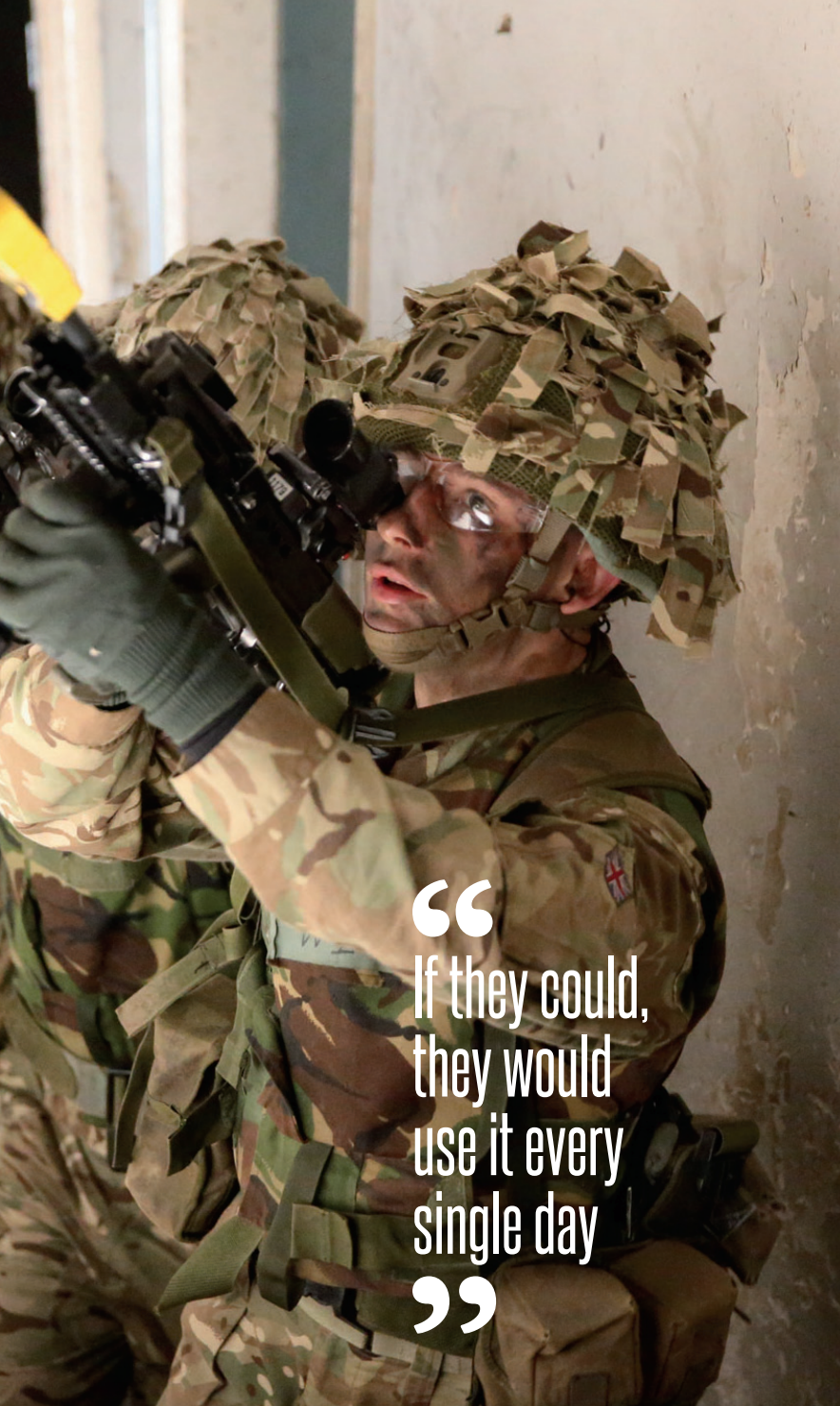


IN NUMBERS

57,500

Number of soldiers who have used Whinny Hill's low-level urban skills trainer, making it the smallest but best used LLUST in the country





This might present Rigby and his colleagues with some obvious challenges when it comes to maintaining buildings that clearly weren't designed to have squaddies hammering them on an almost-daily basis.

But it does add a greater sense of realism to packages that are staged there.

After all, urban operations of the future will not happen in purpose-built sites; they will be fought in areas that have been lived in, adapted and weathered – areas rather similar to Whinny Hill.

“If we go to war tomorrow, this is what you'd be looking at,” says Rigby as he guides us round the site, which even has a burnt-out T-34 tank from the Battle of Stalingrad amongst its outdoor furniture.

But the real highlight is the low-level urban skills trainer (LLUST) – a house kitted out with Bluetooth technology that sections of troops can practise fighting through and clearing, before watching their encounters back on screen.

It is one of only three in the country – the others being larger, platoon-size LLUSTs on Salisbury Plain and at Sennybridge.

The computers inside may be creaking and in need of replacing, but it is still the best used of the three – presumably due to its convenient location within Catterick Garrison.

Before troops head inside for their taste of close combat, a set of location sensors are slipped into their boots and pockets, and a wireless direction sensor placed on their weapons.

A player-worn comms system is also donned, which once inside will tell the soldiers whether they are “wounded” or “dead” whenever a weapon or effect such as an artillery strike →





is brought to bear.

Minutes after they exit the building, having barely caught their breath, the troops are moved into an after-action review to relive the experience.

They gather round a large screen to watch flashing markers move across the house's floorplan in a way that resembles a retro game of *Snakes* more than it does *Call of Duty*.

For Sgt Matthew Reynolds (R Welsh), who is there to give phase one recruits their first taste of urban operations, the value is obvious.

"When I went through ITC Catterick we didn't have this, and to be honest I'd forgotten it existed," he says.

"But these troops have only done conventional warfare, so it is really beneficial to have them here experiencing an urban environment.

"The facility is great."

Section commander Cpl Giovanni Feliciello (R Welsh) is in agreement.

"There's no training as good as actually getting hands-on, that is the way these guys learn," he adds.

Walking round the site, it is obvious that a cash injection wouldn't go amiss – not least in the CCTV ops room, which resembles something out of a 1970s television studio.

But the antiquatedness does not seem to be detracting from how useful this facility is to troops who, increasingly, are expected to have a good grip on all of their urban warfare skills and drills.

"We are just about managing in our current state," Rigby concludes after the tour.

For now at least, dedicated staff and optimistic users are keeping Whinny Hill an exciting and realistic place to train for future conflicts. ■

● Final word – p82



INSIDE WHINNY HILL

Phase one recruits explain how the centre marked a turning point in their training...

At the time you don't realise how long you are taking to move from one room to another. It feels like it's over in two minutes, but then watching the after-action review you realise it was more like 20 minutes.

Fus Carl Payn, RRF



This has been the best part of the course so far. You are doing proper soldiering in there and now it all feels a bit more real. That's exciting.

Rgr Jamie Lennon, R Irish

“There's no training as good as actually getting hands-on”

Cpl Giovanni Feliciello (R Welsh)



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RESERVISTS from The Queen's Own Yeomanry have been supporting their Regular paired unit in its preparations for a vital six-month tour.

The personnel took part in training across Otterburn, RAF Spadeadam, Kirkcudbright and Galloway Forest alongside The Light Dragoons before personnel from that unit deployed to Poland to bolster Nato's enhanced forward presence.

During the exercise the QOY soldiers provided enemy forces and a civilian population for their full-time counterparts to test themselves against in a scenario simulating a cross-border attack.

"We were trying to replicate as much as we can the sort of tasks we'll be practising over in Poland," The Light Dragoons commanding officer, Lt Col Ben Cossens, told *Soldier*.

"We moved through local populations, for example, mirroring our road move from Bavaria into Poland.

"We also gauged the troops' communication skills and operational abilities at range away from their HQ.

"The exercise gave us vital collective skills training and tested our personnel nicely to build progression before they departed."

The formation's A Squadron has now arrived in Orzysz near the border with Kaliningrad, a Russian province sandwiched between Poland and Lithuania.

They are equipped with 15 Coyote, Jackal and Panther vehicles and are tasked with integrating with troops from the US Army's 2nd Cavalry Regiment, operating under the command of Poland's 15th Mechanised Brigade.

Four QOY Reservists have been deployed with them to support the unit, and they include Pte Daniel Burnikell (RAMC), a 20-year-old medic attached to the formation.

"It's cool to get a chance to work with foreign forces and the Americans with their Stryker vehicles in particular," he commented.

"I feel really fortunate because I was on the verge of joining the prison service when I was told I could deploy and they were brilliant about delaying my start date and guaranteeing my job when I return.

"To be involved in a proper operation after just two years in the Reserve is fantastic.

"Like most of us, I joined up to do this sort of stuff; it was simply too good an opportunity to miss."

B Squadron will take on the next six-month stint in Poland starting this summer, and more Reservists could be called upon as a result.

"It's a real benefit to have QOY troops available and they will be fully embedded with our troops, slotting into positions when they are required," said Lt Col Cossens.

"Many of the exact tasks we will have to do out in Poland are still a work in progress, but this is the first turn of the handle, so to speak. It's a new and exciting challenge for everyone and a fantastic opportunity to work alongside some key international partners." ■

“It's cool to get a chance to work with foreign forces”

Baltic-bound: Troops from The Light Dragoons and their paired Reserve regiment, The Queen's Own Yeomanry, manoeuvre their vehicles through the forest during their pre-deployment training exercise in Scotland



Pte Daniel Burnikell (RAMC)

Report: Steve Muncey

Pictures: Steve Dock

FAST-TRACKED

Personnel set for new reassurance operation



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Eagle down

Army Air Corps test procedures they hope never to conduct for real

PERSONNEL based at Middle Wallop have been refining their skills and drills for dealing with one of the most daunting and gruesome tasks they could face – a fatal aircraft crash.

Exercise Eagle Down allowed the Servicemen and women to practise their reaction to such an incident through a complex rescue and recovery effort alongside local civilian agencies.

"We have a requirement to respond to air accidents within our local area and with a busy airfield we have to reassure ourselves we have all the right people and equipment available to react effectively," Col John Bryant, commandant of the Army Aviation Centre, told *Soldier*.

More than 70 military and civilian personnel were involved in the package, which is held in one form or another every year, often alternating with a table-top version.

This time around the scenario involved a helicopter that had smashed into a sports field while transporting live munitions from the Salisbury Plain Training Area, leaving two crew killed, one badly injured and the spillage of volatile aviation fuel.

The shell of a Lynx was also brought in to be used as the wreckage by the Joint Aircraft Recovery and Transportation Squadron at Boscombe Down.

The Army Aviation Centre's specialist



Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Steve Dock



firefighters and medical teams, who worked closely with local emergency services personnel, arrived at the scene within 15 minutes of the crash, making the site safe and tending to the surviving crew member.

A 600-metre perimeter cordon was set up around the site and staff from the Military Air Accident Investigation Branch later attended the scene to add realism to a scenario that lasted around six hours.

Role players were also employed as worried spouses turning up at the scene and as local reporters, badgering the Army Aviation Centre for details and attempting to enter the site under false IDs to test the perimeter guards' vigilance.

"If this incident ever did happen for real our people would have to deal with numerous civilian organisations so the important aspect of this package is making sure they are here and taking part," explained Col Bryant.

"Through exercises like this our own emergency teams get to know their civilian counterparts and that would undoubtedly prove crucial if this situation, or something like it, was to happen for real.

"It didn't go perfectly but, to be honest, I'd be more concerned if it had.

"It revealed some minor shortfalls in equipment such as radios and tents, which we'd need in order to secure the scene for about 48 hours, which would be likely with a real crash.

"Some of the radio communications between the accident site and the headquarters at the airfield took a bit longer to sort out than we had anticipated too, so we learnt some good lessons, and from that point of view alone the exercise was worth doing."

The police, who assume primary control of all crash sites, worked with Army personnel to secure the local area and embed a chief inspector and assistant into the incident control centre at Middle Wallop.

"Overall, it went really well," said exercise coordinator WO1 Mark Ingram (AAC).

"It's been well supported by the local fire, ambulance and police services and the accident investigation team.



"They've all had a good look at our procedures and said that we are doing all the right things."

The plan now is to ramp up the exercise next year to test Servicemen and women even more, and take account of new threats to air safety.

"We want to escalate this package to the next stage and simulate a mid-air collision in an urban area," the warrant officer continued.

"The use of drones is a growing threat, it's become one of our priorities, and they bring a whole different set of challenges that we need to consider."

He continued: "UAVs the size of the palm of a hand can do considerable damage.

"We've seen testing at Copehill Down with a drone around six foot in diameter and if an operator flies at the wrong height and without informing anybody such a device could strike one of our aircraft and severely damage or even down it; that's why we need to look seriously at these kinds of scenarios."

It's almost impossible to predict the exact challenge rescue teams will be faced with if the plausible became reality.

But at least the aircrews flying in and out of this busy airfield know that with such a rigorously tested set of procedures in place they will be in the best possible hands if the worst ever does happen. ■



“The use of drones is a growing threat”

Emergency measures:
Fire and medical teams from Middle Wallop combined with their civilian counterparts to test their procedures for tackling a downed aircraft

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WEAPONS OF CHOICE

Five top picks from the Small Arms School Corps

MAKING sure the Army knows its stuff when it comes to operating pistols, rifles and light machine guns is all in a day's work for members of the Small Arms School Corps. Here, its outgoing corps sergeant major, WO1 Neil Guerin, lists his standout firearms from the historic collection held at his Warminster-based headquarters...

Pictures: Steve Dock



LONG LAND PATTERN FLINTLOCK MUSKET (BROWN BESS)

DATE: 1722
ORIGIN: UK
BARREL: 46in (116.8cm)
CALIBRE: .76in (19.3mm)

Among the many national patterns of musket, the British Brown Bess is undoubtedly the most famous, due partly to its nickname. The Land Pattern adopted from 1722 formed the basis for all subsequent British Army muskets up to the adoption of the Pattern 1851 Minie.



BREN MK 1

DATE: 1938
ORIGIN: UK
BARREL: 25in (63.5cm)
CALIBRE: .303in (7.7mm)

Developed at Brno in the Czech Republic and modified at Enfield, London, the Bren gun was the British Army's principal light support weapon from its introduction until the 1970s, latterly in 7.62mm Nato chambering. In service from 1938, the Mk I was the original Bren based on the Czech gun. In the British and Commonwealth armies, it was generally issued on a scale of one per section, with three rifle sections in each platoon. The Bren had an effective range of 600 yds (550m) when fired from the prone bipod. Initial versions were considered too accurate because the cone of fire was deemed too concentrated. Its final operational deployment with the British Army, on a limited scale, was to the First Gulf War in 1991.

ENFIELD PATTERN 1853

DATE: 1853
ORIGIN: UK
BARREL: 39in (99.1cm)
CALIBRE: .57in (14.48mm)

The introduction of the Pattern 1851 Minie muzzle-loading percussion rifle had a major impact in the Crimea. It was so impressive that the School of Musketry (later the Small Arms School Corps) was formed at Hythe to ensure maximum advantage was gained from its capabilities. However, it only lasted two years before being replaced with this model. Together with the 1855 Springfield, it made a similar impact during the American Civil War. A soldier was expected to maintain a firing rate of three-to-four rounds per minute.





SMLE MK III

DATE: 1907
ORIGIN: UK
BARREL: 25 1/2 in
(64cm)
CALIBRE: .303 in
(7.7mm)

The Short Magazine Lee Enfield, or 'smelly' as it was known among troops, was the rifle that kitted out the British Army in the World Wars. Shortcomings with the original Long Lee Enfield, with its 30in barrel, were brought to light during the Second Boer War. Although it had a ten-shot magazine it had to be reloaded with individual cartridges, which took time. So the small arms committee started work on a replacement. Towards the latter half of 1901 some 1,055 shortened models were made and sent for troop trials. A well trained rifleman could perform a rate of 20-30 rounds per minute, but in 1914 a SASC instructor managed a new record of 37.



VICKERS LIGHT PATTERN MODEL 1908

DATE: 1908
ORIGIN: UK
BARREL: 28 1/2 in (72.3cm)
CALIBRE: .303 in (7.7mm)

This weapon was designed to resolve issues in the earlier model of 1906. Vickers redesigned the gun, changing the entire functioning of the mechanism by turning it upside down. This model had a rate of fire of 450-550 rounds per minute, and later variations of the Vickers served the British Army throughout the Second World War and into the 1960s. It is clear now that the introduction of the Vickers Maxim gun transformed the way in which 20th century wars were fought, in much the same manner that the rifled musket changed the face of linear warfare in the 19th century.

Expert

view from the National
Firearms Centre

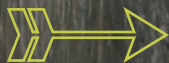
> Something to add?

Email the team via news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

I decided to

Interview: Becky Clark Picture: Graeme Main

After 40 years of secrecy this ex-infantry soldier came out as transgender. Now she is sharing her experience through social media to help others in the same position



Being transgender was a complete secret for 40 years

Not one person knew, not even my ex-wives. I wouldn't admit it to myself. Then I got sick about three years ago and my doctors told me to embrace it, so I decided to be me. I put some jeans on – nothing over the top – and went out for a walk. I wasn't nervous, it just felt right.

Back when I was in the Army you'd have been ostracised

As a military policeman I had to arrest people for being gay. They'd go through a trial and do six months in the pen and then get kicked out. I never liked doing it but I don't dwell on the past. I still think it's difficult for serving personnel to come out because it's a macho occupation. Maybe people wouldn't actually say anything to you nowadays but they might keep their distance.

I describe myself as double-gender

They have all these different names for it. Bi-gender, gender fluid, non-binary – I haven't got a clue what they mean. A lot of trans people suffer from gender dysphoria, where they hate their bodies, but it was never like that for me. I just always knew I liked "girly" things, like make-up and crochet and I felt ashamed.

I changed my name from Ron to Vicky last September

It was a weird day. One minute I was crying with happiness, the next with sadness. It was almost like mourning, like I'd lost someone.

I have had some harassment

I was living in Canada when I decided to come out and people would shout things out of the window as I walked down the street. I moved four times in a year because of it and that's one of the reasons I came back to England. Initially I was living with my sister but now I've got my own flat and I'm doing good. I have high hopes for the future.

“Not one person knew – not even my ex-wives”

be me

My ex-Army mates have been 100 per cent behind me

I was at Check Point Charlie the night the Berlin Wall came down and I belong to a group called the RMP Wallbusters. About 30 of us are going back to Berlin this July for a reunion. We have a good laugh together.

These days everyone asks me for advice

I'm like a cross between Marjorie Proops and Buddha. I started a group on Facebook for transgender people in the military or emergency services and it is really picking up momentum – we currently have 156 members. It's about practical and emotional help. I actually go out with other trans people to show them how to do it, to give them more confidence and tips on how to walk and dress. I'm also an admin on a group for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or queer (LGBTQ) people struggling with addiction.

I'm not ashamed or embarrassed

I know people stare at me but it doesn't even register. An old man along the way told me "people like you should be put up against the wall and shot". The first time I let it go, the next time I told him to be respectful and now we get on great. Most people accept me as I am. It's been surprisingly easy.



Name: Vicky-Marie Hogan

Age: 55

Career history: Served from 1983 to 1991, first in **3rd Battalion, The Queen's Regiment** and then the **Royal Military Police**. After leaving the Army, Ron Hogan – as the veteran was then known – joined the **civilian police**, before moving to Canada and working as an **outreach worker for the homeless and drug addicted**. Having moved back to the UK last year, she has started hormone treatment and runs a Facebook support group for trans people in the military and emergency services.



Search for the **Transgender Veterans Support Group** and the **LGBTQ Addiction Support Network** on Facebook.

[VETERAN INTERVIEW]

“
Push
past your
limits –
the army
taught
me that
”



Hard-won lessons

Interview: Becky Clark Picture: Cameron Spencer/Getty Images

This Australian serviceman lost two limbs in a shark attack. Eight years on he tells *Soldier* that he wouldn't change a thing...

Name: Paul de Gelder

Age: 40

Dates of service: 2000-2012

Cap badges: 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment and Royal Australian Navy

Career history: A former paratrooper, de Gelder transferred to the Navy's elite dive clearance unit in 2005. During a counter-terrorism exercise in Sydney Harbour in 2009 he was attacked by a bull shark, losing his right hand and leg. The day after surgery, doctors were shocked to find him doing chin-ups with his good arm from his hospital bed.

Current status: Motivational speaker, marine conservationist and Discovery Channel television presenter.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO GET ON WITH LIFE.

After the attack that's what I wanted to do. I wasn't dead and I swore I wouldn't go back to the struggles I had while I was growing up; I'd do it on my own terms. I started training and that gave me the building blocks to recreate my life.

PUSH PAST YOUR LIMITS – the army taught me that. The navy clearance divers taught me that there are no limits and surviving the shark attack gave me the foot-in-the-ass to chase down dreams that others would deem impossible or unrealistic.

I DON'T WANT MY OLD LIFE BACK. I've made it even better than it was before. I started a new career in speaking that pays me triple my old navy wage and gives me time off to do the things I love, and I have the satisfaction of actively changing other people's lives for the better. I now get paid to travel and have adventures, just like I did in the military. I've hunted poachers in Africa, handled deadly snakes for shows and dived with great white sharks. I'm just a little more physically awkward and slower, and my leg and arm come off at night; no biggie.

I HAVE VERY FEW REGRETS. But if I had my time again I would not have been such an ass growing up, would have studied harder and been a better person to others.

THE CIVILIAN WORLD IS A VERY DIFFERENT BEAST. My biggest challenge was learning to communicate with civilians in the workplace. Apparently swearing at them isn't a valuable skill.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO HAVE BOTH A PLAN AND A BACK-UP PLAN WHEN YOU LEAVE THE FORCES. I can't stress that enough. Utilise every resource that the military machine has in place for veterans because they're not going to do it for you. The skills learnt in the services will help – things like working to a timeline and under pressure for long hours, laser-like focus, leadership, flexibility and commitment. But it takes patience and perseverance too.



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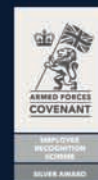
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Guards left in cold

“
Things are
going from
bad to
worse
”

I AM a member of the Military Provost Guard Service (MPGS) and have been in Service quarters for ten years.

The availability of this accommodation is a big factor for recruitment and also enhances base security because we are located close to our work station and can be called upon quickly if required.

MoD surveys have been conducted with the Armed Forces regarding the new housing model but they have not included the MPGS.

How come? We have the same right to quarters as Regular serving soldiers so does our opinion not matter?

If we do eventually transition to the future accommodation model (FAM) it appears we will have our rents increased to fund repairs so that Service properties can be sold off.

Does this mean the scheme is an attempt to compensate for the lack of care and maintenance given to these quarters over the years?

After the recent tarnishing of CarillionAmey's reputation I think things are going from bad to worse for Forces families and the accommodation they are supplied with. – **Name and address supplied**

Camilla Stewart, People Accommodation Mobility, MoD,

replies: FAM will offer the MoD the chance to change the way housing is provided, making it fairer by using a system based on need and not rank, age or marriage.

That will create greater flexibility and choice over how personnel live.

It is still at the consultation stage and no decisions have been finalised – we are still actively talking to soldiers, their families and representatives in order to understand their preferences.

The process included a recent survey that was open to most serving Regulars.

However, a number of groups were not included because their entitlements differ slightly which means the survey would not have been asking the right questions.

FAM is one of a number of projects within the Armed Forces people programme and we need to ensure that there is a standard approach by the other projects to this issue.

We are working closely with the various teams and should be in a position to continue the consultations shortly.

Unfortunately, that's as much as we can say at this stage.

“
Talkback
”

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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It might mean only a little extra from wages

TALKBACK

Money well spent

I RECENTLY used the Forces Help to Buy scheme (FHTB) to purchase a house and restricted myself to a £10,000 loan so it would not affect my tax code.

Could someone please explain how much tax I would have paid if I had borrowed more?

I feel this aspect of the programme is stopping a lot of people using more of this excellent allowance when it might mean only a little extra from their wages each month. – **Name and address supplied**

Col Nathan Sempala-Ntege, Assistant Head, Army Personal Services, responds: Your individual tax code would be adjusted to account for the tax that would have been paid had you borrowed from a commercial lender.

This rate is set in accordance with Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' official rate for beneficial loans; for Service personnel this is set at three per cent as laid down in chapter one, section five (rates of Service expenses and allowances) of JSP 752.

Income tax regulations are explained in chapter two, section four (long service advance of pay) of JSP 752 and chapter 12, section one of JSP 464.

A beneficial loan made after 2014 would be exempt from tax if the amount outstanding on it and any other beneficial loans (advances of pay, overpayments/undercharging) over any single tax month within the tax year in question does not exceed £10,000.

If during this period the amount exceeds £10,000 the whole of the amount will cease to be tax exempt for that tax year.

So in the case of a £25,000 FHTB loan, the full amount will be considered to be beneficial.

Notional interest at three per cent would be calculated on it so the taxable benefit (the cash equivalent) would be calculated to be £750 per annum.

Assuming they were higher rate taxpayers, this would mean the Serviceman or woman would pay an additional £300 (40 per cent of £750) tax per year.

If the FHTB amount and any other beneficial loans over the tax year does not exceed £10,000 it will be exempt from tax.

'HOW MANY MILES?'

A BRIEF article in the March edition called "Trans America Trek" caught my eye.

From August 2005 to July 2006 my son and two university friends travelled the same route but in the opposite direction, starting at Prudoe Bay and finishing at Tierra del Fuego.

It took them 347 days, and using a GPS computer they logged the journey as exactly 14,812 miles, not 20,000 miles as the article claims.

My son and his pals did it by bicycle, unsupported, to raise funds for assisting in equipping schools in El Salvador.

I recall that at about the same time the actor Ewan McGregor travelled this route with a friend by motorbike, claiming to have done it unsupported too, but of course he had a fully staffed film crew with him. – **Christopher Arnold, Winchester**



RESERVE HELP PLEA

I AM an instructor at a Reserve unit and part of my team's job is to arrange training

I have a substantive corporal with dyslexia who went on a promotional course and was returned to the unit for being medically unfit.

I asked the local Army education centre if he could have a dyslexia screening test with a view to seeking some form of assistance, but was told that the MoD does not fund these courses for Reservists.

I know not everything can be on offer but, surely, in order to recruit and retain these personnel we must invest in their career progression and allow them to move forward.

– **WO2 Gavin Cleverley, RE**

Col Colette MacDonald, Education Branch, Army Personnel Services Group, responds:

The Army is committed to ensuring that all soldiers, whether Regular or Reserve, are able to maximise their potential.

All troops have access to individual education advice and support through Army education centres, including assistance with literacy and numeracy.

Unfortunately, under current policy Reserve personnel are not entitled to Army-funded screening for specific learning difficulties or specialist educational psychologist reports because the Service is not their primary employer.

They are, therefore, encouraged to follow the guidance offered by the British Dyslexia Association in terms of getting an assessment, or alternatively they can follow the "Access to Work" scheme through their civilian employer.

Further information is available in **Army Command Standing Order 3326 Army Specific Learning Difficulties Policy**.

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RANT OF THE MONTH



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With the enhanced forward presence in Eastern Europe ramping up, there's been plenty of chat about the role of the British Army



Zachary Harvey-Brewer

They're doing what they signed up to do. No infantryman wants to sit on a range in Wales or practise house-to-house on Salisbury Plain year after year to protect us. Bless 'em all!



Liam Hall

Estonia was a good ally to us during the Afghan war, it's good that we're supporting them back.



Paul Allsopp

Why are we in Estonia? Love our troops but we don't need to be there.



Robert Wood

We had an Estonian AI Coy attached to our BG on Op Herrick 6. They are bloody good soldiers and suffered casualties whilst serving with us.



Jay Murray

Served with the Estonians in Afghan, they are a strong force and will have our backs.



Steve Horne

The Cold War all over again.

You do not
qualify as
you travel
home each
night

Could I be eligible for
both allowances?



Hungry for food claim

I AM a Regular soldier attached to a Reserve unit, the Queens University Officers' Training Corps

It is more than ten miles away from my Service family accommodation and 11 miles from the nearest pay-as-you-dine facility.

I'd like to know if I am entitled to claim day subsistence (DS) for my lunch during the week and an evening meal on a Wednesday when I work until 2200?

I receive home to duty (HDT) allowance so would this mean I couldn't claim these sustenance costs?

Or can I stop my HDT and claim the cost of food as it averages £140 per month compared to the £62.10 that I receive towards my travel expenses?

Alternatively, could I be eligible for both as I travel to work and need to buy my own food? – **Name and address supplied**

Brig Chris Ghika, Director Personnel Capability, replies: First, HDT is a contribution to the cost of daily commuting between your home and your place of work.

The allowance is based on the assumption that Service personnel have little choice over where they live and that they are mobile.

Everyone has to make a personal contribution but payments are exempt from tax.

While HDT and DS are not directly linked, you are right that JSP 752 states you cannot claim DS while travelling between work and home.

In common with many jobs, it is assumed that breakfast and dinner will be taken at home and lunch will be either a packed meal or taken in a cafe, shop, Service mess or canteen

if they are available.

Whereas HDT is paid automatically at a daily rate for most personnel, DS is a temporary allowance and given only when troops are detached from their permanent duty station for more than five hours.

It provides reimbursement of the actual costs of meals incurred during the day.

From the details you supplied, it does not appear you are absent from your permanent duty station and given that you travel to and from your home each day, you would not be entitled to DS.

However, when you are committed to training that spans lunch and dinner (potentially Wednesday evenings in your case) your chain of command may be able to authorise "meals out" expenses.

This provides a contribution to the cost of food with varying rates depending on what time of day it is taken.

Your unit administration staff will be able to advise you.

Lastly, JSP 752 prevents personnel from trading allowances to maximise financial benefit.

Entitlement is based on need rather than choice – you must travel from the accommodation you were allocated to the job you were assigned to and therefore can claim HDT allowance.

It is not possible to forgo HDT in order to qualify for DS as the entitlement criteria are separate. Even if you could give up HDT you still wouldn't qualify for DS because you travel home each night.

BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



CAREERS

Veteran Employment Transition Support (VETS) programme, aimed at connecting ex-Forces personnel with employers. For details visit www.veteranemployment.co.uk

Transition Force uses a combination of technology and events to provide personalised career support for ex-Service personnel nationwide. To register visit www.transitionforce.com/events

Ex-Military Recruitment assists former Service personnel from specialist technical regiments trained in electrical and mechanical engineering, logistics and telecommunications in finding similar civilian careers. For details visit www.xmr.co.uk



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winner: Maj RT Jones (Rifles), Westdown Camp, Salisbury.



DIARY

April 6-7: National Employment and Careers Fair at Catterick Leisure Centre. A free event with more than 4,000 jobs available. Visit www.bfrss.org.uk to register your attendance and request a free CV health check.

April 8 and 9: World at War weekend at the Helicopter Museum, Weston-super-Mare. Doors open at 1000 and the event features a reconstructed Second World War encampment, historical re-enactors and weapons.

April 12: Brexit and the Army from 1900 at the National Army Museum. An expert panel discussion on how leaving the EU will impact on the Service and defence policy. Tickets £10; concessions £7.50. Visit www.nam.ac.uk for more.

April 22: St George's Day concert in aid of Combat Stress at Cadogan Hall, London from 1930. The evening will include the Band of the Coldstream Guards and Commonwealth Children's Choir, with compere Alexander Armstrong also performing. For details visit www.cadoganhall.com

April 25: Memorial stones honouring the 63 Freemasons awarded the Victoria Cross in the First World War to be unveiled by the Duke of Kent outside the Freemasons' Hall in Covent Garden at 1100. Event

open to the public and featuring the Band of the Grenadier Guards.

April 27: Wiltshire College open event, from 1700. Meet the tutors and learn more about the courses available at the Trowbridge-based site.

May 6: Stoke-on-Trent Military Tattoo at King's Hall, Kingsway in aid of ABF The Soldiers' Charity. The show will feature The Military Wives Choir, pipes and drums and massed military bands. Doors at 1730, performance at 1830. Tickets £10. Call 01782 206000.

May 15: ID your stuff. A free workshop from 1400 at the National Army Museum, London. Get help identifying artefacts, medals or military photographs. Visit www.nam.ac.uk

May 27-28: Duxford Air Festival. The first of three air shows at IWM Duxford in its centenary year. Tickets must be booked in advance and for more details visit www.iwm.org.uk



DIRECTORY

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Army Libraries: 01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
www.armybirding.org.uk

Army Welfare Service:
01904 882053;
www.army.mod.uk/welfare-support

Big White Wall:
www.bigwhitewall.com

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans:
020 8590 1124; www.blesma.org

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

Care After Combat:
www.careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

Children's Education Advisory Service:
01980 618244;
dcyp-ceas-enquiries@mod.uk

Combat Stress:
01372 841600;

www.combatstress.org.uk

Erskine:
0141 814 4569; www.erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901
www.felixfund.org.uk

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

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988

Help for Heroes:
0845 673 1760 or 01980 846 459;
www.helpforheroes.org.uk

Heroes Welcome:
www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
www.highground-uk.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office: 01722 436575

Medal Office:
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National Ex-Services Association:
www.nesa.org.uk

National Gulf Veterans' and Families' Association Office:
24-hour helpline 0845 257 4853;
www.ngvfa.org.uk

Regular Forces' Employment Association:
0121 236 0058; www.rfea.org.uk

Remount:
01451 850 341; www.remount.net

Royal British Legion:
0808 802 8080;
www.britishlegion.org.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences:
0131 556 0091; www.svrnline.org

SPACES (Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services):
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SSAFA:
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Stoll (formerly known as the Sir Oswald Stoll Foundation):
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www.stoll.org.uk

The Not Forgotten Association:
020 7730 2400 www.nfassociation.org

The Poppy Factory:
020 8940 3305;
www.poppyfactory.org

The Royal Star & Garter Homes:
020 8481 7676; www.starandgarter.org

The Veterans Charity:
01753 653772;
info@veteranscharity.org.uk

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



INTELLIGENCE

The following Army Briefing Notes, Defence Internal Briefs and Defence Information Notices can be found online at
www.armynet.mod.uk

ABN 32/17: Army Education Champion of the Year Award 2017

ABN 31/17: Assurance of personnel data

ABN 30/17: Implementation instructions for the Army Reserve Reinforcement Group

ABN 29/17: Regular Reserves trials 2017

ABN 28/17: Brigade of Gurkhas – former soldier transfer and rejoin policy

ABN 27/17: Civilian performance management 2016/17 end of year process

DIN 2017DIN01-053: Royal Air Force Photographic Competition 2017

DIN 2017DIN01-052: Late entry commission in the Royal Army Physical Training Corps

DIN 2017DIN01-049: The effect of Service discipline offences on applications for indefinite leave to remain or naturalisation made by Service personnel, veterans or their families who are foreign or Commonwealth citizens

DIN 2017DIN01-048: Armed Forces Act 2006: higher authorities for joint units and organisations and Service personnel in non-operational posts overseas

DIN 2017DIN01-047: Reserve rehabilitation contract

DIN 2017DIN01-046: Late entry commission in the Royal Corps of Signals

DIN 2017DIN01-045: The Professional Engineering Institution Churchill Medal award 2016/17

DIN 2017DIN01-043: Reduction of general duties medical officer time prior to general practice and aviation medicine training

DIN 2017DIN01-042: Support available for staff facing legal proceedings

DIN 2017DIN01-041: Gibraltar Naval Trust – Britannia House

DIN 2017DIN01-040: Senior officers' course 131 – Nato Defence College

Rome – August 2017 to February 2018 (inclusive)

DIN 2017DIN01-039: Reserves Day 2017

DIN 2017DIN01-037: Accommodation booking in the Portsmouth area

DIN 2017DIN01-036: Ministry of Defence Police: annual pay award

DIN 2017DIN01-035: Appraisal and assignment policy and process amendments

DIN 2017DIN01-034: Gurkha late entry officer regular commission conversions and late entry officer Pink List promotion policy

DIN 2017DIN01-033: Armed Forces Buddhist (Spiritual and Moral Leadership) Conference, June 21-23

DIN 2017DIN01-032: In-Service degree mark-time policy

DIN 2017DIN01-031: Recruitment of volunteers for training as an Army welfare worker

DIN 2017DIN01-030: Late entry commission in the Corps of Royal Engineers

DIN 2017DIN01-029: 59th International Military Pilgrimage to Lourdes

DIN 2017DIN01-028: F Med 271 handling for Army personnel

DIN 2017DIN01-027: Apprenticeship pay for external/new joiners

DIN 2017DIN01-025: Civilian attendance at the advanced command and staff course

DIN 2017DIN01-024: Armed Forces Sikh (Spiritual and Moral Leadership) Conference, May 18-20

DIN 2017DIN01-023: Service personnel leave – change in return of service for maternity and adoption leave

DIN 2017DIN01-022: Health service provision for MoD entitled personnel in British Forces Germany

DIN 2017DIN01-021: Pension tax – lifetime allowance, annual allowance, and pensions earning cap

DIN 2017DIN01-020: Armed Forces' Muslim (Spiritual and Moral Leadership) Conference, May 10-12

DIN 2017DIN01-019: World faith moral leadership and development conferences

DIN 2017DIN01-018: Rules for tapered annual allowance for pensions tax relief in tax year 2016/17

DIN 2017DIN01-017: Diplomatic clearance procedures for Belgium, The Netherlands and Luxembourg

DIN 2017DIN01-016: Voter registration for March and May 2017 elections

DIN 2017DIN01-015: MoD NHS/Agenda

for Change grades – submission of AFC Form 1720A – performance appraisal development report for 2016 reporting year

DIN 2017DIN01-014: Late entry commissions in the Army Medical Services

DIN 2017DIN01-013: Operational welfare communications – WelComE

DIN 2017DIN01-012: Late entry commission into the Royal Armoured Corps, Infantry, Royal Gurkha Rifles and Small Arms School Corps

DIN 2017DIN01-011: Terms and conditions of service for specialist officers in the Army Reserve group B General Service Corps and the Engineer and Logistic Staff Corps

DIN 2017DIN01-008: Late entry commissions in the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

DIN 2017DIN01-007: Personal accident insurance scheme – clarification of coverage – post-traumatic stress disorder

DIN 2017DIN01-006: Regular flexible duties trial

DIN 2017DIN01-005: Purchasing added pension or buying an effective pension age

DIN 2017DIN01-004: Basic skills development managers threshold assessment guidance

DIN 2017DIN01-003: 2017 pilgrimages by the Armed Forces region of HCPT – The Pilgrimage Trust

DIN 2017DIN02-002: Volunteers for specialist Humint duties – interrogation

DIN 2017DIN02-001: Volunteers for specialist Humint duties – agent handler (Op Samson)

DIN 2017DIN03-008: CBRN reachback advice to UK MoD; change to CBRN reachback support telephone number

DIN 2017DIN03-007: Defence governance for countering improvised explosive devices

DIN 2017DIN03-006: Defence counter – chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear policy.

DIN 2017DIN03-005: Strategic mobility asset prioritisation

DIN 2017DIN03-004: Defence culture and language policy

DIN 2017DIN04-053: Weapon equipment – declaration of obsolete/obsolescent status

DIN 2017DIN04-052: Siemens Clinitek status+ urine chemistry analyser

DIN 2017DIN04-051: Marine fuel supply arrangements for ports in the UK and overseas

DIN 2017DIN04-050: Notice of obsolescence of surplus JOFS items

DIN 2017DIN04-049: Framework contracts for the supply of commercial publications to the MoD

DIN 2017DIN04-048: Onboarding of a selection of manual direct supply contracts under the LCS (T) contract onto team Leidos systems

DIN 2017DIN04-047: Mk 6 general service combat helmet, Mk6a general service combat helmet and Mk 7 combat assault helmet, lightweight parachutist helmet and Virtus helmet OSD and demands

DIN 2017DIN04-046: MoD Sanctuary Awards 2017 – calling notice for nominations

DIN 2017DIN04-043: Changes in the process of the tasking of commercial provision of irregular dimensions and weight, mobile cranes and special types general order (previously specialist loads and vehicles services)

DIN 2017DIN04-042: Declaration of obsolete: deployable operations room/building of opportunity racks

DIN 2017DIN04-041: Declaration of obsolete: BCIP asset configuration management system

DIN 2017DIN04-040: Obsolete night BIOC NSN 99-761-0667

DIN 2017DIN04-039: Marker marine No 4 Mk N11 withdrawal from service

DIN 2017DIN04-038: Declaration of obsolete air publications for battery charging rooms

DIN 2017DIN04-037: Notification of the introduction into service of the Dosimetry data management system replacing the Dosimetry management system

DIN 2017DIN04-035: Declaration of obsolete for hydrant dispenser carts MAC 6075-3101, NSN 4930-99-777-9298

DIN 2017DIN04-034: Crown exemption policy

DIN 2017DIN04-033: Introduction of replacement operating head for CO2 life jackets

DIN 2017DIN04-032: Uniform annex B forms for contracted Terberg equipment

DIN 2017DIN04-031: Specialist military engineer support – tasking

DIN 2017DIN04-030: Provision of red cross emblem blanking plate for personal clothing system

DIN 2017DIN04-029: Withdrawal of AW50 L212A1 (NSN 1002-99-302-2157) for upgrade

DIN 2017DIN04-028: Operational infrastructure programme 60-day demand lead times

DIN 2017DIN04-027: Falcon contractor logistic support realignment

DIN 2017DIN04-026: Publication of water safety equipment log block amendment 84

DIN 2017DIN04-025: Declaration of obsolete of specific serial numbered Avery Hardoll master meters type code ADX NSN 6680-99-861-7130

DIN 2017DIN04-024: Declaration of obsolescence – CS irritant ammunition natures for respirator testing

DIN 2017DIN04-023: Requirement for a manual muscle tester

DIN 2017DIN04-022: Requirement for provision of adjustable and continuous flow cryotherapy to rehabilitation units

DIN 2017DIN04-021: Amendments to operational medical modules contents – December 2016 to January 2017

DIN 2017DIN04-020: Obsolescence of 10ml bottle sizes of Loctite 241, 601 and 290 and their alternatives

DIN 2017DIN04-019: Declaration of obsolete: TacGA UK/PRC-346 communications system

DIN 2017DIN04-018: Declaration of obsolescence: PRR /EZPRR radio carrier pouches desert NSN: 5820-99-836-5974, green NSN: 5820-99-425-3999

DIN 2017DIN04-017: Hestia contracts soft facilities management interim guidance

DIN 2017DIN04-016: Declaration of obsolete commanders location beacon and all associated spares

DIN 2017DIN04-015: Declaration of obsolete – charger, battery 2 channel

DIN 2017DIN04-014: Classification of unit-held shotguns

DIN 2017DIN06-006: Claims and insurance provisions for the use of MoD vehicles in the UK and overseas and confirmation of motor liability cover

DIN 2017DIN06-005: Defence annual road safety Rose Bowl Award 2017

DIN 2017DIN06-004: The risk assessment and management of force health protection, CBRN, environmental and industrial hazards on operations and exercises

DIN 2017DIN06-003: Publication of DSA02-defence diving and DSA02-MoD ports regulations

DIN 2017DIN07-046: Declaration of obsolescence – Mapric qualification

DIN 2017DIN07-045: Guidance and information for the conduct of JSAT parachuting, including expeditions

DIN 2017DIN07-044: CSL triage process

Continued on page 54

Intelligence continued

for procurement of external training for civilians

DIN 2017DIN07-043: Unit welfare officer training courses 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-042: DIT courses delivered by the AES 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-040: Defence foreign language training courses for training year 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-039: Procedures for attending US Pinnacle, Capstone and Keystone

DIN 2017DIN07-038: Defence unit fire safety managers and wardens extinguisher maintenance awareness trainer

DIN 2017DIN07-037: Adventurous training offshore sailing – planning expeditions to Cyprus in 2017

DIN 2017DIN07-035: Information management courses for September 2017 until July 2018 at the Defence Academy of the UK – Shrivenham

DIN 2017DIN07-033: The defence survival, evasion, resistance and extraction training organisation

DIN 2017DIN07-032: Mountaineering in Tajikistan: Exercise Pamir Tiger

DIN 2017DIN07-031: Joint service adventurous training parachuting – planning expeditions to Cyprus in 2017

DIN 2017DIN07-030: Training courses

for wounded, injured and sick service personnel – April 2017 to March 2018

DIN 2017DIN07-028: Joint information activities group training provision 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-027: Combat medical technician clinical professional accreditation opportunities training year 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-026: Tactical medical wing course schedule training year 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-025: JOLP 3 and MA courses: 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-024: JNCO, SNCO and WO command, leadership and management part 3 courses 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-023: Number 49 aerosystems course applications

DIN 2017DIN07-022: Initial reserve recruit training accreditation

DIN 2017DIN07-021: Wounded, injured and sick unit recovery officers training courses 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN07-020: Joining instructions for personnel attending Maritime Warfare School courses at Phoenix Training Group

DIN 2017DIN07-017: Education, training and management of Regular Royal Army Medical Corps pharmacists

DIN 2017DIN07-016: 2017/18 defence cyber education and training

DIN 2017DIN07-015: Exercise Arctic Express 2017

DIN 2017DIN07-014: Joint Intelligence Training Group training courses for training year 2017/18

DIN 2017DIN08-001: 2016/17 annual report and accounts – closure of feeders

DIN 2017DIN09-004: Multinational Force and Observers Medal

DIN 2017DIN09-003: Armed Forces Day campaign 2017

DIN 2017DIN10-023: Travel at public expense for Army sport

DIN 2017DIN10-021: Inter-Service Paragliding Championships 2017

DIN 2017DIN10-020: Army Sport Climbing Championships 2017

DIN 2017DIN10-019: Basic gliding courses at the Wyvern (Army) Gliding Club – Upavon

DIN 2017DIN10-018: Services Offshore Regatta 2017 – notice of race

DIN 2017DIN10-017: The Royal Military School of Music, Kneller Hall – Twickenham stadium event vehicle parking

DIN 2017DIN10-014: Exercise Solent Venture (ASA Regatta) 2017

DIN 2017DIN10-012: British Army Motorsports Association – navigation events

DIN 2017DIN10-011: Combined Services Chess Championships

DIN 2017DIN10-010: British Army Motorsports event – Saxon Express 2017

DIN 2017DIN10-009: Army Inter-Unit Tennis Competition



REUNIONS

Army Apprentices National Memorial Trust annual reunion weekend on May 6-7 at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. All ex-apprentices welcome. Email mohope118@gmail.com



SEARCHLINE

Ian Sinclair is seeking memories and information about RAF Mafrag, Jordan circa 1945-6, where his grandfather Archibald Sinclair served as a staff sergeant in the Royal Engineers. Anyone with details is asked to contact him via ian_js@hotmail.com

Military charity SSAFA is taking bookings for its short breaks – free, week-long adventure holidays for the Armed Forces community. A siblings and young carers trip will take place in Staffordshire from May 28, and a break for families with a child with an additional need or disability will run in Exmoor from July 29. For more details or to apply contact Hannah Wiltshire on hannah.w@ssafa.org.uk or call 0207 463 9275.

Keiran Proffer is looking for military reviewers and proofreaders for his new book *The Revised Art of War by Sun Tzu*, an update of a Chinese classic. Email keiran7@yahoo.co.uk

NO. 905 JUST HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

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service, time since leaving the armed forces) are sought for biographical interviews that cover the decision to join the Armed Forces and the experiences during your time in the military and the time after leaving. This project aims to learn from veterans what services and practices make the transition to civilian life easier and what types of support could be better or are missing. If you would like to participate and/or have further questions, please contact Dr Silke Roth, University of Southampton, silke.roth@soton.ac.uk, 02380 594859.

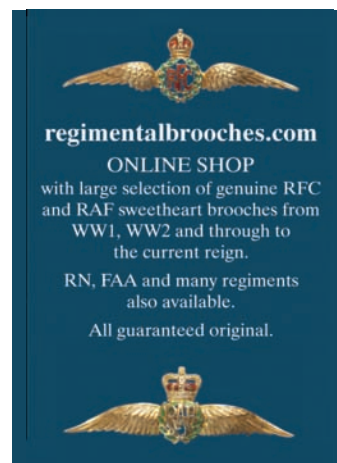


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UK's 2016 Top 20 Independent Schools % A*/A A level (Sunday Times)

Ranking of Schools taking boarders		
Nationally Ranking all type schools		
		%age A*/A at A level
1	St Paul's Girls' School	93.8
2	Magdalen College School	88.7
3	North London Collegiate	88.5
4	Westminster School	88.0
5	Queen Ethelburga's College	86.9
6	Winchester College	86.1
7	Wycombe Abbey School	86.0
8	King Edward's, Birmingham	85.6
9	Sevenoaks School	85.2
10	St Paul's School	84.7
11	Guildford High School Girls	84.3
12	Haberdashers' Aske's Girls	83.8
13	Faculty Queen Ethelburga's	83.7
14	James Allen's Girls' School	82.5
15	Eton College	81.9
16	Withington Girls' School	81.4
17	Godolphin & Latymer Sch	80.2
18	St John's College, Cardiff	80.2
19	Brighton College	79.8
20	Haberdashers' Aske's Boys'	79.6

➔ £100m invested in new facilities in the last 8 years.

Why choose an independent school education if you qualify for CEA? If you made a list, the same reasons would keep appearing. We think the list might include: happy children, top ten academics, a personalised approach, top quality teachers with specialised expertise, good discipline, latest technology and superb facilities, excellent pastoral care, amazing sport, first class boarding accommodation, diverse experience, small classes, university success, excellent career prospects and first class confidence and self assurance. If you want the best for your child, and to stand a chance of achieving most of this list, we believe you would need to pick one of the top 10 UK Independent boarding schools as ranked by the Sunday Times. BUT, most importantly of all, we unashamedly also offer TLC - tender, loving care!

Other Schools' Results % A*/A A level (Sunday Times)

5	QE College	87%
13	Faculty of QE	84%
76	Kingswood School	61%
94	Bromsgrove School	56%
136	Monmouth School	51%
n/a	Gordon's School	48%
171	Cheltenham College	47%
177	Dauntsey's School	47%
209	Kingham Hill School	44%
245	Dean Close School	41%
277	King's Sch Bruton	37%
288	Monkton Combe	36%
n/a	Welbeck College	34%
317	King's Coll Taunton	31%
328	Stamford School	30%
336	Millfield School	28%
349	Warminster School	26%
375	Royal Hospital Sch	21%
376	Licensed Vict Ascot	20%
378	Barnard Castle Sch	19%

REVIEWS



MUSIC

DIVIDING OPINION

The Sheeran juggernaut rolls on but don't believe the hype

THE numbers make for impressive reading. A total of 22 million albums sold worldwide, 4.7 billion Spotify streams and 3.5 billion hits on his official YouTube channel – and that's before figures from new record *Divide* have been added to the tally. So, it's fair to say Ed Sheeran is the true definition of a global superstar. »

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TOP GEAR

MUSIC



VERDICT:

More of the same – yawn

★★★★★



His case was further strengthened when nine tracks from his latest offering dominated the top-ten singles' chart but, for me, I just don't understand the hype.

The music is far from offensive but at the same time it is anything but innovative or pioneering; it just safely sits in the middle of the road.

Sheeran is all about mass appeal and comeback singles *Shape of You* and *Castle on the Hill* are the perfect embodiment of this.

The former, with its almost rap-like delivery, boasts obvious appeal for the young and trendy crowd, while the latter is perfectly targeted at the Radio 2 generation.

The whole album repeats the mainstream-stealing formula of previous offerings and serves as tick-box exercise for what has gone before.

Soppy ballads; check. Hip hop beats; check. The list goes on.

In an attempt to buck the trend Sheeran reflects on youth and childhood on *Castle on the Hill*, but given its ubiquitous nature it makes for painful listening the 173rd time round.

Further efforts to push the boundaries are found on *Galway Girl*, which delivers an infuriating Irish-inspired rap with a clichéd fiddle accompaniment.

Come the end of 2017 it will be no surprise to see *Divide* crowned as the year's biggest selling album – given the strength of his fan base.

Sales figures are one thing but it is hard to escape the fact this is bland and uninspiring music.

The busker has undoubtedly achieved greatness, along with a healthy bank balance, but I still don't understand what sets him apart from the plethora of one-man-and-a-guitar acts striving for success. ■

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG, *SOLDIER*

MUSIC RELEASES



My Unfashionable Opinion by Mark Nevin

THIS is the fifth solo album from **Mark Nevin** and is co-produced by his former

Fairground Attraction bandmate **Simon Edwards**.

With the mighty **Phill Brown (Bob Marley, Led Zeppelin, Talk Talk)** performing the mixing duties its 12 tracks offer huge promise. The writing process has been a different experience for the artist and it seems as though something has shifted in the creative section of his brain, with Nevin proclaiming that the songs came easily and quickly. I was quite surprised by this offering; it is very simple in both the instruments used and the lyrics but it is very quirky and easy on the ear. With a happy feel throughout it is definitely worth a listen.

Rodge Tapply, ex-RE



Hit The Lights by Ten Fe

COMPRISING London duo **Ben Moorehouse** and **Leo Duncan**, **Ten Fe** combine synth with what can only be

described as 80s American rock. Such a description could lead you to believe they have little to offer in today's musical landscape – but that is not the case. Recent single *Elodie* fuses a lovely piano roll with a gorgeous synth undertow that will have you wanting to hear more. You have to appreciate the craft that has gone into making this collection of songs, they will draw comparisons with contemporaries **The 1975** but I think that would be unjust. *In the Air* is the highlight; it bounces happily along and then changes direction to sound like **MGMT** at their finest. This surely must be their next single. A cracking debut.

Damian Hern, ex-AGC (SPS)



The Fall by Joshua Radin

A SELF-PROCLAIMED journeyman of music, **Joshua Radin** returns with his seventh studio album. By and large this

isn't any different to the previous six, which makes it a middle-of-the-road affair without any real standout tracks. His style follows the same vein as **Paolo Nutini** – acoustic guitar and soft-spoken lyrics that are pleasant enough to listen to as a backdrop. But has it got enough to want me to lay back and lose myself? Unfortunately not. Radin has achieved a hardcore fan base over the years and his music has featured in numerous film scores and a host of TV shows. But this album, along with the ones that have gone before, seems to lack the extra sparkle that's needed to stand out in an already overcrowded marketplace.

Tony David, ex-RE



PICK OF THE MONTH:

SNIPER ELITE 4

PlayStation 4, Xbox One and PC

▶ LIKE previous iterations of the series, *Sniper Elite 4* opts for the single-seater approach to shooting and sends you off to sometimes wonderful-looking environments where it's just you, your rifle and a host of oblivious bad guys.

This is what has set the franchise apart from rival titles such as *Call of Duty* and *Battlefield*.

The levels – all eight of them for the campaign – are huge and focus on Italy during the Second World War.

As per usual, stealth is the name of the game and if you like wall running or jumping around while throwing grenades then try something else. This is all about patience and subterfuge.

The visuals are sublime, and they need to be because you'll be spending the majority of your time crawling around in them.

But the main bonus of the *Sniper Elite* offerings is the X-ray sequences when landing a successful kill.

Though somewhat gruesome they provide visual confirmation of your marksmanship and what other title can offer the chance of a bespoke testicle shot?

Another standout feature is the game's realism. You need to be on

VERDICT:

A must-have for hot shots seeking a dose of reality

★★★★★

your toes if opting for the authentic setting, which makes everything far more difficult.

When selected, each shot involves accounting for wind direction, gravity, drift of scope and muzzle velocity – all of which is important when engaging moving targets.

Sniper Elite 4 is an accomplished shooter that continues the stealth and infiltration of previous iterations but does so with a much better backdrop. Even so, the game requires a particular mindset and won't be everyone's cup of tea. ■

REVIEW: DAVID MCDUGALL, CIVVY

GAMES RELEASES

Halo Wars 2
Xbox One and PC

AFTER drifting through space for the equivalent of 28 years, the crew

of the Spirit of Fire awaken to find a large Forerunner structure, but they're not alone. Providing the opposition is the Banished, an amalgam of Covenant forces led by the aggressive and tactically brilliant Atriox. The gameplay is a vast improvement on the previous title and visually it is superb; the audio is also on par. In fact, the whole game plays much better than the original. There are new features for single and multiplayer via Blitz and Strongholds that offer fast-paced options and slower, more deliberate styles of play, depending on your mood. The only drawback is that the campaign is fairly short.

David McDougall, civvy

A Pixel Story
PlayStation 4 and Xbox One

ORIGINALITY is something that is often hard to encounter

in modern video games, but *A Pixel Story* provides at least some variation on a popular game type. Platform titles aren't usually as exciting as their first-person shooter brethren, mainly because we have moved on to other things. At first this appears to be a very basic pixel-laden experience but it's much better than that. Unlike other offerings in the genre, such as *Mario*, the main aim is puzzle solving – not combat. The art style provides a superb historic journey through the different generations of 2D platformers and it's great to play. However, the gameplay doesn't really evolve as fast as the graphics.

David McDougall, civvy

MOVIES

PICK OF THE MONTH:

HUMAN TOUCH

Ex-serviceman puts military stamp on indie horror

► IT'S not often that Hollywood movie stars want to wax lyrical about how much they love *Soldier*. Their loss.

But former Canadian Armed Forces serviceman **Daniel Fathers**, who features in new US horror *The Void*, also happens to be an enthusiastic subscriber.

"100 per cent, it's my favourite magazine," he tells us.

So after exercising the usual high standard of editorial impartiality (honest), we decided to chat more to the British-born actor about his part in the title, which is showing in selected cinemas now and out on DVD later this month.

Its tells the unsettling story of a hospital which gets overrun by a terrifying, otherworldly force.

And after decent feedback at last year's London Film Festival, the 50 year-old Royal Regina Rifles veteran hopes his performance as an American ex-serviceman will be well received.

By taking his acting work in the this direction, the Army Cadet Force instructor has managed to maintain a link to the world he loves – one that, unfortunately, he couldn't enter on moving back to the UK because of a knee injury.

"A lot of my roles are either military or ex-military; that's who I am," he explains.

"And one thing that drives me up the wall is watching actors play service personnel and not wearing their berets properly, for example."

But why the horror genre?

"I read the script and wanted to do it," Fathers continues.

"Often in these films there's not much character development, but with *The Void* they wanted to ensure that there was a backstory.

"A lot of military roles on TV and in film are very two-dimensional and often there is no humanistic depth to the characters.

"But I like to explore that. It creates drama."

He concludes: "My only regret is that I wasn't a career soldier." ■

INTERVIEW: SARAH GOLDTHORPE, *SOLDIER*

DVD RELEASES



Tomboy

DESPITE having a star cast with a few household names, this is a difficult film to get into. A hitman falls into the hands of a rogue surgeon who transforms him into a woman against his will, but the plot of this title is not evident until the end, and the acting certainly could have been better. This is not one I would watch again. For me, it's a miss.

Matthew Jackson, civvy



Fantastic Beasts

IN her screenwriting debut, **JK Rowling** has produced the first spin-off from the *Harry Potter* series. Based on her book of the

same name, with amazing special effects, a fast pace and incredible cast, this action-packed family fantasy ticks all the boxes. Unlike the *Harry Potter* series, it will also appeal to adults who are not parents. **Eddie Redmayne** fits his quirky role perfectly and the talented **Samantha Morton** also gives a resounding performance as the abusive preacher, Mary Lou Barebone.

Janet Dorman, ex-R Signals

PICK OF THE MONTH:

BLOOD FOREST

Ex-Reservist brings Roman Empire to life in debut novel

► IN 9AD Germanic tribesmen led by the chieftain Arminius ambushed and slaughtered three Roman legions under the command of General Varus.

The bloody encounter, thought to have taken place near modern-day Osnabruck, triggered the Roman Empire's eventual withdrawal from the region but despite its impact, some 2,000 years on it remains largely unknown to non-historians.

Now, however, one Reservist-turned-author has drawn on the clash for inspiration for his debut novel – and landed himself a publishing deal with Penguin in the process.

Blood Forest by Geraint Jones (ex-R Welsh) is a fictionalised account of the massacre with a hefty dose of battlefield realism thrown in.

A veteran of two Iraq tours and Operation Herrick in 2009, the former lance corporal deliberately set out to create a book that would chime with military readers.

"Anyone who has served will recognise the characters and the language they use," he explained.

"There's always the guy in your company who isn't concerned about climbing the career ladder – he likes to do things his own way but when the chips are down you can rely on him 100 per cent.

"There's always someone complaining, or the person who is constantly in the wrong place at the wrong time.

"You can have best friends arguing and insulting each other like they're the worst of enemies but two minutes later they're dying for each other."



» WIN

MAKING its debut on home entertainment this month, *Allied* tells the story of two spies who fall in love during a top secret Second World War mission. *Soldier* has teamed up with Universal to offer a DVD of the film, starring **Brad Pitt** and **Marion Cotillard**, to five readers. To be in with a chance of winning tell us who directed it. Answers to comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by April 28.



And despite the passage of time, the 33-year-old believes the experience of the Roman legionary was not so far removed from that of the infantryman in today's Army.

"Walking into a forest and expecting an ambush is no different to going out on patrol in the Green Zone or down a street you know is riddled with IEDs," he continued.

"Everything that's going on in your body is the same."

As the action unfolds, it becomes clear that the main character, Felix, and members of his section are dealing with wounds both visible and invisible.

PTSD may be a modern concept but Jones is convinced the soldiers of old would have been affected too.

"It's not like people didn't suffer in the past," he said.

"For me, there's no way you can come away from a massacre of 15,000 men with a completely clean bill of health, mentally.

"So I wanted to dig into that. If you ignore that part you're missing out on a

VERDICT:

Page-turning historical fiction with a modern military twist

★★★★★

huge part of the story."

Jones did not start writing in earnest until he left the Reserve in 2012 and began working in the security industry.

He emailed his first manuscript to some literary agents while on a tugboat off the coast of Sudan.

"When I was on stag in the Army I'd be thinking up plots and characters but living in the block with the boys isn't the best environment to write," he added.

"Actually, I used to read the book section in *Soldier* magazine when I was in, so it's nice to have my work reviewed here. It's come full circle."

Blood Forest is an impressive debut and a fresh take on a genre awash with military tales.

As Jones describes it, it is a book "written by a soldier for soldiers".

In that sense he has accomplished his mission. If you like your fiction fast-paced and gory this is well worth checking out. ■

REVIEW: BECKY CLARK, *SOLDIER*

SOLDIER SELECTS



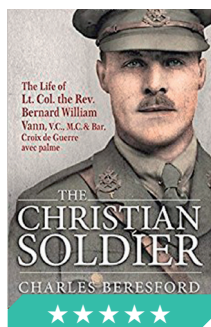
Harsh Lessons by Ben Barry

THIS hard-hitting book by retired brigadier Ben Barry is aptly titled. It outlines the Iraq and Afghanistan

conflicts and the struggles of those involved. The author does not miss any targets, offering an honest appraisal of the mistakes made mainly by the US and UK in the combat and rebuilding phases of the wars. The title is aimed at higher-level strategic thinkers in defence and the government but it is a very good read for those wanting to understand the reasons for the Allies' difficulties in the post-war period. I hope it is picked up and these "harsh lessons" are heeded.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

BOOK RELEASES CONTINUED

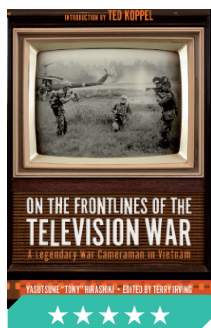


The Christian Soldier by Charles Beresford

BERNARD Vann, an ordained Anglican clergyman

and school chaplain, joined the Army as a fighting soldier in August 1914. Courteous, brave, enduring and cheerful in the worst of conditions, he stood out even in the British Expeditionary Force of the Western Front. He was killed five weeks before the Armistice leading his Sherwood Foresters battalion in the attack on the Hindenburg Line, probably the BEF's greatest feat of arms. Charles Beresford's well-researched biography brings to life this wonderful man and the ideals he and many of his generation held. If a remarkable story of courage inspires you, this is your book.

Dr Rodney Atwood, military historian

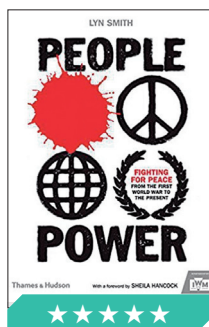


On the Frontlines of the Television War by Yasutsune Hirashiki

SOMETIMES a book

comes out that astounds the reader, and I believe this is one of them. In 1966 Yasutsune "Tony" Hirashiki was hired by the American news network ABC as a war cameraman. Armed only with his 16mm film camera he set off for Vietnam, staying until 1975 and the fall of Saigon. The conflict was the first to be completely covered by all of the major broadcasters and his retelling of events catalogues the horrors of the campaign along with the heroics not only of the soldiers but the war correspondents as well. This is a riveting read.

Tony David, ex-RE

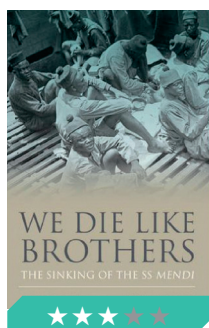


People Power: Fighting for Peace by Lyn Smith

ACCOMPANYING the first major exhibition of its kind at the Imperial

War Museum, this book charts the history of the anti-war movement in the UK. True military historians will seek out not only the views of the oppressors and oppressed, but also those fighting for peace. As this title illustrates, conscientious objectors come in many different forms and believe for a variety of reasons. Written in plain English and containing many documents and photographs, it tells a story not often heard. I enjoyed this book so much that I plan to visit the exhibition as soon as I can.

Janet Dornan, ex-R Signals



We Die Like Brothers John Gribble and Graham Scott

READERS picking up a book about the sinking of the *SS Mendi*

might anticipate finding out about a maritime disaster. So they may feel somewhat disappointed to find the first 63 pages are devoted to the South African National Labour Corps and other such units employed in support of the British Army in the First World War. That said, the title casts a light on rarely mentioned aspects of the conflict. The account of how the ship was lost along with more than 600 African lives is illuminating, but one gets the impression that the authors never identified the actual story they wished to tell.

George Robey, ex-GH

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PICK OF THE MONTH:

FLAWED FRIEND

Amazon device can be a help and a hindrance

➤ IF you happen to have a child called Alex or Alexa and a family pooch named Echo this so-called voice-activated home assistant could prove very irritating.

That's because for all the clever gadgetry that's gone into its internals, this device still can't distinguish between your commands to it and your conversation with another person in the vicinity.

Picture this recent scene; I'm in the kitchen attempting to cook my kids a meal and I'm surrounded by clouds of smoke from burning sausages, beeping oven timers, vegetables boiling over on the hob and a smoke alarm claxon going off in the hall.

I scream out of the back doors: "Alex! (my ten-year-old son), Jake! (his older brother) Fergawdsake get out of those muddy puddles and come in 'ere for dinner."

It was at this point my little cylindrical friend suddenly chipped in with its very controlled but slightly patronising female voice and asked, "how can I help?".

Grrr.

Also, be warned that any word sounding like "Alexa" uttered on the television can wake it up.

However, you can set the device so it responds to the name Echo as an alternative, although this will merely mean a change in the words that mistakenly bring it to life.

Occasionally, it even misunderstands seemingly-clear instructions. I asked for shoe repairs in Teddington and it gave me instructions on how to make a hot toddy – a tempting alternative, admittedly.

Looks-wise, it's about the size of two tins of beans stacked on top of each other and, to coin a phrase, comes in any colour you want as long as it's black or white.

To get the Echo going first time involves only a short set-up process. First, you'll need to download the app onto your smartphone or tablet and connect it to your Wi-Fi.

It has an off-on switch and a ring on top that eerily pulses blue light when it's activated.

This acts as the volume control when swivelled by hand but this a function that can also be controlled by simply saying "Alexa louder" or "Alexa quieter" (you have to precede all commands with its name).

Fed by a cloud-based internet service, its replies to your requests are essentially the appropriate internet pages delivered in audio form.

For example, it can tell you the weather forecast for any area almost instantaneously, what day the Battle of Trafalgar started, the current status of the Bakerloo Tube line or how to boil an egg – sorry Delia.

If it can't find an answer it comes back with an apologetic, "sorry I couldn't find the answer to your question".

You almost feel sorry for her... er, it.

VERDICT:

Not perfect but an addictive gadget for your home
★★★★★

To make it more user-friendly you can install "skills" – the equivalent of smartphone apps. The Uber skill requests a minicab, the Just Eat skill a takeaway meal, you get the idea.

And if you have such a thing as a connected home, things get even better.

Thermostats such as Nest or Hive can be controlled through the Echo as well as Philips Hue lights or anything using Samsung's SmartThings which includes motion sensors and home security systems.

But for those who are a bit less smart – and that's certainly me – the Echo is really useful for the simple things in life.

I now use it to set timers for instance ("Alexa, ring an alarm in ten minutes") and I've discovered this is amazingly effective when trying not to burn sausages.

It can also add items to a shopping list which can be viewed on a tablet or smartphone. And my wife very kindly used it to create a DIY to-do list for me.

However, it is music that has really endeared me to the Echo. If you subscribe to Amazon Prime you can pick from thousands of all but the latest tracks – they usually join the library a few months after being released. Amazon Music is the default service but this can be switched to Spotify or Tunein.

It will select tracks by song title, artist, genre, era or even from lyrics you quote, and it generates pretty well-judged playlists based on your criteria.

The speaker is high quality and Amazon claims it has 360-degree sound to give you plenty of flexibility when placing it in the room.

After a hard day it really is nice to be able to flop down on the sofa and simply say, "Alexa, play some chill-out tracks" knowing it will generate a satisfyingly relaxing selection.

If only it could fix me a gin and tonic too. ■

REVIEW: STEVE MUNCEY, SOLDIER



£50

< GO FOR A DOT INSTEAD?

IF you already have Bluetooth speakers or even headphones you could opt for the Amazon Echo Dot, a unit that's designed to be connected to existing systems and has the same Alexa voice assistant and skills, complete with control buttons and volume ring.

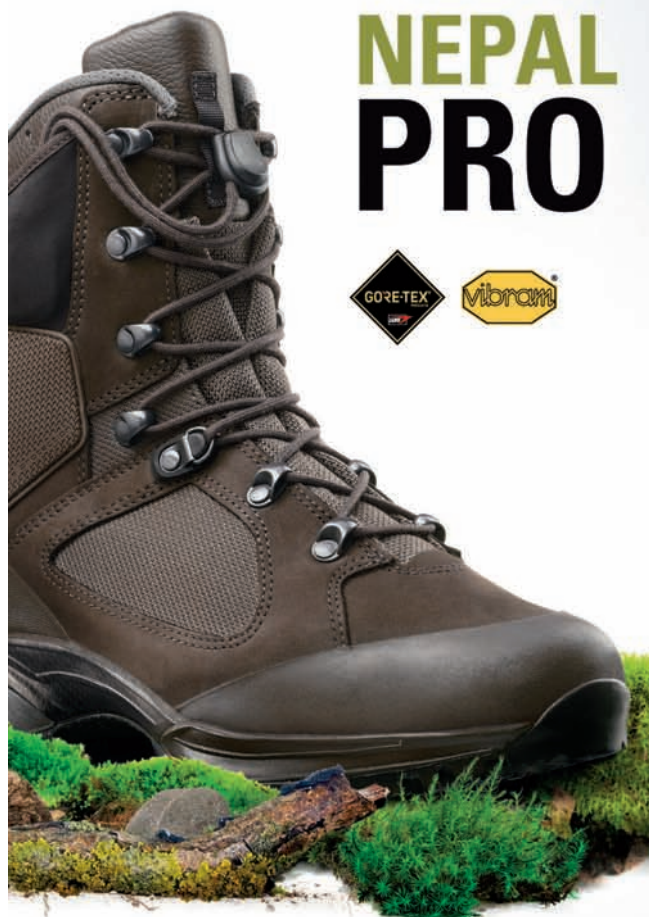
It can hear all your commands but for music playback the aim is to connect to an existing system as the internal speakers are tinny, especially compared to the full fat version's.

It has a stereo audio output and comes with wireless Bluetooth connectivity so can control compatible home devices like lights, switches, thermostats, etc.

It's about a fifth of the size and a third of the price.



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HIGHS AND LOWS >>

THERE were mixed fortunes for the Army's football players in this season's Inter-Services competitions. Find out how the teams fared on pages 74-75...

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FORM MAN: ARMY WING LCPL SEMESA ROKODUGUNI (SCOTS DG) HAS SCORED TEN TRIES IN FIVE TWICKENHAM APPEARANCES



REDS SET FOR RUGBY HISTORY

It is arguably the biggest sporting fixture on the Armed Forces calendar.

When the Army's rugby union stars face their rivals from the Royal Navy in the final game of this season's Inter-Services campaign they will be cheered on by a capacity crowd at Twickenham Stadium.

And if an electrifying atmosphere fuelled by 80,000 fans was not enough to whet the appetite then this year's clash, on April 29, will have added significance as it is the 100th time the sides have done battle.

The match has come a long way since it was first staged in 1907, when the Navy recorded a slender 15-14 win at the Queen's Club in Kensington.

Initially only officers were allowed to play and it was not until 1920 that personnel from the ranks were selected.

In the same year the action switched to the home of English rugby and it has gone from strength to strength ever since.

This success is no surprise to Maj (Retd) Chris Fowke, secretary

of the Army Rugby Union, who has seen the fixture evolve into a Twickenham sell-out during his time in post.

"Having taken on the role of secretary eight years ago, the attendance was just over 35,000," he told *SoldierSport*.

"It's incredible to think that we have now sold out the stadium inside three days.

"Our attendance is higher than the Premiership final. Why? Well, people use this as a date in the calendar so they can get together in a Service environment.

"The Rugby Football Union also tell us that the atmosphere in the stadium on Army-Navy day is like no other."

The grandeur of the occasion is not in doubt but the Reds' players cannot afford to be distracted by such landmarks as they prepare to take to the turf.

Last year's encounter ended in a 29-29 draw as the Army blew a 19-point lead but with star man LCpl Semesa Rokoduguni (Scots DG) set to make the squad, the soldiers could well hold the trump card this time round. >>>

**"WE
HAVE
SOLD
OUT THE
STADIUM
INSIDE
THREE
DAYS"**

RUGBY UNION



KENDO KICKS ON

THE great and the good of the martial arts world gathered in Aldershot for the latest Army Championships.

Having welcomed a host of newcomers to the fold over the past 12 months the sport of Kendo was keen to showcase its strength in depth and the athletes did not disappoint.

Maj Kev Holligan (AGC (ETS)) won the novice title ahead of teammate Maj Tom Oakley (IG) and the officer spoke glowingly of his first taste of competitive action within the set-up.

He said: "It was a great atmosphere to compete in.

"The experienced fighters have been really supportive of the novices and I am looking forward to future fights."

Maj Chris Jones (RAMC), the officer in charge of Army Kendo, claimed the open title and the pairing of Maj David Worsley (RAMC) and Maj Paul Reynolds (REME) took the kata honours.

"The past year has been one of our busiest ever and a number of newcomers have gone on to represent the Service at national-level competitions," Jones said.

"It has been especially gratifying to see so many beginners performing to a high standard and winning medals."



>>> Read more on page 75



PREMIER PERFORMER: SIG RAVAI
FATIAKI MADE 54 APPEARANCES IN A FIVE-YEAR SPELL WITH WORCESTER WARRIORS, SCORING ONE TRY

MAN ON A MISSION

REDS' LATEST RECRUIT HOPES FOR TWICKENHAM CALL AS HE EMBRACES A NEW CAREER IN UNIFORM

AS the Army's rugby players run out at Twickenham for their sell-out clash with the Royal Navy this month it will be a familiar scene for the side's seasoned campaigners.

But with the Reds facing the prospect of a much-changed line-up from last year a number of newcomers look set to join the fray.

One of those hoping to make the grade is Sig Ravai Fatiaki (R Signals) and he will be far from daunted by the magnitude of the occasion.

As a Fijian international he played two matches at the 2011 World Cup – taking on the might of South Africa and Wales – and has also tested himself against the best in the Premiership during his time with Worcester Warriors.

Visa problems prevented him from signing a new contract with the club at the end of the 2015/16 season so the 30-year-old decided to embark on a career in uniform and given his sporting CV a call-up to the Army squad was inevitable.

Fatiaki made his debut against Russia in February and has been impressed with what he has seen so far.

"It is a really talented squad," he told *SoldierSport*. "And as a set-up it is not that far from a professional club.

"We have physios who are available 24/7 to help with rehab and the management team is very strong. I definitely



**"I KNOW
ALL
ABOUT
THE
HISTORY
OF THIS
GAME"**

think Army rugby union has a bright future.

"The defeat against Russia was hard on the boys. They scored three tries in the first 15 minutes but we kept fighting. The Russians couldn't cope with our pace in the second-half so there were a lot of encouraging signs."

With preparations for the Inter-Services almost complete attention now turns to matters on the pitch and Fatiaki is no stranger to the importance and intensity of the competition.

"When I first came to Worcester I was teammates with Josh Drauniniu, who was in the Navy at the time," the centre explained.

"So that is where my interest comes from. I watched the Army-Navy games on television and could see that the crowd makes it a really good day.

"But we are not looking that far ahead at this stage. The coach has told us not to fall into the trap of thinking we are better than anyone and we have to focus on each game at a time.

"It is not the same as a World Cup match but a full house at Twickenham is not far behind. I know all about the history of this fixture and the fact this year is its 100th anniversary makes it even bigger.

"Everything is coming together and the boys are building the bond that is needed. It was there before I came but it is now really starting to gel."

Fatiaki's rugby prowess came to the fore at a young age and he starred for the Fijian Warriors before progressing to the senior side in 2009.

He was then named in his country's World Cup squad – an experience that still ranks as the pinnacle of his career.

"Every player dreams of playing at the World Cup," he explained. "The results did not go our way but to get in the squad and play was a massive achievement for me.

"After that I moved to Worcester. My first match was in the snow and it was a terrible experience – I had never seen snow before.

"As a club we struggled at times but I could not fault anyone there. They offered me a new contract but as I hadn't played for Fiji in 15 months I didn't meet the visa criteria.

"Joining the Army was something I always wanted to do and given the situation at the time I could not resist.

"Basic training was tough and it is totally different to anything you do in rugby but after a few weeks I settled into it.

"If I had not joined up I would have definitely gone back to Fiji. However, I wanted to build a life for myself and my family in the UK and the Army has allowed me to do that." ■



Picture: AJB Photography

GAME BRIEF

DATE: March 15, 2017
COMPETITION: Inter-Services Football
VENUE: Army Military Stadium, Aldershot

ARMY



SUBS: Cooper-Tomkins, Love, Rookes, Cassell, Hughes, Macanespie, Shaw

CAPTAIN'S COMMENTS:

"THE PLAYERS HAVE PUT THEIR HEART AND SOUL INTO THIS AND TO WALK AWAY VICTORIOUS IS A GREAT FEELING FOR EVERYONE"



CHAMPIONS' DOUBLE DELIGHT

INTER-SERVICES FOOTBALL ARMY

2

RAF

1



HAVING banished a nine-year losing run in last season's Inter-Services showdown the Army's footballers delivered a convincing title defence in 2017 to confirm their status as the military's top team.

A 2-1 win over the Royal Air Force set the Reds on their way and a 4-0 thrashing of the Royal Navy ensured the silverware remained in Aldershot.

But victory looked far from assured in the early exchanges of the opening match as the airmen made a storming start.

A corner from the left was cleared to the edge of the area and Cpl Tom Claisse found the head of Cpl Alex Woodhouse.

Army keeper LCpl Luke Cairney (RE) thwarted the forward with a smart save and with the goal at his mercy he thumped the rebound against the crossbar.

The visitors capitalised on their supremacy in the 20th minute as SAC Liam Corrigan

outmuscled his marker to head home Woodhouse's free kick.

Cairney then denied Cpl Dave Webb before Cpl Stephen Norton fired into the side netting as the pressure continued.

But the hosts upped the tempo after the break and a deflected shot from LCpl Matt Glass (RLC, pictured) was well saved by SAC Dan Gorman.

Broadbent went close from the resulting corner and the Army grabbed a deserved equaliser midway through the half when Cpl Calum Wilkinson (RLC) converted from the spot after Woodhouse fouled LCpl Luke Noble (R Signals) in the box.

And the striker delivered the knockout blow in the closing stages with a tidy near-post finish after good work by LCpl Kyle Cassell (AAC).

The Army hit the goal trail a week later in Yeovil as strikes from Noble, Broadbent, Spr Dan Stoneman (RE) and Cassell secured the points against the Senior Service. ■



INSPIRED ARTISTS

KARATE star Pte Chris Rowan (Para, pictured above) added three medals to his growing prize haul at the Army Martial Arts Championships.

He claimed gold in the dan-grade kumite and added silver in the open ippon kumite and bronze in the kata.

A total of 23 medals were presented at the competition with Army teammate Capt Karen Owen (AGC (ETS), pictured below) taking gold in the women's kumite.

A host of awards were also secured in the ITF tae kwon do, where success came hot on the heels of a strong showing at the International Open Championships.

Competing against athletes from the USA, Holland and Ireland, the team won more than ten medals.

The squad has been boosted by personnel from the University Officers' Training Corps in recent times and a number of newcomers made their competitive debuts at the event.

Another up-and-coming star, Cfn Georgia Smith (REME), also excelled and won gold in the 60kg female sparring.

Head coach WO2 Angus Hodge (AGC (SPS)) said: "ITF is looking really strong at the moment."



SERVICES STALEMATE

THE Army women mounted a stuttering defence of their Inter-Service crown as successive draws with their Forces rivals dented their title hopes.

An injury-time penalty from Cpl Lucy Foreman (AGC (RMP)) earned the Reds a 1-1 draw with a resurgent Royal Air Force side before a disappointing campaign ended in a goalless stalemate with the Royal Navy.

Their rivals were due to face each other in the tournament-decider in Cosford as this issue went to press.

Having achieved a 100 per cent record this season the soldiers headed into the competition as firm favourites but they failed to replicate such fine form in a frustrating match with the RAF.

Their rivals enjoyed the better of the early exchanges, looking solid in defence and composed in possession,

and they took the lead when Cpl Zoe Stewart (AGC (SPS)) brought down SAC Kaye Widdicombe in the box.

Skipper Cpl Catherine Beaver held her nerve from the resulting penalty as the visitors deservedly opened the scoring.

Cpl Olivia Dixon (AGC (SPS), pictured) grazed the crossbar with an angled drive as the Army finally came to life and strike partner Cfn Kelly Aldridge (REME) saw a close-range effort well saved by keeper SAC Laura Persons.

Dixon then wasted her side's best opportunity when she headed over on the stroke of half-time.

The second period offered little in the way of goalmouth action until Foreman's penalty rescued a point at the death.

The Army's struggles continued against the Navy a week later as a game of few chances ended 0-0. ■



● BOXER Cpl Steph Wroe (REME) was named sportswoman of the year at the UK Armed Forces Sports Awards. The Army's karate stars secured the team prize.



TROOPS ON TRIAL

TEAM GB women's coach and Rio gold medallist Danny Kerry was an interested spectator as the military sides did battle.

He was invited to the competition by the UK Armed Forces Hockey Association, who have close ties with the national set-up.

"We've had a number of athletes from the Services in our squads over the years," Kerry (pictured below) told *SoldierSport*. "This tournament has a long history of Forces players who have competed at Olympic level.

"I've watched a couple of games today and was impressed with the Army women, who look very strong. They are a side capable of playing at a good level.

"As a coach I often draw comparisons with the military and in terms of drive, focus and adaptability there are definitely parallels with what we do.

"In 2010 I took the squad to Lymington to train with the Royal Marines. They did not enjoy it at the time but afterwards they said it was one of the best things they've done. We are always looking at different ways to motivate our athletes."



REDS CRUISE TO TITLE



"WE DID WELL TO BE PATIENT AND GET THE SIX GOALS"

A RESOUNDING victory over the Royal Navy laid the foundations for a convincing win by the Army women at the Inter-Services Hockey Championships.

The soldiers thumped their rivals 11-0 and with the Royal Air Force also triumphing over the same opposition the tournament was decided in a final between the two sides.

After dominating the possession early on the Reds failed to create any clear-cut opportunities as a resolute RAF outfit held firm.

But with the pressure continuing to mount the breakthrough was inevitable and Sgt Annabel Lamb (CAMUS) duly delivered as she converted from a penalty corner midway through the half.

A second followed as Capt Gemma Darrington (RLC) played a superb pass into the D allowing the unmarked Capt Cheryl Valentine (AMS) to score and the lead was extended

further as Lamb rounded off a slick corner routine.

The RAF reduced the arrears early in the second-half but the Reds capitalised on another penalty corner as Maj Nic George (R Signals) glanced the ball home and she repeated the trick moments later as the Army raced 5-1 ahead.

Sig Heidi Devey (R Signals) delivered the final blow when she rifled the ball into the net in the last minute.

"The RAF made life hard for us," skipper Valentine said. "We did well to be patient and get the six goals.

"We played some good hockey in the build-up to this competition and have a great mix of youth and experience."

While the women tasted success it proved to be a disappointing day for the men.

Having recorded a 4-3 win over the Senior Service they were thrashed 5-1 in the tournament-decider as the RAF retained their title in style. ■

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SPORT SHORTS



Hot shots required

THE Army clay target individual and team championships will be held in Wiltshire on May 9 and 10.

Open to athletes of all abilities, as well as Regulars and Reserves, the competition will consist of 200 sporting targets of varying difficulties and is aimed at growing the sport at grass-roots level.

Organisers also hope to identify new talent for the Army clay target team pathway programme.

For more information on the event email capcbt-sasc-ara-ct@mod.uk



Gunners back on top

THE rugby stars of 12 Regiment, Royal Artillery returned to the top of the Premiership tree with yet another triumph in the sport's showpiece final.

A 22-14 victory over 1st Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment saw the gunners win the prestigious title for the third time in four seasons.

The Premiership League 2 final saw 1st Battalion, The Rifles down 8th Training Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

PARA STARS PUSH ON

THE Armed Forces Para-Snowsport Team got a taste of life in the sport's upper echelons as they took to the piste at the World Championships in Germany.

Despite missing out on the final of the cross-country sprint, Terry Ahrens (ex-QRL) and Scott Meenagh (ex-Para, pictured) both finished inside the minimum Paralympic qualifying criteria and showed huge improvement from the last World Cup event in Finland.

Teammate Steve Arnold (ex-RE) underlined his potential as he completed the technically demanding course in what was his first full race.

Ahrens showed good accuracy with the rifle in the 12.5-kilometre biathlon, while Meenagh produced another solid display in the long distance cross-country event. Unfortunately, Arnold suffered a fall in the same race and was unable to finish.

"I feel the long distance competition is going to be a great event for both of these athletes to really make an impact on the world stage," said team leader Maj Elizabeth Winfield (RLC).



Picture: Mlaponder

"THESE GUYS CAN REALLY MAKE AN IMPACT ON THE WORLD STAGE"

THE Army's table tennis players enjoyed a busy month of action as they faced their Forces rivals at the Inter-Services Championships.

Having claimed an historic double in 2016 the Reds suffered at the hands of a resurgent Royal Air Force outfit that claimed the men's and women's team titles.

The competition followed hot on the heels of the Army Championships and training camp in Aldershot. Rfn Bibek Karki (RGR) defeated LCpl Michael Kwan (REME, pictured) in the men's final and Cpl Hilary Greig (AMS) defeated Rev Nicola Frail (RACHD) in the women's showpiece.



MONTH IN SPORT

April's key fixtures...



« **WHAT:** Army Snowboarding Championships
WHEN: Ends April 8
WHERE: Stubai, Austria
NEED TO KNOW:

The Service's snowboarders take centre stage on the Austrian slopes as another winter sports season draws to a close in one of the highlights of the campaign



« **WHAT:** Army v Royal Air Force Inter-Services Rugby Union
WHEN: Wednesday, April 19
WHERE: Army Rugby Stadium, Aldershot
NEED TO KNOW: All eyes may be on Twickenham but the Reds must down the RAF first. The men's and women's teams are both in action



« **WHAT:** Army FA Cup Final
WHEN: April 26 (1800 kick-off)
WHERE: Army Military Stadium, Aldershot

NEED TO KNOW: The teams for this showpiece fixture are still unknown but 1 Yorks – beaten finalists in 2016 – will be looking to go one better if they progress from the semi-finals

HOBBS IN NUMBERS

POINTS
AWARDED
TO THE
BOXER

97

TO HIS
RIVAL

95

WHAT THE
FIGHTER
WEIGHED IN
AT AHEAD
OF THE
BOUT

12ST
6^{LB}

HOBBS' AGE

29

SOLDIERS
IN THE
YORK HALL
CROWD

40

BOXING



Picture: www.digitalsportsphoto.com

HOBBS WINS TITLE BOUT

LIGHT heavyweight star LCpl Chris Hobbs (R Signals) delivered on his promise to win the southern area title on a stunning night of action at York Hall.

The fighter triumphed in a brutal contest with rival Jordan Joseph, scoring a points decision after ten energy-charged rounds.

"It was a superb night," Hobbs told *SoldierSport*.

"I fought hard and won the first few rounds but I got caught with some big body shots in the fourth.

"I had to get through it and the middle stages were close but I finished the stronger.

"I went into his backyard

and won. I wasn't going to be stopped and I wanted it more than anything. Winning this belt feels great."

Hobbs was cheered on by a strong Army following and is now waiting for his body to recover before plotting his next move.

He added: "Jordan was a lot tougher than I thought he would be and he fought well.

"I will rest up for a week or so and wait to see who my next bout will be against.

"My body is sore but I know there are plenty of people out there who will want to take my title.

"Hopefully I can move on to bigger things." ■

● **ROWERS** from the Royal Army Physical Training Corps produced a strong display at the European Indoor Championships in Paris. All nine team members finished in the top-30 of the 2,000-metre race, with SSgt Brett Steels (pictured) claiming an impressive fifth place. His success continued in the 500-metre discipline, where his time of 1min 20.7sec was good enough to secure a silver medal.



BOXING

Pictures: SAC Will Drummee, RAF



SOLDIERS ON ICE

ARMY athletes achieved their best results in more than a decade as they secured three of the five team titles up for grabs at the Inter-Services Ice Sports Championships in Norway.

Competing on the Lillehammer track the soldiers took top spot in the men's bobsleigh courtesy of The Parachute Regiment crew that stormed to victory at the Army Championships earlier in the season.

Capt Hayley Larcombe (QARANC) and SSgt Julia Bloomer (RAPTO) secured a one-two in the female skeleton standings and their efforts helped the Service to another collective accolade.

The luge also proved to be a happy hunting ground as the combined team prize was added to the haul, along with individual honours for Sgt Dani Scott (QARANC) and Gdsm Ray Thompson (IG).

"This is the first time we have been to Lillehammer for a few years," WO2 Graham Holmes (RE), secretary of Army Luge, told *SoldierSport*. "It is a hard, technical track so the guys did really well."

The Army is hosting a novice camp for those wanting to try bobsleigh, luge and skeleton in Austria in November. For more details on the event email graham.holmes294@mod.uk



DESTRUCTIVE DEFENCE



"I WANT TO GO ALL THE WAY AND UNIFY THE BELTS"

A RMY boxer LCpl Chez Nihell (PWRR) cemented his reputation as one of the country's premier super heavyweights with a convincing defence of his England title belt.

The soldier secured a unanimous verdict against rival Courtney Bennett on a triumphant night in Rotherham as his winning run extended to seven bouts.

Victory came on the back of Nihell being named Isle of Wight Sportsman of the Year and capped a special month for the former Army team skipper, who was due to compete at the Inter-Services showdown as this issue went to press.

"To get recognition from the place I come from means a lot," the England international told *SoldierSport*. "Getting nominated is an honour so I was over the moon at winning."

"In a way that added to the pressure of my title defence. Courtney is 6ft 6in with a 5.5kg

weight advantage so the plan was to stay mobile and not let him load up.

"In the first round he was waiting for me so I had to be patient. When he came forward my counter punches were working perfectly."

"The second round was comfortably in my favour so I knew he would be busy in the third. I was popping shots and moving my feet; as a super heavyweight I'm always going to be the smaller fighter so I can use my speed as an advantage."

If Nihell progresses at the Inter-Services his attention will switch to the Amateur Boxing Association (ABA) Championships and a potential final at the prestigious venue of London's York Hall.

"The last time I lost a bout was in the ABA final in 2016," the fighter added. "It was a heart-wrenching experience."

"So this year I want to go all the way and unify the belts." ■

SAPPERS STAND OUT



TWO red cards, a penalty and a second-half goal rush formed the headlines in a hard-fought Woolwich Cup final. And it was the Royal Engineers who were left celebrating at the full-time whistle as their efforts secured a 3-1 win over the Infantry. After a quiet opening period the game sprang to life after the break when Infantry skipper WO2 Allen Reid was dismissed following a second yellow card. The sappers capitalised on their advantage moments later as LCpl Lee McCombie made the breakthrough from the penalty spot. However, LCpl Kieran Harrison was sent off in the 73rd minute to even the numbers and the champions-elect were dealt a further blow as LCpl Ash Colclough bundled home. But a superb strike from substitute Spr Dan Stoneman put the engineers back in control and the contest was sealed with a last-gasp effort from Cpl Jayson Ashworth. "This will kick-start our campaign," said victorious skipper Cpl Kyle Friars. "We're sitting second in the league, if we win all of our games we can take that title as well." ■



● THE Royal Artillery mounted a successful defence of rugby union's Corps Championship crown on a tense afternoon in Aldershot. The gunners headed into the clash with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as favourites and the contest looked to be following the form book as they opened a 17-7 lead at half-time. However, the REME posted ten unanswered points after the break to leave the contest locked at 17-17 as the final whistle sounded. With extra-time following the champions held their nerve and Bdr Owain Davies slotted a decisive penalty to seal the win.

**"IF WE
WIN ALL
OUR
GAMES
WE CAN
TAKE
THAT
TITLE AS
WELL"**

SPORT SHORTS



Mixed results on court

THE Army's squash teams produced a string of inspirational performances at the latest Inter-Services Championships at HMS *Temeraire*.

Despite missing several players, the men's team started with a convincing win over the Royal Air Force.

However, the hosts proved too strong in the final and the soldiers fell the wrong side of a 3-2 scoreline.

The women's side extended their three-year winning streak with straightforward victories against their rivals and the under-25s added further silverware to the haul.



Disney does the double

AMPUTEE jockey and ex-soldier Guy Disney completed a Forces race double when he rode to victory at the Grand Military Gold Cup.

His success at Sandown Park followed hot on the heels of his triumph at the Royal Artillery Gold Cup, when he became the first person to win a race wearing a prosthetic limb.

Speaking afterwards the former captain praised the efforts of his horse, Rathlin Rose.

"He is class," he said. "This race went nicely. Coming up the hill I was definitely not thinking about winning, just getting him over the last fence."

Final word

Interviews: Sarah Goldthorpe
Pictures: Graeme Main



Rgr Gareth Lowry, R Irish

My family has always served in the Army so it's been in the back of my head. It skipped a generation with my mum and dad, though. I started understanding what the different regiments were and then the idea of joining the Royal Irish got into my head.



Fus Ashley Williams, R Welsh

When I started off in life I was the average teenage kid, misbehaving and being very gobby. It made me realise that no woman, or anyone, is going to want to know me if I become a criminal. So I joined.

Rgr Brandon Hatton, R Irish

I wasn't good in school and wasn't the best human being, so decided I needed to make something of myself. It's the best thing I've ever done.



Why sign up?

With no combat operations to inspire the next generation, *Soldier* paid a visit to Whinny Hill (pages 29-32) to find out what is driving ITC Catterick's phase one recruits to serve Queen and country.

Rgr Jamie Lennon, R Irish

To be honest, I wanted to leave my country and experience somewhere different. The Army offers you loads of travelling opportunities and is a good way of life. It's something different.

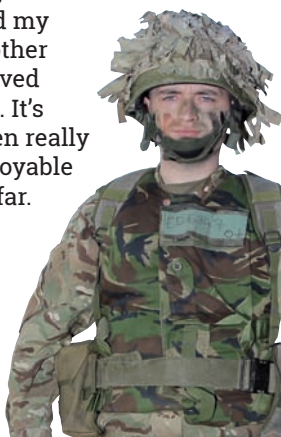


Fus Scott James, R Welsh

I've always wanted to be in the Army; I just couldn't see myself working in an office. I'm a more active person. I can't wait to get to my battalion. My best mate and I decided to join up together so that's a bit of competition!

Pte Michael Edmunds, Mercian

It's something I've wanted for a while but I kept getting injured playing rugby. That put me back a couple of years but I didn't want to have any regrets. A friend of mine served in Afghanistan and my brother served too. It's been really enjoyable so far.



Pte Elliot Dudley, Mercian

I used to work at Centre Parcs in Sherwood Forest but I hated doing the same thing every day. I've always wanted the outdoor life. My dad's mate used to be in the Army and he influenced my decision a bit too. It's a good career.

Fus Carl Payn, RRF

My grandad and great-grandad were in the military.





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SOLDIER POWER

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