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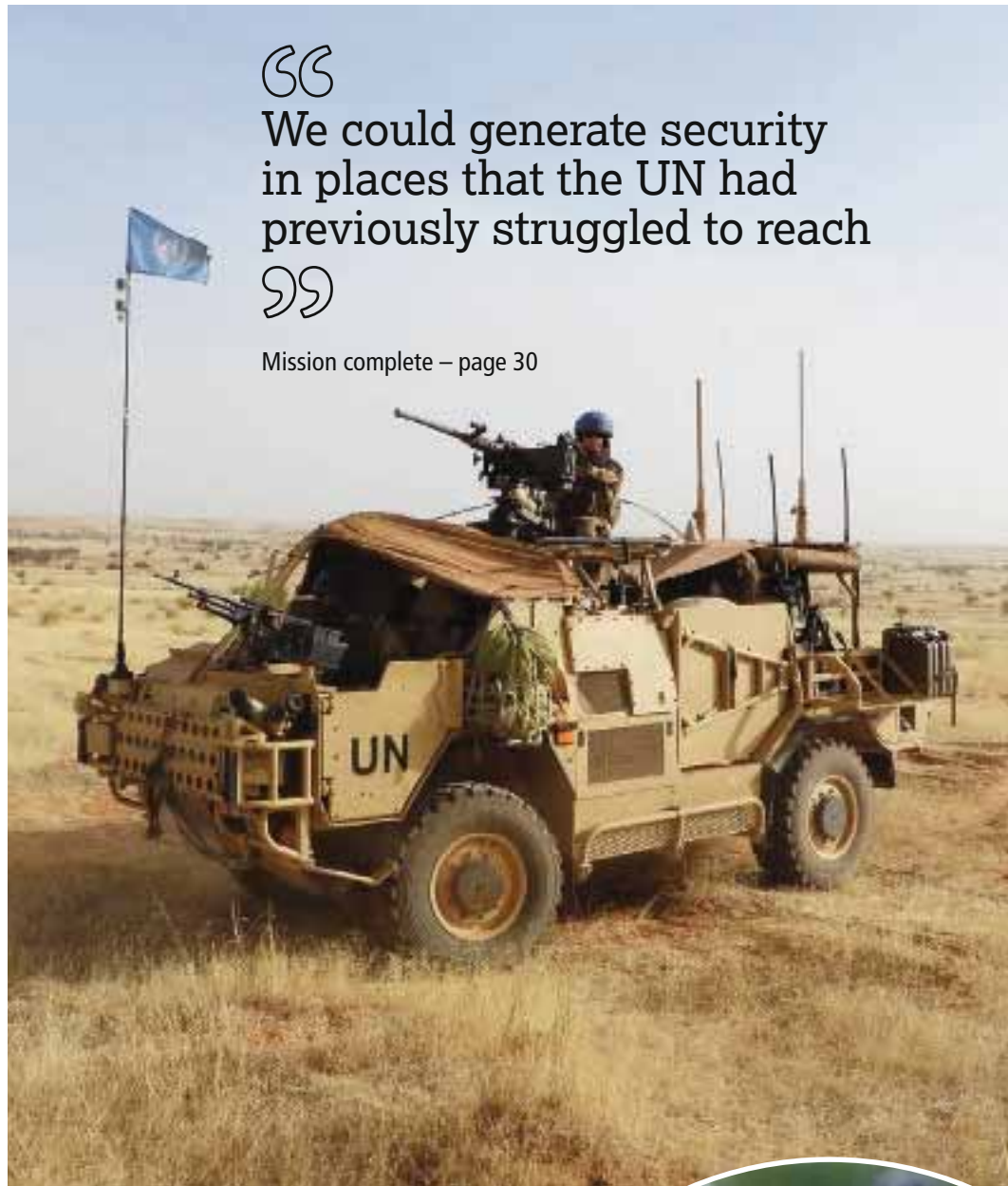
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“

We could generate security in places that the UN had previously struggled to reach

”

Mission complete – page 30



Op Toral, the UK's mission in Afghanistan since the end of combat operations, is over – page 7



Living our values



“WHY do you cover negative news in the Army's official magazine?”

This is a question sometimes levelled

at *Soldier* by those who feel we should stick to covering the success stories, and not the difficulties, of military life.

Our response is always the same: you can't do one without the other and expect to be taken seriously.

After all, what organisation is without its challenges?

And if personnel in today's military are taught to embrace failure and use it to improve, it stands to reason their employer must do the same.

From putting problems direct to Army HQ via *Talkback* (page 49), to sharing soldiers' everyday experiences in our news and features sections, this magazine provides an honest and trusted means of communicating with the chain of command on just about any topic.

And it is to the Service's credit it has supported this endeavour for more than 75 years now.

Integrity is a core Army value – a word well understood by soldiers. It means you are honest with your teammates. If you aren't, they do not trust you. Simple as that.

Sarah Goldthorpe • Editor

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A British soldier boards an RAF Puma from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan

Pictures: Cpl Cameron Eden, RLC

SOLDIER

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Troops reflect on their Afghan legacy

Op Toral – the UK’s mission since the end of combat operations in 2015 – is over

PERSONNEL who served at the height of the Afghanistan campaign have said colleagues can be proud of their achievements, despite the Nato mission drawing to a close last month.

They stressed that soldiers and officers who saw intense fighting in the troubled state should be satisfied that their efforts had improved lives for people on the ground, while suppressing a ruthless brand of international terrorism.

And although a resurgent Taliban represented a real concern, they pointed out that the Afghan National Security Forces were both well equipped and prepared.

“They definitely have a challenge,” said Lt Col Graham Sefton, CO of 3rd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland, who led his troops on the final Op Toral tour in Kabul. “But we have spent a lot of time training, advising and working alongside them to ensure they have the capabilities they need.”

“I was on Op Herrick 17 (2013-14) and the mission was in a different place – at that time we were working with the Afghan security services at a very tactical level.”

The decision to wind down the Afghanistan mission was taken after US President Joe Biden recently confirmed



A Royal Logistic Corps Serviceman checks weapon serial numbers before they are shipped home



Back in arrivals at RAF Brize Norton

his long-held intention to withdraw American personnel.

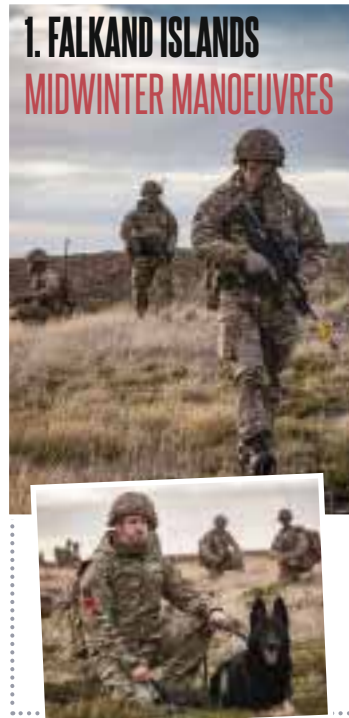
As coalition forces had always adopted an “in together, out together” approach, Nato leaders quickly followed suit in declaring that the mission was complete.

The 250 soldiers from 3 Scots – who had been helping to protect those mentoring Afghan counterparts and running a quick reaction force in Kabul – formed a large part of the British Armed Forces personnel still in theatre.

> continued on page 11

“
They
definitely
have a
challenge
”

GLOBAL SITREP



1. FALKLAND ISLANDS MIDWINTER MANOEUVRES

PERSONNEL on tour in the South Atlantic found themselves tested by the harsh Antarctic conditions as they embarked on a shakedown of core soldiering skills.

The troops – from 1st Battalion, Welsh Guards – completed an arduous three-day midwinter training package working alongside colleagues from the other two Services.

Having deployed from an Atlas A400M aircraft, they moved to conduct a mock platoon attack – backed up by the military working dogs of the Royal Air Force Police.

The guards later spent a night with naval personnel on HMS Forth before rehearsing a beach landing supported by troops from the Falkland Islands' Defence Force.

They are currently on tour as Roulement Infantry Company for the British overseas territory.



Cyprus-bound soldiers from 1st Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment are in the early stages of a 2,000-mile running, swimming, cycling and rowing relay from their old home at Woolwich, to their new digs in Dhekelia, as they prepare to take up residence as the Regional Standby Battalion from next month. To follow their progress search #EXOV on Twitter and Facebook

4. GERMANY HELP FOR FLOOD VICTIMS

THE British Army community in Sennelager has joined efforts to support flood-hit towns in Germany by donating much-needed supplies.

Clothing, household items, food and children's toys were among items gathered for those made homeless in North Rhine Westfalia and Rhineland Palatinate – the two states worst affected by the deluge.

As this issue went to press, some 170 people were confirmed dead, with dozens more still missing, following the most devastating natural disaster to strike the country in more than half a century.

2. GIBRALTAR SAVINGS ROCK

TROOPS based in the British overseas territory are set to notice a difference in their wallets after the launch of a new initiative with a range of local businesses.

Some 50 organisations are now signed up to the Defence Discount Service – among them a number of popular bars, restaurants, hotels and shops.

A free app is available, showing the locations of participating outlets in the scheme, which is linked to one already established in the UK.



3. JORDAN PLUGGING THE GENDER GAP

AN all-female short-term training team from 16 Air Assault Brigade have helped boost the Jordanian Armed Forces' (JAF) efforts to integrate women into their ranks.

The British soldiers led a ten-day package covering topics such as counter-IED and battle casualty drills, PT and urban operations, with the experienced instructors

swiftly overcoming cultural differences to build a rapport with the students.

Jordan's Quick Reaction Force Brigade established a female platoon in 2017. Part of the UK troops' remit was to highlight the skills that Servicewomen can bring to their unit, as well as developing a solid foundation of basic skills so both genders can work alongside each other on forthcoming deployments.

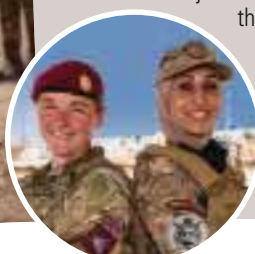
Team leader Capt Kathryn Smith (RLC) said seeing the students' progress had been rewarding. "As they spent longer with us, they really opened up and worked hard to get the most out of the training," she added.

"Two of the female warrant officers from the platoon also led a lesson each, which saw males being taught by women from their own country – something that is rare over here."

The package was part of a wider joint exercise between the JAF, US forces and soldiers from The Parachute Regiment's 2nd and 3rd Battalions.



Pictures: Sgt Ben Maher and Cpl Nathan Tanuku, both RLC



INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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“
We were doing
the impossible
”

Light Dragoons reflect on a job well done in Mali – page 30



Picture: Cpl Paul Morrell, Rifles

6. UKRAINE OPERATING 'AT REACH'

BRITISH troops have been training with their Ukrainian counterparts as part of a multinational package that also involved Canadian, US and Swedish personnel.

A 400-strong battlegroup centred on 4th Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland deployed to the country with the aim of developing mutual relations, joint planning and battalion and tactical operations.

Working under their host's command, the soldiers practised live-fire drills alongside Ukraine's 54th Mechanized Brigade, which has completed multiple tours in the volatile Donbas region.

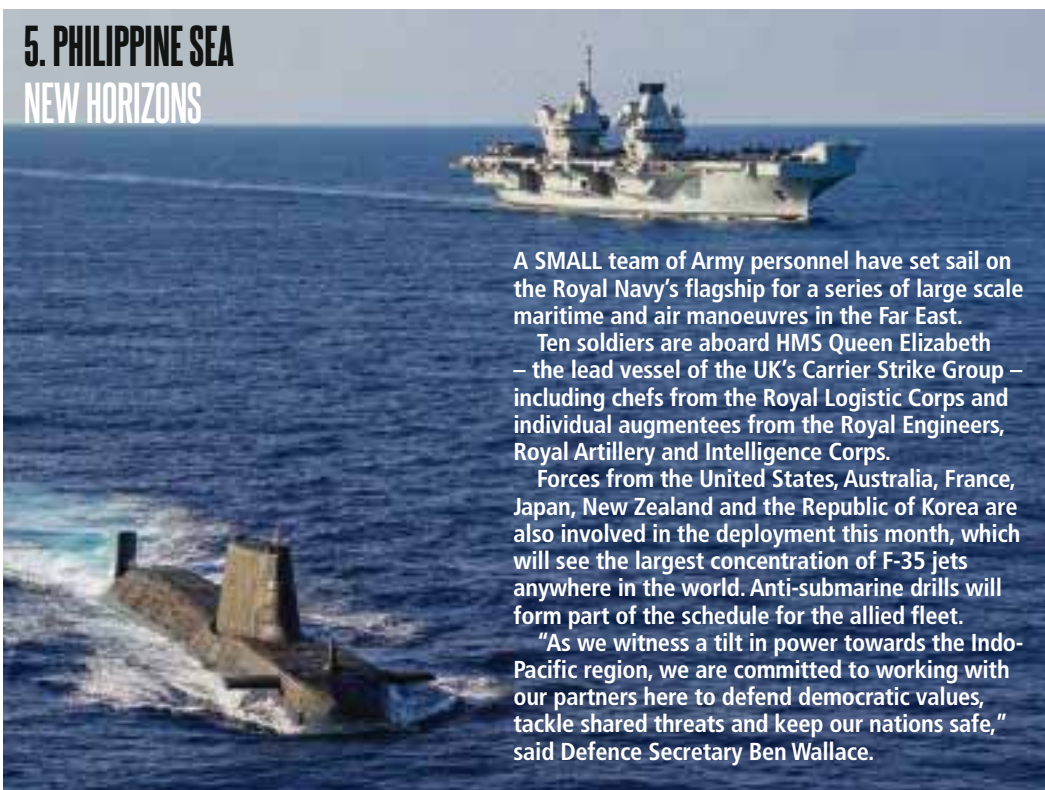
"Exercise Cossack Mace gave British troops a unique opportunity to conduct demanding training at reach from the UK, in a totally different area that none of them have visited before," Lt Col Alasdair Hempenstall (Scots) told *Soldier*.

"They have learnt how the Ukrainians operate from a military perspective, as well as experiencing a taste of their culture and heritage."



Picture: Flt Sgt Rich Denton, RAF

5. PHILIPPINE SEA NEW HORIZONS



A SMALL team of Army personnel have set sail on the Royal Navy's flagship for a series of large scale maritime and air manoeuvres in the Far East.

Ten soldiers are aboard HMS Queen Elizabeth – the lead vessel of the UK's Carrier Strike Group – including chefs from the Royal Logistic Corps and individual augmentees from the Royal Engineers, Royal Artillery and Intelligence Corps.

Forces from the United States, Australia, France, Japan, New Zealand and the Republic of Korea are also involved in the deployment this month, which will see the largest concentration of F-35 jets anywhere in the world. Anti-submarine drills will form part of the schedule for the allied fleet.

"As we witness a tilt in power towards the Indo-Pacific region, we are committed to working with our partners here to defend democratic values, tackle shared threats and keep our nations safe," said Defence Secretary Ben Wallace.

Picture: PO (Phot) Jay Allen, RN

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Emotional farewell



Musicians prepare to march out of iconic Kneller Hall

THE Royal Corps of Army Music will complete its move to Minley Station in the coming weeks as the gates to its historic home at Kneller Hall are closed for the final time.

The site will host the formation's headquarters and Royal School of Military Music, with advanced elements already in place ahead of a full transition in early September.

Principal Director of Music Lt Col David Barringer (RCAM) told *Soldier* that leaving Kneller Hall will be an emotional experience but insisted the new home, alongside the Royal School of Military Engineering, will benefit personnel in the long term.

"For many Army musicians, the focal point and home of Army music has always been Kneller Hall," he added. "I have served there on six occasions in various roles, and it is iconic across the world."

"But at the same time, it was getting tired. We are coming into a work environment that is fit for purpose with two gyms, medical and dental centres and a range of welfare and retail options – it is so much better."

"We have been warmly welcomed

by the Royal Engineers and feel like we have a new home, rather than being a lodger at their camp."

Minley will be the base for the corps' 34-strong headquarters and phase three training establishment, which runs various career qualifications and courses as well as the flagship bandmaster's course.

Phase two training will be conducted in Portsmouth in conjunction with the Royal Marines Band Service.

To say farewell to their former home, RCAM will perform a virtual concert on its YouTube channel later this month that will feature the specially commissioned piece, *Kneller's Legacy*.

"Kneller Hall was famous for its summer concerts, and we had a number of events in place as a way to say goodbye," Lt Col Barringer added.

"Unfortunately, due to Covid, we have not been able to do those. So, we decided to record a behind-closed-doors concert that will come out at the end of August to coincide with the locking of the gates."

Details of the release date will be published on the Army's social media channels nearer the time.



Follow the **British Army Music** page on YouTube

FINAL TROOPS LEAVE AFGHANISTAN

> continued from page 7

■ WHILE the UK presence had been much scaled back from the brigade deployments of times past, the Biden decision nonetheless marked the end of an era.

Underpinned by a United Nations Security Council resolution, Nato forces had maintained a robust presence in the country since 9/11.

Back in 2001, when the ruling Taliban leaders were providing sanctuary to Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda fighters suspected of being behind the strikes, the international community demanded swift action to hold the regime to account.

The United Kingdom played a leading role from the outset, with HQ 3rd (UK) Division forming the backbone of Nato's first International Security Assistance Force mission.

In all, 100,000 British troops served in theatre, helping with a range of projects including training the country's national defence and security forces.

But it is the eight years of Op Herrick from 2006 that put the deployment in the public eye – when soldiers were sent to Helmand to expand Nato's influence in the south.

The resulting bitter struggle with Taliban fighters accounted for the overwhelming majority of the 405 British deaths from hostile action. Many others were left with serious and life-changing injuries.

The withdrawal has left some questioning why soldiers were sent, particularly as insurgent fighters are now reported to be controlling large swathes of the country.

Lucy Aldridge, mother of Rfn William Aldridge (Rifles) who was killed in 2009, told the BBC: "I'd like to see with my own eyes – what did we achieve?"

But Maj Craig Shephard (Para, left), who was awarded the Military Cross for his actions while a lieutenant with 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards, warned veterans not to overthink the reasons for withdrawal or consider it a failure.

"As soldiers and officers at the coalface, we did our best – it's all you can ask," he said. "Everyone will have reflections on the campaign but it's important that we don't disappear down a rabbit hole arguing the whys and wherefores of it."

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said the nation owed all those who had served – particularly those who lost their lives – a huge debt of gratitude.

"Their efforts have helped prevent international terrorism and set the country on the path to peace," the politician added.

“It's important we don't disappear down a rabbit hole”



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Picture: Cpl Nathan Tamuku, RLC



Singles thrown a line

Accommodation upgrades with improved maintenance to boot

PERSONNEL occupying single living accommodation (SLA) in the UK can expect higher quality properties and improved levels of maintenance, the Army's head of infrastructure plans has told *Soldier*.

Some £450m is to be spent upgrading Army SLA over the next ten years, which will see nearly 4,000 bed spaces built from scratch and 1,100 refurbished by 2031.

Providing no changes are made as part of the Future Soldier restructure, the first batch is due to be completed in 2024 (see panel right).

And in a move that will be music to many soldiers' ears, a new maintenance contract is also on its way.

"Improving SLA is the chief of the general staff's number one infrastructure priority at the moment," explained Brig Richard Brown.

"We are working hard with the Defence Infrastructure Organisation to raise the standard of all our 55,000 SLA properties.

"We are undertaking construction in waves and some accommodation will have to be refurbished at heritage or constrained sites, such as Victoria Barracks in Windsor.

"Our buildings should have a 60-year life but a number of them are older so we are refurbishing them to make them more sustainable with lower running costs – something we're doing across the Army in line with government direction."

The new maintenance contract is much closer to the one that is currently only enjoyed at Colchester's



and Salisbury Plain's private finance initiative sites.

It includes planned, preventative maintenance as well as fix-on-fail, so issues can be tackled more quickly.

Extra services can also be purchased if troops are left completely stuck.

Brig Brown continued: "When it comes to the serious matter of hot water or heating failing, for instance, we have a mechanism where within 24 hours we can hire, off-contract, a boiler or generator to plug into the accommodation.

"To achieve this we are installing stubs to connect a boiler into the building and special 'commando sockets' to plug in a hired generator.

"In remote parts of the country we have pre-positioned supplies of boilers and generators to ensure we can get them plugged in within one day."

The maintenance overhaul follows the creation of kitchenettes and snack preparation areas in many SLA blocks.

By 2023 more than 3,000 utility rooms or other spaces at existing sites will have been converted and Service personnel can still request this work through their chain of command.

“ We are working hard to raise the standard ”



Brig Richard Brown



Fine margins

Cricketers edge Inter-Services thriller page 72

Which blocks will be improved – and when?

We asked Head of Infrastructure Plans, Brig Richard Brown, for a breakdown of what's ahead...

1,026 properties by the end of 2024 at

- Palace Barracks, N. Ireland (254)
- Kinloss, Moray (68)
- Beacon Barracks, Stafford (72)
- Imjin Barracks, Gloucester (46)
- Trenchard Lines, Upavon (202)
- Victoria Barracks, Windsor (384)

Around 1,000 bed spaces by 2029 across

- St George's Barracks, Bicester
- Infantry Training Centre, Catterick
- Baker Barracks, Thorney Island
- Kendrew Barracks, Cottesmore
- RMAS
- Weeton Barracks, Blackpool

2,800 units by 2031

Sites to be confirmed



GURKHAS GAIN BATTALION

THE Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Support Battalion has been redesignated as part of the Brigade of Gurkhas and renamed accordingly.

Now known as the Gurkha Allied Rapid Reaction Corps Support Battalion, the formation will continue to enable and provide force protection to HQ ARRC, the British-led Nato warfighting outfit.

Speaking at a parade to mark the new chapter, Lt Gen Richard Wardlaw, colonel commandant of the Brigade of Gurkhas and chief of defence logistics and support, described the event as historic.

"The formation has been heavily manned with Gurkhas for many years and today is another milestone for not only the battalion, but in recognition of the professionalism of the brigade," he added.



'DO BETTER FOR OUR SERVICEWOMEN'

■ A DEFENCE minister has spoken of her "profound regret" after a damning new report found that bullying and harassment of women remains too much of a problem in the military.

Published by the House of Commons defence committee shortly before this issue went to press, it criticised Service leaders for their lack of action over a 2018 Army survey which found that 21 per cent of Servicewomen had experienced or witnessed sexual harassment at work.

"Such a figure should have raised major concerns in the Army but appears not to have done so," the report said. "The stories that we heard are truly shocking and they gravely concern us."

It continued: "In particular, we are disturbed by repeated examples of senior ranks failing those they command, by not responding appropriately or even engaging in these behaviours themselves.

"Some of the language we heard from senior leaders also concerned us, as it appeared to imply Servicewomen wanting to progress need to learn to put up with these behaviours."

"Let us be clear: this behaviour is harming the health, careers and operational effectiveness of our Service personnel and has no place in the military."

The *Protecting Those Who Protect Us* report also criticised slow progress across the MoD on appropriate uniform and equipment for females (*Soldier*, July), adding that it was "extraordinary" these areas were still problems when combat roles were opened up in 2018.

"Thousands of female Service personnel, already facing the dangers of military duty, are at greater risk of harm due to basic failures in their uniform and equipment, which can have consequences for their combat effectiveness and health," it said.

Minister of State for Defence Baroness Goldie (pictured below) said: "In the past on too many occasions, defence has failed to provide women with adequate support.

"Many changes have been introduced to improve the experience for women in the Armed Forces, and military service remains a fantastic career opportunity for men and women alike.

"But the reality is that this experience is not yet equal, and very occasionally can be really harmful. I

profoundly regret that and we shall examine this report closely and use it to build on the improvements we have made."

Read next month's issue for more on this report, including:

- > Servicewomen's Network speaks out
- > Top officers talk culture change

Got a question?
news@soldiermagazine.co.uk

“We must ensure our capabilities remain at the cutting edge”



Picture: Cpl Ben Beale, RLC

First glimpse of 'Future Soldier'

THE 1st Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment is to become part of the 16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team. That's the headline-grabber in the first round of rejigs to be delivered under the Army's Future Soldier plan, which sets out the bold and ambitious vision for modernising the Army.

In addition, 12th and 20th Armoured Infantry Brigades are to be redesignated 12 and 20 Armoured Brigade Combat Teams, while 104 Logistic Support Brigade and 1 Signals Brigade are to be resubordinated to the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps.

Brig John Clark, Head of Strategy, explained that these were the first steps on the path to the Army of 2025.

He also said more announcements would follow in the autumn around structures and basing and their delivery across the whole Force.

"We will drive hard to increase our persistent engagement around the globe, including by redesignating the Specialised Infantry Groups as the Army's Special Operations Brigade

in August, and establishing the new Ranger Regiment to its initial operating capacity by December," he added.

"11 Brigade will redesignate to 11 Security Forces Assistance Brigade in October. We will continue to develop our regional hubs in Oman, Kenya and Germany, as part of our contribution to defence's global network.

"We know we need to constantly learn and improve to ensure that our capabilities remain at the cutting edge.

"By 2025 we must restructure the Army – Regular, Reserve and civilian – to ensure that it can meet the challenges of the next decade.

"We will become more agile and technologically capable.

"We know that the Regular strength must reduce to 72,500 by 2025, so the Army Reserve will become intrinsically more important to our outputs. We also need to examine the size and shape of the civilian workforce.

"We will continue to invest in our people to ensure the Army succeeds and maximises everyone's potential."



New flash for equipment bods

■ ARMY personnel serving with Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) are now wearing a new formation flash that acknowledges the organisation's mission to equip the UK's Armed Forces.

The body was the only one in defence to not have an identifying marker, and the arrow is linked to the crow's foot stamp used by its predecessors, the Board of Ordnance and the War Department.

Although the Army's DE&S contingent is relatively small at 346 posts, these troops play an important role identifying emerging technologies and observing what allies and adversaries are doing.



Digital deployment

AN INNOVATIVE blend of simulations has been transforming training rooms into synthetic towns and cities to enable troops to evaluate and evolve their tactics for conducting operations in built-up areas.

Headquarters staff from 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh in Tidworth were among the latest personnel to plan and wargame urban missions using a QinetiQ-supplied cache of computer-based training tools.

The four-day digital deployment was part of Exercise Urban Lion – a two-year series of experiments held on behalf of the Land Warfare Centre – and saw the company's constructive simulation integrated alongside its Unit Based Virtual Training (UBVT) system.

Run on a network of laptop computers with exercising soldiers

communicating via headsets, UBVT has previously been used to support a broad range of collective training and experimentation.

This included helping artillery units master the difficult discipline of de-conflicting joint fire missions in complex battlespaces and assisting mechanised rifle companies as they honed their patrolling skills before deploying to Afghanistan.

Commenting on UBVT's novel application as part of Urban Lion, as well as QinetiQ's wider supporting role to the exercise, project manager Nick Brown said: "Our collective training delivery teams are accustomed to being flexible and responsive to the Army's needs and circumstances and repurposing the technology to complement such a wargame was the latest example of this."

“
This is the
country's
path back to
normality
”

TROOPS URGED TO GET JAB

■ ONE of the Army's top medical officers has told *Soldier* that troops should get vaccinated against Covid-19 as soon as possible if they haven't done so already.

With around 50,000 personnel yet to receive the full benefit of a double jab, Lt Col Andy Tredget (RAMC, pictured below), the clinical operations lead at Field Army Headquarters, insisted the time to act is now,

"As of July 23, more than 72 per cent of the British Army have been vaccinated against Covid at least once, so we are well on our way," he added.

"The coronavirus job is available to all soldiers and officers and I urge anyone not yet jabbed to join the millions who have been in the UK. This is the country's path back to normality. They should use the online NHS Covid booking service that manages people's coronavirus vaccinations.

"Not only does the vaccine protect you from complications such as long Covid but it helps prevent transmission, and will help protect your family, friends and Army colleagues."



IN NUMBERS

33,972

personnel to have received just the first Covid-19 vaccine

18,080

to have received both jabs

*Figures as of July 23, 2021

DRONE SWARMS APPROACHING

Army working with Navy to develop capability



■ THE Army will be working with Naval colleagues to share best practice after a defence first saw six medium-heavy lift drones operated in a continuously controlled swarm for tactical resupply missions with the Royal Marines.

They were trialled alongside other systems during Commando training raids across Northumberland and Dorset

Personnel from 40 Commando also tested the Malloy TRV15, which can deliver 68kg of supplies.

And they used the Anduril Ghost mini-helicopter for reconnaissance, while experimenting with underwater vehicles which can scan for threats such as mines.

Army robotics chief Lt Col Iain Lamont (RE) told *Soldier* the Service was also working on drone swarm initiatives, including Project Theseus focused on resupply actions.

"This capability clearly has huge potential for future operations," the officer added.

"It is fair to say that we will be working with the Royal Marines in the sharing of best practice and tackling the challenges that we encounter together."



SHOT AT RECRUITMENT

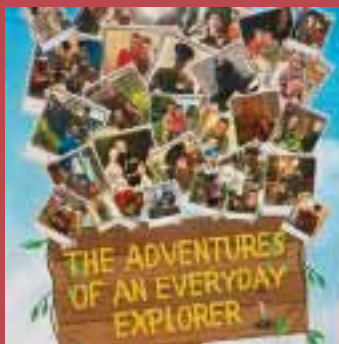
■ THE MoD's in-house science arm, the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, has launched its biggest recruitment drive for years with the creation of hundreds of posts.

It comes off the back of a £6 billion investment in research and development as part of the government's Integrated Review.

Some 300 positions will be advertised throughout August, with others next year.

The roles include project leaders, engineers and analysts in areas such as cyber, electronics, communications, surveillance and command and control.

Visit civilservicejobs.service.gov.uk for more details.



ADVENTURE UNDER WAY

■ A BESPOKE children's book designed to help youngsters understand and process the thoughts and feelings associated with life in military families has been distributed to Army households in Stafford.

The brainchild of Capt John Kennaugh (R Signals), the unit welfare officer at 16th Signal Regiment, the project was financed by a £10,000 grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund.

Capt Kennaugh set about the task after his commanding officer, Lt Col Pete Brunton, spoke of doing more to help the mental health of families. He was introduced to The Big Happiness Project, who helped with the writing and publishing of the book, which is aimed at six to 12-year-olds and is entitled *The Adventures of an Everyday Explorer*.

"It covers topics such as what happens if mum and dad separate, deployments for a parent and moving to a new school," Capt Kennaugh told *Soldier*.

"These are all key issues that military families encounter."

The book also encompasses the cultural differences that children from Nepalese and Commonwealth families may face.



Different perspective

Southgate tapped into Army mindset during Euros run

Picture: Shutterstock

“ I found Gareth to be a really humble man ”



AN OPERATIONALLY experienced officer who advised England football boss Gareth Southgate during the Euros has praised his openness to Army thinking.

Col Lucy Giles (below left), one of several consultants from outside the beautiful game assisting on the FA Technical Advisory Board, said the manager had listened carefully to a wide range of views during the campaign.

And she was delighted to see the team achieve its best result in generations, despite losing on penalties in the final.

Col Giles told *Soldier*: "I found Gareth to be a really humble man – and he was open to the different perspectives that the board and its members brought.

"I do not know a huge amount about football, but the committee's aim is to present views from those not connected with the sport. With the Army, I am in an organisation that works around the clock, 365 days a year.

"The military can also be a high-stress environment, particularly while on operations. Success depends on

understanding your people."

The advisory board was formed several years ago when a panel of football outsiders – all volunteers – was assembled by the FA to assist Southgate's new style of working.

As manager, the former England defender made no secret of wanting a depth of experience in his camp.

The group includes Olympian-turned-author Matthew Syed, as well as entrepreneur Manoj Badale and cycling coach Sir Dave Brailsford.

Col Giles, who is President of the Army Officer Selection Board at Westbury, was asked to join after working with the Foundation for Leadership Through Sport.

The career Royal Logistic Corps soldier, who served on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, said: "I'm not on the board to suggest whether Gareth should adopt a four-four-two formation or help with the half-time team talk.

"But I can perhaps assist with the different ingredients that make up a squad – how they perform can depend on who they are working alongside."



Picture: Cpl Adam Wakefield, RLC

■ A SET of nearly 50 portraits of Army generals dating back some 170 years have been returned to their rightful home in York. The images are of previous chiefs of Northern Command, a now-defunct formation which used to be based at the city's Tower House. After the headquarters' demise they were stored for safe keeping in the Kohima Museum at Imphal Barracks but after a joint decision between the garrison and civilian community, they are back on display at their former residence, now a business centre. The portraits span the period 1849 to 1972 and include Victoria Cross recipient Brig Gen Edward Stevenson Browne.



FEARLESS FUNDRAISING

Bridges boost

LONDONERS teamed up to raise funds for the military charity on Armed Forces Day. More than 500 serving personnel and civilians completed the 13 Bridges Challenge, a ten-mile walk exploring the city's riverside landmarks. SSAFA supporter and *Coronation Street* actor, Antony Cotton (right), said he has been "proud and honoured" to launch the event.



Amount raised: **£70,000**
For SSAFA



Proms pays off

LIVE music came back with a bang at Blenheim Palace in aid of Forces charity SSAFA. The sold-out Battle Proms picnic concert raised £7,404, bringing the running total since its inception in 2004 to £458,000. Audiences enjoyed orchestral music, as well as Spitfire, parachute, canon and cavalry displays, before a firework finale ended proceedings.

District delight

A SUPER-FIT former sapper who set out on a punishing tab across the Lake District has secured his place in the history books. Christopher Gaskin tackled all 214 Wainwright Fells with around 20kg of kit on his back. He finished the endeavour in 11 days – shaving 72 hours off the previous record – and raised nearly £6,000 for Walking with the Wounded.



Style selection signed off

A RESTYLED Army policy giving women more choice about how they wear their hair while on duty has been given the thumbs-up from personnel.

They say the move – which will see soldiers deviate from the hitherto approved bun – will improve comfort and allow kit to fit more snugly.

Unless they are at high-profile parades or other occasions, women will now be permitted to have a single ponytail, braid or plait, corn plaits, rows or an Afro.

Army chiefs have stressed that the changes will not lower standards but "provide individuals with greater choice reflecting the needs of our diverse workforce".

The move also brings the Service into line with the Royal Navy, which announced its policy shift in May.

Maj Vanessa Freestone (R Signals) believes the changes will be backed by troops – while making the Service

more appealing to joiners.

She told *Soldier*: "There are times when wearing your hair in a bun is not practical. Most Servicewomen will be sensible enough to know which style is appropriate at any given time – they will definitely welcome more choice."

WO2 Sheridan Lucas (RLC) – who assisted the first women heading for ground close combat roles at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick – agreed change was needed.

While she pointed out that hair could be plaited to fit helmets robustly during training activities, she highlighted that amending the policy was helpful.

WO2 Lucas (pictured right) added: "Long hair once had to both be tied back and placed in a hairnet, but that requirement has gone over the years.

"People have all kinds of different styles so my view would be to allow the changes – just as long as hair is consistently kept neat and tidy."

“As long as hair is kept neat and tidy”



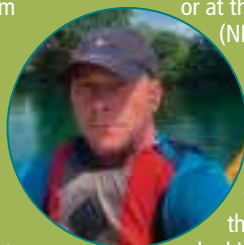
CAPITAL QUEST

RESERVIST Sgt Ed Mackenzie (R Signals) is hoping to fund a memorial for veterans who have taken their own lives by completing a 280-mile kayak challenge from Liverpool to London.

The soldier, who served as a Regular in the Infantry for 24 years, will depart from Preston Brook Marina on August 17 and follow the canal network and River Thames as his route to the capital.

He will be joined by a support team that includes Cpl Colin Cadman, Cpl Dave Wood (both Scots) and SSgt Jon Greaves (R Signals).

"When a soldier, sailor or airman/woman



dies in service they are remembered with their name, number and cap badge on a memorial – whether that's at their regiment or at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA)," Sgt Mackenzie said.

"However, if they die after their time in service they aren't remembered in the same way.

"I think they should have the same recognition that they would've done if they had paid the ultimate price. I'm by no means looking for anyone to blame."

Sgt Mackenzie hopes to install the memorial at the NMA and has set a fundraising target of £50,000. To donate visit elysiummemorial.co.uk

WIN
£200 of LifeJacket
sun protection
gear



INFLUENCED by last month's cover star, Army boxer Karris Artingstall, our July spine line clues were the names of female Service Olympians and Winter Olympians – (Kelly) Holmes, (Heather) Stanning, (Paula) Walker and (Amanda) Lightfoot.

This month we have teamed up with high performing SPF brand LifeJacket to offer one lucky reader a bundle of sun protection goods worth £200.

The prize includes two family packs of products, a hat, t-shirt and sun stick.

In the UK men are almost twice as likely to die from skin cancer as women, and this brand is engineered specifically with males in mind (although the items are suitable for all).

The range is lightweight, water-resistant, reef-safe and cruelty free too. Visit lifejacketskinprotection.com for more.

To be in with a chance of winning, simply tell us what links the words on the spine of this month's issue. Answers, including telephone, to the usual address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by August 31.



SPINE LINE COMPETITION

“
There are
roles to suit
everyone
”

Boost for dependant job searches

AN ONLINE initiative to help military dependants find work is going from strength to strength despite the disruption caused by Covid.

The Forces Families Jobs website, which offers training and employment opportunities for partners and offspring of Service personnel, was set up in September 2019, some six months before the pandemic brought normal life to a halt.

However, it continued to grow throughout the lockdown and now boasts 4,500 registered members and nearly 5,000 different full- and part-time positions.

Run by a small team from the Army Families Federation (AFF) and its Royal Air Force and Royal Navy counterparts, the forum also hosts webinars on topics such as CV writing.

Jenna Richardson, the AFF's

employment and training specialist, said jobseekers were relieved to have a service catering for their needs.

“Military spouses might have gaps in their CVs and that is often seen as a negative by recruiters,” she explained.

“But a lot of our employers have joined the Armed Forces Covenant and this gives our members confidence that they are not being discriminated against.

“Our audience is so diverse. Some want relatively basic jobs they can fit in around school hours, while others are looking to restart careers in medicine or engineering – there are roles to suit everyone.”

Around 800 employers have signed up so far, including major firms such as Sky, Amazon and Tesco.

For more information or to register visit forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk



PLAIN IMPRESSIVE: Soldier reader and military vehicle enthusiast Michael Holland captured this image of a Royal Irish Regiment Foxhound in the early morning light on Salisbury Plain. Got your own shot to share? Email news@soldiermagazine.co.uk



Racing return

Cyclists hit the road after Covid
page 64

POPPY PEACE OF MIND

■ THE Royal British Legion has reassured expats living in the EU that they will still be able to buy poppies for Remembrance Day.

Despite a decision by the charity's online retailer, Poppy Shop, to stop selling goods on the continent due to Brexit red tape, the supply of traditional paper poppies will remain unaffected, a spokesman confirmed.

However, they added that VAT rates and customs fees now applicable made it unviable to continue shipping accessories and other gift items unless legislation was changed.



COVID KICK IN TEETH

■ SHOCK stats released by a military charity show less than a quarter of people admire the military's work during the Covid crisis.

A poll carried out by SSAFA found 23 per cent of Brits appreciated the troops involved in Op Rescript – now officially the largest ever peacetime homeland deployment.

The organisation is calling on the public to learn more about the work of the Services.



50

New infanters taken on by 4th Battalion, The Yorkshire Regiment over recent weeks as it maintains a reputation for one of the best recruited Army Reserve outfits. A further 70 recruits are now also in the pipeline



NEWS IN NUMBERS



■ REGULAR troops from The Rifles and The Light Dragoons were among several teams of soldiers competing in this year's UK Challenge, a leading teambuilding event, in the Lake District as this issue went to press. The three-day package (shown here in a previous year) sees personnel run, cycle and kayak their way through different missions to scoop the Team of Heroes trophy.

Get off my land, families told

DfID warning over popular recreation spot in Germany

FAMILIES in Sennelager face losing access to the countryside around their quarters.

The area, known as the Southern Fields, borders two housing estates behind Normandy Barracks and has been used recreationally for decades by walkers and horse riders from the local community.

While officially still part of the training estate, the small strip of meadows and woodland is not in regular military use. However, in a post on Facebook, the Defence Infrastructure Organisation announced that trespassers could be in line for disciplinary action from now on.

Explaining their reasoning, officials cited the presence of unexploded ordnance and the potential requirement to stage exercises on the land in the future.

The news was greeted by anger and confusion from residents, who argue the space is important for their mental and physical wellbeing.

In response, Commander British Army (Germany), Col Tim Hill, stressed that the Southern Fields had always been a military training area, but indicated that the decision was not yet final.

"In line with a number of agreements between the host nation and UK MoD, we are obliged to control and regulate access for the safety of all," he continued.

"However, enforcement has been lax over the years and we are reviewing arrangements, although it won't happen overnight.

"Following the summer, HQ BA(G) will lead a period of internal planning, followed by a public consultation period after which we will communicate the outcome to our own and local German communities."

Esther Thomas, overseas manager for the Army Families Federation welcomed the news of a review, adding: "We are pleased to have received confirmation that families' concerns have been acknowledged."



MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD

■ POETIC soldiers are being urged to put pen to paper for a special event run by an organisation that helps personnel connect with the creative industry.

The Soldier's Arts Academy is running its first international poetry competition and is encouraging entries from anyone with an Army connection.

There are two entry categories for adults and young people and the closing date is September 15.

Visit soldiersartsacademy.org

MOTHER FIGURE

■ THE Army is one of the country's most mum-friendly employers, according to work-life balance charity Working Families.

The Service was named joint winner in the "best for working mothers" category of the organisation's Best Practice Awards – thanks to its commitment to gender equality and initiatives such as the parents and breastfeeding networks.

Other progressive policies include a maternity and breastfeeding passport detailing the legal requirements a mother can expect at work, the maternity and shared parental leave offers, flexible working patterns and childcare support.

In joint first place alongside the Army was commercial real estate company Unibail-Rodamco-Westfield.

FUTURE HURDLES

■ FIERCE competition for civvy jobs and a military with less of a public profile mean veterans are set to face "significant challenges" in future, a report has claimed.

The Lifting Our Sights: Beyond 2030 study from the Forces in Mind Trust also highlights that the changing nature of conflict could have unforeseen medical effects on troops.

And it predicts that cash-strapped charities might find it harder to support veterans who fall on hard times.

The document recommends that government, businesses and good causes better collaborate to ensure ex-personnel are not left at a disadvantage.

RURAL JOBS FOR VETS

■ A CHARITY that provides veterans with horticultural therapy has started an initiative to connect ex-soldiers with rural jobs. High Ground is aiming to create openings in agriculture, outdoor education and country sports. Former Royal Marine Tim Lever will manage the scheme for the organisation, which has already assisted some 300 ex-personnel since its launch eight years ago. Visit highground-uk.org

Illustrations: Freepik





Ground view

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

FIND it hard to believe – putting pen to paper in my final *Soldier* column – that my three-year tour in this role is finally drawing to a close.

As you read this, my handover to successor WO1 Paul Carney (RE) will be complete.

It is a job I could never have imagined doing when I joined the Service nearly 25 years ago and I take some amazing memories with me. It feels a wrench to leave, but it is time to bring in somebody new with a fresh perspective.

The time in this post has gone very quickly – probably due to the fact so much has happened.

Overseas deployments across the world were already keeping us busy and then the Covid pandemic saw us committed back home in the UK as we supported our NHS colleagues.

In this role you get a rare opportunity to see how different parts of the military work together. As a result, I have learnt a great deal more about the Service – as well as the challenges faced by our chain of command in ensuring that orders and information disseminate through the ranks.

My role has been to represent our

soldiers at the most senior echelons, and I am always telling our generals that the troops deserve the best leadership.

However, I think it is also important to remember this is a two-way process – and that being a good follower is also crucial to success.

Our generals care deeply about personnel, so they in turn are entitled to our full support. When people are disloyal, or follow their own agendas, the consequences can be serious.

I raise this issue now because mutual trust will be vital as we move forward, particularly as the Army will be changing shape and size in the years ahead.

We must remember that our senior leaders will be trying to balance the requirements of our people with the policy set down by government.

And we are all involved in this process because – at the end of the day – we are all soldiers, working to achieve the same objectives.

Thank you for welcoming me as the Army sergeant major.

It has been wonderful to see the outstanding work our troops are doing. And it has been a privilege to represent you.



A soldier rests at Patrol Base 2, Nahr-e Saraj during Op Herrick 13 in 2011

Afghan sundown

Picture: Graeme Main



OVER the past month we have seen troops withdrawing from Afghanistan (page 7) – which I am sure has prompted many to reflect on their service there during the last two decades.

Op Herrick 11 was an important time in my career as a platoon commander with 3rd Battalion, The Rifles (left).

It was also a demanding time – kinetic and with constant fighting.

Soldiers of every era

can often find themselves criticised, with some elements of society saying that they have it easier than – or are not as good as – troops from times past.

I served with those who were sometimes unkindly referred to as the “PlayStation generation”.

Yet in Afghanistan, like their predecessors throughout history, they stepped up to the plate.

They performed heroic acts every single day.

“
Mutual trust will be vital
”

Nations united in virtual realm

■ THE Covid pandemic has been testing for the Army – but the use of online technology for meetings has actually helped bolster our relationships with allies.

During the early part of the outbreak, meetings with my sergeant major counterparts from the likes of the USA, New Zealand, Canada and Australia became a weekly feature.

These have continued and the informal discussions have seen us share good practice – bringing each other’s tried-and-tested ideas into our own armies.

I’m really proud of the international network we have built up – cementing relationships and fostering trust is important in a world in which working together is critical.



After-action review

Soldier asked our readers for some final questions to put to WO1 Gav Paton...

What advice would you now give yourself as a young rifleman joining the Army?

Tribalism and identity are important, but you need to understand the tribes of others too. Everyone has their part to play in the Service. Secondly, never ever give up. I nearly threw in the towel in the early stages after joining. A major moved me to another company, where I was able to flourish. As a result, I have served as the Army's most senior soldier.

Any guidance for NCOs?

For younger commanders in particular, it is important that you do not underestimate your impact on troops. They will want to emulate you, so be aware of your leadership style and how you engage.

If you could pick one rank to stay in, what would it be?

Good question – every rung on the ladder is a privilege and I've enjoyed them all. But being a platoon commander on operations in Afghanistan was great. I think it was probably where I learnt a good part of my trade, although I don't think I could have sustained the fierce tempo forever.

What are your weaknesses?

I'm a bit of a perfectionist and can spend a long time on tasks – this isn't helpful with deadlines.

What are the problem areas you still want to see addressed in the Army?

Diversity – making sure everybody is treated fairly and can bring their whole selves to work. Secondly, breaking the stigma of mental health. And the creation of a challenge culture – without this you are never going to achieve a learning environment.

Are we rewarding our people enough? Does a CO's coin really cut it?

The Army is ultimately about serving others – if



you're doing it for yourself you are probably out of step with our values and standards. We work with public money, so commanding officers cannot give cash bonuses. They do, however, have authority to give something back throughout the year like long weekends, for example. Good servant leadership is the best reward.

Is more parity needed between officers and other ranks when it comes to mess kit grants?

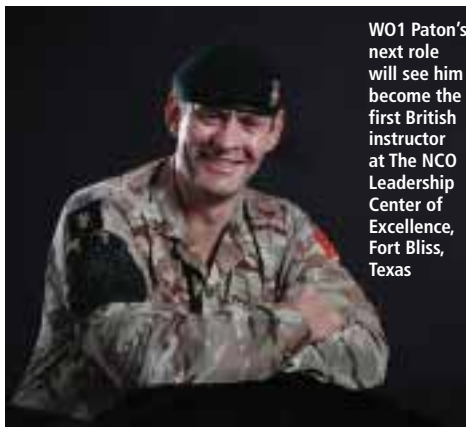
I know there are discrepancies in this area, and the Army is constantly reviewing mess dress and the grant.

What has been your biggest achievement in this role?

I have strived to improve the lived experience for soldiers by being present at the senior levels of command. I can – hand on heart – say I have given the job my all.

Any advice for your successor?

I hold Paul Carney in very high regard and he will put his own stamp on this role. I'd tell him it is great to have somebody new in place because change is important – and coming from the Royal Engineers he will bring a fresh perspective. But I'd warn him of burnout, which can be a hazard.



WO1 Paton's next role will see him become the first British instructor at The NCO Leadership Center of Excellence, Fort Bliss, Texas



Picture: Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society

BACK IN BUSINESS

THE military is returning to the stage in Edinburgh after the pandemic forced its annual Fringe to migrate online last year.

Army@TheFringe – which sees soldiers support a range of performances – will run this month at the Hepburn House drill hall in New Town.

The Covid-safe venue, at East Claremont Street, is hosting an eclectic programme, ranging from a play about an escape attempt from communist East Germany in the Cold War to a magic show.

For details visit armyatthefringe.org

RESETTLEMENT RALLY

TROOPS helping colleagues make the transition to civvy street must now book onto Army resettlement information staff courses.

The mandatory training prepares those taking on the first-line responsibilities of helping leavers, and they must complete the package within six weeks of assuming the job.

Read **ABN 065/2021** for details.



Picture: prostooleh/freepik

SOLAR PANELS AND MORE

THREE new blocks at Nesscliffe Training Camp, Shropshire are the latest environmentally friendly digs to be opened as part of the MoD's £45 million net zero carbon accommodation programme.

The project will see more than 40 new buildings created across the defence training estate, with features such as roof solar panels, air source heat pumps and heat recovery systems in showers and drying rooms.

GYM FOR JOY

AFTER 26 years in a disused state, the 60-year-old quartermaster's store at Bovington Camp has been transformed into a 24-hour hi-tech fitness centre for troops. The BeaverFit gym was created in six months at a cost of £200,000.

NEED TO

KNOW

SKILLS & DRILLS / CASH / RULES & REGS / FITNESS / EXPERIENCE

Get clued up

... on the warrant
officers' Army
leadership and
development
programme



▶ **THE new-look ALDP courses for senior soldiers are now up and running. Having replaced the old command and leadership management (CLM) format, the revamped system promises a more demanding test to set troops up for success in their first warrant officer role and beyond.**

According to Maj Ben Stokes (AGC (ETS)) from the professional development team at Army HQ, the curriculum was devised following detailed analysis of the skills personnel require at that level.

“The content needed to be refreshed, modernised and be more closely aligned to officer training and education,” he said.

“Careful consideration went into its development to ensure a commensurate level of challenge for what is a significant rank to be selected for.”

Among the first students to attend was WO2 Greg Kendall (REME), who last month took up post as artificer quartermaster sergeant at 3 Battalion, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Soldier quizzed him on what he made of the course and how personnel should prepare...

How did you find it?

Intense. It was hard work and unlike previous CLMs you really had to apply yourself, not just attend

What was the format?

We did the whole three weeks remotely because of Covid, but usually the first week would be distance learning, and the last two would be residential. The first part is self-study – lots of reading and videos – which is a different type of learning entirely. You really have to be disciplined to get it done in the allocated period of time

What kinds of topics does it cover?

Warrant officer development, essay writing, emotional intelligence, high performing organisations, the Service complaints process, discipline and welfare, as well as mental and physical wellbeing

How do you think it prepared you for your next role?

I did it just before I took over as AQMS and next month I'm going on Cabrit. I'll be deploying with nearly 40 soldiers, and I have no doubt that people will have struggles and that

discipline and welfare issues will come to light. But having done the course I feel confident that I can be an effective asset to the team

Which module did you find most challenging?

The academic rigour of the course took me by surprise. We had to do three essays of between 400 and 700 words – that doesn't give you much room to skirt around the issue. You have to be very succinct and analytical and construct arguments for and against in a very logical way

Any tips for other newly-promoted warrant officers?

Fully apply yourself in that first week – if you don't you'll do yourself a disservice. And really get into the self-study material because the whole course is based upon it. I'm a life-long learner and I enjoy challenging myself but people coming into it with a fixed mindset might struggle

View from the top

Outgoing Army Sergeant Major WO1 Gav Paton, who helped shape the new ALDP courses during his tenure, gives his take...

“ A huge amount of work went into ALDP to generate a better educational package that equips troops with the personal and soft skills they need in their next rank.

Some of it is based on the late entry officer course because I personally believe we should learn those skills as a WO2. I didn't – I picked it all up through experience and that's not right.

When I did my CLM it left me wanting – it was basically a week of PowerPoint, time in the mess and plenty of PT.

The new course is a world apart from that. Soldiers need time to read, think and reflect – which is why the first part is set aside purely for that.

It is deliberately labelled “week one” rather than being considered pre-reading, which people would be expected to complete in their own time.

We demand so much more from our personnel these days and their education needs to reflect that. ”



In numbers:

3 length, in weeks, of the whole package – a week of e-learning, followed by a fortnight of classroom-based lessons

2 modules making up the warrant officers ALDP course; military training and military education

12 time, in months, in which Regulars must complete the training after promotion. Reservists have 24 months

In 5

Wise ways to use the cash you've saved during Covid

► **THE pandemic may not have given us much to be cheerful about, but for those fortunate enough to be in regular employment – soldiers included – the months of lockdown living might have resulted in significant savings.**

All those missed nights out, coffees to go and commutes soon add up to a sizeable sum.

While it's tempting to go on a spending spree, money blogger Andy Webb says now is a good time to think of your long-term financial security...

1 Clear your debts

This is the priority when you have any spare cash, in particular things like credit cards, loans and store credit. If you have more than one debt, start with the most expensive one by interest rate

2 Next, build an emergency savings fund

The rule of thumb here is enough to cover three-to-six months of essential costs in case you lost your income. Put it in a separate savings account so you're not tempted to touch it

3 Plan for forthcoming expenses

After this, think about stuff you plan to buy or spend money on that you'd normally struggle to afford – such as a new phone or a holiday.

This will help you avoid borrowing for those things in future

4 Think longer term

If you've still got money left at this stage, then it's a great idea to put it towards your future, for example:

● **Overpay your mortgage**, if your lender allows it, to reduce the length of your loan and how much interest you pay

● **Pay into a personal pension.** Depending on how long you plan to stay in the Army, you might want to start your own private pension to boost what you get later in life. You can also pay extra into your military pension – read [2015/DIN01/075](#) to find out how, but seek financial advice before deciding

5 Keep saving

Once things get back to normal and you start spending more of your monthly pay cheque, it'll be easy to get back into old habits and see your savings shrink. Instead, set up a standing order from your current account to a separate savings account. By moving it before you've had a chance to spend it, you're less likely to miss it



For more money-saving tips visit Andy Webb's blog ([becleverwithyourcash.com](#)) or follow [@andyclevercash](#) on Instagram, Twitter and YouTube



► **WHEN you have a problem at work or with a colleague, there are various official routes you can take – from talking to your chain of command to lodging a Service complaint.**

But sometimes it helps to talk through your options with a third party, and that's where the Army's dedicated anti-bullying and harassment helpline – Speak Out – comes in.

We spoke to one of its military call handlers to find out what her role entails. In keeping with the outfit's strict policy of confidentiality and impartiality, we are withholding her identity here.

It's not uncommon for me to say almost nothing for the first ten minutes, while the caller gets the issue off their chest. Often they are frustrated that they haven't been listened to and they just need to vent

Everything we do is on first-name terms so that callers feel comfortable talking to us. But they can be assured that whoever they speak to fully understands the military setup. A lot of us also have a strong welfare background

We take calls on a huge range of topics. Speak Out is advertised as a bullying and harassment helpline but the majority of cases aren't related to that. At the moment we are getting a lot of queries about Covid and childcare while returning to work, for example



Here to HELP

Behind the scenes at the Army's Speak Out hotline...

Many problems stem from a lack of communication.

We get a lot of calls about medical issues – and it's often because the medical system and the chain of command haven't understood what the other is saying, and the soldier is caught in the middle



powerful means of resolving grievances – that's why we promote mediation, as long as both sides agree to it

Most of the time after a call I don't hear anything again

and I take that as good news – although we'll support you for as long as you need.

Sometimes someone rings back

and says thank you and it can be like speaking to an entirely different person – you can hear the weight has

been lifted. The job is fantastic because I'm dealing with people and using my experience to hopefully make their lives easier



Sometimes we can help people look at things objectively.

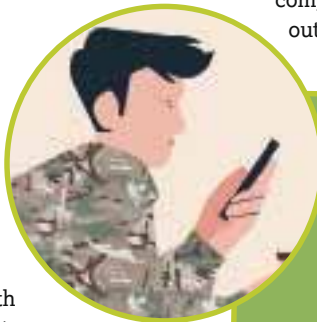
Maybe a caller has perceived something as bullying, but it is actually just leadership. The fact that they have been asked to do guard twice in a month, for example, might be down to a limited number of soldiers on camp, not because they are being victimised. Annual reports are another common area for such disputes. Whatever the case, we try and help work through the issue and come up with a positive action plan

We work closely with the Army

Mediation Service and encourage people to explore that option. Callers often say they want to lodge Service complaints, but I know from experience how long these take and the damaging effect they can have on the complainant's mental health, regardless of the outcome. Human interaction is a much more

Confidentiality is sacrosanct.

No one else has access to our information. We always ask permission before recording any details or sharing anything with anyone. There are only two situations in which we are obliged to pass on information – if we have concerns for someone's safety or if we think a crime has been committed



You can choose to remain anonymous

– we will still do everything we can to support you – but we can't act on your behalf without knowing your name or unit. By sharing those details with us we can call the relevant person in your chain of command and explain your concerns in a less emotive way. Or we can help you rehearse what you want to say to someone. Some people get flustered when talking to a superior, so it can be useful to discuss how to put your point across calmly and articulately with a neutral party

Speak Out in numbers

9.5%

increase in **transactions last year** compared to 2019, according to the team's 2020 statistics

71.5

percentage of calls come from **Army personnel**, with the rest made up of other Services, civil servants and family members

11

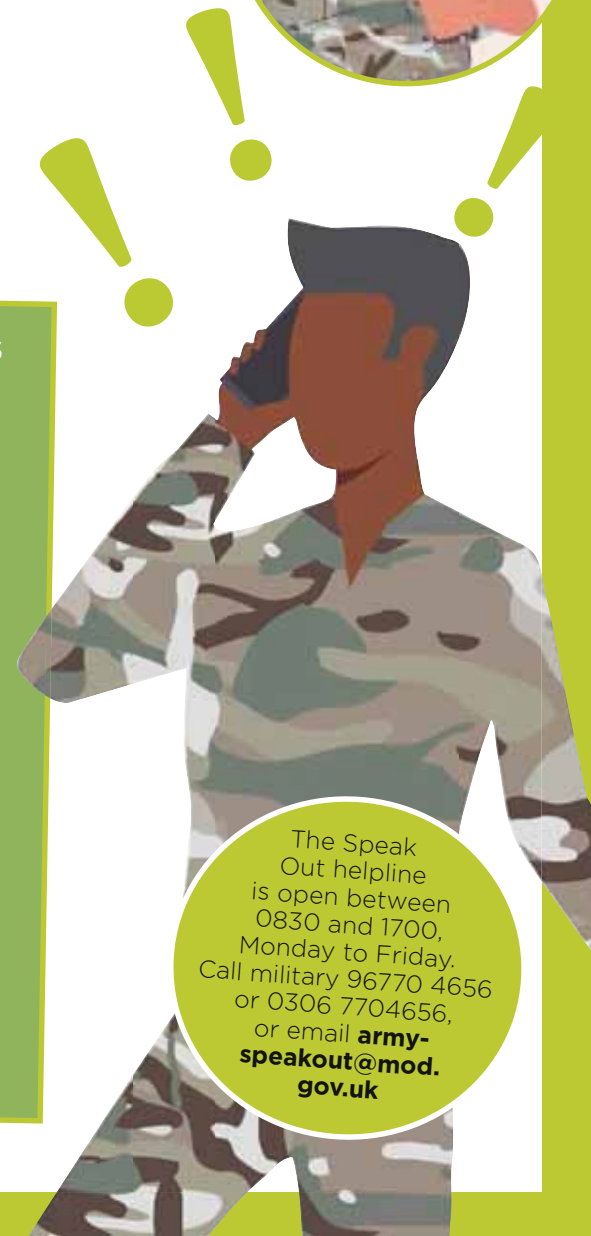
percentage of callers who raised **Covid-related concerns** last year

23%

increase in queries from **majors and lieutenant colonels**

52%

of calls that came from **other ranks**



The Speak Out helpline is open between 0830 and 1700, Monday to Friday. Call military 96770 4656 or 0306 7704656, or email army-speakout@mod.gov.uk

Forest phys

Set yourself a post-lockdown endurance goal with this brand-new charity challenge

▶ NEXT month sees the launch of the first ever National Forest Trek – hikes of up to 75-miles through some of England’s most scenic Midlands countryside, with the military ethos at its centre.

Starting at Beacon Hill, near the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC), and finishing at the National Memorial Arboretum, the event promises a stern test for individuals or teams looking to push themselves while raising money for good causes.

Whatever your existing level of fitness, Maj Matt Perkins (RAMC) – an Army physio and trustee of the DMRC Benevolent Fund, one of three charities behind the trek – says participants must come well prepared.

“This is not a combat fitness test that can be winged,” he stresses. “To cover 75 miles over three days you will need to get your body accustomed to increased mileage.”

Read on for some of his pointers for would-be walkers...



Hydration

Water and electrolyte replacement maintains your output and you should be drinking two litres of water per day – more if it’s hot or you’re in training. So, reach for that bottle... of water, not Monster



Kit

Good quality walking shoes or boots and socks are a must. You’ll have to carry your kit, food and water with you, but there is no weight requirement so a light daysack with provisions and warm clothing is fine



Nutrition

This element is really important. You need carbohydrates to sustain your body in endurance events and you should eat a light snack every 40-60 minutes to maintain your energy – slow-release foods, such as fruit, nuts or cereal bars are best



Training

Walking is different to tabbing. Therefore, training consistently to go at your natural speed or that of your group in endurance events is vital. Incorporate two sessions a week that reduce the load on your legs – cross-training is an excellent, low-impact way to build cardio-vascular fitness. Flexibility and mobility are key during multi-day treks, so regular stretching after training and during the event is important to stay the course. Proper conditioning is also about the terrain. Train on similar paths and uneven surfaces so that your feet and ankles get used to the wear and load



Interested?

The National Forest Trek offers one, two, or three-day routes ranging from three to 75 miles.

- For more information, entry requirements and a full training plan visit nationalforesttrek.co.uk
- Use **#iamwalkingbecause** on social media to show your support

Triathlon tribulations



1,764 miles, 26 days, one epiphany – how this soldier's fundraising quest became a journey of self discovery

▶ **HAVING** swum the equivalent of the English Channel, WO2 Si Hannaford (RE) jumped on his bike and cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats, where he completed one mile in a bomb disposal suit, before running back down to Warwickshire.

Dubbed FelixTri26 – the gruelling event saw him cover nearly 1,800 miles in 26 days straight, in aid of two charities close to his heart.

Talking to *Soldier* during his recovery he revealed what pushing the boundaries of physical endurance had taught him about himself and life in general...

It's 100 per cent about mindset

I didn't once think I wasn't going to finish. My brain bought into it about nine months earlier, I was just waiting for my body to catch up. It was a case of putting one foot in front of the other. Once you step through the metaphorical wall you reach a whole new scale of what you can give

It's hard to train for that type of distance

You don't know what the consequences are on the human body until you're actually doing it. The brain is very attuned to going, 'that hurts, let's stop'. But you need to know where the line is between a niggle and an injury, whether you have to stop or just adapt your running dynamic for a short period

I was in the pain cave for a very long time

In fact, I practically bought a house there. I had swelling, blocked sweat glands, insect bites and at one point got a blister that was so bad it soaked through my trainer and was leaving bloody footprints. But the pain I went through is nothing compared to what people with cancer have to deal with or those suffering from PTSD, or missing limbs through IEDs. The charities I'm raising money for do incredible work to support people like that

The admin is non-stop

As well as listening to my body, I took painkillers and every single supplement I could think of, taped my feet, rested where I could and stayed well-hydrated. I only lost 0.7 of a kilogramme throughout the whole journey, which is a sign of good nutritional management because I was burning 8,000 plus calories a day

Teamwork makes the dream work

There's no way I could have done it without help. I had amazing logistical and moral support on each leg from my team and also from my sponsors. Without them it would have been a different story »



» EXPERIENCE CONTD

Part of it was probably an attempt to turn back the clock I'm 43 and I need to set a good example to my four children. I don't want them to have to listen to me whinging about my bad back, bad knees and sore ankles. I want them to see me keeping fit and being positive and it's rubbing off on them, which is good

My outlook on life has done a complete 360 Through the days of pain I distracted myself by thinking about my priorities. And I'm not spiritual but it was almost like an awakening - some of the things that are at the top of the table because they make you money or give you your identity aren't always going to be there. I see now how much I put my family through due to prioritising my career and it's made me re-evaluate things completely

Long-distance lifesavers

Tricks of the trade for pain-free running

Equine tape "It's what they use to wrap around wounds on a horse's leg. It's exactly like human sports tape but a fraction of the price. **Don't bother with zinc oxide tape or expensive blister plasters - this stuff is amazing.** It sticks to itself, not your skin and acts as a compression sock but expands with your body so doesn't cut off the blood supply. I swear by it and will use it for any long distance running I do in the future"



Chamois cream "This anti-chafing balm became my best friend. I didn't train that much on the bike because I don't enjoy it, so I was battered by the saddle and swelled up down below. I then went straight into the run and the swollen area started rubbing. **This cream reduces friction and has a soothing menthol quality.** I went through two tubs"



2

● Phase two was a 1,000-mile cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats



4

● The finish line was in Warwickshire, after a 733-mile run, averaging 54 miles a day

1

● WO2 Hannaford started the FelixTri26 with a 21-mile open water swim



● At John O'Groats he completed one mile in a bomb suit provided by sponsors NP Aerospace

In numbers

80,000

approximate number of steps WO2 Hannaford covered daily during the run phase

5

hours of daily training, in the five months prior to the event



WO2 Hannaford's FelixTri26 was in aid of bomb disposal charity Felix Fund and The Hummingbird cancer support centre. To donate visit uk.virginmoneygiving.com/sihannaford

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PERSONNEL SHINE A LIGHT ON THE SERVICE'S DEBUT

TOUR IN MALI

Report: Richard Long Pictures: Maj Johnny Black, Capt Alex Rudd, Capt George Christie (all I.D.)

“

It is a hugely rewarding position to be able to go on an operation like this and know you are doing your bit to help others

”



“WE CANNOT look back with anything but a huge sense of satisfaction,” Lt Col Tom Robinson told *Soldier* as he reflected on the high points of the Army’s first deployment on the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali.

As commanding officer of The Light Dragoons, he was at the forefront of a challenging six-month tour that saw personnel arrive in theatre, develop a new camp to operate from and leave with a string of high-profile successes to their name.

Brought in to provide a long-range reconnaissance capability that was previously lacking, the British task group allowed the UN to establish a greater presence in remote areas of the West African country – where chronic poverty, instability and gender inequality is rife, and terrorism and conflict is on the rise.

Its headline acts included the seizure of a weapons cache loaded with AK-47 rifles, ammunition, mobile phones, and radio kit, and contributing towards a significant reduction in crime rates in its area of operations.

Troops also helped create a UN footing in Tessit – a town previously deemed out of range of the organisation’s work – while EOD operators played a crucial role in preventing an explosion at a Malian Army camp when a fire broke out in an ammunition compound.

The Service’s effort was a cross-cap badge affair, with The Light Dragoons’ A Squadron offering reconnaissance expertise and B Company of 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment the infantry element.

A mix of mechanics, medics, UAV pilots and EOD specialists were among a strong supporting cast and Lt Col Robinson believes their efforts have laid positive foundations for others to build upon – starting with their colleagues from 2 R Anglian and 1st The Queen’s Dragoons Guards, who are now in theatre. »

“We saw our role as deploying first and getting the operation set up so the task groups that follow have the best chance of success,” he explained.

“Not only did we achieve that, but we completed some challenging patrols as part of the mission to protect the people of Mali.

“When the first members of the task group deployed, we had yet to take over the camp and no vehicles or equipment had arrived.

“Within a month we had made sure we were able to operate in the way we wanted to, and we were then out on patrol for the whole of February.

“Mali is a hard place to work, temperatures were in the high 30s when we arrived and were in the 50s when we left, and the terrain is very challenging.”

The patrols were designed to offer a degree of reassurance to the local population, while creating a greater understanding of how the instability of the country was impacting on them.

And the Army’s contingent were the perfect candidates for the role.

“We have a pretty unique ability to operate at range without having to return to the main operating base every three to five

days,” Lt Col Robinson continued.

“That meant we could generate security in places that the UN had previously struggled to reach.

“While we didn’t face any direct contacts, the threat was very real. We saw French soldiers killed and there were numerous attacks on other UN contingents that resulted in a loss of life.

“But we received a completely different reaction from what I remember in Afghanistan. There people would run to their compounds and hide from us, but in the towns and villages of Mali they would rush to greet us and were curious about what we were doing.

“Across the whole task group everyone felt that they were making a tangible difference to the day-to-day lives of some of the poorest people on the planet.

“It is a hugely rewarding position to be able to go on an operation like this and know you are doing your bit to help others.”

Maj Johnny Black, officer commanding A Sqn, echoed these comments and said prolonged time on the ground proved to be a real asset, particularly when it came to the weapons find and the reduction in crime and incidents such as robberies, intimidation, and illegal taxation.

“
We had so much thrown at us, but we are REME and British Army soldiers, so we made it work
”

300 British personnel comprising the long-range reconnaissance task group

4,000 average distance, in kilometres, covered by each vehicle – 98 per cent of which was off-road terrain

The group's intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities contributed to the success, but it was the act of getting out and talking to people which proved decisive.

"That allowed us to get the trust of the locals," Maj Black, a veteran of two Op Herrick tours, said. "They helped identify areas and we were able to conduct the search. It was a massively positive experience.

"We saw a 55 per cent reduction in crime, compared to the previous three months, in an area we were patrolling.

"The soldiers got a real buzz off that. When you are out on patrol it is a long time to be living off a wagon in extreme heat.

"We faced two months of temperatures more than 50 degrees Celsius and the longest patrol we did was 28 days. We were operating up to 170 kilometres from our base in Gao and most of the other troop-contributing countries had not spent more than four or five days out on the ground.

"We have not done anything like that since Afghanistan. The guys found it challenging, but rewarding, and they had a real sense of achievement."

That feeling of accomplishment would not have been enjoyed without the task group's vehicles – namely the Jackal, Coyote and Foxhound.

Lt Col Robinson said the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers produced a "man of the match" performance in keeping the platform's running in an unforgiving environment of sandy deserts and rock-strewn landscapes.

This was on top of the need to establish a fully functioning workshop for themselves, and future tours to come.

"It was a lot tougher than we expected," said SSgt Martin Potter (REME), the artificer in charge of the fitting section on the ground.

"As it was the first tour we had to set up the workshop, but were going out on operations at the same time.

"As soon as we arrived we had 50, 60, 70 vehicles turning up in ISO containers – it was non-stop from the off.

"Six months earlier the workshop had just been a muddy patch, and it became known as the warehouse as there was so much stuff in there.

"We put a lot of hours in – probably 20 to 22-hour days. You'd have a couple of hours' sleep and then were back in again. But as long as the vehicles were moving, we were happy."

The NCO was pleased to report the fleet fared well in its new environment, although he did achieve a notable first when an axle snapped on a Man SV truck.

"We had a replacement airlifted out by a partnering nation's helicopter," SSgt Potter continued. "It came out by underslung load, and we changed it in the middle of the desert – that has never been done before.

"We were doing the impossible and did everything the UN asked of us.

"The Germans said that if we head west out of camp anything weighing more than 20 tonnes would not make it.

"They are not designed to go out on that terrain, but we proved the concept can work.

"I insisted we could fix anything in the field as long as we get the spares. I was a corporal in Iraq and Afghanistan, so it was the first time that I was the one making decisions on the ground – we did not want to fail.

"We had so much thrown at us, but we are REME and British Army soldiers, so we made it work."

With R and R not possible during the deployment, the task group's personnel are now enjoying some well-deserved post-tour leave before the tempo inevitably increases ahead of their next tasking.

The majority were sampling operations for the first time and their experiences in Mali mean they will be well prepared for whatever that test may be.

"It was a chance to get out behind the wire and conduct patrols in a contested environment where they knew they could improve the lives of local people – that is what every soldier wants," Lt Col Robinson concluded.

"It really was a team effort. The Light Dragoons may well have had their name at the top of the orbat, but we could not have done it without the Royal Anglians, the medics, the engineers and so many more – it was a task group from across the whole Army." ■



28 length of the group's longest patrol, in days

15 Man SV axles changed on tour

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Tools to TERRIFY

As the modern Army grapples with emerging threats, *Soldier* reflects on some of the battlespace kit that has changed the course of history

WHEN American forces invaded the tiny Japanese island of Iwo Jima in February 1945, the Empire of the Sun's military leaders were completely unflinching.

Hoping their enemy would not stomach a brutal battle of attrition, they ordered their troops to dig deep into the black volcanic soil of the Pacific outpost and prepare to mount a last man stand to defend their home territory.

The US campaign to wrestle the objective from them took five weeks, using all of the era's available conventional means. But despite the deployment of a cataclysmic naval bombardment, relentless air attacks and use of brutal infantry arms such as flamethrowers, the struggle for victory continued.

New technology, however, was about to change the face of global conflict forever. Days after two atomic bombs were dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the enemy surrendered unconditionally.

The human cost of this new ordnance was horrific, and the need to use these weapons of mass destruction has been contentious ever since. But the overnight arrival of the nuclear age cruelly demonstrated how conflict is an ever-evolving beast. New developments have the potential to completely alter the course of history – and in short order.

Today, it could be argued that the world is once again at a military crossroads. An untested battlespace is emerging, where computer hackers and fake news peddlers have the potential to inflict severe damage without firing a shot. Meanwhile, some powerful new military technologies are emerging from the drawing board.

Against this backdrop, *Soldier* takes look at some of the kit and capabilities that have proved to be game-changing over the decades...



Repeater rifle

● The firearm has been a core part of the soldier's personal kit for generations, after coming of age during the American Civil War.

This conflict saw these new weapons used in

anger, representing a shift from an old Napoleonic-style of warfare to a new form of mechanised combat.

At the Battle of Allatoona Pass in 1864, soldiers from the 7th »

» Illinois Infantry Regiment were armed with the 16-shot Henry Rifle. They reported that the state-of-the-art equipment provided huge force-multiplying effects, delivering firepower equivalent to 12 troops armed with muzzle-loading muskets. It was an early foretaste of the more powerful weaponry to follow in the First World War.

Experts, however, stress that the quality of an infanteer's personal weapon – the current types of which have their roots in the German assault rifles of the Second World War – are ultimately second to the quality of the individual wielding it.



Machine gun

● An evolution of an invention by Hiram S Maxim in the late 19th century, the full force of this game-changing weapon came in the First World War when its devastating potential was laid bare to soldiers, commanders and their political masters.

The full realisation of its effect arguably came during the Somme offensive – the opening day of which on July 1, 1916 remains the bleakest ever for the British Army.

Ordered to advance under the fatal assumption that an artillery bombardment had softened up German defences, Allied troops were hit with the machine gun's full force. More than 19,000 died and nearly 40,000 were wounded.

Its development during the conflict meant it continued to become an evermore efficient killer. New ways of operating such as "enfilade firing" (hitting the enemy from the flanks of the battlefield to inflict maximum casualties) were also devised. Countering it fully would require the combined efforts of emerging tech like tanks, air power and better artillery.

Tank

● Originally a codename that prevailed as its official moniker, the introduction of the tank was a turning point when its caterpillar tracks first crawled across the First World War battlefields.

The mechanised armour was first used in force during the Battle of Cambrai in 1918, but its full potential was not unlocked until the opening months of the Second World War.

It was, ironically, a German officer called Heinz Guderian who established how the platform could prove a battle winner if synchronised with infantry and

air power. His theories would ultimately lead to the Blitzkrieg tactics which, in 1940, resulted in the fall of France and the Allied evacuation at Dunkirk.

Writing in his seminal 1937 study *Achtung – Panzer!*, Guderian said: "As a rule, new weapons call for new ways of fighting and appropriate tactical and organisational forums.

"You should not pour new wine into old vessels – in the days to come the goddess of victory will bestow her laurels on those prepared to act with daring."





Helicopters

● The brainchild of Ukrainian inventor Igor Sikorsky in the late 1930s, rotary power arguably came of military age with the likes of the Huey UH-1 in the Vietnam War.

The battle of the Ia Drang Valley represented a notable first for the platform when, in November 1965, hundreds of American troops were flown into battle in the South East Asian country's central highlands. The move was to be the first mass deployment of personnel using helicopters and the so-called airmobile concept.

The landings also heralded the first major encounter between US forces and the People's Army of Vietnam. Aircrews provided a vital resupply line and carried out casualty evacuations throughout two days of fierce fighting before the Americans prevailed.

Helicopters have long been a mainstay of the British Army, seeing action around the world. With the introduction of new aircraft – notably the Apache AH-64E and versatile Wildcat – plus the formation of 1st Aviation Brigade last year, the Service now has a potent punch in the skyborne toolkit.

“
They have been
our trusted friends
”



Animals

● Quirky stories suggesting that China's military mandarins are readying thousands of carrier pigeons for use should their IT system be compromised might just be heresy, but the value of the creature combatant is not to be underestimated.

A faithful group of animal allies have served in every military age – from horses carrying cavalymen fighting against Napoleon's troops at Waterloo to birds with messages and dogs sniffing out explosives.

“They have been our trusted friends, often coming into their own when technology fails,” says Laurence Roche, a retired major and military history teacher.

“Soldiers with the French army have started using mules again to help carry supplies while our own military working dogs saved countless lives in Afghanistan.” »

Drones

● They might have been in the public eye during more recent conflicts, but the history of the UAV has its roots in the interwar period. The name “drone” first originated with the DH.82B Queen Bee – a pilotless aircraft used for target practice in the 1930s. A drone is a term for one of the honey-making insect’s workers.

However, this kit’s sophistication has grown more rapidly in recent times and its latest generations have become a key feature of modern operations.

In southern Afghanistan, the Hermes 450 and Watchkeeper gathered information with sophisticated sensors and distributed it in real-time to commanders on the ground.

Lt Col Nathan Webber (RA), who commanded a UAV battery during Op Herrick, says: “In less than ten years, there was a huge step change in this equipment and capability.

“I remember the old Phoenix assets being used in Kosovo – which could only take full-motion video footage – but in Afghanistan the kit returned high-quality imagery that we could send from a tablet to anyone in theatre.

“The equipment has been transformed from being a means of coordinating artillery fires to an asset linking several battlespace functions together.”



IED

● Often a terrorist weapon of choice after other options have failed, the improvised explosive device has proved a devastating weapon throughout history.

This was certainly the case when dissident Irish Republican group the Provisional IRA carried out bombings in Northern Ireland and the UK mainland in the 1970s and 80s.

But, as their ruthless campaign progressed, the British gained significant experience in countering the devices, as well as a wealth of wider counter-insurgency acumen. This proved crucial on later operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Andy Oppenheimer, who charts the history of Irish Republicanism in his book *IRA: The Bombs and the Bullets*, says the dissidents acquired significant capabilities. They had experimented with mass effect weapons such as fuel air explosives as well as napalm, although these were not used in attacks.

But he stresses that British counter-terrorism expertise also proved decisive. And it remained highly developed as a result of the troops’ experience during the 38-year Northern Ireland campaign, Op Banner.

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POSITIVE CHARGE

Trials show that electric hybrid vehicles could add lethality as well as cutting the fuel bill...





““
**There are
 tactical
 advantages**
 ””

THE idea of supplying the Army with a range of hybrid electric vehicles is becoming more compelling by the minute, thanks to an experiment that’s been taking place behind closed doors at Millbrook Proving Ground.

The secretive vehicle evaluation facility in rural Bedfordshire is used by many of the world’s top car makers. But since 2019 it is also where senior officers – along with Defence Equipment and Support boffins and private industry specialists – have been developing three standard Army platforms fitted with diesel-electric power systems to assess their potential.

To date, the team has converted a Man SV by fitting electric drive and large lithium batteries across the chassis which can be charged up by a diesel engine. A Foxhound and Jackal have had their combustion engines engineered to charge a battery pack that in turn powers electric hub drives at each wheel.

The experiment is using a raft of current, commercially available technology to demonstrate to the Service what can be achieved. And it has seen manufacturers such as Magtec – a UK-based company that produces electric and hybrid drive systems for lorries and buses – provide the inner workings required.

“At the end of this year our target is to be able to say what hybridisation can and can’t do for the Army,” says Lt Col Ed Sutthery (RRF), head of innovation, research and experimentation in the Ground Manoeuvre Capability Directorate at Army Headquarters.

“We have still got lots to evaluate such as safety – there ”

Report: Steve Muncey Pictures: Graeme Main, Sgt Ben Beale, RLC

» are some high voltages involved.

“We need to determine, for example, what we must engineer to make them safe to drive through water, what happens if a rifle bullet hits different parts of the system, or how we make these vehicles’ heat signatures acceptable for the demands of military operations.

“But it’s become clear that the potential advantages they offer out in the field can’t be ignored and I truly believe these types of vehicles will be in service with us soon.”

The gains witnessed at Millbrook include the sort of things you might assume: increased range, lower fuel consumption and reduced emissions are all phrases we’ve become familiar with through advertising for hybrid passenger cars.

However, for the Army these platforms also offer the tantalising prospect of acting as mobile energy stores on the battlefield, powering defensive and offensive weapons, sensors and ancillary devices.

“There are obvious tactical advantages with these assets,” continues Lt Col Sutthery.

“All these vehicles can potentially run silently on electrical power for two to three hours and then, when they’ve moved away from the enemy, can switch on their engines to recharge their batteries.

“But the stored power they offer also opens up a new page on how vehicles can support operations because of the way

the battlefield is evolving with increased digitisation and networked systems.

“Soldiers could potentially fight lighter because their personal battery packs for situational awareness tools and comms may be smaller thanks to the availability of charging points on a reconnaissance platform or combat support vehicle.

“And having lots of electricity to hand will also be crucial for the increasing burden that’s going to be placed on assets such as Foxhound when they are equipped with the latest networked comms systems, electronic countermeasures and active protection devices.

“They could also power our drones up for their next aerial reconnaissance task or counter-UAV systems to nullify attacks from the enemy.

“You only have to see the footage from Nagorno Karabakh, of drone attacks against the Armenian forces, to see how very real that threat is.”

The introduction of hybrid platforms could also have implications for the way combat support is provided.

“Two of the Man SV trucks we have here could power a major field hospital for 24 hours,” adds Lt Col Sutthery.

“Think of the hospital at Camp Bastion. That had CT and MRI scanners, which are hungry beasts requiring palletised generators, but this Man SV would be ideal for a deployed environment because you don’t need that fixed infrastructure.

“So, the trucks that are bringing the hospital in then become the generators.”

Maintenance is also a potential winner, with fewer moving parts to take care of in hybridised vehicles.

“A Jackal crew on ops would be regularly checking the engine and whether the oils and lubes are fit to go and that affects their time on other duties,” continues the officer.

“In the hybrid patrol vehicles wiring and small boxes have replaced some relatively vulnerable components such as drive shafts and gearboxes. And the wheel hub electric motor is small enough to be easily transported into the operating area to replace those damaged or malfunctioning.

“With the way robotics and unmanned systems are developing, I can see spares being delivered forward by drones, which then plug into the platform being repaired to charge themselves up for their return journey to base.”

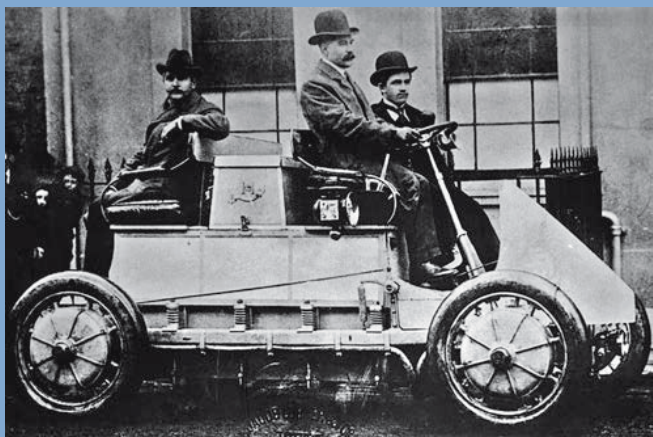
So why not opt for fully electric vehicles to make the platforms even lighter and more robust, rather than the halfway house that the hybrid represents?

“The problem with full electric vehicles is that you eventually need to plug into a fixed power source and that could mean returning to base,” explains Lt Col Sutthery.

“If you are mobile, dispersed and deployed forward you can’t afford to be reliant on solar power or wind.

“Given that these hybrids could work on a variety of fuels, including biodiesel and aviation, they give us the degree of flexibility we require during operations.”

After this experiment concludes at the end of the



Driving in circles

The world may be increasingly turning to electric power but did you know the first hybrid car was built in 1899 by German engineer Ferdinand Porsche?

Called the System Lohner-Porsche Mixte, it used a petrol engine to power the electric motor responsible for driving the car’s front wheels.

It was well received, and more than 300 were produced.

But demand waned when Henry Ford launched the first car assembly line in Detroit in 1904. Mass production enabled Ford to sell cars at lower prices than anyone else. As a result, the Mixte was doomed and with it, for the next 90 years or so, the idea of hybrid vehicles.

CC
Soldiers could
fight lighter



More survivable, efficient and stealthy – electric hub drives are transforming the potential of the Foxhound

year, a more advanced set of trials will take place to determine the Army's specific user requirements.

Questions such as how many hours of endurance are needed for each type of platform, how many secondary devices they must power and what hurdles need clearing to make them rugged enough for combat must all be resolved.


It will be a complex process and, as recent major equipment programmes have shown, this path is often long and fraught with difficulties.

Whether hybrids come into service in a few years' time remains to be seen but there is one major factor working in their favour – political impetus.

The introduction of hybrid technology may reduce fuel use. Experts at Millbrook believe savings of around ten to 15 per cent could be enjoyed compared with the vehicles' conventionally-driven equivalents.

Reducing reliance on fossil fuels is a key goal of the Ministry of Defence, as stated in its recent report *Climate Change and Sustainability Strategic Approach*, which sets out how it plans to support the government's target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

With that in mind, who would bet against hybrid vehicles becoming a mainstay of the British Army's fleet in the not-too-distant future? ■



ENGINEERING THE FUTURE

Reservist sappers train for a coastal showdown

THE troops are still below ground as the silhouette of the village begins to take shape – the outlines of houses slowly appearing from the gloom as dawn gradually breaks.

In a world far removed from their day jobs, the Reservists from 131 Commando Squadron, Royal Engineers are on their stomachs. They squeeze awkwardly through a tunnel beneath a pair of antique railway wagons – the last vestiges of a military line dismantled during the Cold War – before they emerge into the slate-grey morning to conduct their attack.

Rain is hammering down as the teams begin clearing four buildings in this mock strike. Blasts are felt and smoke drifts across the village on the Longmoor Training Area as a rattle of rounds rings out and the personnel pass from room to room.

There are frenetic bursts of automatic fire – then the action subsides to be replaced by the monotonous splash of a midsummer downpour.

The individuals taking part in Exercise Commando Sapper straddle a dual life between civvy street and soldiering. They hail from sectors such as industry, the civil service and finance but their military role, on the other hand, is focused on operating in coastal areas, toe-to-toe with the enemy.

“It is fantastic to see everyone gelling so quickly during these urban warfare serials,” Sgt Andy McArthur, who has been taking part in the training package at Longmoor, says as troops conclude their mock assault.

“Success is a matter of going through the drills smoothly, not rushing, and keeping everything as tight as you possibly can as you clear each of the rooms.

“There are 30 or so soldiers taking part from my troop and everyone has performed well – they’ve managed to keep

everything tight in the build-up and assault.”

While the exercise is an annual feature for this unit – part of 24 Commando, Royal Engineers – this year’s two-week training package has a definite edge.

With the Army stating in its Future Soldier modernisation plan that a “fully integrated war-fighting role” will be key to the future Reserve, troops like this are poised to become an evermore important asset.

The serials have also been adapted to meet the potential threat posed by nation state adversaries fielding well-drilled personnel and state-of-the-art kit.

Full on conventional war-fighting is now the order of the day but the soldiers – who are selected via the demanding two-week Reserve forces commando course – are certainly well prepared for the demands they might face.

“This exercise is very much about ensuring our core skills and drills are up-to-date,” Maj Olaf Dudley, 131 Squadron’s officer commanding, points out. “As well as the urban warfare training, we are conducting bridging serials in addition to demolition scenarios and live-firing packages in the West Country.

“Falling under the Royal Marines remit in 3 Commando Brigade, we have troops in our unit that can help with a number of different tasks, which include the distribution of water and engineering support to fuel installations.

“But we also have a raft of experience from a variety of civilian roles – we’re drawn from a wide range of professions with different skill sets.”

While admitting that the Covid pandemic has presented challenges, Maj Dudley believes the strict hygiene protocols have added to the training value.

“It has made our admin tighter,” he says. »



“Obviously, we have measures to prevent infection and procedures in place to deal with any positive cases.

“But our planning means we have been able to flex people in and out of training as required, effectively tailoring the programme to individual personnel.”

Meanwhile, Maj Dudley – who has been a Reservist for 35 years and has a civvy job in government – is impressed with how his complement of 70 troops are consolidating their military knowledge. The squadron includes plant operators, drivers and combat engineers in its ranks.

Those involved in the training are certainly gaining a great deal from the experience – and admit they are relishing the return to the Army’s core business.

“The exercise has definitely been very useful, I think we all picked a lot up,” says Lt Tom Garrod as he concludes the Longmoor serials. “We were responsible for observing the target before the final assault and worked well as a team.

“On this occasion we did the live-firing package before going on the urban drills and this also helped focus the mind on weapon handling.”



THE RESERVE FORCES COMMANDO COURSE

A package culminating in successful candidates being awarded the green beret, applicants for 131 Squadron will find this demanding test awaiting them. The formidable two-week package follows a ramp-up of preparation weekends for the demanding mental and physical challenges that lie ahead. It includes a nine-mile march, endurance course and a 30-mile yomp carrying weapons and kit – which must be completed within eight hours.

Interested in volunteering for service with **24 Commando, Royal Engineers?**
Regulars can email 3cdox-24cdotrgmailbox@mod.gov.uk
and Reservists 3cdox-131sqnmailbox@mod.gov.uk

The officer, who works as an engineer for a major aerospace firm on civvy street, believes the depth of experience in the Reserves continues to serve the Army well. “There are many specialist skills in this unit alone,” he adds.

LCpl Will Tolman agrees. An explosives expert serving with the Ministry of Defence in his day job, he is now deploying his expertise at the sharp end.

“I joined 131 Squadron four years ago after looking at where I might be able to add value in the Army,” he recalls.

“My skills are niche and they fitted in with this unit – so I went

off and prepared for the commando course.

“This is certainly not a nine-to-five role; it is different to my day job at the MoD and there are a lot of opportunities – I can make a difference here.”

The abilities, and diverse background, of the junior NCO and his colleagues is certainly proving invaluable to the Service as the nature of conflict changes.

Selecting the best volunteers – while maintaining their skills and fitness to the highest standards – will be critical to success in the evolving battlespace. ■



CONSTRUCTION v DESTRUCTION

The engineers rehearsed two specialist disciplines during the exercise – *Soldier* took a closer look...

BRIDGING: A key part of their role, the sappers of 131 Squadron are poised to help troops move around the battlespace, ensuring the likes of rivers pose no obstacle. Soldiers from the unit rehearsed their skills in assembling the medium girder bridge in Weymouth, Dorset and capably showed their mettle on the serials. Squadron OC Maj Olaf Dudley says: “There are always gaps that must be plugged – teams of eight soldiers can assemble these structures and keep forces moving. In the same way, we are also able to bring down bridges to halt an enemy.”

DEMOLITIONS: Troops from the squadron have been honing so-called “disruption and denial” tactics, using explosives to bring down enemy structures to keep the foe at arm’s length. The specialists rehearsed with the kit and methods needed at a site in the West Country, where they were safely able to ply their trade and hone the required skills. But Maj Dudley adds that explosives are also a vital component of construction tasks. “We might, for example, be called upon to clear rocks from a route being built,” he points out.



MAJ OLAF DUDLEY

Age: 53

Years of service:
1986-present

Military Role:
OC, 131 Cdo Sqn, RE

Civvy job:
Civil servant, Cabinet Office

Operational experience:
Afghanistan, Iraq





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A short-term training team at work in Kaduna State, Nigeria



Picture: British High Commission, Nigeria

TALKBACK

‘Let’s talk sense on medals’

HAVING completed a deployment to Nigeria for four months to deliver mission-specific training to the Nigerian armed forces, I can say with authority that medallic recognition for this task was a burning issue in the unit.

The operation was regarded as a defence engagement task and so we were not entitled to a medal – despite the team reporting weekly to the operations section at Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ).

As a result, this mission is a hard sell to many soldiers for whom medallic recognition is important because it’s very different from other similar activities.

It is conducted in a high-threat, austere environment, requiring individuals to be armed at all times. It also lasts longer than most short-term training team assignments and directly contributes to Operation Turus objectives which revolve around assisting Nigeria with the Boko Haram insurgency.

To rub salt in the wound, some individuals who were deployed by PJHQ under Op Turus were in the country for less time than the training team, never left the capital and lived in hotel-style accommodation all the time – yet they were formally recognised.

Will the Army broaden the medal-earning criteria for these deployments?

There remain several deployments that are classed as defence engagement which support current recognised missions and many personnel believe they warrant the award of a medal.

Have no doubt, this is an emotive issue for our Servicemen and women. – **Name and address supplied**

Col Jim Taylor, Assistant Head, Personal Services, replies: Training teams deployed on capacity-building activities are categorised as “defence activity other than operations” but this does not mean they are automatically ineligible for medallic recognition.

Operations and wider defence tasks are assessed by the operations recognition board against a set of established criteria to determine whether or not they qualify for the award of a medal.

The criteria include the risk to personnel deployed, the rigour experienced by them and the scale of the activity or operation.

Service in Nigeria has been reviewed and recognition given through the General Service Medal 2008, which was granted for deployment in a specific geographical region.

Personnel deployed there for 30 continuous days or 45 days accumulated are eligible.

Those deployed outside of this area, or who do not accrue the required number of non-continuous days of service, either on Op Turus or through wider defence activity, are not eligible.

Also, the Army does not have the authority to independently broaden medallic recognition. This is conducted through the recognition board in conjunction with PJHQ and the other single Services.

If you require further information, please contact my team directly.

“Have no doubt, this is an emotive issue”

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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Photography: Anthony Kerr © Crown Copyright

BOOTING FALSE RUMOURS OUT

● I AM part of a company that works alongside AKU, one of the major suppliers of combat boots to the UK's Armed Forces.

I have recently been engaged in a meeting with some end users because AKU wanted to find out what those users thought of the boots.

I was told by a number of participants that they knew “on good authority” that the boots they were issued with were not genuine but had in fact been manufactured cheaply in the Far East to cope with demand.

I know this is absolutely not true and I was particularly saddened when certain individuals said they had purchased a second pair of AKU boots, so convinced were they that the ones they had were not genuine.

The MoD works hard to supply a good boot from a reputable manufacturer and I am concerned that these rumours mean hard-working soldiers are effectively wasting their money because they don't need to buy what they already have. – **Jill Evans, Osborne Consulting Solutions**



GOT A GRIPE?

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Newly-promoted colonels on the staff course at Sandhurst

‘We should promote the best’

I WAS commissioned into a non-Regular permanent staff (NRPS) post – a group B commission – in January 2005, but in March of that year the terms and conditions of service were changed for new entrants.

Their terms were altered again some ten years later when they were moved to full-time Reserve service (FTRS), which is classed as a group A commission.

The “so what” of all this is FTRS staff are considered for promotion through the selection board – the “beige list” – while personnel like myself, who remained on their original terms, have group B commissions and are not eligible.

I will admit we have the advantage of retaining our Regular pensions while FTRS personnel have had theirs capped by the Treasury.

However, I think all officers who have, through positive appraisals, been recommended for promotion should be considered by the selection board.

The Army looks to pick those who have proven their worth through fair and transparent assessment processes, so why deselect on the basis of a type of commission? – **Name address supplied**

Lt Col Claire James, Personnel Policy Branch, Army Headquarters, replies: Thank you for your letter regarding the difference between the promotion prospects of NRPS and FTRS officers.

It is important to note that the two forms of service have very different terms and conditions and, as such, are not equitable.

You have articulated an example of this in your question – that NRPS personnel are able to keep their Regular pensions whereas FTRS staff have had theirs abated.

In terms of promotion, there are no longer any NRPS appointments available for advancement.

Meanwhile, those serving on FTRS commitments do not need to be boarded to apply for a role in a higher rank on the same terms.

They do, however, need to be boarded to apply for a Reserve group A commission post on Reserve service days – should they wish to resign their FTRS commitment – or to substantively promote in that category of engagement.

“Why deselect on that basis?”

VEXED ABOUT MISSING COVID PASSPORT

● THE National Health Service is still not linked to the military medical documents system. This means soldiers can't get covid vaccination passports which will restrict our activity as the world opens up.

I was told weeks ago by the NHS that this was being looked at, but I still can't get an answer about it from them or my medical centre. Are you aware of any activities to resolve this? – **Name and address supplied**

Lt Col Jacqueline Powell, Campaigns and Internal Communications, Army Headquarters, replies: The NHS may not be linked to our medical document system but you can access your NHS covid pass certificate using the NHS Online service.

Instructions on how to do this are published on Defence Connect – search for “vaccination certificates for patients”.

Or scan this QR code to be taken directly to the guide on how to access your pass.



BULLET POINTS

Bite-sized data to keep you in the know



CAREERS

The Recruit for Spouses Career Academy has joined forces with Virgin Red to offer a free mentoring programme to military spouses. Mentors from the company will include employees in areas such as business development and portfolio management. For more information about the initiative visit recruitforspouses.co.uk/spouses/career-academy

Veterans into Logistics CIC is a not-for-profit organisation based in Greater Manchester dedicated to training and supporting ex-military personnel for new careers within the transport and logistics industry. Visit veteransintologistics.org.uk

Forces Families Jobs is a platform designed to help partners into meaningful employment. Visit forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk



DIARY

August 1-September 1: Summer holiday activities for children at the Army Flying Museum, Middle Wallop. Book at armyflying.com/what-s-on/events/summer-holiday-activities/

August 7-8: Combined Ops Military & Air Show at Headcorn Aerodrome, Kent, TN27 9HX. A family event featuring a variety of modern and vintage aircraft displays plus living history re-enactments, arena events, military stalls and children's entertainment. Adults from £12 per day, children over five £7. To book visit headcornevents.co.uk/events

August 13: The Berlin Wall – a free talk at the National Army Museum, London to mark the 60th anniversary of the construction of the Berlin Wall. Prof Patrick Major will explore the crisis that followed. To attend in person or online visit nam.ac.uk/whats-on/berlin-wall

September 4: Irreverent Warriors Silkies Hike in London. A 22km fundraising and awareness-raising walk from the US-run organisation (irreverentwarriors.com) which seeks to improve mental health and prevent veteran suicide through

camaraderie and humour. Open to all British military personnel and veterans.

From September 12: Foe to Friend, an exhibition at the National Army Museum, London examining the UK's 75-year presence in Germany. For more details visit nam.ac.uk

September 17-20: Tankfest 2021 – the best display of historic moving armour in the world. Guest vehicles, living history encampments and demonstrations, plus a mini arena and lecture stage. Open 0900-1800. Find out more at tankmuseum.org

September 25-26: Swindon and Cricklade Railway Military Weekend featuring military vehicles, trade stalls, walking history, food and ice creams, live period music, beer tent and flypast. Visit swindon-cricklade-railway.org/event/military-weekend

November 6: Militia fair and auction in association with Duke's Auctioneers at The Tank Museum in Bovington, Dorset. Lots go on display November 3-6. The auction will also be live-streamed on the museum's YouTube channel.

Until further notice: World War 2: War Stories – an exhibition at The Tank Museum in Bovington. The story of the Royal Armoured Corps through a series of campaigns and battles, 1940-45.



DIRECTORY

ABF The Soldiers' Charity:
020 7901 8900;
soldierscharity.org

Armed Forces Buddhist Society:
Chaplain 020 7414 3411;
afbs-uk.org

Armed Forces Christian Union:
01793 783123;
afcu.org.uk

Armed Forces Muslim Association:
Chaplain 020 7414 3252;
afma.org.uk

Armed Services Advice Project:
0808 800 1007;
adviceasap.org.uk

Army Families Federation:
01264 382324;
mil 94391 2324;
aff.org.uk

Army LGBT Forum:

armylgbt.org.uk

Army Libraries:
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Army Ornithological Society:
armybirding.org.uk

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

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

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

Care After Combat:
careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

Centre for Veterans Health, King Edward VII Hospital:
020 7467 4370;
cduenne@kingedwardvii.co.uk

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

Combat Stress:
0800 323 4444;
combatstress.org.uk

Defence Bullying, Harassment and Discrimination 24/7 Helpline:
0800 783 0334

Erskine:
0141 814 4569;
erskine.org.uk

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

Felix Fund – the bomb disposal charity:
07713 752901;
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
forcespensiosocietys.org

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

Heroes Welcome:
heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
highground-uk.org.uk
07951 495 272

Humanist, Atheist and Non-religious in Defence Network:
defencehumanists.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office:
01252 787574

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or
0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
mutual-support.org.uk

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

PoppyScotland:
0131 557 2782;
poppyscotland.org.uk

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

Remount:
01451 850 341;
remount.net

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

Royal British Legion Scotland:
0131 550 1583;
legionscotland.org.uk

RBL Industries Vocational Assessment Centre:
01622 795900;
rbli.co.uk

Scottish Veterans' Residences:
0131 556 0091;
svronline.org

Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex-Services:
01748 833797;
spaces.org.uk

SSAFA: 0845 1300 975;
ssafa.org.uk

Stoll: 020 7385 2110;
stoll.org.uk

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

The Poppy Factory:
020 8940 3305;
poppyfactory.org

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

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

Troop Aid:
0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260;

troopaid@icloud.com; troopaid.info

uk4u Thanks!:
01798 812081;
uk4u.org

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

WVRS: 02920 232 668



SEARCHLINE

The Forces Pension Society is staging roadshows. See forcespensionsociety.org/news/events for the latest dates and details.

Mesothelioma UK is looking to raise £40,000 for a National Memorial Arboretum memorial honouring personnel who lost their battle with cancer. Visit mesothelioma.uk.com/armed-forces-memorial-donation

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WIN

TEN details have been changed in this picture of HRH The Prince of Wales talking to members of The Parachute Regiment at Merville Barracks in Colchester last month. The colonel-in-chief was presenting their battalions with new colours and it was a momentous occasion – the last time colours were presented to the regiment was in 1998. Last month also marked the 50th anniversary of Prince Charles's first parachute jump.

Circle all the differences on the left image and send the panel to HOAY 952, *Soldier*, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot, Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than August 31. A photocopy is also acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

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The winner's name will appear in the October issue. All the usual competition rules apply.

June's winner: Mr Bremner, Folkestone, Kent.




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REVIEWS



GAMES

Tour de France 2021

For Xbox, PS4 and PC

› THE world's most famous cycle race was back on schedule this year after the Covid-hit 2020 outing was postponed until the later months of last summer.

Having started on June 26, the 108th spectacle recently concluded with the usual blast through Paris – the end of a 2,120-mile ride with six mountain climbs.

Given the event's extreme physical demands, complex rules and protracted timeframes, it is perhaps an odd choice for a video game conversion. But fans can now replay the event to their heart's content in full virtual glory.



P59
BOOKS



» *Tour de France 2021* – the latest offering in an officially licensed series – sets out to digitally recreate the sporting showcase in all its highs and lows. Initially available on PC, PS4 and Xbox One, with versions for next generation machines soon, the title’s billing includes an array of new features.

As well as rendering the official race route, the package includes a more customisable version in the My Tour mode – which now provides nearly 90 stages.

Refinements have been made to the peloton behaviour – which is flagged as more realistic than in the last offering – while a recovery mechanic and extra branded kit add to the fun.

The upshot is a decent recreation of the high-octane event that captures the atmosphere and gives players an authentic experience as they pedal for supremacy.

We sampled the Xbox One version and found gameplay to be solid throughout with controls easily picked up – allowing virtual competitors to quickly establish themselves and become part of the action.

Although the title offers more of an arcade – rather than simulator – experience, riders will nonetheless require a decent slice of stamina as the race legs are lengthy. A two-player co-op mode is a welcome addition in an age where fewer games allow you to button bash with a friend sitting in the same room.

On the flip side, the graphics and general delivery are mediocre, with impressive intro sequences giving way to a far less breathtaking in-game experience.

The scenery has a somewhat two-dimensional look while the endless shouts of “allez, allez” from roadside spectators soon prove deeply irritating. It will be interesting to see whether these elements are any different when the game is released on the latest PS5 and Xbox Series X platforms.

Nonetheless *Tour de France* will hold plenty of appeal for the Army’s cycling legion. Finding your rhythm, choosing when to break away from the pack, maintaining the lead and conserving energy for the hills is good fun. The less committed, on the other hand, should probably look elsewhere. ■



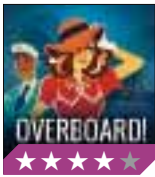
VERDICT:

Good fun – but for hardened tourists only

★★★★★

REVIEW: CLIFF CASWELL, SOLDIER AND SGT BEN MAHER, RLC

GAMES RELEASES



Overboard
For PC and Switch

A MURDER whodunnit played from the perspective of the guilty party, this black comedy is one of the most original games *Soldier* has seen for a while.

Overboard casts gamers as 1930s socialite Veronica Villensey, who has despatched her husband into the Atlantic Ocean from a New York bound ship. Now with a day to kill until arrival in the Big Apple she needs to play the innocent party – potentially requiring her to lie, cheat and seduce to retain her liberty. It all translates into a beautifully illustrated interactive story, requiring decisions from multiple choice menus to determine the outcome. Easy to pick up and put down, this impressive game packs a significant punch for its relatively modest price tag of £11.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*

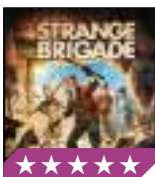


Maneater
For Switch

SANDBOX games of the *Grand Theft Auto* variety are now a mainstay of the video game world – but rarely do they feature a killer fish as the lead. *Maneater*, however, boldly casts players in this role, initially as a vulnerable bull shark pup, with the aim

of becoming the scourge of US coastal communities. En route, the task involves eating everything in sight to put on weight and acquire new abilities. Munching sea creatures will attract little attention, but snack on human swimmers – which provide a big bulk bonus – and gun-toting hunters soon appear. Despite its leftfield theme, this is a fine role-playing game with an amusing storyline and great graphics. We found it best served with a takeaway fish supper and a few drinks.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Strange Brigade
For Switch

FOLLOWING its release on full-sized consoles three years ago, this *Indiana Jones*-esque actioner set in the 1930s

makes an impressive Nintendo debut. *Strange Brigade* pleases on every front – with its slick mix of shootouts against the undead and puzzle solving, the title has clearly been reworked with care. Graphics are superb throughout, with the action taking place against a series of beautifully rendered backdrops. While the single player campaign is a fun affair, the multiplayer co-op options are by far the best way to enjoy this stylish Switch conversion.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



PICK OF THE MONTH:

The Father

A son's reckoning with his Nazi heritage

› IN the last months of the Second World War, my maternal grandparents were among millions struggling to survive the collapse of the Third Reich.

My grandmother's family joined a stream of refugees fleeing the Russian Army as it surged across East Prussia, while my grandfather was lucky to be staying with relatives when Allied bombers unleashed a firestorm on his hometown of Dresden.

Both teenagers at the time, they were too young to have played an active role in Hitler's regime, so I've never had to confront how I would have felt towards them had they been enthusiastically,

or even passively, involved.

But it's a question many Germans have had to grapple with about their family tree in the years since. And for some it continues to this day.

Niklas Frank (left) was seven when his father, former Nazi lawyer and governor of occupied Poland, Hans Frank, was executed at Nuremberg. As he grew up he developed a morbid fascination with understanding his heritage in all its horrifying detail, culminating in a savage

denunciation published in 1987 under the title *The Father: A Settling of Accounts*.



● *The Father*, by Niklas Frank and published by Biteback, is out now in paperback priced £12.99





Hans Frank during the Nuremberg trials (main image), with Hitler (below) and after his death (right)

➤ The graphic, often profane, narrative caused controversy in his home country and a watered-down version was eventually released in America, but it was not distributed in the UK – until now.

Seventy-five years on from the Nuremberg executions, a new translation, faithful to the original text, is finally available in paperback.

Today, as then, Frank says he feels compelled to break the “bloody silence” around his family and his country’s crimes.

“For decades, no one wanted to talk about the evil of the Third Reich and it made me want to vomit,” says the now 82-year-old, talking to *Soldier* from his home near Hamburg.

“But the general opinion, when the book first came out here, was that I should have been hanged beside my father.

“Apart from the bad language, I broke a big taboo by accusing not only my parents, but anyone who lived in the era.

“And that was horrible for Germans to hear because most of them had grown up in families who were active in the Nazi regime or simply just looked away.”

Frank’s first inkling that his father was not “on the good side” came at the age of six,

when American-produced newspapers in Bavaria published photos of concentration camps filled with corpses.

As a young adult he began to seek out those who had worked with or known Frank Snr, and their recollections, along with his diaries and memoirs, eventually formed the basis for the book.

Structured as a letter to his father’s ghost, it scathingly dissects his ingratiating correspondence with Hitler, and berates him as he callously oversees the deaths of millions while growing rich off their looted valuables.



The literary character assassination was serialised in *Stern* magazine – where the author worked as a journalist for 23 years – causing public uproar and a permanent rift with some of his surviving siblings, who insisted their father was a victim of the Allied judicial process.

Despite the consequences, however, Frank remains undeterred and more determined than ever to call out such misplaced loyalty.

“I still manage to sell around 1,500 copies a year,” the author continues. “And I often get long letters from modern readers complaining about the ongoing unwillingness in their families to discuss the Third Reich.

“That dictatorship was really cruel, and people were afraid, but by not opening up after the war and talking about their own cowardice, by staying silent, it is like they poisoned their children.

“And for me there is a direct line from them to the AfD.”

The rise of Alternative for Deutschland – Germany’s hard-right party – and its counterparts in other European countries comes as no surprise to Frank, who believes that an underlying “swamp” of racial prejudice has set the conditions for authoritarianism to flourish.

“Anti-Semitism has never gone from Germany –

BOOK RELEASES

it is still there, but hidden," he continues.

"I'm always perplexed that people don't have empathy, can't compare themselves to a Jewish family, put on a transporter for three days and nights and then having their beloved child or wife torn away from them.

"When I have these discussions after I do public talks, someone always says, 'yes, but look at the crimes of the Americans and the British Empire'.

"But to kill, in an industrialised manner, millions of innocent people is unique.

"We are the only people who did this, and we know what will happen if we don't build up our civil courage."

The Father is a strange, disturbing, but completely unforgettable book that will stick with me for a long time.

It is a howl of rage, not only against Hans Frank but against those Nazis who melted away, unpunished, at the end of the war to live out their lives as grey men in grey suits.

Ironically, Hans and Niklas Frank may not actually have been father and son, and the former's doubts over his offspring's paternity made him



aloof – something Frank considers "his good luck" because it ensured his later disgust was not clouded by fond memories.

Whether their connection was genetic or not, it's clear their relationship has loomed large over his entire life, in many ways much to his detriment.

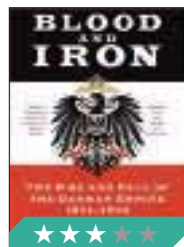
Today, a scarecrow stands outside his house, clothed in his father's Nazi-style leather coat.

I couldn't help but wonder whether an accident of birth justifies such self-flagellation. But for shining a light into the depths of depravity and refusing to look away despite the personal cost, Frank deserves the utmost respect. ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, SOLDIER



"The women's bravery, intelligence and a determination to live were admirable" – *The Nine*

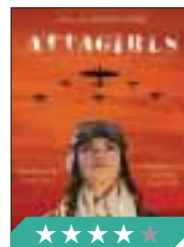


Blood and Iron
by Katja Hoyer

THE Great War saw Germany fall from a military and economic powerhouse to a starving and virtually bankrupt country in the throes of revolution. This book seeks to

tell the story of how, from its triumphant formation in 1871 to near collapse in 1918, Germany developed the national identity it needed to survive catastrophe. The author leans heavily on the great personalities of the period – Bismarck, Kaiser Wilhelm, Philipp of Eulenberg – and draws interesting modern parallels. Easy reading and short, the lack of detail may frustrate those familiar with the history already, but this is a sound introduction.

Pte Richard Thomas, Int Corps



Attagirls
by Paul Olavesen-Stabb

DURING the Second World War, the Air Transport Auxiliary delivered aircraft to front-line squadrons or collected damaged aircraft from them for repair, freeing up Royal

Air Force pilots for combat. Overcoming much male prejudice, these ladies did an excellent job, with several losing their lives in the process. Based on real-life pilot Molly Rose, this novel is an adaption of a film script for a movie still to be made. From a well-to-do family, Molly had learned to fly before the war and was married to a soldier fighting in Africa who was reported missing, believed killed. My one issue is that the book is very light on detail and the full story could be told in a larger edition. However, it is an enthralling tale, which is long overdue.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



The Nine
by Gwen Strauss

THIS is the harrowing story of a group of female resistance fighters who met in Nazi captivity and banded together to survive. Taken on a "death march" as the concentration

camps were emptied in the last days of the war, they found their chance to escape, but with the Allies yet to take Germany their route to freedom was fraught with peril. The women's bravery, intelligence and determination to live were admirable, however, one of the saddest parts of the book is that on their return home their experiences were largely overlooked because of their gender. While not an easy read, this account is worth sticking with to keep their memory alive.

Andy Kay, ex-RS



Geezers
by Monica Lavers

THE author of this autobiographical, "tell-all" tale spent three years up close and personal working in the cookhouse and stores at Hereford with Britain's elite.

Billed as compassionate, funny and heart breaking, what it actually is is a series of pretty naff dits – based on adrenalin-fuelled troopers trying to chat up the lady behind the hotplate or stores desk. The book was exactly what I expected it to be – a waste of time. Therefore, to quote from a famous military advertisement: 99.9 per cent need not buy, and the other 0.1 per cent probably shouldn't either.

Cpl Scott Roberts, Rifles

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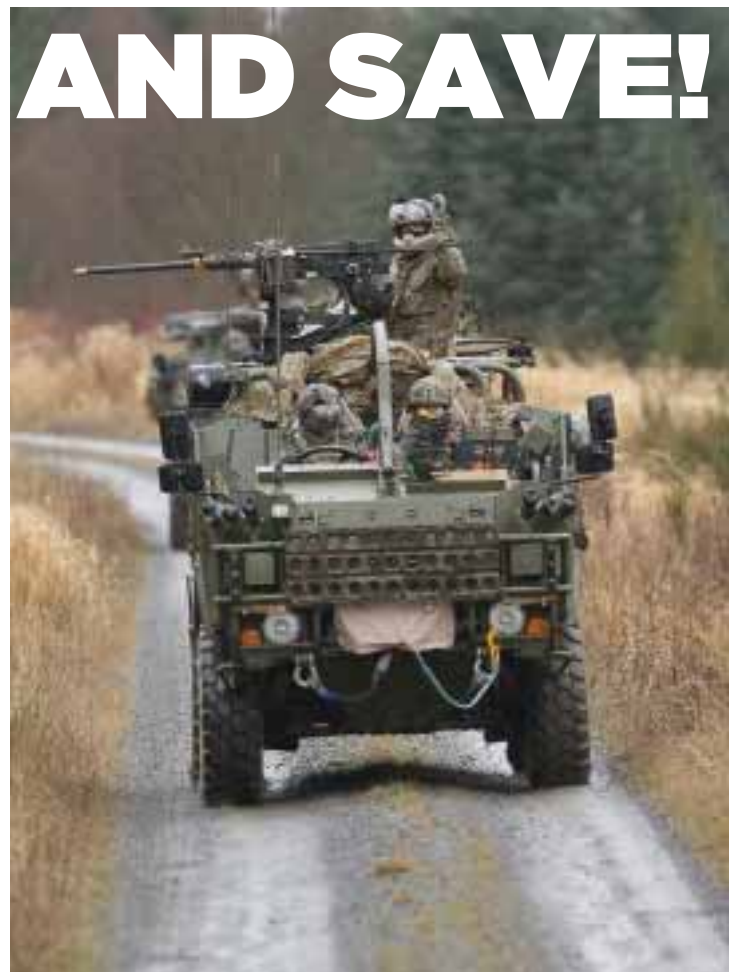
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SOLDIER SPORT



TIME TO CELEBRATE >>

HAVING tried, and failed, to win the Army Cycling Road Race Championships for nine years, Sgt James Bevan (REME) finally achieved one of his key sporting goals last month. Read more about his success, and the event's return after Covid-19, on pages 64-65...





OUT ON THE ROAD AGAIN

CYCLISTS RETURN TO THE SADDLE FOR ARMY CHAMPIONSHIPS AFTER DISRUPTED YEAR

IT PROVED to be a memorable day at the Army Cycling Road Race Championships as the event crowned first-time champions in the men's and women's fields after some thrilling action on the Colchester circuit.

A decisive break in the final chicane saw pre-race favourite Cpl Fran Derbyshire (AAC) surge to the line to seal the female honours, an effort that was matched by Sgt James Bevan (REME, pictured right) as he ended his long wait for top spot in the male standings.

The victory saw a delighted Derbyshire – who competed in her first race on borrowed kit in 2017 – achieve one of her key objectives for the season, although she told *SoldierSport* it was far from plain sailing.

“This is something my coach and I have planned for since October,” she added.

“The wind and rain didn't help and after quite a steady start I put an attack in to see who would come with me.

“We were in a group of five, which then dropped to four. I'm known for being a sprinter which meant they wanted to attack as they knew they couldn't take me to the line.

“I went early in the final chicane and that proved to be a decisive move.

“Because I am a sprinter the pressure was on me to win, which I don't really like – I'd rather be the underdog.”

Derbyshire (pictured near left) secured two podium finishes at British Cycling events in the build-up to the competition and her latest success continues her rapid rise in the sport, which has also seen her win the Army Road Race Series and establish

herself in the Service's squad.

“When I first got into cycling, I was one of those who were getting lapped at the back,” the soldier added.

“But I kept coming, I got better and am now part of the Army team.

“My focus is now on the British Cup and then the Inter-Services in September, which could prove to be the hardest test we've had.

“The Royal Navy are having selections for their final team of ten and I think lockdown, and training online with *Zwift*, has helped all three Services attract new talent.

“It's no fun racing ten against two – we want that challenge.”

Bevan's triumph saw him complete what has been a nine-year quest for honours, having fallen short during previous attempts in that period.

“I've either had bad luck or got it wrong on the day,” the athlete, who has achieved six podium finishes in eight races for professional team Saint Piran this year, explained.

“I've performed well in those seasons but I've either finished second, third or fourth.

“This is one I've wanted for nine years, and it means a lot.

“I had a few REME guys here today and we had a game plan. Maj Alex Fortune was leading for a long time; he is a strong time trial rider and the idea was to let him go and force the others to chase.

“Once that gap was bridged I was able to react to anything that happened in the last three laps and when we got to the last corner nobody was getting past me.”

For event organiser WO1 Mark Cain (RA), who is also



“THIS IS ONE I'VE WANTED FOR NINE YEARS”

manager of the Army men's team, the highlight of the day was seeing personnel back on the road after the considerable disruption of 2020.

More than 80 cyclists competed on the day – including a host of the Service's top riders – and the senior NCO is hoping some new talent will emerge in the coming months.

“It is fantastic to have road racing back,” he added.

“We are not quite at the point where it will be a full season but as things are a little less hectic, we are hoping to identify a few more youngsters who have come over from *Zwift*.

“It is a difficult sport to get into as it is quite expensive but we have a lot of experienced people in and around the team who can nurture them and bring them on.

“We also have some great supporters who can offer really good deals on equipment.”

And with the Army Championships now complete the focus has shifted to next month's Forces showdown and regaining the title that was lost last time out.

“As a team we have raced in 25 events already this season, with five winners and 15 podium finishes,” Cain added.

“That gives us some learning points as we move towards the Inter-Services. The Navy won it in 2019 and it is our key goal for the year.

“It is going to be a tough course in the rolling Devon countryside, but hopefully that will play to our strengths.” ■



LIFTERS REACH FULL POWER AFTER LOCKDOWN LULL

THE Army Powerlifting Union welcomed 70 athletes to the stage as it hosted its first full competition in nearly two years.

Featuring squat, bench press and deadlift disciplines, the event was the first to be held since the Covid-19 outbreak and formed the selection process for the Army team ahead of October's Combined Services Championships.

More importantly, it was designed to attract newcomers to the sport and more than half of those taking part were novice competitors – a figure that delighted organiser SSgt Stephen Baldock (RE).

“The numbers we have here today are higher than recent years,” he told *SoldierSport*.

“I think people just want to get out and do some sport again after lockdown.

“We really started to push the virtual competitions after

the second lockdown, when we knew people could have access to kit and military gyms, and we gained a lot of popularity.

“But it is great to be back doing it for real.

“Everyone has been super enthusiastic; they’ve had to diet to make their weight categories and they were here at 0730 ready to go.

“Our main goal is to promote the sport at grass roots level and 60 per cent of those taking part are novices.

“Some of our athletes will go off and compete at the national championships, which is great, but this is all about getting more people involved.”

After the scores from all three events were combined, Cpl Jonathon Payne (RE) was named best full power male with an overall total of 637.5kg lifted. Capt Olivia Whinton (QARANC) took the female equivalent prize with an effort of 312.5kg.



"IT IS GREAT TO BE BACK DOING IT FOR REAL"

As well as witnessing some impressive displays of strength, the showdown served as a proving ground for three newly qualified Army referees – all of whom are female.

It is a scene that is continuing to flourish and there are now 68 members in the Service's female powerlifting group – 15 of which were in action on the day.

Musn Amy Surman (RCAM) was among the newcomers sampling a competitive environment for the first time and said she decided to get involved after seeing the group promoted on social media by WO2 Sheridan Lucas (RLC), one of the newly qualified officials.

“We were talking about the events coming up and that inspired me to take part,” the soldier, who was named winner in the 80kg class, explained during a break in action.

“It was something to focus on during lockdown and I just

wanted to come along and see what happened.

“It has been a great day. The atmosphere is fantastic, and everyone is so encouraging.

“I had one weak event in the bench press, but I was really happy with how I performed in the others and managed to post some personal bests.

“I’ll see what happens moving forward but there is a ladies day in September, and I will continue training in the meantime.”

Cpl Abbie Rymer (RAMC) was another novice athlete in action for the first time.

Her background in strength training and cross fit meant the transition to powerlifting was an obvious move to make and she was delighted with her debut showing in Minley.

“I’m really pleased,” she added. “I lifted 137.5kg in the deadlift, which is a new personal best.

“I’ve been so busy with work and haven’t really trained for six weeks, so I just wanted to come and hit the weights I was comfortable with.

“When I got that personal best, I was shaking.

“Everyone is cheering and that spurs you on – it felt like the slowest deadlift in the world.

“In many ways this has given me a kick up the backside and if I put some training in, I could be quite good.” ■



MARTIAL ARTS IN NUMBERS

DISCIPLINES
WITHIN THE
SERVICE
SET-UP

5

LENGTH, IN
DAYS, OF THE
TAE KWON
DO SKILLS
AND GRADING
COURSE - THE
FIRST TO BE
HELD AFTER
LOCKDOWN

5

SOLDIERS
WHO
COMPLETED
GRADINGS
AT KUP AND
DAN LEVELS

7

ATHLETES
INVOLVED IN
THE COURSE

15

MEDALS
WON BY SGT
YAMI GUBA
LAST YEAR
- HE NOW
HAS 246
ACCOLADES
TO HIS NAME

6



EXCITEMENT AT MAT RETURN

HAVING spent 16 months away from the mat, the Army’s martial arts stars marked a return to action at the latest tae kwon do skills and grading course.

The event welcomed a mix of novice and experienced athletes, who eased themselves back into the groove in a range of non-contact drills.

A number of soldiers also successfully completed kup and dan gradings, the most notable of which saw new Army coach Sgt Yami Guba (RA, pictured above) achieve his fifth dan.

With the karate set-up holding an initial squad training session as this issue went to press and Brazilian jiu-jitsu hopefully following suit in the coming weeks the sport is starting to get back on track, much to the delight of Lt Col (ret) Dave Campey, secretary of the Army Martial Arts Association.

“The main aim for the tae

kwon do course was to get people back together,” he told *SoldierSport*.

“It was about going through their drills and learning how to do things like kicking again.

“The buzz around the place was brilliant. They were working really hard, even though it was non-contact.”

Campey was keen to stress that a phased return is being implemented across all disciplines in a bid to avoid potential setbacks from upping the intensity too soon.

He added: “It is about conditioning and match fitness at this stage. When the adrenalin starts pumping you may try a high kick, but the body is just not capable.

“In jiu-jitsu it’s all about knowing what strength you have, and that takes time to build up – the last thing we want is for people to go out there and break each other.

“But we are excited about it all and we will continue to come back slowly.” ■



STARTING IN STYLE

FEATHERWEIGHT star Gnr Karriss Artingstall (RA) booked her place in the quarter-finals of the Olympic boxing tournament with victory over Jucielen Romeu as this issue went to press.

The soldier outclassed the Brazilian third seed to take the bout on a unanimous verdict as she continued Team GB's fine form on the Games' third day, which featured gold medals for diving duo Tom Daley and Matty Lee, swimmer Adam Peaty and mountain biker Tom Pidcock.

Artingstall started her campaign with a stunning win over African Games gold medallist Keamogetse Sadie Kenosi, of Botswana, in her opening bout, when she dominated all three rounds to secure another unanimous decision.

Speaking after the result and ahead of her clash with Romeu, the 26-year-old said: "I'm in good shape, mentally and physically.

"All I need to do is make sure I switch on as soon as I hear that first bell – I'm capable of beating all the girls at this tournament.

"Seeds mean nothing to me. As long as I'm in there on my A game I know I'm a nightmare for anyone to beat."



ARMY CRUISE TO T20 CROWN

THE Army women's cricket team were targeting an Inter-Services double as this issue went to press after recording a convincing victory in the Twenty20 format.

With the Royal Navy electing not to field a team this season, the Reds emphatically dispatched the Royal Air Force in a winner-takes-all clash at Arundel, where their opponents batted first but fell short of a competitive total.

Early strikes from Cpl Gabie Clark (Int Corps) and Sgt Amanda Potgieter (REME) set the tone as the RAF slipped to 13-2 and they failed to recover as the regular fall of wickets, coupled with lowly scoring, saw the innings close on 68-8.

Potgieter starred with the ball as she posted figures of 3-5 from four overs, while Clark finished with 2-14 and only two RAF batters reached double figures.

The run chase proved a formality as the Army raced to their target inside seven overs, with LCpl Georgie Cant (Int Corps) smashing an unbeaten 40 from 24 balls. Sister and skipper, Lt Connie Cant (RA), was 20 not out.

"We've had an excellent season so far and came out and played the way I know we can," the team's captain told *SoldierSport*. "Amanda Potgieter bowled outstandingly well; the RAF just couldn't clear the ring and there was no need to resort to plan B."

Cant is in her first season as skipper and has relished the opportunity of leading a side that now boasts real competition for places.

"Selection is so competitive, and we had a few disappointed players who had to miss out," she added. ■



"THERE WAS NO NEED FOR PLAN B"



● THE Army has included 49 elite performers in the Talented Athlete Support Programme for 2021/22.

The scheme is designed to help those who are not currently funded by UK Sport but have the potential to go on and reach podium and world class programmes.

A range of disciplines – from biathlon to weightlifting – are represented in the latest list, which includes triathlon star Capt Katrina Matthews (RAMC, pictured) and bobsleigh pilot LSgt Lamin Deen (Gren Gds) among its roll call.

SPORT SHORTS

Picture: Alligin Photography



Super sevens showing

BACK-to-back victories in the Nottingham and Bury St Edmunds legs were not enough for the Army men's team to claim the overall Super Sevens Series crown.

After four hard-fought rounds in rugby union's short format, the soldiers found themselves tied with rivals Samurai at the top of the standings only for their title hopes to be dashed by points difference.

The women's team have also been in action and showed progression throughout the competition, with regular appearances in plate finals.

They next play at the Richmond Social event on August 14.



Broncos brushed aside

THE Army women's rugby league side enjoyed a resounding win in their latest Super League South clash with London Broncos.

Welsh international LBdr Jess McAuley (RA, pictured) was among the try scorers in a 32-18 victory for the Reds, who were in action against Bedford Tigers in their remaining eastern conference fixture as this issue went to press.

They have already qualified for the semi-finals later this month.

Elsewhere, the Infantry triumphed in the final of the Lawson Cup, where they defeated the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers 42-26.

MASSEY IN NUMBERS

WINS, FROM FIVE MATCHES, FOR THE INFANTRY IN 2020/21

5

GAMES, OUT OF TEN, COMPLETED BY THE TEAM IN 2019/20 – ONLY FOR THE LEAGUE TO BE DECLARED NULL AND VOID

9

YEARS SINCE THE INFANTRY LAST WON THE DIVISION ONE TITLE

17

GOALS SCORED BY THE ROYAL ARTILLERY AS THEY BEAT THE INT CORPS TO SEAL PROMOTION AND THE DIVISION TWO TITLE

4



INFANTRY'S MASSEY MISSION

INFANTRY football manager Capt Jimmy Blair (Coldm Gds) has challenged his players to set new standards next season after guiding them to the Massey Trophy Division One title.

The squad finished a Covid-curtailed campaign with a perfect record – a run that concluded with a 3-0 victory over the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as they sealed the silverware in style.

The triumph was a deserved reward for a side that was in prime position to lift the trophy in 2019/20, only for the competition to be declared null and void following the coronavirus outbreak.

“At the time, we were joint top of the league with the Royal Engineers,” Blair explained. “We were due to play them in our final match, but the league got cancelled. It was so frustrating.

“We were determined to come back stronger this season and prove to everyone that last year was no flash in

the pan. Winning is reward for our achievements over the two seasons combined.”

During his time in charge Blair has helped the Infantry secure promotion from division two and establish themselves in the top tier, but he insisted their success has been very much a joint effort.

“We have a talented group of players and coaches,” he said.

“We are one of the biggest corps, but the Infantry is very busy. We have career courses to contend with, along with overseas deployments and operations, so we have still not had our strongest team out, but we are strong enough to finally compete.

“We have gone from being bottom of division two with one player in the Army squad to now having half a dozen who are at that level.

“The aim is to retain our title next season and raise the standard of our outputs. The other teams will rise to the challenge of playing us, so we will have to be ready.” ■



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NIHELL RETURNS TO GUIDE SERVICE'S FUTURE STARS

THE Army's next generation of boxing talent has been handed the perfect role model to learn from following the appointment of LCpl Chez Nihell (RLC) as the development team's head coach.

A new-look squad is due to arrive in the gym next month, where they will train alongside the set-up's elite performers as they build towards the national championships that are scheduled for later in the year.

Given the inactivity in the sport over the past 18 months, recruiting new fighters has been a challenge but the 23 athletes who have already signed up will find themselves tapping into the experience of a coach who excelled in the upper echelons of the amateur game and is currently unbeaten in the professional ranks.

"These are exciting times, and everyone is looking forward to boxing again," Nihell, a former

Amateur Boxing Association national champion and Army team captain, told *SoldierSport*.

"We've had a massive push on social media in terms of recruitment and have used the contacts we have at unit level to check the availability of fighters.

"We are still looking for a few more females but we're adding to the number all the time. Providing everyone turns up, it looks like a pretty full squad.

"This is a huge honour for me. I've been team captain, I came back as assistant coach for the elite team and am now head coach of the development squad – it is a steady progression.

"The Army boxing team has been so good to me, and I wanted to give something back."

Nihell has endured a frustrating spell during the coronavirus outbreak with four bouts arranged, and later cancelled, as his sporting progression was put on hold.



**"THIS IS
A HUGE
HONOUR
FOR ME"**

However, the setbacks allowed him to focus on the day job as he completed all arms PTI and promotion courses, and delivered PPE to hospitals as part of 27 Regiment's effort on Op Rescript.

"It was good to get on board with that," the fighter added. "I wouldn't say it has been a blessing, but this period has definitely helped my career.

"In terms of my boxing, it has been frustrating. I was training for bouts on certain dates, but they were not happening.

"It was a difficult time and there were moments when I thought 'will I ever fight again?'

"If it had not been for Covid I would be in possession of a title by now, if not I would have certainly been fighting for one.

"I turned pro at 30 and didn't want to be hanging around.

"Next year is going to be massive for me and I think a southern area title is well within my grasp." ■

GAME BRIEF

COMPETITION: Inter-Services 50-Over Cricket Championships

VENUE: RAF Vine Lane, Uxbridge

RAF 201-9: Watson 83, Fisher 58, Hodgson 3-65, Hill 2-21

ARMY 202-8: Bali 97, Carmichael 29, Patel 4-35



SKIPPER Sgt Jay Boynton (REME) praised the resilience of his players after they put the disappointment of an opening day loss behind them to defeat the Royal Air Force and lift the Inter-Services trophy.

“We were happy chasing 173 to beat the Royal Navy in our first match,” he said. “We wanted to express our talent, but we fell short. Everyone wants to play shots, but sometimes you just need to look at the game scenario.

“We turned up the next morning feeling demoralised and it was hard to rally the troops. However, once we had a meeting and talked about run rates, they knew what they had to do.

“We had the RAF at 23-5 early on but it was so satisfying to knock off 201 in 35 overs. In a way I’m glad they got that total as it gave us a chance to show what we’re about.

“Words cannot describe what this means to us and it will make us stronger moving forward.”



REDS DELIGHT AT RUN RATE TRIUMPH

INTER-SERVICES
CRICKET

RAF

201-9

ARMY

202-8



THE Army men triumphed on a tense final day of the Inter-Services 50-Over Cricket Championships as they secured the silverware with a last-gasp victory over the Royal Air Force.

A shock defeat to the Royal Navy in their opening fixture left the Reds facing a winner-takes-all clash with the airmen, where they needed to defeat their rivals within the required run rate to retain their title from 2019.

After winning the toss and electing to field, the soldiers made the ideal start with the ball as the pace of newcomer LCpl Connor Hodgson (LD, pictured left) and spin of WO2 Urie Hill (RLC) reduced their opponents to 23-5.

But, as in their clash with the Senior Service, the Army’s charge was met with some middle-order resistance as Flt Lt Adam Fisher and Sgt Ash Watson repaired the damage.

The duo added 101 runs for the sixth wicket before the former perished to Bdr Graham Wiseman (RA), but Watson held firm to steer his side to a

respectable total of 201-9.

That effort meant the Reds had to reach their target in 35.5 overs and Cpl Varun Bali (AGC (SPS)) laid the foundations with a fine innings of 97.

The opener hit 15 boundaries in his 88-ball knock before he was bowled by Watson with a century in his sights.

His departure prompted some late jitters as four wickets fell for 29 runs but skipper Sgt Jay Boynton (REME, pictured above) steered the Army to their target with four balls to spare.

A tournament win seemed unlikely as the champions-elect slumped to a disappointing defeat against the Navy, when they failed to chase down a total of 173-7 after a disciplined display with the ball.

Hodgson and Hill restricted their rivals to 30-4 but a 128-run stand for the fifth wicket gave them a respectable score.

After a promising start to the run chase the soldiers lost wickets at regular intervals and, when the lower order was blown away, they finished 32 runs short of their target. ■

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I recall it making me grow up as a person and as a soldier. In that war setting you had to learn about team dynamics really quickly and the camaraderie and sense of belonging you get in that situation can't be had anywhere else. When I got back to the UK my girlfriend remarked on how much I'd matured as a person.

Sgt Ross Stacey, REME



I was on Op Herrick 14 in 2011 – one standout memory for me is how we helped local people at a bazaar in Nad-e Ali, who were being threatened and intimidated by the Taliban. We provided an overwatch to deter the enemy and it was great, by the end of our tour, to see life return to normal in the area.

Sgt Andy McArthur, RE



I never served in Afghanistan, but it was important to my career as it influenced my decision to become a Reservist. I was ten years old when I saw the 9/11 attacks on the USA play out on television. Later, I read the personal accounts of the soldiers who were involved in Op Herrick.

Lt Tom Garrod, RE



I came straight out of phase two training and then deployed on Herrick 19, maintaining Apaches. It was a bit surreal at first – I didn't know what to expect – but I vividly remember the shock felt by us all when the Lynx helicopter went down during training, killing five crew members. We had a vigil for those who died and it brought home to me how serious the whole campaign was.

Sgt James Burke, REME



The high point for me was seeing the different elements of the Armed Forces integrate with each other and the wider international community. The scale of it all sticks in my mind too, particularly the size of Camp Bastion.

Maj Olaf Dudley, RE



End of an era


We asked troops about their standout memories of the Afghanistan campaign...

I did four Herrick tours and I'll never forget the tremendous level of public support we had. We received streams of letters and gifts out there, even from strangers. One lady called Christina sent our unit packages regularly and I used to write to her to say thank you. We kept in touch for years afterwards.

SSgt Tanith Alexander, RA





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