

SOLDIER

MAGAZINE OF THE BRITISH ARMY



URBAN
FIGHTERS

**CABRIT
UP CLOSE**

LGBT 20
YEARS ON

SHOOT

TO

THRILL

PHOTOGRAPHERS PUT SERVICE LIFE IN THE LENS

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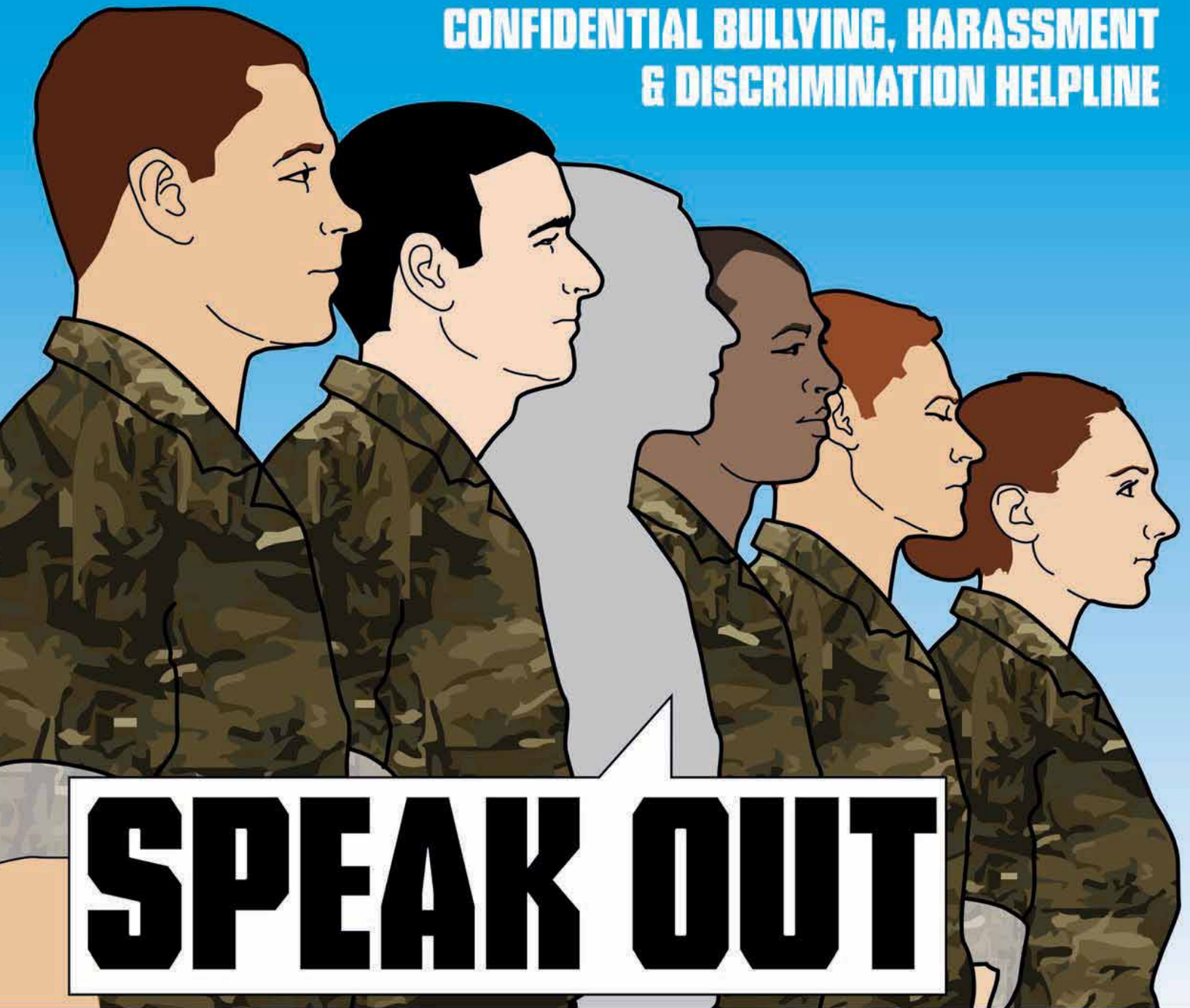
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CONTENTS



Cover picture: Cpl Ben Beale and
Cpl Rob Kane, RLC

FEATURES

COVER
STORY

- 26 **Street life**
Reservists trial police urban facility
- 32 **Every picture tells a story**
Army Film and Photographic Comp
- 36 **Out and proud**
LGBT personnel share their stories
- 40 **Opening the door**
New housing pilot kicks off
- 42 **Feedback from the front**
CGS' briefing team's major issues

REGULARS

- 7 **The Informer**
Top stories from across the Service
- 18 **Need to Know**
Essential tips for today's personnel
- 48 **Bullet Points**
Troops' intelligence assets
- 57 **Reviews**
Movies, books, music and kit to fill your downtime
- 74 **Final Word**
Photographers talk trade

SOLDIERSPORT

- 64 **Motorsport**
Racers eye further grid gains
- 67 **Rugby league**
Reds progress in Challenge Cup
- 68 **Tennis**
Army take on US college stars
- 69 **Football**
Women look to bounce back
- 70 **Rowing**
Helm breaks Atlantic record
- 71 **Skiing**
Novices excel in corps clash
- 72 **American football**
Official Service team in the offing
- 73 **Boxing**
Nihell eyes next pro success



“The feedback we have had has been really first rate”

Troops and police find common ground – p26



32



42



36



73



72

The power of perception



THERE are several stories in this issue that reinforce how flexible and capable the British Army can be, but two in

particular really stand out.

The first relates to Operation Cabrit (page 7) where the UK's long-term commitment is having a palpable effect on Russian-speaking Estonians' attitudes towards Nato.

It's not a show of military strength that's impressing the locals, it's the strength of the military at the show – whether that is craft, dog, pony or car.

Yes, lots of British soldiers mixing with the locals at fetes and fairs, showing there's a friendly face behind the uniform, has done wonders for the organisation's image – even among previously hardened sceptics.

Changing perceptions is also at the root of "Out and proud" on page 36, where we've marked 20 years since the lifting of the ban on gay people serving in the Armed Forces by interviewing two personnel with very different tales to tell.

What unites them both is their conviction that attitudes have changed over the past two decades and the Army has become a much better place to work – for everyone.

Steve Muncey • Managing Editor

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Estonian officers with personnel from 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers at Warminster

Winning the war of words

Outreach and engagement is swaying many of Estonia's Russian-speaking sceptics

BRITISH troops deployed on Operation Cabrit have been instrumental in changing the perception of Nato in Estonia, the commander of the country's 1st Infantry Brigade told *Soldier*.

Col Vahur Karus said that while the majority of citizens there have long backed the country's alliance with western nations, Russian-speaking Estonians have traditionally taken the opposite stance – but that is starting to change.

"In the past, when we have polled our people about their views of Nato, there was a lot of positivity from Estonian speakers but not so much from our Russian-speaking community, who make up 26 per cent of the population," he said.

"But since 2017, when the first British battlegroup arrived, the number of such people who feel favourable towards Nato has risen by ten per cent, which is amazing.

"This is because your personnel have been actively participating in every fair, pony or dog show, whatever, to promote their presence and let people know what Nato is and that they are friendly, open and interested.

"It comes down to human interaction and the enhanced forward presence troops have helped change the social fabric of the country and are making people feel more secure."

Col Karus was speaking at a combined staff tactical training exercise at Warminster for 1st

Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, who are scheduled to deploy to Tapa in March.

Their battlegroup will incorporate armoured, engineering and medical elements as well as a Danish armoured infantry company.

Together, they will operate as an integral part of Estonia's 1st Infantry Brigade for six months.

Thanks to the UK's long-standing commitment to Op Cabrit, greater time and effort is being invested in ensuring each deployment is a harmonious process.

The Fusiliers worked with no fewer than 14 key Estonian personnel over a two-week period at Warminster as they ran through educational sessions and tactical exercises to iron out differences in procedures.

"We sent out a couple of operations and intelligence personnel to help the Queens Royal Hussars Battlegroup who are in Estonia now, and got very positive feedback," said Col Karus.

"This time we have sent more people than ever before, with officers from our artillery, engineering, air defence, signals and logistics sections, so we have all the main areas covered.

"Both armies want to ensure the British battlegroup gets an early insight into how to serve with 1st Estonian Brigade, because they are going to be with us for a long period.

"It makes sense to ensure we do not have to spend time in Estonia learning how each other operates."

“They are friendly, open and interested”

SOLDIER

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GLOBAL SITREP

IN NUMBERS



29,000

Total number of US personnel taking part



18

Nato partners involved



2,500

Length in miles of 12 European convoy routes

ALLIANCE UPS THE ANTE

BRITISH troops are ramping up preparations for their role in the largest transatlantic training serial for 25 years.

Exercise Defender Europe will involve a 2,600-strong UK contingent, alongside nearly 35,000 other Nato personnel at its peak in April and May.

At the centre of the action will be the Gloucester-based Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps – which recently assumed the role of the alliance's warfighting corps – with 104 Logistic Brigade and Joint Helicopter Command also playing a prominent part.

The manoeuvre is designed to test the coalition's ability to mobilise quickly and en masse via land sea and air, but also combines a series of large-scale airborne and armoured exercises staged in Germany, Poland and the Baltic states.

Speaking at a press conference in Berlin, US Army Europe's deputy commander, Maj Gen Andrew Rohling explained the drill was not a response to a specific threat but a rehearsal of moving troops and hardware into position in a crisis.

He said: "How do we get ourselves from our base in the US to a port, then over here, to a train, then marry up trains and people from airlines to get them to their foxholes? That is what we're trying to exercise."



1. FALKLAND ISLANDS CAPE CRUSADERS

TROOPS from 1st Battalion, Grenadier Guards' Support Company are entering the final stretch of their deployment to the South Atlantic.

Having chalked up more than four months as the Falkland Islands roulement infantry company, they deployed on Exercise Cape Bayonet alongside Royal Air Force and Royal Navy assets as this issue went to press. Joining them on the week-long package were new guardsmen

from Nijmegen Company, who provided a rifle element to complement the recce, mortar, sniper and anti-tank capabilities of their colleagues.

For the recent recruits, whose usual focus is ceremonial duties, the visit is a chance to deploy overseas and benefit from the islands' extensive live-firing ranges, followed by adventurous training and a battlefield tour.



2. IRAQ

FUTURE OF SHADE UNCERTAIN

UK PERSONNEL serving on Op Shader are waiting to find out if their training mission will continue amid heightened tensions with neighbouring Iran.

Iraq's parliament passed a non-binding vote on January 5 to expel US troops from the country after a drone strike killed Iranian general Qassim Soleimani in Baghdad.

There are currently more than 5,000 American soldiers stationed in Iraq and a further 4,000 coalition troops, including nearly 400 British personnel from formations such as 1st Battalion, Irish Guards and 29 Field Squadron, 21 Engineer Regiment.

Training activities and joint operations were paused while Iran launched retaliatory missile strikes on US locations, including Al Assad air base.

Despite ongoing uncertainty, shortly before this issue went to press an MoD spokesperson told *Soldier*: "We remain very much committed to the long-term stability of Iraq and the lasting defeat of Daesh, and will continue until there is a formal indication from the Iraqi government that we need to leave."



1. FALKLAND ISLANDS



INTELLIGENCE FOR THE ATLAS?

Brief the team now:



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1. IRAQ

4. ESTONIA

2. MALAWI

BRITISH personnel are training hard for the world's toughest foot race – Morocco's Marathon des Sables. Lt Dan Unwin and Capt Alex Aitken (both Rifles) will take on the 156-mile event in aid of Care for Casualties, while a team of four officers from across Home Command will be running for Walking with the Wounded



5. AFGHANISTAN KABUL CALLING

SOLDIERS from 2nd Battalion, The Rifles have been making last-minute preparations before deploying on Op Tora 10.

The infantry will be involved in force protection, training and mentoring Afghan counterparts during the tour as part of Nato's ongoing Operation Resolute Support mission.

Recent months saw the soldiers put through an intensive training package ahead of the move – they are now standing by to deploy to locations in and around the capital Kabul.

4. ESTONIA COLDER CLIMES

AROUND 800 personnel belonging to the Queen's Royal Hussars' Battlegroup took part in a challenging five-day cold weather operators course.

The package saw them building and sleeping in improvised shelters and taking the plunge in icy waters.

Although snow has been unusually absent in Estonia so far this winter, the mercury still dipped to a chilly -11 degrees Celsius.

3. MALAWI WILD RIDE

SOLDIERS from 2nd Battalion, The Royal Gurkha Rifles have completed a three-month counter-poaching deployment in Liwonde National Park.

The troops helped train new rangers and reduce illegal wildlife trade by improving patrolling and information sharing skills.

Towards the end of the tasking the soldiers assisted with the careful offloading of rhinos who had travelled by air and road from KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, helping to boost the population of the species in the region.

There are around 5,500 black rhinos left in the wild today and the value of their horns on the black market continues to threaten their numbers.

Officer Commanding, Maj Jez England (RGR), said the mission had been a great success, and also provided challenging training.

He added: "Helping with the rhino move was a fitting end to our time in Malawi – getting up close to the animals we are here to help protect was an experience the soldiers won't forget."

So far, the Army has helped train 200 rangers in the country and thanks to this initiative no high-value species have been poached in Liwonde since 2017.





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Combat career path takes off

SAPPERS will now be able to choose combat engineering as a specific career stream, the Royal Engineers have announced.

Previously, members of the corps were trained in the role in addition to their main trade but thanks to a requirement for more specialists they will now be able to focus exclusively on this field, a move that could improve promotion prospects and the variety of jobs open to them.

Among those initially eligible are signallers, drivers, plant operators and logistics specialists from sapper up to sergeant, as well as geographical technicians at lance corporal or below.

Anyone who has not yet obtained their class one qualification in any of the artisan or design trades can also apply, but the option is not open to search and explosive ordnance disposal personnel.

Lt Col Stu Brown (RE) from



IN NUMBERS

60

Sappers a year to be accepted into the career stream

Headquarters Royal Engineers said: "We want to get the first batch transferred by April 1.

"If you want to be in that your application needs to be at the Army Personnel Centre by February 28.

"It's a great opportunity and the corps needs a select few to do it."

Those unsuccessful on their first try can reapply in the future. For full details read people policy note 1908 on the RHQ RE sharepoint.

■ TROOPS from 13 Air Assault Support Regiment, Royal Logistic Corps teamed up with Royal Air Force colleagues and a Chinook helicopter to hone the skills needed to move kit in hostile areas. The soldiers used underslung loads as they shifted supplies between Merville Barracks, in Colchester, and nearby Friday Wood.



LOGGIES SHARE THE LOAD



PROJECTS PRESSING ON

■ THE Army is progressing well with major tech projects – and will pack a significant punch in future with an array of new equipment, a senior officer has stressed.

Speaking at the International Armoured Vehicles Conference in Twickenham, Maj Gen Jez Bennett, the Service's Director Capability, said new projects will ensure troops are well-equipped for future conflicts.

He said more than 500 multi-role Ajax vehicles (pictured above) are coming online and a similar number are now under order.

The new kit will be bolstered by the modernisation of the existing Challenger 2 tank to give it greater accuracy plus a more lethal punch, Maj Gen Bennett added.

He revealed that trials on the new 40mm stabilised cannon for the Warrior are also continuing and stated the modernisation programme would "see the Army transfer from the mechanical to the digital age".



CHAMPIONS ON THE RISE

■ MORE support to help Army leavers make the move to civvy street will soon become available.

The government has pledged to increase the number of Armed Forces champions – who are based at job centres around the country and help with the likes of benefits and employment.

Will Quince – Minister for Welfare Delivery – said more than 100 new appointees would be in post by the end of April, pledging veterans in need should "never find themselves without help".

The MP for Colchester added: "Those who have served leave with a fantastic range of transferable skills, including leadership, teamwork and resourcefulness.

"Many of our champions have previously been in the Armed Forces themselves and draw upon their own experiences to help move veterans forward – they provide that extra help as former soldiers, sailors, airmen and women move towards a new career."



Ground view

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

IT HAS been a busy start to the new decade for me – even before the Christmas decorations were down, I was back on the road and seeing units in the UK as well as on ops.

Many thanks for all the invites that have already been sent asking me to drop by, most recently from The Light Dragoons on deployment in Poland and the Belfast-based 1st Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Scotland. It was a pleasure to see you and please keep the letters coming.

A constant theme I'm finding on these visits is the high quality of our youngest leaders. The British Army rightly has a reputation for producing the finest junior NCOs.

But I think that we can do even better. Specifically, I would like our leaders to be more at the forefront of developing people.

While I do not want to say too much at this stage, progress is being made. My vision is to have our training hosted at a single location where experience can be

shared easily.

I want to stress the system is definitely not broken, and it does not need to be fixed. However, we should never settle for the status quo and if we can show our younger commanders how to get the very best out of their troops we will gain a greater edge.

Our NCOs are highly influential – connecting with soldiers where the proverbial rubber meets the road. They will lead our nation's sons and daughters on operations.

Talking on the same theme – although a slightly separate topic – we're also going to be changing the course for regimental sergeant majors to help further boost their skills.

The package only lasts for a week at the moment and needs to be longer. It provides a good overview, but we must look at the potential pitfalls our warrant officers might encounter in the role.

We should never forget that soldiers are the greatest asset. The Army is all about people.



Picture: ASgt Lee Goddard, RAF

Inclusion comes first

IT IS now 20 years since the Armed Forces' ban on gay personnel was lifted and we have changed for the better.

I'm not concerned about a person's sexual orientation any more than their religion, ethnic origin or whether they are a male or female.

If you can soldier, I am more than happy.

Everybody has a right to be comfortable in their skin and we must do all that we can to support our troops – inclusion also means we are tapping into the widest talent pool.

• **Out and proud** – p36

“
I think we
could do
even better
”

UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL



Q What were your worst and best subjects at school?

A I hated maths because of our teacher – he had a nicotine-stained beard and stank of tobacco. PE was my favourite – enough said really.

Commercial breaks prove their worth

■ JOIN up and improve your confidence – it worked for me and countless other soldiers.

The Service has brought out the best in people for a very long time. Some 23 years after I enlisted it is fantastic to see people go on to do the things they once thought were beyond them.

This message is at the heart of the latest Army advertising campaign – and it's very true.

Those signing up will often surprise themselves and others with their new-found confidence and skills.

The potential is in all would-be recruits and we should tell them. Never in a million years did I ever think that I would end up as the most senior soldier.

The simulation package provided a dry run for Exercise Wessex Storm



Sim training scaled up

UNITS from 7th Infantry Brigade have been put through their paces in the largest command simulation package of recent years.

Exercise Jerboa Cast was staged at Sennelager's Command and Staff Trainer (Germany) for nearly 400 troops from the 1st and 2nd Battalions, The Royal Anglian Regiment, The Queen's Dragoon Guards and Combat Support Services, most of whom are set to deploy to either Afghanistan or Mali later this year.

Known as a "Super Cast", the serial was an amalgamation of what would have been four individual packages, which brigade chief of staff, Maj Andy Bourne (Mercian) explained was not only a more efficient approach, but also provided better training value.

"You never go on operations in

isolation," he said.

"There's always someone left and right of you, in front of you, definitely above you and all the logistical support behind you.

"So, we felt bringing the exercises together increased the flavour of the package and made it more real.

"When you have a problem, you can't just wish it away – there are actually other units that have issues too, so you have to set about negotiating and compromising."

The training was a dry run of this month's scaled up Exercise Wessex Storm, which will also see two serials combined into one and some 3,000 troops deploy onto Salisbury Plain.

Subsequently, personnel will begin mission specific training for Operations Toral and Newcombe.

SOLDIER SURVEY

WE value our readers and your views and opinions are really important to us. To help us improve the magazine, we would be grateful if you would complete our eight-question survey. Please scan the QR code below to access the form.



SPINE LINE COMPETITION



THE spine clues on last month's magazine were a cinch for anyone familiar with the more obscure districts, towns and cities of Ukraine, which include Busk, Chop, Bar and Romny.

This month, we have teamed up with one of the UK's leading glamping accommodation providers, Wigwam Holidays (www.wigwamholidays.com), to offer one lucky reader a £200 voucher to use towards a 2020 staycation.

The company has more than 75 sites across the UK – perfect for a tranquil break with the family or as a couple – and its cabins are heated, some with hot tubs. To be in with a chance of winning the voucher, just tell us what links the words on the side of this issue.

Answers – including daytime telephone number – to the usual postal address or comps@soldiermagazine.co.uk by February 28.

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GET MARCHING IN MARCH

MILITARY mental health charity Combat Stress is urging people to get behind its March in March event and walk ten miles to raise money for veterans.

How and where participants complete the challenge is up to them – all they have to do is register online.

Entry costs £20, though extra sponsorship is encouraged. The proceeds will go to support ex-soldiers struggling with issues like anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Visit marchinmarch.co.uk to find out more and share your photos and videos on social media using #MarchinMarch.

ARMY COOKBOOK EMBRACES BASICS

MORE than 40 recipes for breakfast, lunch and dinner, as well as smoothies, can now be accessed via the Army's *Healthy Soldier Cookbook*.

Free to download from the Army website, the dishes can be made with minimal equipment such as a hob and microwave and only basic utensils. They include a range of ingredients and nutrients needed for a balanced diet and are designed to be cooked quickly and conveniently.

Michelin-starred chef, Adam Gray, who helped create the menus, said: "I was asked to be involved to help with everyday nutrition.

"It is about making simple changes that are slightly healthier and buying better ingredients, the best you can afford, and understanding what those ingredients do to your body."

The recipes include the strawberry breakfast bowl, chilli salmon parcel, Asian vegetable and carrot chow mein and mighty berry protein smoothie.





SERVICEWOMEN UNITE

■ THE ARMY Servicewomen's Network will hold their annual conference on Tuesday, March 3.

The single-day event held at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is open to all Regular and Reserve Personnel – you do not have to be a network member to attend.

The aim is to explore the concept of "value" to both the individual and the Army.

This will be achieved via several different workshops, panels and a keynote speech delivered during the course of the day.



Island's eco move

THE Army is to build new eco-friendly sea defences around Thorney Island in West Sussex, home to Baker Barracks where 12th and 16th Regiments, Royal Artillery are based.

The Ministry of Defence and the Environment Agency will develop a new habitat alongside the defences containing up to 70 acres of saltmarsh and mudflats, increasing biodiversity and wildlife as a result.

The area will also be used as part of a pilot programme that will see solar farms installed at four sites around the country.

Maj Gen David Southall, Director of Basing and Infrastructure, visited the site last month (pictured) to receive a brief on the project by representatives from the Environment Agency.

HONOURS ANNOUNCED

■ A RETIRED Army GP who has dedicated a large part of his career to helping Service leavers suffering from mental health issues is among the 64 Forces personnel receiving royal recognition.

Dr Jonathan Leach, who currently heads up the military and veterans' health portfolio for NHS England, was rewarded for his work with an OBE in the 2020 New Year Honours list.

He said he was "stunned, surprised and humbled to be receiving the accolade".



Railcards for veterans are among the new measures

Picture: Graeme Main

More veteran support on way

Discount railcard scheme leading the way on a raft of new measures

AN EXTENSIVE package of measures designed to bolster support for those who have left the Armed Forces has been welcomed by charity bosses.

They claim the plans – announced by the government in the Queen's Speech – have the potential to give a much-needed boost to veterans' prospects.

But they also suggested that existing measures, such as the Armed Forces Covenant, remained seriously misunderstood and insisted that they needed to be better communicated.

The latest proposals unveiled by ministers include discounted train travel through the introduction of a veterans' railcard from November this year, which Transport Secretary Grant Shapps says "will help open up opportunities" in employment, retraining and personal relationships.

The new railcard is to be launched on Armistice Day and will extend cheaper train travel to more than 800,000 veterans who do not qualify for existing discounts.

The railcard will reportedly cost £21 for an introductory period, before the rate is increased to £30.

Former Service personnel will be able to save a third off most train tickets, although certain restrictions will apply.

Other measures being considered

include guaranteed interviews when ex-soldiers apply for public sector roles.

Meanwhile, firms employing former personnel may benefit from reduced National Insurance contributions and moves would be made to enshrine the covenant in legislation.

Ray Lock, chief executive of Service mental health charity Forces in Mind Trust, said this could strengthen the deal offered to those who are leaving the military.

But he maintained that more needed to be done to ensure that the wider public understood the needs of veterans without inadvertently labelling them as "needy or broken".

While Lock insisted the government's new strategy for veterans had the potential to improve how Service leavers were treated, he also suggested that an action plan to enable change was now needed.

The former Royal Air Force officer added: "The covenant is widely misunderstood by both the public sector and members of the Armed Forces community.

"I'm not convinced that legislation is the solution – better communications, committed local champions and shared best practice are among the areas our research suggests would improve support for veterans."

“I’m not convinced legislation is the solution”

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**HELPING YOU MAKE
BETTER CHOICES**







THE BIG PICTURE

Orzysz, Poland

Winning team

THIS striking picture, called *Take a Knee*, won two awards at the 2019 Army Film and Photographic Competition (page 32).

These troops, from C Squadron, Royal Scots Dragoon Guards, are currently in Poland as part of the UK's commitment to Nato's enhanced forward presence.

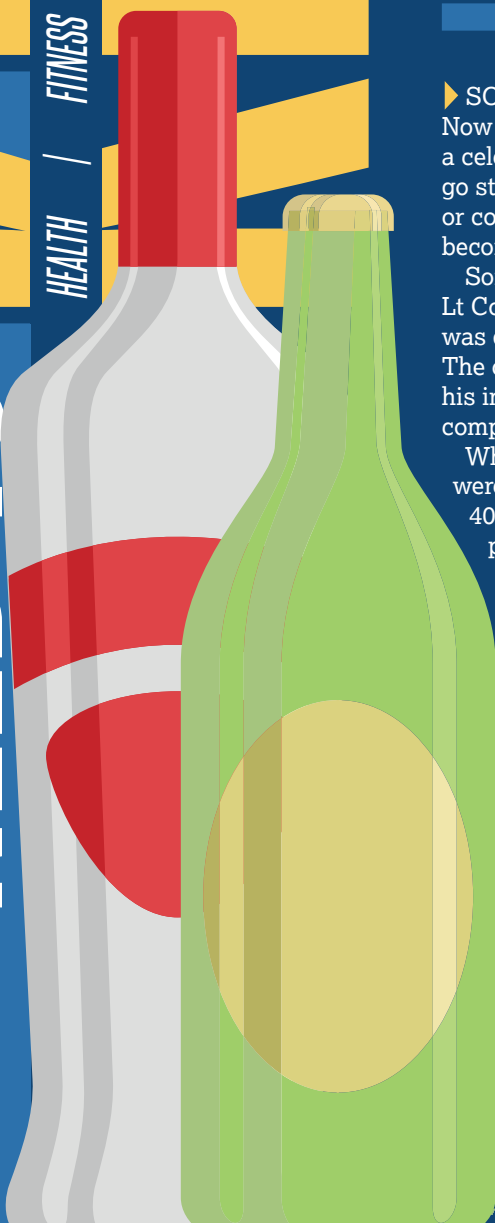
Working alongside American, Polish, Romanian and Croatian forces, they are helping to ensure security in Eastern Europe (more Op Cabrit – page 7).

Picture: Cpl Nick Johns, RLC

NEED TO

WAVELL ROOM

HEALTH / FITNESS / NEXT STEPS / EXPERIENCE / NUTRITION



WORRIED

about your drinking?



This officer has been there and is sharing his story to help others

► SO, you've done dry January. Now what? Do you pour yourself a celebratory glass of wine and go straight back to your old ways, or could cutting back on booze become a long-term thing?

Some two-and-a-half years ago, Lt Col Rob Page (RTR), realised he was drinking more than he should. The officer decided to reduce his intake and eventually went completely sober.

While his friends and colleagues were aware of his journey, the 40-year-old recently chose to go public to the wider Army in the hope that his experience could help others who suspect their relationship with alcohol might be unhealthy.

"I knew my level of drinking was higher than those around me," he tells *Soldier*.

"If we were on a big night out, I would probably drink more than most, and drink more quickly. In the evening I'd often, just out of habit, have a beer to unwind after a day at work.

"I grew up in a house

where alcohol was a problem, which is quite common I think, but it was partly an anxiety issue as well – you get to the bar and are feeling a bit nervous so you have a drink and before you know it, you're through your first three."

It was the death, in December, of Maj Mandy Islam (RAMC), who had used her cancer diagnosis to improve the provision for seriously ill personnel, that inspired Lt Col Page to make a difference.

He published his story on the military discussion website The Wavell Room and set up the Alliance for Alcohol Awareness in the Army – 4-Alpha for short.

"We are a peer-to-peer support network," he explains. "That's what we did in Iraq and Afghanistan for trauma management, so we know that system works as a method for personnel to open up to each other.

"We want to give people the information, tools and opportunity to make positive choices for their health and well-being.

"What really helped me and others I've spoken to is having someone to listen, someone to hold you accountable and to pat you on the back and tell you to keep going.

“That’s what we did for more than 40 people during Dry January and it seems to have worked really well.”

Lt Col Page praises the Army’s existing alcohol initiatives, such as its awareness course and appointing specially trained personnel within units, but hopes 4-Alpha will offer an additional, less formal avenue for those hesitant about seeking help.

Currently serving as the commanding officer of the Armoured Trials and Development Unit in Bovington, he is also concerned about the role alcohol plays in discipline in the military.

“As a leader I know far too many lives, families and Service careers that have suffered due to drink-related issues,” the officer continues.

“If you look at the statistics – in 2018 there were 1,200 discipline incidents involving alcohol. What a difference it could make if we even just halved that.”

Another goal is to make it easier, and more acceptable, for people to abstain at social events by encouraging messes and bars to stock a better selection of non-alcoholic beverages.

“There are some great alternatives such as alcohol-free gins and craft beers, and trials within some 6th Division units over the Christmas period worked really well,” he adds.

“People shouldn’t feel that shame, or feel left out either.

“I was at a mess do the other day and had water in my glass for the loyal toast and people were like ‘why aren’t you having port?’

“It is important to join in with our military customs and traditions, but we also need to be respectful of personal decisions.”

Total abstinence may have worked for Lt Col Page, but he acknowledges that everyone

has to find their own way and that no one should inflict their choices on other people.

And it seems he is not the only one reconsidering their personal relationship with the bottle.

“My inbox and DMs have been absolutely rammed, it’s been quite overwhelming” he says.

“I’ve had messages from people saying they recognise themselves in my journey and are relieved they are not on their own.

“Change happens when we feel we’re all deciding to do something together.

“I’m not here to preach or be the fun police, but if you’re curious about how much you’re drinking, why not take a break and see what you can learn.

“One thing to consider is a simple self-assessment – a sort of booze estimate.

“Ask yourself, ‘is what →

STICKING AT IT

Lt Col Page offers some motivation for resisting when the urge to drink strikes

Hold onto your why

We all have our reasons for going dry or making a longer-term choice. Keep reminding yourself of that. For me it’s about my family and well-being

Ask yourself what you’ve gained so far

Count the units you haven’t consumed. Now work out how much money you’ve saved. How much could you save with another week, month or year?

Remember your body will thank you

Most low and no-alcohol alternatives have notably fewer calories. Booze is also known to disrupt sleep and be a factor in depression and anxiety, as well as being linked to seven different cancers, so you are reducing your risk

Reflect on what you have learned

You’ve overcome temptation, peer pressure and vulnerability – be proud of that



► HEALTH

I consider normal actually normal? Is it doing me more harm – physically, socially, or professionally – than I realise? Do I want to change?”

“If the answer is yes, the support from 4-Alpha will be there. If not, then that’s fine too.”

Where to go for advice

Visit 4-Alpha.co.uk or oneyearnobeer.com, which encourages people to set themselves challenges for 30, 60 or 90 days and beyond.

Try the app Drinks:Ration (@Drinks:Ration) which is supported by Combat Stress and Kings’ Centre for Military Health Research.

Be a mate

If one of your friends or colleagues has decided to cut back on booze, support them.

Lt Col Page says: “If you’re a veggie and you’re at a restaurant, no one would say, ‘you need to eat that hamburger’, and yet with alcohol everyone says, ‘come on, have another’.

“It’s a really strange aspect of life. Instead, I think we should be taking our core values – respect for others, integrity and the rest – and applying that to our drinking. That’s one of the key things I want to change.”



TOUGH ENOUGH for TRAILWALKER?

Step your way to success
in the South Downs
ultramarathon

► FANCY taking on the Queen’s Gurkha Signals in this year’s Trailwalker challenge? Applications are open for the 100km event this September. Here, WO2 Shyam Lama (QG Signals) from 2019’s winning team offers his top tips for succeeding in the endurance run across the South Downs.



Last year’s QG Signals winning team (L-R) LCpl Aman Magar, WO2 Shyam Lama, Sig Sandesh Rai and LCpl Samso Phago

GAATHER THE RIGHT PEOPLE

In 2017 my team finished in second place, ten minutes behind the winners. I realised then that I had the potential to come first if I had the right group. So, I gathered some fit and dedicated individuals, and did the same again last year. We trained hard with one goal in mind: winning the race.

AND ON THE DAY ENJOY

We loved how the crowds cheered us last year, giving us more energy throughout the race. It's going to be great to defend the title in front of those people again this year.

BE DEDICATED

Trailwalker takes a lot from you. It's long and the hot weather, plus the landscape, doesn't make it any easier. Dedicated training and mental fortitude is needed just to finish, let alone win. Being in a four-man team also brings issues that need to be ironed out in training. It's not just physicality that's required, but also man-management and understanding your counterparts. Everyone must be on the same page to ensure they function as one.

TAKE ON NUTRITION

Managing food is important. And my team couldn't have achieved this without strong backup and admin from our colleagues. For example, we had a support team commander providing us with food and water at the right checkpoints, ensuring we could fight on.

KNOW YOUR WEAKNESSES

I have competed in Trailwalker multiple times, with each event helping me learn something new about myself. Look at how far you've come since your last challenge and how far you need to go. Continue training and keep fit after disappointment.

STAMINA NOT SPEED

This ultramarathon is a gruelling event that requires a high level of physical aptitude and stamina. It's all about going at a decent pace, which means strong training and a good eating regime that should be followed religiously. Everyone needs to understand that it's not about who can go the fastest, but who goes least slow throughout. Not losing pace is the most important aspect to train for.

The **entry fee** is **£200 per team** for military units who **sign up before February 14**. The full price is £280, so don't delay.

100km across the South Downs Way |
Start: Queen Elizabeth Country Park, Petersfield.
Finish: Brighton Racecourse | **Teams of 4** | 30hrs to complete | **Run, walk or jog** – the choice is yours

Sponsorship raised supports the work of both **Oxfam** and **The Gurkha Welfare Trust**



Women sought for a career behind bars

► **MILITARY** law enforcement can be a tough gig – particularly when you're at the sharp end of custody and ensuring jailed offenders are properly held to account for their criminal acts.

Troops ending up behind bars come from a variety of backgrounds and circumstances, convicted of everything from going absent without authorised leave to causing grievous bodily harm.

But a role in the prison system with the Military Provost Service is focused as much on rehabilitation as punishment – and here many experienced soldiers have found a new direction in their careers.

Now NCOs from across the cap badges are being sought to bring their experience to the custody arena – with more women particularly urged to sign up for the pathway.

Those successfully transferring will be in a crucial position to help detainees, whether they are being discharged from the Army or assisted back into Forces life.

It is certainly not a role for everyone. But those who have taken on the custody mantle say helping colleagues falling foul of the law back onto the straight and narrow is the most rewarding of careers.

Soldier spoke to a few women who had made the leap about leading a life behind bars....

Further info

If you are interested in transferring, you should go through your chain of command in the first instance. You'll need to be a corporal or above for your application to be considered.

Further details can be found in the MPS section of the Adjutant General's Corps page at army.mod.uk

Life on

NAME: Sgt Donna Smith | **AGE:** 46

TRANSFERRED FROM: AGC (RMP)

YEARS OF SERVICE: 26

OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE: Includes Afghanistan, Iraq, Northern Ireland and Bosnia

🔒 I'm a drugs dog handler having transferred to the MPS from military policing – so I've seen both the arrest and detention phases of law enforcement. I made the change in 2014 because I wanted the opportunity to do something different, and experience a new side of Army life.

This is a rewarding job because you have the chance to help turn soldiers' lives around. I find it very easy to relate to the guys and girls who I am helping to look after – and additionally you are accruing transferable skills that you could later use in civvy law enforcement.

I think this role is amazing and I work closely with my four-legged friend Lola. I've never regretted making the career change and I'd encourage colleagues to consider it. 🐕

NAME: Capt Becky Smith | **AGE:** 47

TRANSFERRED FROM: Royal Navy

YEARS OF SERVICE: 31

OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE: Includes Afghanistan, Falkland Islands, The Gulf

🔒 I enlisted in the then Wrens back in 1989 when I was 17. As a teenager I had originally wanted to join Essex Police but my dad, who was an officer, suggested I get some life experience first.

In the Navy I started life as a writer – effectively a clerk. But I managed to get out to sea in the early 1990s and spent some time at PJHQ in Northwood but the law enforcement appeal never left. I transferred to the MPS 15 years ago and haven't looked back.

I worked my way through the NCO ranks to become a late entry officer. I'm at the Military Corrective Training Centre in Colchester these days, serving as OC Service Custody Facilities – we have a number of these around the country.

There has been plenty of opportunity to get out on ops, although helping rehabilitate people is the most satisfying part of the job. 🐕



the inside

NAME: Sgt Jay Raine | **AGE:** 29

TRANSFERRED FROM: RA

YEARS OF SERVICE: 13

OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE: Includes Afghanistan

“I have spent pretty much my whole life in the military – including as a cadet as a youngster. My dad asked me what I wanted to do when I was older, and when I suggested that I wanted to serve he did me the courtesy of booking a slot at the recruitment office.”

Having been to the Army Foundation College Harrogate I spent eight years in the Royal Artillery – but then I felt I needed a change. The MPS seemed a good choice as I had already worked in custody when the remit was the unit’s responsibility.

I’ve now done a good few roles here and have just taken up a slot as 2iC at the Midlands and Wales Service Custody Facility. You have some great opportunities for sport – it’s really well promoted – and there are jobs that require overseas travel too. There are custody facilities in places including Estonia, the Falkland Islands and Canada. ”

NAME: Sgt Chantelle Uda | **AGE:** 34

TRANSFERRED FROM: AGC (SPS)

YEARS OF SERVICE: 16

OPERATIONAL EXPERIENCE: Includes Iraq

“I was working in human resources as a clerk when I heard about the MPS – it sounded really interesting and it has fully lived up to all expectations.”

At the moment I’m working in IT, helping our staff resolve any issues they might have with technology. Among the benefits of coming here is they really use your past experience.

I’m also a single parent with an 11-year-old, and my colleagues have been really accommodating too – we support each other and there is a huge amount of flexibility and understanding.

If you are looking to do something different in your career, I would really recommend this line of work.

You also have some decent opportunities to deploy outside of the UK on ops, and there are a variety of jobs to do too. ”



“I don’t want to go there again”

When this former fusilier was medically discharged some dark times followed. But he found solace in his workshop, crafting walking sticks for celebrity clients...

► AFTER joining the Army at 21, David Roberts was looking forward to a long career in uniform. But his progress was hampered by family bereavements and personal problems and the mental health issues that followed saw the soldier, who served in The Royal Welch Fusiliers and Royal Horse Artillery, leave the Army in 1997. His transition from military to civilian life has been dogged by incredible lows – including three suicide attempts – but the 52-year-old from Pembrokeshire has found a way to cope...

“The early days were definitely the worst and, while I’m not okay, my issues are now under control.

I started to work as a security guard but with the symptoms I had I simply could not cope any more. Since 2000 I’ve been declared unfit to work.

I got married in 1994 and my wife, who has since gone into mental health

nursing, has been like a rock while I’ve suffered with this condition – she can see the signs in me straight away.

A friend of mine committed suicide recently, but I don’t want to go there again.

I’ve always been good with my hands. Maths and geography were never my



Be cramp-free



Three top tips to keep muscle spasms at bay...

► **IT CAN** affect anyone, regardless of fitness level, and hit almost any part of your body from foot to thigh.

And although cramp is associated with high levels of physical activity, it is more likely to occur with fatigue.

Muscle tightness is a key factor, as is dehydration and hot environmental conditions. But the actual cause of cramp is still not fully understood.

Here, Healthspan Elite nutritionist Rob Hobson outlines three ways to reduce the risk of it happening through your diet.

Take on electrolytes

These are minerals that help to balance the amount of fluid in your body. Sodium, potassium, calcium, magnesium and phosphate all play a role. They also ensure that your nerves, muscles and brain are kept in good working order. Intense exercise and hot weather can leave you depleted, so make sure you take plenty on, especially sodium – cramping can occur when blood concentrations of this decline.

Stay hydrated

Dehydration hampers physical performance as well as affecting decision making and concentration. It can also cause nerve endings to bunch together and spontaneously twitch. This may lead to cramp. Note that diet contributes up to 30 per cent of fluid intake too – the most hydrating foods include watery fruits, soups and dishes including casseroles and stews.

Include carbs in your diet

While it may have become popular to cut carbs out of the diet, this is of no benefit to people with active lifestyles. They are broken down into glucose, which is the body's primary source of fuel and is stored in the muscles to get you through your next training session. But if this becomes exhausted, the muscles may lack the energy required to contract and relax and you could be more prone to cramping. Glycogen stores become depleted after 60 to 90 minutes of exercise. So, after long bouts of physical activity, eat foods that are rich in carbohydrates such as pasta, rice, potatoes and oats to replenish the stores.



CRAMP: if it strikes

- Do slow, gentle stretching to ease the pain
- Stand in a lunging position to ease calf cramps or pull your ankle towards the buttocks for thigh cramps
- Gently rub or massage the area, or try to walk around to get the blood flowing into the muscle

strong points and I'd struggle on map and compass exercises in the Army.

But making stuff is a passion of mine and my wife suggested I pursue that as a way of coping. I watched a few videos online about how to make walking sticks, sourced a supply of antlers from Scotland and got into it from there.

When I was having a bad day, or was feeling down, I would potter around in my shed. The first stick I made was total rubbish, but I got in touch with a craftsman in the area, who gave me a few ideas.

I make them in my garden shed and over time they have been getting better and better. Because I'm concentrating I forget about things. I go in the shed, put the radio on and get in the zone.

I've been doing this properly since 2017 and then had the idea of approaching celebrities I admire. I just get in touch with their agents and wait for a reply. If they want one that's great, if not it's fine.

Julia Bradbury was the first and after that I started asking for video messages in return, which I post on my Facebook page.

Since then I have done others for the likes of Prince Charles, Bear Grylls, David Jason, Gary Lineker, Rob Brydon and Joanna Lumley, as well as the heads of all three Services.

They are all individual pieces with different handle types. A stick can take anything from a day to two weeks to make but you have to get in the zone – I'd rather take my time and do a good job.

I had a nice letter from Bear Grylls, who said I had produced a 'wonderful piece of work' and that he was full of admiration for the craftsmanship.

The Prince of Wales was also hugely appreciative of the considerable time and care that went into producing his handcrafted stick.

They are just people to me, but I'm thankful for their comments. I do not make these sticks to earn money – if I did that, I'd be skint all the time.

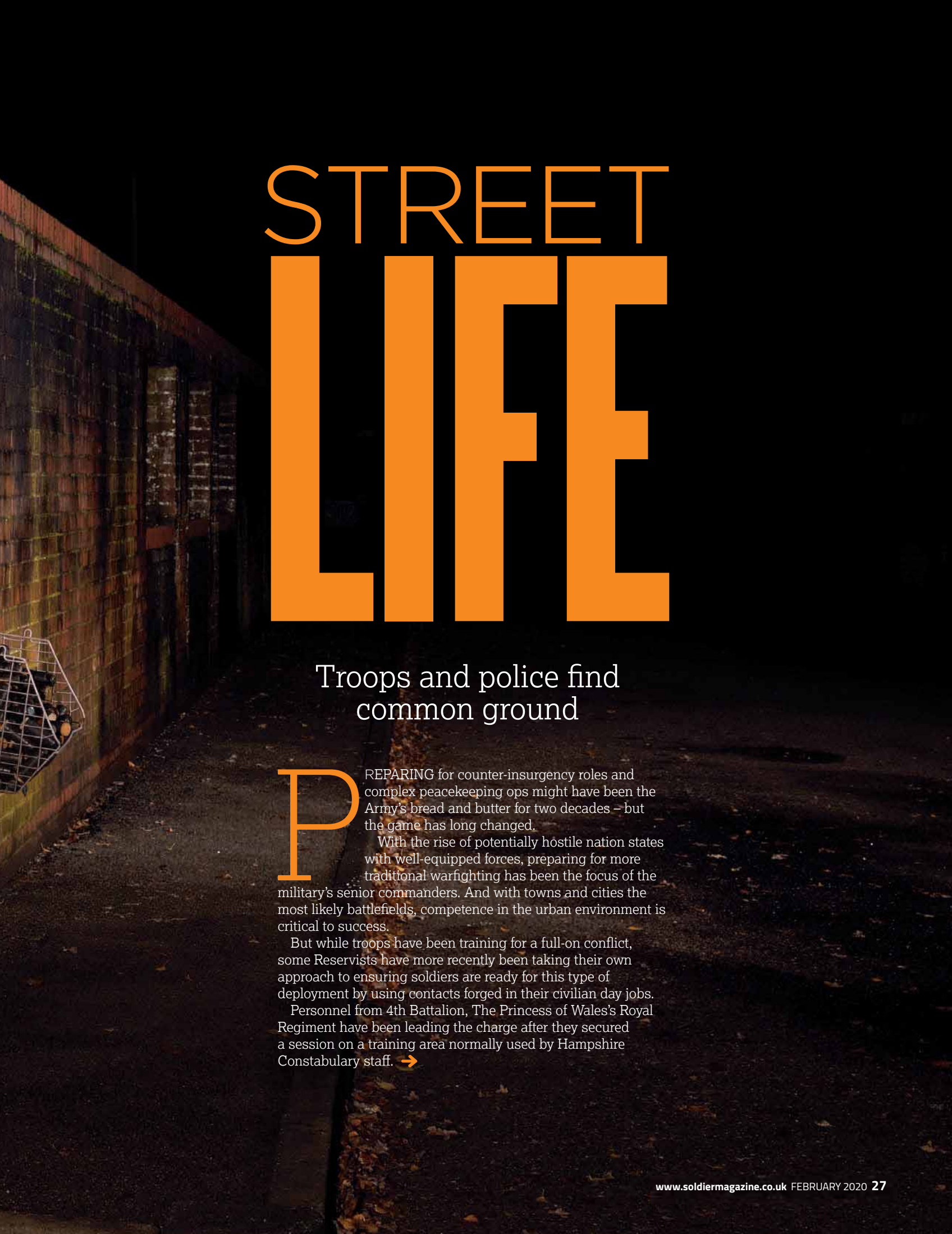
I just had to do something. Those first few attempts were not great but now, if I'm feeling low, I'll head to my shed and set about creating something.

It has been an excellent coping strategy.

► Anyone interested in commissioning a stick should email droberts8641@gmail.com



Report: Cliff Caswell Pictures: Peter Davies



STREET LIFE

Troops and police find common ground

PREPARED for counter-insurgency roles and complex peacekeeping ops might have been the Army's bread and butter for two decades – but the game has long changed.

With the rise of potentially hostile nation states with well-equipped forces, preparing for more traditional warfighting has been the focus of the military's senior commanders. And with towns and cities the most likely battlefields, competence in the urban environment is critical to success.

But while troops have been training for a full-on conflict, some Reservists have more recently been taking their own approach to ensuring soldiers are ready for this type of deployment by using contacts forged in their civilian day jobs.

Personnel from 4th Battalion, The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment have been leading the charge after they secured a session on a training area normally used by Hampshire Constabulary staff. →

→ “It’s been a great experience,” said veteran infanteer and ex-Regular officer Maj Andy Carre, (PWRR, pictured below), who commands the Cosham-based C Company, as his personnel completed the manoeuvres.

“Our approach to Hampshire Constabulary was made through one of our soldiers who works as a full-time member of staff with the force – and this shows how Reservists can bring their valuable experience with civilian organisations into the Army.

“With the help of our friends in the police, our aim was to put the troops in an unfamiliar place that was different to what they might find at Salisbury Plain, Longmoor or Sennybridge.

“The feedback we have had has been really first rate – the guys told us that the different environment added a new dimension to rehearsing fundamental infantry skills.”

Based around a block of buildings in Netley near the 4 PWRR headquarters, the training area provides a different experience to the usual mock towns and villages used by soldiers.

The level of detail in the buildings – which are routinely employed to teach the police the fundamentals of dealing with public order situations – is a world apart from the concrete structures of fighting in built up area environments, with furnished rooms offering an added depth of realism. →



“
It added
a new
dimension
”

PROFILE

Maj Andy Carre

Joined: Royal Hampshire Regiment, 1991

Current role: OC, C Coy, 4 PWRR

Operational experience: Includes Iraq, Sierra Leone, Kosovo

Years of Regular Service: 1991-2006

Reserve service: 2018-present

Civvy job: Employed in tech firm



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Figures shown are for comparability purposes; only compare fuel consumption and CO₂ figures with other cars tested to the same technical procedures. These figures may not reflect real life driving results, which will depend upon a number of factors including the accessories fitted (post-registration), variations in weather, driving styles and vehicle load. *There is a new test used for fuel consumption and CO₂ figures. The CO₂ figures shown, however, are based on the outgoing test cycle and will be used to calculate vehicle tax on first registration.

➔ The short exercise package was carried out during a weekly evening session and saw more than a dozen soldiers put to the test while junior commanders found their decision making under scrutiny.

“We discovered that hosting the training in a different place raised the game and tested both leadership and core infantry skills,” Maj Carre said. “Troops had to contend with situations in strange building layouts and confined spaces – it was a real eye-opener.

“The environment was complex and the evening was a particularly good way of getting young lance corporals and corporals to command in some pretty tough conditions.”

The officer, who completed tours of Northern Ireland, Kosovo and Iraq during a 15-year Regular career with 1 PWRR, pointed out that future training was also planned in Netley.

“I think there is more we can do, and it is great for us to have established the contact,” he added.

“Reservists rarely have an opportunity such as this – in fact we’ve had an experience and the use of a facility that very few Regulars have access to.

“As well as the training, it has been good for us to build strong relationships with an organisation in our community – as a result of one of our soldiers being involved with the police in his full-time



job we now have some valuable future training possibilities.

“The force seemed to enjoy our presence as much as we were grateful to be able to use the facility.”

The chance to take training outside of a military environment on to a site used by the law-enforcement officers certainly created a new dimension to an otherwise routine exercise.

But an insight into how another uniformed organisation prepares personnel for confrontation also proved equally valuable – and could provide useful examples of good practice.

Cooperation will be important in the new battlespace. With the likes of cyber attacks and fake news among the emerging threats, strong relationships with other bodies will be vital in future. ■

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EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY





Army Film and Photographic Competition zooms in on Service life

FROM a group of comrades playing cards after a hard day of jungle training to an infantryman leading the charge in a show of force, the 2019 Army Film and Photographic Competition once again offered tantalising glimpses into the real lives of British soldiers around the world.

The latest showcase of Service activity saw a significantly higher number of entries than last year's event – 1,054 still images and 87 videos were submitted for consideration by three expert judges, among them Master Photographer WO1 Dan Harmer (RLC).

The head of trade for the Army's cohort of official snappers, he said the standard of work had been consistently high across both the professional and amateur classes.

"They had more freedom this year in the number of images they could enter, and more time to gather material because we extended the dates," WO1 Harmer explained.

"So that helped improve the quality. The amateur category really surpassed expectations, and the video entries were massively impressive.

"When judging stills we are looking for composition, exposure and sharpness, but also engagement – does the image draw you in and tell a story without you having to read anything?"

"There are always two or three images that jump out at you straight away and make you question, where was that soldier and what was he or she doing?"

"At the same time photography is so subjective, so there's always a bit of back and forth between the panel, but it's a really enjoyable challenge."

WO1 Harmer was also pleased to see lots of submissions from newcomers.

"We have had a big turnover in the trade recently and it was good to see some new names," he added.

"Some personnel from other cap badges who entered as amateurs in previous years have actually decided to become Army photographers and are going through training at the moment.

"That's encouraging. They have an eye for social media and bring new ideas to the table."

Keen snappers from across the Service have until December 4 to gather material for the 2020 competition. Read on to gain inspiration from this year's winning images... ➔

Words: Becky Clark

2



IN NUMBERS

1,054

still images submitted to the competition, roughly 50 per cent more than last year

87

videos entered, double the figure from 2018

5

hours the panel spent judging the photographic entries

3



AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Public categories

Op Camera: *Teamwork* by LCpl James Clarke, RM

Op Smartphone: *Powerlifter* by Charlie Perham, MoD

Amateur categories

Cadet life: *A Silent Reflection* by Cdt Sgt Ali Fawzi, ACF

Portrait: *Ambush, eyes on target* by CSgt Liam Swan, Gren Gds

Sport/adventure training: *Take the Strain* by CSgt Philip Carr, PWRR

① Soldiering: *Jungle Belize* by Maj Mike Thwaite, Para Portfolio (Amateur Army Photographer 2019): Cpl Danny Houghton, RLC

Best online image: *Jungle Belize* by Maj Mike Thwaite, Para

Professional categories

② Telling a story: *Who's in There?* by Cpl Ben Beale, RLC

③ Portrait: *Ghurkas on Guard* by Cpl Jonathan Adams, RLC

Sport/adventure training: *Desert Tango* by Sgt Ben Maher, RLC

Soldiering: *Take a Knee* by Cpl Nick Johns, RLC (see page 16)

Best PR image: *Take a Knee* by Cpl Nick Johns, RLC

News video: *Ex Iron Wolf* by Cpl Sam Jenkins, RLC

Open video: *Recruit Smith* by Cpl Ben Beale, RLC

④ Portfolio (Professional Army Photographer 2019): Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC



SHARP SHOOTER

We asked professional portfolio winner Cpl Rebecca Brown about her winning submission

How do you feel about claiming the Army's top photographic prize?

"To go from winning single categories and an amateur accolade a couple of years ago to securing the professional portfolio award is really gratifying. It highlights how far I've come since joining the trade."

How do you go about picking images when entering your portfolio?

"You are required to have certain categories of image in there – portrait, equipment, sport, a black and white, etc – and I'm amazed I managed to find enough exciting pictures for the awards this time because over the past 12 months I've travelled a lot less than I normally do. I've been busy doing lots of career and training courses."

Who has been your inspiration as a photographer?

"I'm drawn to people who work differently to the way we do things in the Army. I love New York photographer Lindsay Adler's approach, her fashion shoots are incredible; Dave Black does sports photography in a totally different, very creative way; Karl Taylor does brilliant product photography, especially the way he cleverly uses light to photograph black objects on black backgrounds – that inspired me to produce the image of two dark Glock pistols against a black setting that I included in my portfolio this time."



OUT &



WHEN Clare Phillips joined the Army back in 1995 the world was a very different place. Under the premiership of Prime Minister John Major, soldiers were heavily committed to major operations in the flashpoints of the former Yugoslavia and Northern Ireland.

Elsewhere in the news, singer Robbie Williams hit the headlines after announcing his intention to leave teen heartthrob band *Take That*. The police were tackling disorder on the streets of Luton – and there was still a blanket disqualification on homosexuals enlisting in the Armed Forces.

“I don’t remember directly being asked whether I was gay when I joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers all those years ago,” Col Phillips (pictured far

right), recalled.

“But the fact remained that you would be handed a dishonourable discharge if you were found out – and everyone knew your room could be searched and personal effects seized at any time.

“It was hard as an officer in my early 20s leading two lives, one at home with friends and the other with the military – I used to make up stories about spending weekends going to the rugby and even had a photo of a fake boyfriend on my room wall.”

Exactly two decades after the ban on gay Service personnel

was ended, the situation has been turned on its head and there is equality for all, regardless of sexuality.

Lifting the disqualification has transformed both the personal and professional life of Col Phillips. Now open about her own background and approaching the sixth wedding anniversary to wife Nicky, she has served as the first female corps colonel in the Army – fittingly with the REME. She has also completed tours of Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

Loving life at the Scotland-based Army Personnel Centre where she is now serving, the officer also received a post-Christmas gift after being appointed a CBE in the 2020 New Year Honours list.



PROUD

Gay troops reflect on Army life – 20 years after the ban on homosexual personnel serving was lifted

Hard times

Full equality might now be a reality, but ending the ban was a challenge for the Armed Forces.

As the millennium approached there had already been legal challenges forcing the Services down the modernisation path. Many politicians and commanders also accepted the need for change.

When the disqualification was lifted in 2000, troops of all sexualities were granted the same rights. With the later introduction of legislation allowing civil partnerships, and more recently marriages, same sex couples could also live together in military accommodation.

Soldiers, sailors and Royal Air Force personnel also now regularly march together at Pride events and the Army again featured in the top-100 employers compiled by equality group Stonewall.

In addition, Capt Hannah Graf (REME) – spokesperson for the Service's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Forum – was named by the organisation as the 2019 trans role model.

While accepting that the Armed Forces were well behind the equality curve in the late 1990s, Col Phillips believes they rapidly caught up – and are now often ahead of their civilian counterparts in offering an environment where all can feel valued and appreciated.

She stressed that forcing people to hide their true selves had been unhealthy – and a culture of transparency ensured strong personal and professional

relationships prevailed.

“I don’t know a single person in the Army that can believe the ban was ever in place,” Col Phillips added. “Sexuality is not a topic now – you can be totally open.”

Operational readiness

Sgt Guy Lowe-Barrow (RLC, pictured far left), – who signed up for the Army after the ban on gay personnel was lifted – agreed with the veteran officer.

The career chef – who has completed tours of Iraq and Afghanistan while championing equality – believes embracing diversity will ultimately enhance effectiveness on ops. →



→ “We need people from different backgrounds and with a range of skills, particularly with the threats we face today and complexity of the modern battlespace,” he added.

“Overall, I think the Army completely has the right culture but attitudes on the ground can be mixed – there is still some work to be done in order to change perceptions.”

But Sgt Lowe-Barrow – who hails from St Vincent and the Grenadines – said his own colleagues had been hugely supportive.

“I came out early on when I joined my first unit – and it was the biggest non-event ever,” he said with a smile.

“I remember being asked if I had a girlfriend when I was recruited in 2001 and very honestly answering that I was not dating anyone.

“I knew there had been a ban but people were generally great to me from the moment I arrived.”

Like Col Phillips, Sgt Lowe-Barrow was deservedly recognised in the New Year Honours List.

He was awarded the MBE and commended for his work to promote inclusion during his long career.

His royal accolade was also testament to the unique perspective he brings as a gay soldier from a Commonwealth community, serving in the Armed Forces far from his mother country.

“In my view it is important that we offer our young troops real life models of the people in the Army,” the NCO, who is an admin sergeant at the Larkhill-based 26 Regiment, Royal Artillery, added.

“I hope that I can provide them with a positive example.”

Bringing in change – and managing it well – has been constant throughout British military history.

As well as morally being the right approach, lifting the ban on personnel of all sexualities from joining the ranks is destined to bring future operational benefits.

While giving those serving the assurance that they will be accepted without the question of sexuality, the military has opened the door to a wealth of previously untapped talent.

In an age where every man and woman counts, and where a full range of skills is needed to counter a raft of threats, diversity is destined to be a battle-winning element of any future conflict. ■



Name: Sgt Guy Lowe-Barrow

Age: 43

Current role: Admin sergeant at 26 Regiment, Royal Artillery

Operational experience: Includes Iraq and Afghanistan

Years of service: 2001-present



Name: Col Clare Phillips

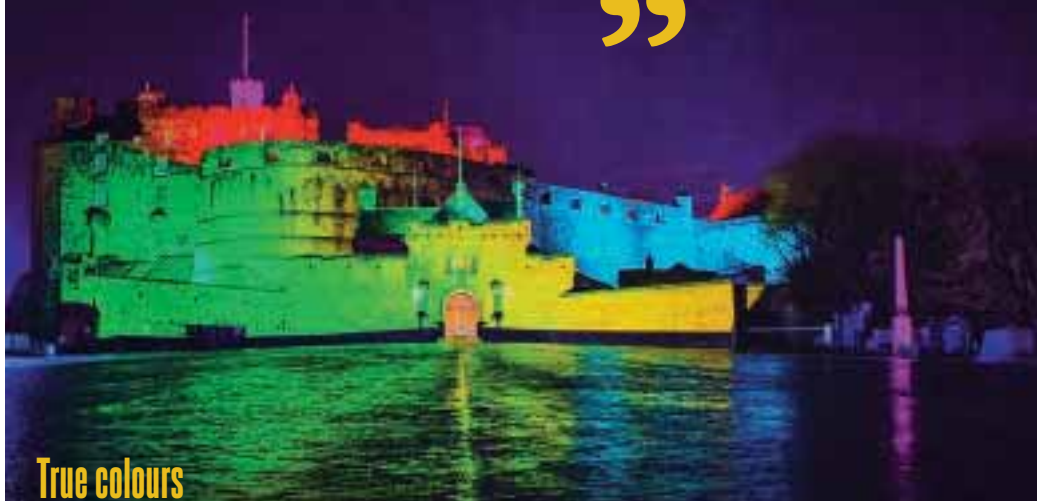
Age: 46

Current role: Branch head, Army Personnel Centre

Operational experience: Includes Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan

Years of service: 1995-present

“Sexuality is not a topic now – you can be totally open”



True colours

RAINBOW lights illuminated MoD buildings to mark 20 years since the gay ban was lifted.

The department's Main Building in London, Edinburgh Castle and Victoria Building, Portsmouth, were among the structures given the makeover in the striking colours of the LGBT+ movement.

The light show came as ministers and former troops celebrated the occasion at a reception at the House of Commons.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace told reporters: “The anniversary is a timely reminder of the fantastic contribution those of the LGBT+ community make to our military.”



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FOR VETERANS

OPENING THE DOOR

Service Personnel have been getting to grips with the future accommodation model (FAM) pilot that has gone live in Aldershot

We asked FAM development team member Lt Col Des Hendry (Para) to answer some of the most common questions from soldiers enquiring about the scheme...

Will FAM cost me more?

DH: No. It has been designed so renting costs are broadly the same as for Service family accommodation. The FAM rental payment increases to cover the cost of living in expensive areas. You can find out more by searching "Discover My Benefits" on gov.uk.

Is FAM just for families?

DH: No, it supports everyone, whether they are single, married, in a civil partnership or long-term relationship.

Can you rent from a relative?

DH: As long as you have a formal tenancy agreement, yes. However, because the pilot is about testing the local rental market, you aren't allowed to rent from immediate family if they live in the property – for example, you can't rent from your wife.


I'm divorced and share child custody so how will FAM support me?

DH:

If your children are in full-time education and you have custody of them for more than 80 nights of the year then they will count as dependants, whether they're your biological children or step children. You will need to register them on JPA before submitting your housing choice. This means that the size of property you're eligible for (whether SFA or privately rented) is larger to meet this need. Find out more at Discover My Benefits.

I want to buy a home but I'm not sure when – so how will this work?

DH: If your move to Aldershot doesn't fit with your plans to buy a home, you can use one of the other options until you are ready. Then, take the paperwork for your new home to your human resources team. Those buying will receive the core rental payment (£125 a month), as well as disturbance expense and movement and storage of personal effects. First-time buyers can also claim a refund of legal expenses of up to £1,500 and make use of Forces Help to Buy.



Capt Daniel Walker has decided to use the FAM pilot to rent a larger property to accommodate his children at weekends

FAM - THE OPTIONS

- Live in **SLA or SFA** – usual charges apply.
- **Rent** from private sector, receive core sum plus geographic payment weighted to area and number of children you have.
- **Buy** a home with monthly contribution and additional help for first-time buyers

'We have so much more flexibility'

One of the first people to register an interest in the FAM pilot was Capt Daniel Walker (AGC (SPS)), who is being posted to Aldershot from Tidworth in April.

The 32-year-old was motivated by the need to find a property that fits in with his family situation.

"My children live in Guildford with their mum," he explained.

"Up until now the options for when I have them at weekends have been limited to living on camp, which is really boring for them, go to my parents or spend a fortune on hotels."

Capt Walker decided to rent a property large enough to accommodate his children. Every month he will receive £125 plus a payment that takes into account the rental values of the area and the number of children he has.

"With this system we'll have so much more flexibility and there's no doubt this will make a massive difference for me and my kids," added the officer.

"I've started to look online at what's available and I've got in touch with the local estate agents so I'm on their radar when the time comes in April to move.

"The FAM Cell provided all the information I needed, and it was great when they confirmed that my stepson is included as one of my dependents under FAM policy.

"You obviously need to think about costs if you're a young lad starting out, but this gives you more options to live in a way that suits you, which doesn't have to be on camp."

Can two single (PStat 5) personnel rent together and, if so, what payments would they receive?

DH: You can choose how you want to live so, yes, they can rent a home together – as long as they are both named on the tenancy agreement. They would both receive the £125 core payment and the geographic payment which varies according to the cost of the area and how many dependants you have.

What if I already own a home?

DH: If it's more than 50 miles from the base then you can claim the core payment and Get You Home allowance – FAM replaces the single living accommodation waiver with the core payment. If you live closer then it is reasonable to live there and commute and you can still claim Home to Duty Travel allowance.

Are you eligible?

You need four years' service, be in an eligible unit (a list is on Defence Intranet) and have a minimum 12 months left on your posting. For more information contact people-famcell-ald@mod.gov.uk or go to Room 123, Floor 1, Wellington House, St. Omer Barracks, Aldershot.

FEEDBACK FROM THE FRONT

How are the most commonly raised issues at sessions with the Chief of the General Staff's briefing team being addressed by the Service?



Why have commitment bonuses been removed, with no replacement incentive in sight, when retention is an acknowledged problem?

Col Phil Bassingham-Searle, Army Pay Colonel:

"Commitment bonuses haven't been removed but they are being phased out – a result of the Strategic Defence and Security Review in 2015, when the Armed Forces were around full strength.

We're not in a position to reverse such a decision but we are looking at the potential impact of losing this scheme.

It's due to cease at the end of March 2021 but anyone who joined the Army before April 1, 2016 still qualifies for it.

In terms of mitigation, we now provide financial retention incentives (FRI), which are more targeted. We are currently focusing on the Infantry, Royal Signals and the Intelligence Corps, which are areas with manning shortfalls.

It's a better way of using public money. The commitment bonus has no return of service attached to it so after five years, for example, you could take your £2,750 and sign off the next day.

By contrast, the FRI is conditional with a return of service attached.

In 2019 we spent just over £1 million on an operational pinchpoint trade group within the Royal Signals. Altogether, 76 personnel took the offer, including several who withdrew their notice to terminate, and they received £15,000 for an additional four years of service.

We are going to continue this policy and target personnel in key areas with five or six years' service in particular, partly because we've had low inflow in recent years and we have to retain more people than historically we've needed to do."

Why is there a difference between pay grades, depending on trade, when doing the same job?

Col Phil Bassingham-Searle, Army Pay Colonel:

“People are paid for what they do during the majority of their career. You might have two engineers, one in supplement two and the other in supplement three, and for the majority of their time in the Army they will work in their specific trades and be paid according to the value of their skills – but for a certain two-year posting they may end up doing the same job.

A good example of this would be when personnel go to work as instructors at phase two training establishments.”



Civilian contracts create frustration across accommodation and messing. Housing is often maintained poorly and repair times can be lengthy, while core meals can be of a low standard.

Col Andy Szabo, Assistant Chief of Staff, Infrastructure, Regional Command:

“The Army does not have the resources to put its chefs into every cookhouse, which is why we have catering contractors.

These outfits must provide a bound comments book in the cookhouse or junior ranks mess – that’s part of their contract.

Personnel should put clearly written feedback into that book and own up to who they are so the Army and the caterer have the opportunity to identify and address specific problems.

The quartermaster staff should look at the book every week and if issues arise they can register them on an online portal that my team scrutinises regularly.

One example was the cleaning concerns at Edinburgh Garrison last year. The firm wasn’t meeting the required standard and soldiers were constantly complaining about the matter.

The contractor was told to rectify the problem but there was another spike in complaints a few weeks later.

As a result, the company’s manager at the site was replaced and the cleaning has since improved.” →



There is a disparity between accommodation standards, often in the same garrison. Some people will have brand new accommodation, built for units returning from Germany, for example, while others must put up with old housing.

Col Andy Szabo, Assistant Chief of Staff, Infrastructure, Regional Command:

“Our estate is huge and varied – the Regular Army has something like 130 barracks in the UK and around 2,000

buildings set aside for single living accommodation alone.

We have a policy to improve the standard of all dwellings and our funding has improved significantly over the last two years.

In the past, personnel lost faith because there wasn't always enough money to carry out repairs but that's no longer the case.

In this financial year we are on course to spend more than double the previous year's total outlay on repairs and maintenance so people should feel confident about reporting faults.

The Army has pledged to invest hundreds of millions of pounds to improve junior soldiers' single living accommodation (SLA), then it will look at junior ranks' messes, the provision and access to gyms followed by SLA for sergeants, warrant officers and officers.

There are large programmes in place and they are being complemented by low level works to improve individual facilities.

The chains of command need to report into the regional infrastructure cells so we know where things are not up to scratch and can set about improving it.”

The JPA claims process is too complicated and over-audited. Many soldiers don't claim due to a lack of access or fear of getting it wrong and being accused of fraud.

Col Nick Carrell, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, Personnel Administration, Army Personnel Services Group:

"Since JPA was introduced in 2007 personnel have often reported they feel deterred from making legitimate claims through fear of being disciplined for making an error.

Since 2007 the same message has been sent out loud and clear: no one will be punished for a legitimate mistake.

JPA detects obvious claim errors and highlights them, and the audit process – typically a random ten per cent of all claims – is designed to identify mistakes.

When one is found it is simply corrected, and the accurate allowance paid. Unless there is obvious fraud no further action will be taken.

Pay and allowance policy can be complex and genuine mistakes are understandable so every member of the Army should feel confident that they can and should claim their entitlements.

To understand allowances better use the Discover My Benefits app that went live last year.

Looking ahead, an application called MyiExpenses is to be launched on the Defence Gateway in 2020 that will enable personnel to enter a claim onto JPA using their personal devices.

It will help resolve a lack of terminals and Modnet access and make the claims process more user-friendly. But it will not remove the auditing and authorising process as this is a key method for ensuring the Army looks after the taxpayers' money, which ultimately pays these allowances."



Serving members want to be busy, but they also want balance in their lives. Poor planning at all levels leads to short notice taskings.

Col Craig Hanson, Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff, Operate, Field Army Headquarters:

"Commander Field Army, Lt Gen Ivan Jones (pictured below) is reviewing every aspect of the soldier's lived experience and offer to ensure we engage and retain our greatest asset, our people.

We are focused on harnessing many initiatives from across defence including those from soldiers and units.

In terms of tempo, demand on the Field Army remains high, especially for niche capabilities. The Service is and will always be the "go to" service for a number of defence's priorities, particularly in delivering the UK's influence across the world.

However, we are actively engaged in driving down commitments over time.

We also have change teams working with divisions, brigades and units to identify how they are conducting business in barracks, expose how much of what keeps a unit busy is self-imposed, and explain how they can generate ideas themselves to work more efficiently.

The Field Army IX Programme underpins much of this work. By better connecting our many data sources and presenting them in a usable manner, commanders will be able to make quick decisions based on evidence, reducing laborious staff procedures.

While efforts such as these continue to mitigate the negative impacts of high tempo, we recognise that personnel relish being busy doing the things they joined up for and this is a major factor in retention." →





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Work is increasingly being pushed to Modnet, but too few extra terminals are being provided and a lack of mobile IT prevents flexible working. Troops use their own devices and data to access Defence Gateway for the Defence Learning Environment, Defence Connect and the leave app while Wi-Fi providers in accommodation blocks are expensive.

Col Andy Lucas, Assistant Head, Information Services Operations, Army Headquarters:

“The need to increase the availability of Modnet is recognised.

The next phase of the programme is the Windows 10 update, with the roll-out due to start in April this year.

This will see a move away from desktops to a predominantly laptop-based approach. It will include an uplift in scaling as well as the introduction of kiosks to enable and improve JPA access for non-Modnet users.

An increasing number of MoD systems and services are becoming accessible via the Internet and all ranks have the option to use their own devices to access these

services via the Defence Gateway.

To support this, initiatives remain ongoing to improve provision of Wi-Fi access to the internet across the Army and defence sites. There is no charge to the individual for use of the service.

These initiatives seek to improve the opportunities for mobile working and enhance access.

The provision of Wi-Fi, in particular, complements the ongoing work by Army Personnel Services Group and others to improve access to essential applications and information for Regular and Reserve non-Modnet users.” ■



Top positives

The Offer: Overall, people enjoy the variety of work the Army provides, plus the opportunity to travel as promised, medical benefits and the prestige of doing a job out of the norm.

Ethos: There is a strong sense of pride, camaraderie and support from a like-minded community of people. They feel able to work together and are encouraged to develop individually towards a greater purpose than corporate business.

AT/sports: One of the most popular positives for life in the Army and a big retention tool. The availability of sport at unit level could be improved, however.

Pay and allowances: Despite it being a negative issue as well, the steady salary, continued education allowances and job security are still positive retention incentives.

Education: The increase in professional development and civilian accredited courses has been positively received but would benefit from being more widely and effectively advertised.



CAREERS

A four-year engineering degree apprenticeship scheme at Goldman Sachs is open to Army leavers. There are no fees as participants work part-time at the global investment bank while also studying at Queen Mary University of London. There is then the opportunity to transition into a full-time role at the end of the programme. Applications for the course, beginning in autumn 2020, must be submitted by February 9. For details visit www.goldmansachs.com/careers/students/programs/emea/engineering-apprentices

Interested in a career as a personal trainer? Ultimate Performance is expanding and on the lookout for more ex-Service personnel to join its growing ranks. Visit www.upfitness.com/en/careers for more information on the opportunities available.

Service leavers interested in working in the network cable and data centre sectors can now use enhanced learning credits to access more courses. The funding can be spent on programmes delivered by CNet Training, which offers packages from a level-three BTEC in certified network cable installation up to a level-seven masters degree in data centre leadership and management. The BTEC has been specially tailored for Forces personnel and includes a two-week industry placement. Visit www.cnet-training.com

The **Recruit for Spouses** coaching programme, which helps Army partners get back into employment, has received a funding boost to help it reach more husbands and wives. To apply for a six-week course of one-hour sessions contact coaching@recruitforspouses.co.uk

Forces Families Jobs is a platform designed to help partners into meaningful employment. Visit www.forcesfamiliesjobs.co.uk to see the site, which is free to advertise on for employers who have signed the Armed Forces Covenant.



COMPETITIONS

Spine line winners: Ian Yates, Lancashire; Lee Townsend, Evesham; Peter King, Catterick



DIARY

February 9: Paws for Remembrance event at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. A special day for four-legged visitors with gifts plus free vet's advice for pets – all funds raised will go towards the venue. Visit www.thenma.org.uk for more details.

April 7, 9, 15 and 16: Bring the Noise free music and singing workshops for youngsters at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. Participating children will be given the opportunity to perform in a special choir at the venue's VE Day commemorations on May 8. Visit www.thenma.org.uk

May 8: National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire will be commemorating **VE Day**, starting a three-day activities programme. The free event will also remember those who fought in the Far East until August 1945. Further information is available at www.thenma.org.uk

May 9-10: National Memorial Arboretum vintage fair, held as part of the VE Day commemorations. It features live music and family activities. Visit www.thenma.org.uk

May 16: Paras' 10 in Colchester – the ultimate ten-mile endurance race. Run or tab the course from The Parachute Regiment's P Company test week. Enter as a team or individual, or with your dog. There is a fun run for children. Serving military personnel can get a discount by emailing secretary@supportourparas.org Go to paras10.com for full details.

September 5: Paras' 10 in Catterick – the ultimate ten-mile endurance race. Same format as Colchester event and, again, there is a fun run for children. Serving military personnel can get a discount by emailing secretary@supportourparas.org Go to paras10.com for full details.

July 27: The inaugural North East Military Ball will be held at The Hilton, Bottle Bank, Gateshead. Open to tri-Service personnel, Regular and Reserve plus friends and family, it features a three-course dinner, live entertainment, raffle, auction and disco. Proceeds will be divided between The Royal British Legion, Veterans in Crisis and Grace House NE. Tickets bought before April 5 cost £50 per person or £450 for a table of ten, rising to £60 and £550 after this date. Email tickets@nemb.co.uk or call



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020 7901 8900;
www.soldierscharity.org

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

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

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

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

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

Army LGBT Forum:
www.armylgbt.org.uk;
chair@armylgbt.org.uk

Army Libraries:
01252 340094

Army Ornithological Society:
www.armybirding.org.uk

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

Big White Wall:
www.bigwhitewall.com

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

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

Care After Combat:
www.careaftercombat.org

Career Transition Partnership:
020 7469 6661

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

Combat Stress:
24-hour Mental Health Helpline for service personnel and their families 0800 323 4444; www.combatstress.org.uk

Defence Humanists:
www.defencehumanists.org.uk

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

Family Escort Service:
020 7463 9249

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

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

Forces Pension Society:
020 7820 9988

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

Heroes Welcome:
www.heroeswelcome.co.uk

HighGround:
www.highground-uk.org.uk

Joint Service Housing Advice Office:
01252 787574

Medal Office:
94561 3600 or 0141 224 3600

Mutual Support (multiple sclerosis group):
www.mutualsupport.org.uk

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

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

Poppyscotland:
0131 557 2782;
www.poppyscotland.org.uk

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

Remount: 01451 850 341;
www.remount.net

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

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Continued on page 50

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www.ssafo.org.uk

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www.stoll.org.uk

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

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

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

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

Troop Aid:
0121 711 7215 or 07734 384260;
troopaid@icloud.com;
www.troopaid.info

uk4u Thanks!:
01798 812081;
www.uk4u.org

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

WRVS Services Welfare:
02920 232 668



ROADSHOWS

The Army Engagement Team wants to hear from members of the public who would like a personal invitation to its hi-tech roadshow. Call 01276 412880 or email your name and address to rc-aeg-mailbox@mod.gov.uk with the event you are interested in attending.

February 13: Ebbw Vale

February 25: Penzance

March 3: South Tyneside

March 11: Burnley



SEARCHLINE

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

Former gunner Chris Dunham and four other Royal Artillery veterans want to hear from survivors of Op Dynamo in Dunkirk. The ex-soldiers are travelling to France on May 27 to mark the 80th anniversary of the evacuation and intend to present a plaque listing the present-day survivors to the Dunkirk Museum. Email chridunham@aol.com or call 07545 094909

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

Twenty Twenty Productions are making All That Glitters – a new television show that will search for Britain's most brilliant

jeweller – and would like to include someone who has a connection to the military. Would you like an item of jewellery specially designed and made to celebrate a momentous occasion in your family's life, or is there someone you know who deserves something gorgeous and unique? Maybe you yourself have an event coming up and only something spectacular will do? If you would like the opportunity to commission a bespoke item made by one of the talented jewellers, get in touch. Email your name, contact number and a brief description of the item of jewellery you would like to clients@twentytwenty.tv

Loved ones of ex-soldiers who have been emotionally or physically affected while serving are being sought for an educational project chronicling the impact of war on families. Veterans' charity The Legasee Educational Trust has joined forces with Help for Heroes Band of Sisters and the Armed Forces Covenant to launch The Military Family: A Life of Service initiative. If you have an interesting story contact info@legasee.org.uk

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TEN details have been changed in this picture of the Jordanian Armed Forces and 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment on Exercise in Jordan. Circle all the differences in the left image and send the panel to **HOAY 939, Soldier**, Ordnance Barracks, Government Road, Aldershot,

Hampshire GU11 2DU with your full contact details, including email address, by no later than February 28. A photocopy is acceptable but only one entry per person may be submitted.

The first two correct entries drawn after the closing date will win a Streamlight Protac HL

5-X USB torch, which boasts 1,000 lumens and can be powered with either disposable batteries or a rechargeable cell. The winners' names will be published in the April issue. All the usual rules apply. **December's winner:** Cpl Vicky Davis, Land Warfare Centre, Warminster.



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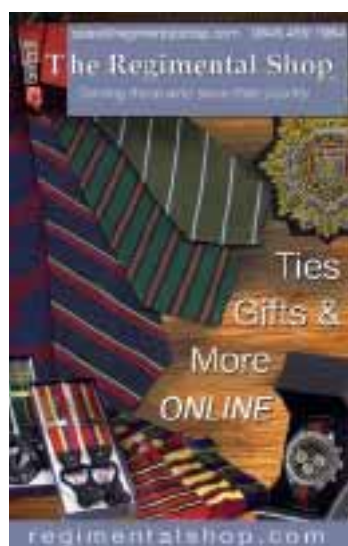
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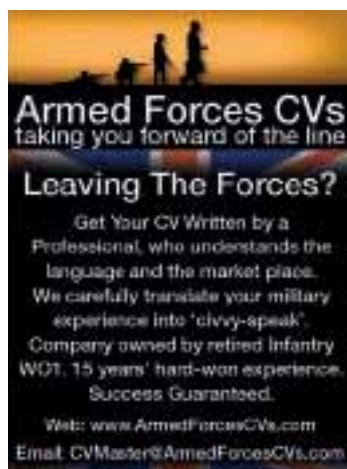
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Full details of the monthly cost for tickets, and the benefits of membership, can be found in the Army Sports Lottery CMI which can be found on the Army Sports Lottery website.

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REVIEWS


MOVIES

JOKER

Origin tale offers fascinating insight into arch nemesis

IN A world of formulaic superhero movies characterised by over-elaborate action sequences, the origin story *Joker* spectacularly breaks the mould.

Stripped of CGI wizardry and thrilling set-pieces, this film ditches the gloss and polish associated with the traditional DC and Marvel realms in favour of a dark character exploration of Batman's most iconic foe.

Joaquin Phoenix (*Gladiator*, *Walk the Line*) stars as Arthur Fleck, a man on the edge from the outset as he struggles to find his place in a Gotham City increasingly devoid of empathy and thought for those at the very bottom of the food chain. 

P59

BOOKS

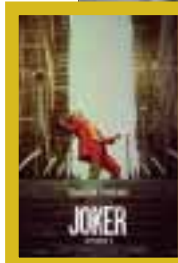
P61

MUSIC

P62

TOP GEAR

MOVIES



Joker is out on DVD and Blu-ray on February 10



He has aspirations of becoming a stand-up comedian, but the reality sees him working as a sign-twirling clown, trying to divert potential shoppers from the streets and into the retail world.

Here, he suffers bullying, abuse and a brutal beatdown – but instead of finding support from a caring boss he becomes embroiled in an ultimately unsuccessful battle to save his job.

Fleck's plight is not helped by a medical condition that sees him cackle with laughter at the most inappropriate times, while the help he is receiving for ongoing mental health issues is suddenly stopped as funding for such programmes is cut.

The sense of abandonment stretches further than the personal level as garbage strikes result in piles of rubbish plaguing the streets and when city high-flier Thomas Wayne refers to the impoverished masses as "clowns", the divide between them and us is never greater.

Despite the spiralling gloom Fleck offers fleeting glimpses into a parallel life, where he meets a partner and imagines a successful comic career.

But, again, reality takes hold and the tragedy of his situation finally culminates in a breaking point with violent consequences.

His decline is perfectly charted by director Todd Phillips (*The Hangover* trilogy, *Due Date*), who gradually piles on the misery until Fleck has nowhere left to turn. And while his reaction is extreme, it is almost understandable.

Like **Heath Ledger** in *The Dark Knight*, the role of Joker provides the backdrop for a star turn from **Phoenix** – who has deservedly

received a best actor nomination ahead of this month's Oscars.

His portrayal of the arch villain is mesmerising and reduces the talents of the supporting cast to mere insignificance and, while he expertly creates a truly unhinged character, he also delivers brief moments of genuine dark comedy.

Phillips deserves great credit for making a surprising transition from his tried and tested world of gross-out comedies, proving he has greater versatility than many have given him credit for.

The 70s, retro feel also serves as the perfect platform to the film, again escaping the trappings of the conventional superhero universe in favour of a grittier backdrop.

All in all, this is a superb offering and it is no surprise to see *Joker* leading the Oscars race with 11 nominations.

Such recognition is richly deserved and here's hoping the shortlist leads to the collecting of actual honours come the awards ceremony on February 9. ■

VERDICT:

Bucks the superhero trend in stunning style

★★★★★

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG, *SOLDIER*

DVD/DIGITAL RELEASES



Primal

Out now on DVD

BIG game hunter Frank Walsh (**Nicolas Cage**) comes across a rare white jaguar in the Brazilian rainforest and swiftly sets off back to the US to

make his fortune. However, he soon discovers that the boat he is travelling on is also transporting extradited assassin, Richard Loffler (**Kevin Durand**). When the hit man breaks loose and releases the animals in the process, the film quickly becomes a game of cat and mouse with bloodshed and chaos while maintaining an enjoyable pace. **Cage** plays his typical profile; cool, calm and with little expression but that's okay, as it's what we know and enjoy from his characters. Also starring **Famke Janssen** as Dr Ellen Taylor, *Primal* has many recognisable faces and is a B movie that definitely takes you back to the 90s with some average CGI, one-liners and a plot that is predictable to say the least. It won't blow you away or make the stage for the Oscars but will keep you entertained on an evening that needs that little bit of mindless action.

WO1 Alan Brewer, RLC



Le Mans 66

Out on DVD March 23

THIS is a nostalgic, real-life tale of one of motorsport's fiercest rivalries between the infamous red stallions of Enzo Ferrari and Henry Ford II's GT40. The latter

looked to legendary car designer Carroll Shelby, played by **Matt Damon**, to produce a machine capable of throwing the Italian giants from their throne, with fearless British racing driver Ken Miles (**Christian Bale**) in the hot seat. Not only do you get a high-octane, tyre-squealing cinematic treat but you're thrown back into the cool 60s. The film shows the personal struggle Shelby has with Ford's corporate suits, fighting to keep the talented Miles as his number one driver despite his disregard for discipline, the chain of command and the ultimate sin of being a Brit in one of America's most iconic companies. Its mixture of gripping racing sequences and humour between characters makes this a must-see.

Graeme Main, Soldier

PICK OF THE MONTH:

DRESDEN

The city that rose from the ashes

➤ ON the night of February 13, Dresdeners will link arms around the historic Altstadt district and bells will toll to mark 75 years since the city was reduced to embers by Allied bombers.

Unleashed in three waves over the course of two days, the merciless attack created a firestorm that claimed some 25,000 lives.

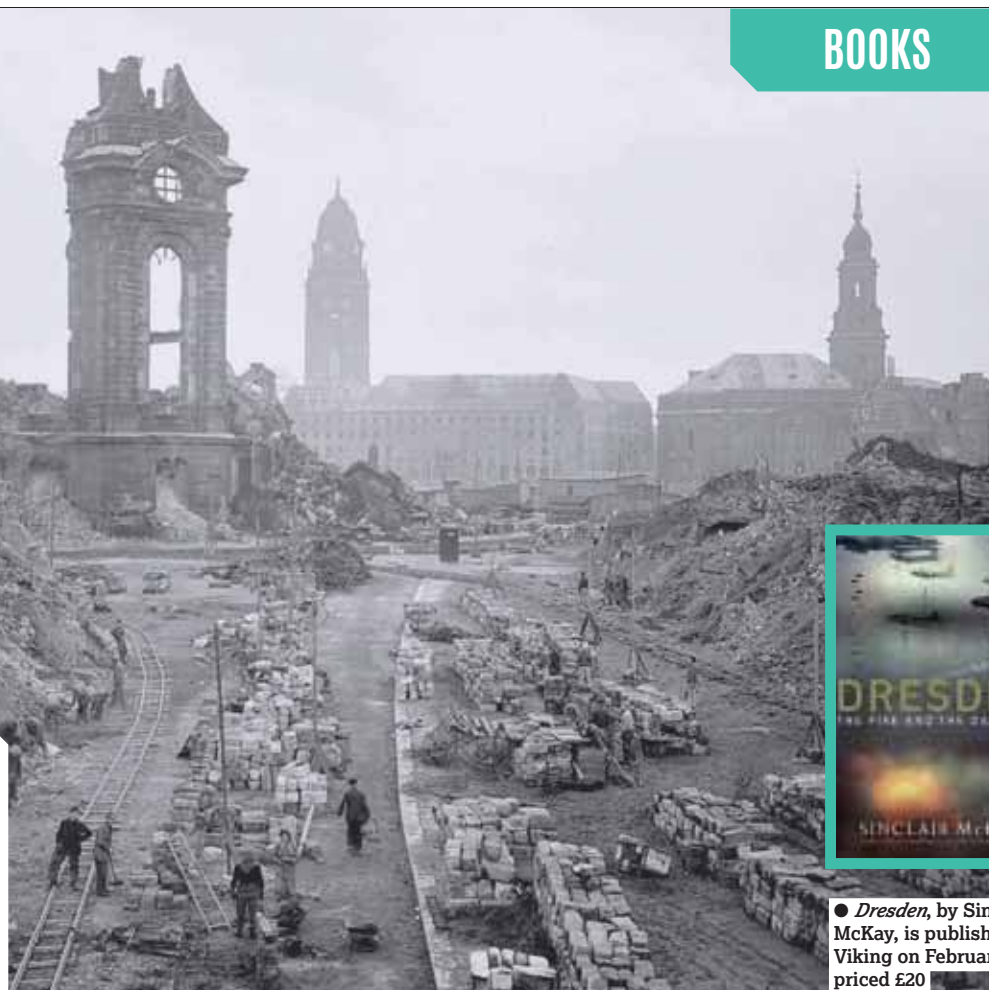
Those who sought refuge in crowded cellars faced a stark choice – suffocate underground or take their chances outside.

At the heart of the inferno temperatures were so fierce that the ground melted and clothing spontaneously combusted, while the winds generated by mile-high flames were powerful enough to suck people off their feet and into the vortex.

These hellish scenes, later recounted by some of the survivors, now form part of a compelling new book by journalist and author Sinclair McKay.

Dresden weaves together the personal tragedies played out in the disaster, from innocent civilians, prisoners-of-war and slave labourers, to the city's last remaining Jews and refugees who had fled as the Russians advanced westwards.

Above, the bomber crews – young men worn down by the stress of consecutive missions – watched the ground burn and



● *Dresden*, by Sinclair McKay, is published by Viking on February 6, priced £20



pushed away a growing sense of unease at the unfolding carnage.

As McKay told *Soldier*, he set out to reveal, from all angles, the wider story behind a place that became a "byword for annihilation".

"Like Nagasaki and Hiroshima, it seems to be most famous for the events of that terrible night,"

he explained.

"However, I wanted to find out about the life of the city before that, before the darkness of Nazism, and what happened in the years afterwards – how a town and its people can recover from that trauma.

"I wanted to tell the tale from the human, rather than just the military point of view."

The book is both an ode to Dresden – formerly a thriving centre of culture and scientific innovation – and a testament to the victims.

But it also discusses the legacy of a campaign that would stain the reputation of Bomber Command and that today is often described as a war crime.

McKay continued: "It was unquestionably an atrocity, an abomination, but 'war crime' is a very specific legal term, as well as a moral one, and if Dresden was a crime then so was all Allied area bombing during the war – Hamburg, for example, where 37,000 people died, and Pforzheim, which was much smaller but 25 per cent of the population were killed.





“You could also argue that Dresden was kind of a legitimate military target – the city had 200 factories dedicated to war manufacturing and it was a serious transport hub.

“There were huge numbers of troops going to the eastern front which was barely 60 miles away by February 1945 and Stalin, at the Yalta conference, had asked for it to be targeted.

“It’s a tricky area, but I think a conflict of such a nightmare scale and duration possibly started to erode the foundations of sanity and something altogether darker descended.

“The recoil afterwards is absolutely fascinating, too – it was almost as if Churchill and various others had woken, blinking, from a fever dream and were asking, ‘what have we done?’. In moral terms it’s endlessly troubling.”

Recriminations started almost immediately and echoed down the years. It wasn’t until 2012 that the personnel of Bomber Command were given a permanent memorial, something McKay agrees dealt the courageous aircrews a grave injustice.

But the intervening decades have also seen a process of reconciliation and regeneration. Today, visitors to

Dresden – which is twinned with its British equivalent, Coventry – will find it restored to its pre-war splendour, with little sign of the disaster that befell the city, save pieces of scorched masonry deliberately incorporated into the restored architecture as a lasting reminder of the past.

Accordingly, McKay ends his account on a note of optimism.

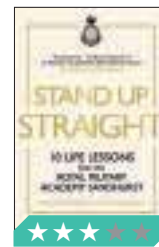
“Somehow, even after the most terrible wounds have been inflicted, the city has recovered its old spirit,” he said.

“So, fundamentally it’s as much a story of life as it is about death.

“I hope that amid the horror there are flickers of hope.” ■

INTERVIEW: BECKY CLARK, *SOLDIER*

BOOK RELEASES



Stand up Straight by Maj Gen Paul Nanson

IF you have been through officer training, or even basic training, there will be little new in the first half of this book of “ten life lessons from the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst”. How to make

a bed, Army style, brought a smile. The second half is more about command, honesty and integrity. The text is aimed primarily at people thinking of a direct-entry commission but would be useful to anyone contemplating a leadership role in their working life. Having risen up the ranks to head up the academy, the author certainly knows what he is talking about. This is a good read, which for those who have worn green will feel nostalgic.

Andy Kay, ex-RS

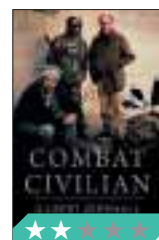


Cold War Interceptor by Dan Sharp

WHEN the Soviet-built MiG-15 jet appeared over Korea, it sent fresh shock waves through a Royal Air Force that had fallen victim to austerity since the end of the Second World War and had recently retired its last Spitfires. The new

aircraft helped prompt a drastic re-think of Britain’s domestic air defences and heralded a golden chapter in aviation, when experimental, high-altitude aircraft took to the skies. This beautifully illustrated book charts an era that pushed the boundaries of human and technical achievement. While a tad expensive at just under £30, it is a polished offering and makes for money well spent.

Cliff Caswell, *Soldier*



Combat Civilian by Gilbert Greenhall

WITH a passport boasting stamps from all the world’s trouble spots, few can say they’ve seen as much as the author of this book. Having left the Army in order to pursue a career in the NHS, Greenhall ended up in Cambodia and Uganda

providing much needed aid. A decade later and finding life dull, he went to Iraq, and from there spent most of the nineties and noughties travelling from warzone to warzone trying to save lives. With interesting insights into what those in need think of western charity and the nepotism behind some humanitarian agencies, the book certainly opened my eyes, even if it lacked a lot of the promised action.

Cpl Scott Roberts, *Rifles*

PICK OF THE MONTH:



MORE. AGAIN. FOREVER

Indie underdogs progress to centre stage

► DESPITE their relatively low profile, Manchester indie outfit **Courteeners** look set to prove their worth as one of the country's premier acts as 2020 reaches top gear.

Having just been confirmed as headliners of Glasgow's TRNSMT Festival in July, the band will cross the border on the back of their largest London show to date at Olympia.

It also follows a triumphant turn at their home city's Heaton Park last summer – where a staggering 50,000 tickets were sold in the space of just three hours.

The numbers are equally impressive when it comes to albums, with previous offering *Mapping the Rendezvous* proving to be a gold-selling effort.

And similar success is sure to follow on latest release *More. Again. Forever.* – a ten-track collection that serves up greater variation compared to what has gone before.

The glam rock-esque *Heart Attack* starts proceedings on a high with its stomping bass line, while the spoken word approach on the record's title track proves to be more akin to **LCD Soundsystem**. However, this approach works well alongside some stripped-back musical accompaniment.

Single Better Man boasts a more reflective feel, with frontman **Liam Fray** swinging between thoughts of self-doubt and self-improvement as he strives to be a "better man, whatever that is".

Such thinking may be inspired by the inevitable passing of time, with the once-young indie rockers now moving into the 30-something bracket.

This notion is explored further on the almost dance-like number *Previous Parties*, where Fray repeatedly sings the clever line "all we do is go to parties and talk about parties we used to go to".

The anthemic *Heavy Jacket* serves as another high and *The Joy of Missing Out* will appeal to hardcore fans yearning for a taste of the band's back catalogue. The pace then slows once more on the final track, *Is Heaven Even Worth It?*, as a varied and impressive album draws to a close.

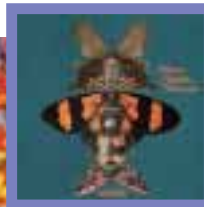
With elements to please their loyal followers and experimental diversions to attract newcomers to the fold, **Courteeners** have delivered material that is deserving of top-of-the-bill status. ■

VERDICT:

Variety proves to be the key

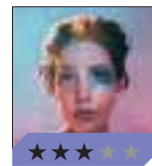
★★★★★

REVIEW: RICHARD LONG, *SOLDIER*



MUSIC

MUSIC RELEASES

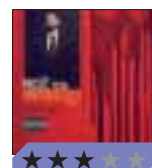


Manic

by Halsey

THIS third album from singer-songwriter **Halsey**, aka Ashley Frangipane, comes on the back of monster single *Without Me*, which peaked at number one in the US and spent a whole year on the charts. Here, the 25-year-old discusses many of the issues facing the average person on the street, such as the pressures of living within the confines of a security team and repelling the advances of those who want to cash in on your fame. But once these unrelatable issues are set aside we are left with a record that boasts elements of country, RnB and pop-rock, among others. This approach is confusing at times as the tracks leap from one distinct genre to another, none more so as we progress from the dark, show-tune qualities of *I Hate Everybody* to the **Avril Lavigne**-esque *3am*. But the scatter-gun approach almost works and, despite some annoying guest interludes along the way, this is an offering that is well worth consideration.

Richard Long, *Soldier*



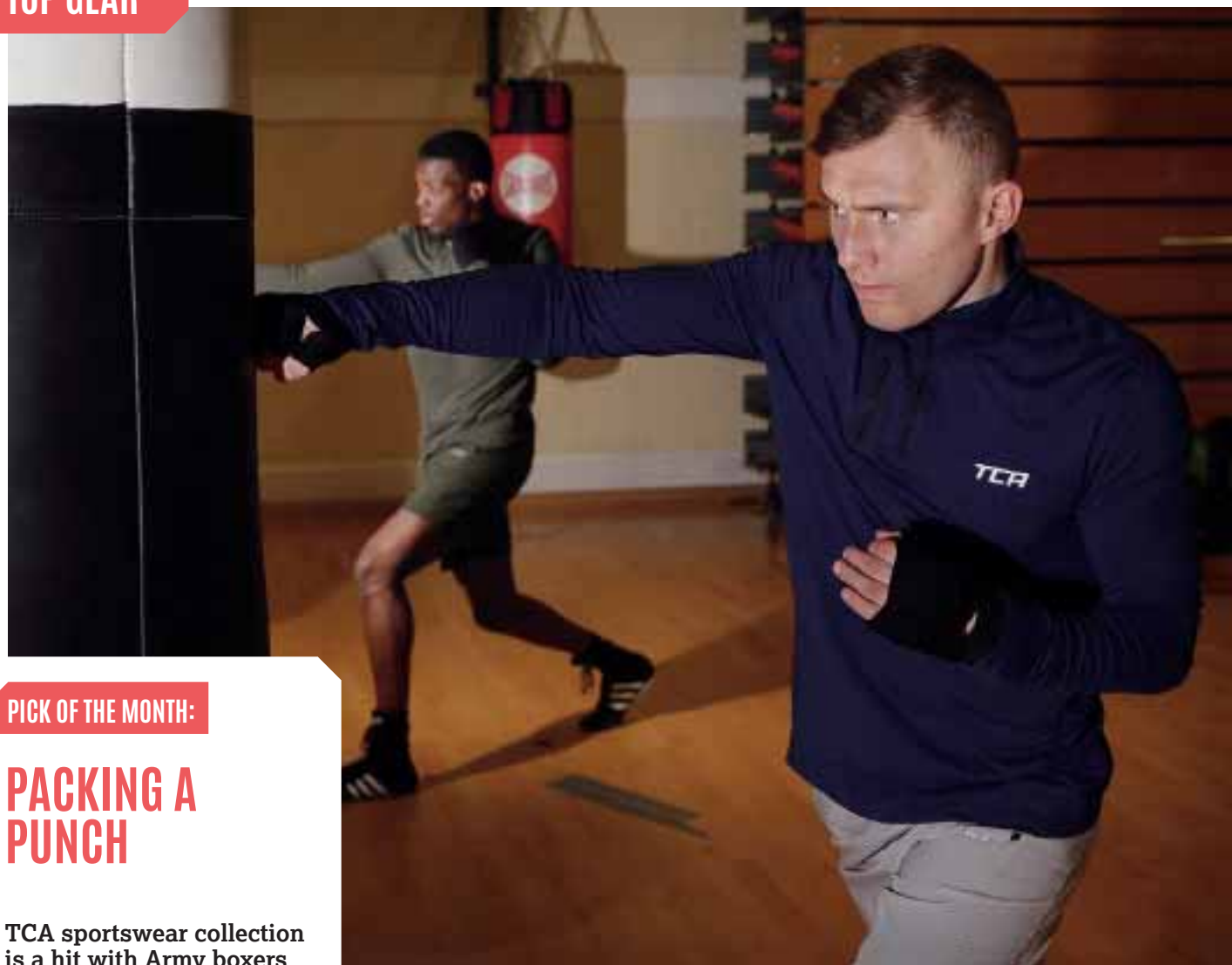
Music To Be Murdered By

by Eminem

RAP superstar **Eminem** returns with another

surprise album release, a move last deployed with 2018's *Kamikaze*. As his career to date highlights, the 47-year-old is not afraid of courting controversy and within hours of the record dropping he'd made headlines thanks to the track *Unaccommodating*, in which he makes a joke about the 2017 Manchester Arena terror attack. There is no doubt this was done to provoke a backlash, similar to the way his material did when he was in his prime 20 years ago, but this tactic feels a little tiresome now and it's surprising he still gets a buzz from such antics. Elsewhere, he ponders his place in the contemporary hip-hop world, reflects on a tough childhood and examines the complexities of relationships. While a lot of this is old ground the true highlight is *Darkness*, an intelligent satire of American gun violence, in which he adopts the role of a shooter. This standout song reminds us that behind the bravado is an artist with some serious points to make.

Richard Long, *Soldier*



PICK OF THE MONTH:

PACKING A PUNCH

TCA sportswear collection is a hit with Army boxers

➤ WITH the hours of time we spend in training – both indoors in the gym and out on the track – selecting clothing that can take the same test you put your body through is crucial.

While you are focused on keeping yourself in shape and preparing for your next opponent, it is important that the kit in your locker is durable, dependable and comfortable.

Thankfully, the latest TCA garments that we sampled from the brand's new urban inspired Underground Collection do the job more than adequately.

And – having taken them out in some pretty ugly winter conditions – we can testify they are up to the cut.

We sampled the Evolution Laser shorts plus long sleeve Fusion, Stamina and Swift tops, ranging from £18 to £24, and they more than stood up to Aldershot's miserable January climate

while performing very well.

As boxers we are always doing a varied training programme and we've taken the garments on the track with us, as well as in conditioning sessions. They are certainly durable enough.

The success is testament to the design of this clothing, which has been well thought out.

The thumbholes in the sleeves of the long-sleeve Stamina and Fusion tops are useful, and the lightweight material helps the skin breathe while adding to the general comfort factor.

The shorts are practical enough to use, both on their own or over long-john thermals. In addition, our items were brightly coloured enough to keep us clearly visible while out and about.

The clothes also washed well – which is important when you are using them all the time. Thankfully they did

VERDICT:

Stylish and affordable, TCA offers the perfect workout kit
★★★★★

not shrink or frizzle up and survived for plenty more sessions.

Both garments are quite stylish too – giving you the bonus of feeling smart while training.

All in all, these clothes are of a decent quality to suit any exercise regime. With our demanding schedule in preparing for the year ahead we had no qualms with this kit at all.

Boasting quality, comfort and durability in abundance these items proved worthy of the asking price. We're looking forward to plenty of use from them in the coming months. ■

● Visit www.tca.fit

REVIEW: LCpl Camell Brown (AGC (SPS), above left) and Pte Peter Love (R Anglian, above right)

SOLDIER SPORT



« RAIDING PARTY

THE Army started 2020 in style as they defeated Oulton Raiders 26-10 in the opening round of rugby league's Challenge Cup. The Reds ran in four tries as they triumphed on home turf to set up a tie against Skirlough. Read more about the game on page 67...

Picture: Lee White



RACERS SET FOR SPANISH TEST AS SEASON LOOMS

THE Army motorcycle road race team head for winter training in Spain this month as they start preparations for another high-octane season on the track.

Buoyed by some sensational performances last year, the racers will be looking to make further gains when they return to the grid in March and, with both disciplines now boasting healthy numbers, their hopes of success are high.

The sprint team proved to be the headline makers in 2019 as they dominated the Inter-Services championships after narrowly missing out to the Royal Air Force in the previous campaign.

That setback proved to be the inspiration for a ruthless title charge and the silverware was emphatically secured with two rounds of the series remaining.

"We didn't just want to win the trophy, we wanted to dominate the championship throughout

the season," team manager WO2 Danny Williams (RRF) told *SoldierSport*.

"After very careful selection we were able to field the best riders the Service had to offer and once the racing got under way it was clear they only had one goal."

While the final standings confirmed the collective honours, they also made impressive reading in terms of individual performances as Army riders claimed all three podium places.

"We are very much looking forward to the 2020 season," Williams added. "We've selected our squad and the names will be released in due course."

"We are confident of securing another hat-trick this year."

With the endurance team's top riders moving on to new challenges within the sprint set-up, their recent focus has been on developing talent in the clubman and novice ranks.

Competing in the 2019 ACU



**"IT WAS
CLEAR
THEY
ONLY
HAD
ONE
GOAL"**

national series, the Army entered teams in the 1,000 and 600cc categories in a bid to build their experience levels.

"They performed really well throughout, including the mammoth ten-hour race at Anglesey," said manager Sgt 'Sweeney' McSweeney (REME).

"The guys were consistently in the top-five of their classes and a successful conclusion to the campaign saw the 600cc racers finish fourth in their clubman class, with the 1,000cc outfit fifth in their field."

"The rookie team also won their novice class."

"In 2020 we will be expanding our ranks to include two additional 600cc novice outfits, with new members from the Regulars and Reserves experiencing their first-ever race at Snetterton next month."

Capt Peter Brown (REME), secretary of the Army road race team, has been delighted with

the progress made in both scenes and believes there will be more to come when the two-wheeled action resumes.

He also celebrated a personal milestone after he was crowned the Inter-Services individual sprint champion.

"2019 was a fruitful and impressive year," the officer said. "It was a bit manic, but definitely worth the time and effort.

"I had high hopes across both disciplines. The sprint team looked solid and was ready to challenge the other Services, while the endurance set-up was bigger than ever.

"We were confident of securing strong results and seeing solid progression and I was delighted to see us achieve our goals.

"The only downside was the injuries suffered by Cpl Mitchell Griffiths (AGC (RMP)) following an incident in May and we wish him well with his recovery.

"Both teams are now set for the 2020 campaign and with the admin sorted we are looking forward to racing again soon.

"The demand for places has been overwhelming and I've urged those personnel who didn't make it this time round to try again next year."

● **For more information on how to get involved, as well as results from upcoming races, visit the Army motorcycle road race team Facebook page.** ■



TRI OPTIONS IN NUMBERS

ROUNDS ON
THE EVENT
CALENDAR
FOR 2020

8

POINTS
GAINED BY
SGT RICHARD
SPENCER-
FLEET IN THE
2019 SERIES

13

MORE YEARS
OF CUP
RACING
ANNOUNCED
IN THE
LATEST
DUCATI

DEAL, WITH
THE OPTION
OF A THIRD

2

RIDERS
NAMED ON
THE GRID
FOR THE
UPCOMING
CAMPAIGN

30

POINTS
WON
BY LAST
SEASON'S
CHAMPION
JOSH DAY

261



POINT PROVED IN CUP RUN

A FORMER mainstay of the Army endurance team, Sgt Richard Spencer-Fleet (REME) has been forging a new path in the British Superbikes scene.

The soldier returned from a catalogue of injuries – including a broken back and neck – to make his debut in the Ducati Tri Options Cup in 2018 and he was a regular fixture on the same grid throughout last year.

His first season proved to be a steep learning curve as he tested himself against some of the top riders in the country, while mechanical issues saw him miss out on rounds at Snetterton, Brands Hatch and Cadwell Park.

However, Spencer-Fleet's efforts in 2019 represented a marked improvement as he showed he could hold his own on the big stage.

"I've been racing at this level for two years now and

competing in front of crowds of around 40,000 people over the course of a weekend is an experience in itself," the NCO told *SoldierSport*.

"At the start of my second season I had two goals. One was to force my way into the top-15 and the other was to gain some points.

"It was far from easy and the competition at this level is tough, but I achieved my aim.

"My first points came in the torrential rain at Donington Park, where I finished ninth. I fought hard for the remainder of the campaign and to end the year with 13 points was a great achievement.

"I'm going to attack the championship again in 2020. I'll be racing on a new Ducati V2 bike and am aiming for more top-ten finishes."

The 2020 Tri Options Cup gets under way on April 12 at Silverstone and concludes at Donington in October. ■



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hac-recruiting-mailbox@mod.gov.uk or call 020 7448 0703.

The next SR Patrol Course for Reservists runs from March to November 2020.

If you are a Regular soldier interested in pursuing a career as a Special Observer, contact 4/73 (Special OP) Battery:

5RA-473BTY-BTO@mod.gov.uk or call 01748 875639.



ARMY
BE THE BEST



FINAL SCORE: VISIT @ARMYRUGBYLEAGUE ON TWITTER FOR THE RESULT AND REACTION FROM THE SKIRLAUGH MATCH

RUGBY LEAGUE



REDS MAKE HOME ADVANTAGE COUNT

FITNESS could prove to be the key as the Army's rugby league stars look to book their place in the third round of the Challenge Cup.

A 26-10 victory over Oulton Raiders paved the way for a home tie against Skirlaugh as this issue went to press and, with the amateur outfit taking to the pitch outside the regular season, the physicality of the soldiers' day job could prove decisive.

"Judging by their league position they will be very similar to Oulton," interim head coach Cpl Karl O'Doherty (REME) told *SoldierSport*. "We will look to stick to our game plan and tire them out in the early stages – we can then hopefully throw the ball around later on."

"As civvies they are not doing three PT sessions a week so their natural fitness levels will not be the same."

"If this game was played during the season, when their big players are fit and conditioned, we could not rely on that, it would be far more tactical."

Another element in the Reds' favour is the fact the match is being played at the Army Rugby Stadium in Aldershot – meaning the Skirlaugh players face a 480-mile round trip at the end of a long working week.

"When we looked at who we might come up against we said as long as we get a home draw it doesn't matter," O'Doherty added.

"We can meet up on the Wednesday and have a few training sessions while they are doing some hard graft."

"Having the home advantage is huge and there's a real buzz around the stadium following the Oulton result."

While his focus remains firmly on the Skirlaugh clash, O'Doherty is also looking further down the line and the possibility of progressing past the third round for the first time.

"That's the furthest we've ever been," the coach said. "It's the stage when the semi-professional clubs come in and our goal is to always try and better what we've done in the past." ■

**CHALLENGE CUP
RUGBY LEAGUE**

ARMY

26

OULTON

10



GAME BRIEF

COMPETITION: Challenge Cup – Rugby League

VENUE: Army Rugby Stadium, Aldershot

ARMY 26: Tries: Baines (2), Watkin, Toms. Conversions: Roche (4). Penalty: Roche

OULTON RAIDERS 10: Tries: Murray, Holdsworth.



A BRACE from Cpl Declan Baines (R Signals) and further scores from LCpl Ryan Watkin (RE) and Cfn Oliver Toms (REME) steered the Army to a first-round triumph over Oulton Raiders.

While the score suggests a comfortable win for the Servicemen it proved to be anything but and with the teams locked at 6-6 at half-time the outcome was in the balance.

"I told the players beforehand it would be an arm wrestle, it could have gone either way," said interim head coach Cpl Karl O'Doherty (REME).

"We got lucky with a couple of quick tries in the second half and, if anything, the final result flattered us slightly."

"Our pack deserves huge credit. Considering the heavy conditions and the game plan we had, we were asking the forwards to give us some big minutes."

"They set the platform for our backs to find the gaps."





SPORT SHORTS



Court return looms

ARMY athletes will be in the thick of the action this month as the new Netball Superleague season gets under way.

Fiji international LCpl Dee Bolakoro (RE), a nominee for the sportswoman of the year accolade at the 2019 Army sports awards, will line up for the Celtic Dragons as they face Surrey Storm on February 22.

And Capt Jo Vann (AAC, pictured) will be looking to start her reign as head coach of the Team Bath netball programme with a win when they play Loughborough Lightning on the same day. The two sides will then meet a week later at Cardiff's Viola Arena.



Foes set to renew rivalry

THERE will be a familiar feel to this season's Woolwich Cup final as the Royal Engineers face the Royal Signals in a repeat of last year's showpiece.

The Sappers progressed from their semi-final in style with a 6-0 victory over the Infantry, while defending champions the Signallers downed the Royal Logistic Corps 2-0.

The 2019 final finished 2-1 and the repeat fixture is due to be played in May.

TOURISTS ACE ARIZONA TEST



SOME of the finest tennis talent in the US university system provided a stern test for the Army's court stars as they embarked on a two-week tour of Arizona.

And the eight-strong men's contingent exceeded expectations as they claimed three victories from six fixtures against rivals including Arizona State University, San Diego University and Northern Arizona University.

The trip represented a marked change in direction compared to previous overseas tours, when the Servicemen have traditionally locked horns with local club sides, as world-ranked players were now lining up on the other side of the net.

"The reason we went to the USA is down to the fact the team is now at the highest standard it has ever been," squad member Lt Reece Munnery (RTR) told *SoldierSport*.

"We've got a number of players who were at the collegiate level before joining the Army so we decided to see how we would fare against some top opposition."

"A lot of the university squads boasted European and overseas players who are there on full-time tennis scholarships, so we were not sure how we would get on."

"We played Arizona State first up and started well."

"They are one of the strongest teams and looking at their pedigree we were slightly in awe beforehand."

"It was nice to win a few games, then sets, and it went from there. To finish with a 50/50 win-loss ratio was a surprise to us all."

**"IT WAS
NICE
TO WIN
A FEW
GAMES"**

● ARMY players Sgt Carrie Roberts (REME, pictured) and Gnr Abbie Eatock (RA) have been named in the England Rugby League women's national performance programme for 2020.

The scheme identifies those with the potential of competing on the international stage and the soldiers will be looking to make an impression ahead of next year's World Cup.

They were part of the Reds' team that made history last season by lifting the Challenge Shield and also helped the squad to another dominant victory at Inter-Services level.

Eatock starred with civilian club Leeds Rhinos as they won the Super League Grand Final.



Picture: Cpl Rebecca Borwn, RLC



BARRY BRACED FOR REINFORCEMENTS

SOUTHERN
COUNTIES CUP

ARMY

0

ESSEX

1



H EAD coach Sgt Lee Barry (Mercian) is looking forward to welcoming back more first-team players to the fold after seeing his depleted side labour to a 1-0 defeat in their latest Southern Counties Cup clash.

A long-range strike from Courtney Lumley sealed the points for Essex, who recorded back-to-back victories in the competition to end the Army's hopes of lifting the trophy.

The midfielder's effort proved to be a deserved winner for the visitors as the Reds struggled to create clear-cut openings on a frustrating night in Aldershot.

LCpl Rachel Rigby (RLC) lifted an early half-chance over the bar but, after that, Essex took control.

Lumley pounced on a loose ball in midfield and her sweetly struck shot from distance sailed over the head of Army keeper Bdr Daisy Burnfield (RA) and into the net.

Burnfield thwarted Holly

Turner as she collected a through-pass from Lindsey Morgan and then produced the save of the match as she tipped a low drive from the same player onto the far post.

The Reds upped the tempo after the break, however, they failed to register a meaningful shot on target.

LCpl Kelly Aldridge (REME) had the best chance when she latched onto a ball down the channel and flashed an effort across goal – but that was as close as the hosts came.

"We were quite slow out of the blocks," Barry told *SoldierSport* at full-time.

"We gave them too much respect and were second to every ball.

"We upped our game after the break but were unable to take the half-chances we had.

"Going into the Inter-Services we will have a bigger squad available. We've lost players to promotion courses and skiing exercises, but that's what happens in the Army." ■



DIXON HITS THE NET

ARMY forward Cpl Libby Dixon (AGC (SPS)) was on target for the UK Armed Forces' women's team as they suffered an agonising 2-1 defeat to Portsmouth.

Their rivals took the lead after just 45 seconds but Dixon restored parity moments later as she slid in to convert a cross at the far post.

The striker had further opportunities in the second half – when she crashed a low drive against the woodwork before being thwarted in a one-on-one with the opposition keeper – and the misses proved costly as Portsmouth grabbed a late winner courtesy of Becki Bath.

The result followed an 8-0 victory over the Irish Defence Force in the summer and was a continuation of the team's preparations for this season's President's Cup.

Just days after getting on the scoresheet Dixon made her debut for Middlesbrough in their FA National Women's League Northern Premier Division clash with Nottingham Forest.

"I'm really happy to get my first 90 minutes," she said after the 1-0 defeat. "We worked hard and the effort levels were right up there."



SPORT SHORTS



Series dates announced

THE Army Cross Country Mountain Bike Series returns next month with Aldershot playing host to the opening stage on March 25.

Aimed at riders of all experience, the event features five rounds at locations across the country and will be followed by the full Army Championships.

Prizes will be awarded to the best individual and major/minor unit teams and each race will last for around one hour over terrain that is manageable, but challenging at speed.

For more details on how to get involved visit www.armycycling.org



Kingsholm calling

GLOUCESTER'S Kingsholm Stadium will again host the matches between the Royal Air Force and Army in this season's Inter-Services Rugby Union Championships.

The games will be played on Saturday, April 4 with the women kicking off at 1130, followed by the men at 1500.

To purchase tickets for the day visit www.tickets.gloucester rugby.co.uk



HELM COMPLETES HISTORIC CROSSING



"I AM SO PROUD"

ROWER KgsM Kian Helm (Lancs) has made history by becoming the fastest teenager to row across the Atlantic Ocean.

The 18-year-old, part of the Force Atlantic crew competing in the Talisker Whisky Challenge, set a new world record of 37 days, 13 hours and 53 minutes – beating the previous best time by more than six days.

Billed as the world's toughest rowing race, the event sees teams covering 3,000 miles from the Canary Islands to Antigua without any assistance.

Helm was joined by skipper Lt Col Rich Hall (Yorks), Capt Alex Walsh (RL) and Capt Chris Hames (RAPTC) in the boat and the foursome finished ninth in the overall standings.

The crew was formed while Helm was a junior soldier at AFC Harrogate, where his colleagues are instructors.

"We achieved everything we set out to do and I am so grateful and proud to represent the Army and to show what our young soldiers, fresh from training, are capable of," Hall said on reaching the finish line.

"Thank you to everyone for the overwhelming support."

The Force Atlantic crew were hoping to raise £100,000 for the Army Benevolent Fund but were not the only Service representatives in the race.

The Atlantic Guardsmen, featuring three serving soldiers from the Scots Guards and a veteran, completed the route in 39 days, 15 hours and 31 minutes. ■

● THE annual Army Table Tennis Championships will be held at the Aldershot Garrison Sports Centre from February 24 to 27.

Open to players of all abilities and experience, the event features two days of training with a professional-level coach before the full tournament gets under way.

The top performers will go on to represent the Army at the Inter-Services. For more details email army_table_tennis@outlook.com



MONTH IN SPORT

February's key fixtures...



« **WHAT:** Inter-Services Snow Sports
WHEN: February 1 to 8
WHERE: Meribel, France
NEED TO KNOW: The pinnacle of the

winter sports season sees the Forces' premier athletes taking on the French slopes. Alpine skiing, snowboarding and Telemark titles will be on the line



« **WHAT:** Inter-Services Under-23 Football – Army v Royal Air Force
WHEN: February 5
WHERE: Aldershot Military Stadium
NEED TO KNOW: The Reds will be hoping to put the disappointment of last season behind them as they begin their campaign on home soil. They face the Royal Navy in Portsmouth a week later



« **WHAT:** Inter-Services Cross Country
WHEN: February 12
WHERE: Gibraltar Barracks, Minley
NEED TO KNOW: The Army claimed

the women's and under-23 team titles in 2019 and will be looking to defend their trophies. Can the men break the stranglehold of the Royal Air Force?

KNIGHT IN NUMBERS

TEAMS FROM ACROSS THE RAC AND AAC INVOLVED

10

RACERS COMPETING ON THE SWISS SLOPES

86

NOVICE SKIERS TAKING TO THE SNOW FOR THE FIRST TIME

27

WEEKS OF TRAINING BEFORE THE CONTEST'S OPENING EVENT

3

DAYS OF ACTION AT THE ARMY FINALS – WITH THE TOP PERFORMERS GOING ON TO FACE THEIR FORCES RIVALS AT THE INTER-SERVICES

9



Picture: Maj Matt Noone, RTR

NOVICES PASS SWISS TEST

SKIERS from the Royal Armoured Corps and Army Air Corps took to the slopes in Switzerland for their annual Alpine training camp and championships – Exercise White Knight.

The contest attracted a healthy number of teams from both formations, with around a third of participants proving to be total novices.

Having never set foot on snow before, they learnt how to ski from scratch in the space of just three weeks and then tested their skills on the racing piste in a series of technical and speed events.

"This year we had a particularly talented cohort of novices who seemed to pick up the sport remarkably quickly," exercise director Maj Lizzie Cranfield (AAC) told *SoldierSport*.

"This is testament to the quality of training the racers received, as well as their own courage and commitment.

"Although the weather impeded training for the first few weeks, the championships themselves were blessed with some of the best conditions in recent years."

Tpr Dylan Bugg-Burke (LD) was among those to impress as the newcomer finished 13th in the final standings, making him the contest's highest placed novice.

Capt Will Cave (RL) was victorious in the slalom and giant slalom, an effort that helped him claim the overall individual combined title.

Elsewhere, Lt Hugo Catmur (RTR) won the super giant slalom, while Lt Jamie Bruce-Crampton (HCR) and ATpr Adam Jones (AAC) were second and third respectively in the individual combined.

The top performers went on to compete at the divisional competitions ahead of the full Army Championships, which were being held as this issue went to press. ■

GRIDIRON'S GROWTH

WITH American football growing rapidly in the UK the Service is looking to join the party with the formation of its own team.

The brainchild of head coach Sgt Abe Day (RA), the Army American Football Association held a briefing day for potential players last month and with full trials set to follow in March the momentum is quickly building.

More than 100 personnel have registered an interest in taking to the field and with 18 qualified coaches already in place the set-up looks well placed to achieve its first major goal – gaining recognition from the Army Sport Control Board (ASCB).

“This is something we have been looking at over the past few years,” Day, a player and coach with civilian team Bournemouth Bobcats, told *SoldierSport*.

“2020 is going to be our recruitment year, 2021 will be about proving our sustainability and in 2022 we hope to be fully up and running.

“The NFL have really pushed the sport in this country, – it is available to watch live on the BBC and Sky and we have got personnel with up to 20 years’ experience in the game.”

Day (pictured) has formed close links with the national governing body which will ensure players are insured for the upcoming trials.

But once recognition from the ASCB is achieved greater financial support will be available.

The Serviceman boasts an impressive coaching pedigree and is the current Great Britain under-19s coach, while he has also forged ties with Fresno State University in California.

“This is hugely exciting and will open up many possibilities,” Day added.

“There has been a lot of interest from civilian coaches with vast experience who want to help grow the sport across the country and, more specifically, within the Army’s ranks.

“At present, there are no teams within the UK Armed Forces which creates an exciting opportunity for one to be established.

“The sport echoes everything the Army stands for and I think this would have a positive impact on morale, recruitment and retention.”

Players, male or female and of all experience levels, interested in taking part in the team trials should email aafa_official@outlook.com ■



Picture: Chris Coope



● SERVICE jockeys return to the saddle next month as they battle for honours at the annual Grand Military Gold Cup.

The race, which saw ex-lance bombardier Jody Sole claim a third victory at the prestigious meeting in 2019, will be held at Sandown Park on Friday, March 6.

The day also features the Queen Mother Memorial Hurdle and both races are the exclusive realm of amateur Forces jockeys – serving and retired. Last year’s event saw 14 such athletes in action.

Military personnel can purchase discounted tickets by using the promotion code “GM2020” at www.sandown.co.uk



RING REPORT: FOLLOW @CHEZNIHELL ON TWITTER FOR REACTION FROM THE FIGHT

» BOXING



Picture: Lawrence Lustig

NIHELL EYES HOME SUCCESS AHEAD OF TITLE PUSH

BOXER LCpl Chez Nihell (RLC) is hoping a showstopping performance at the Battle of Aldershot will kickstart his rise through the professional ranks in 2020.

The cruiserweight was due to top the bill in front of a partisan home crowd as this issue went to press and, with three victories from three bouts already to his name, the soldier was looking to continue his early unbeaten run.

Nihell's opponent was only named two weeks before the contest but the former Amateur Boxing Association national champion, who will have wife Cpl Alanna Nihell (RLC) in his corner following the recent birth of their son, told *SoldierSport* he was confident of success.

"I've been doing a lot of sparring against different styles of fighters," he explained. "I've faced everything from short, stocky south paws to big guys who like to come forward.

"Ideally, you'd like to know who you're going to be facing way in advance but sometimes in the pro game you don't find out until just ten days beforehand.

"This is the first time I've topped the bill and it is nice to be doing that in Aldershot, which is the home of Service boxing.

"There will be a lot of soldiers in the crowd, as well as members of the Army boxing team and colleagues from my former battalion – 1 PWRR.

"I'm absolutely buzzing."

Nihell's progression from the amateur to professional scene is being carefully managed.

He made his debut on the undercard of the James DeGale/Chris Eubank Jr fight (pictured) at London's O2 Arena last year and his latest bout will be his third over six rounds.

The athlete is already eyeing another contest in Aldershot in March and has big goals in mind as he moves forward.



**"I WANT
TO FIGHT
FOR A
TITLE
IN 12
MONTHS"**

"I want to be fighting for a title belt in the next 12 to 14 months," the former Army boxing team captain added.

"But I also need to concentrate on my next fight and keep my feet on the ground.

"I'm 32 years old – I don't want to rush this but, at the same time, I don't want to hang around.

"Most professionals aged around 25 would still be having four-round bouts at this stage but this is my third at six rounds.

"It is about progression. You can spar for ten rounds but on the night you have to factor in the pressure of the occasion and an actual fight is totally different to what you do in training.

"We also compete with ten-ounce gloves, as opposed to the 12-ounce ones used by amateurs, so the punches are harder.

"My advisers are steering me in the right direction. They have the same vision and it's important we do this properly." ■



I previously served in the Royal Engineers. Transferring gave me the chance to follow my passion for photography with professional training and to be able to do it every day.

Cpl Nick Johns, RLC



I am a former recovery mechanic and a lifestyle change was long overdue. I've always enjoyed sharing my experiences and the only thing I regret about becoming an Army photographer is not transferring sooner.

Cpl Rob Kane, RLC



My path is slightly different as I started out as a Royal Air Force photographer. I decided to leave after I saw what the Army could offer, and I have never looked back. You get to experience the Service as a whole, rather than just seeing your own unit.

Sgt Dek Traylor, RLC



I wanted to pursue my already burning desire to become a photographer – what better way to merge my passion and job. This certainly doesn't feel like work anymore.

Cpl Ben Beale, RLC



I was an art student before joining the Army. I served with 3rd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment for 12 years and in my final year there I bought a DSLR camera and started taking pictures of the lads on exercises and whatever they were getting up to. Joining the trade was a no-brainer.

Cpl Nathan Tanuka, RLC

Photography has always been a hobby. Even when I was a combat medic I was often seen with a camera in my hand. I always wanted to be an Army photographer so when the first opportunity to transfer presented itself I took it – and have never looked back.

Cpl Rebecca Brown, RLC



Lens life

Army photographers reveal their motivations for joining the trade

I served for ten years in the Royal Military Police before becoming an Army photographer. I transferred for the opportunities, such as training and travel, that this role offers.

Cpl Paul Watson, RLC



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ARMY

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March 2019

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