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Sun Millies Awards 2013:
heroes honoured by royalty

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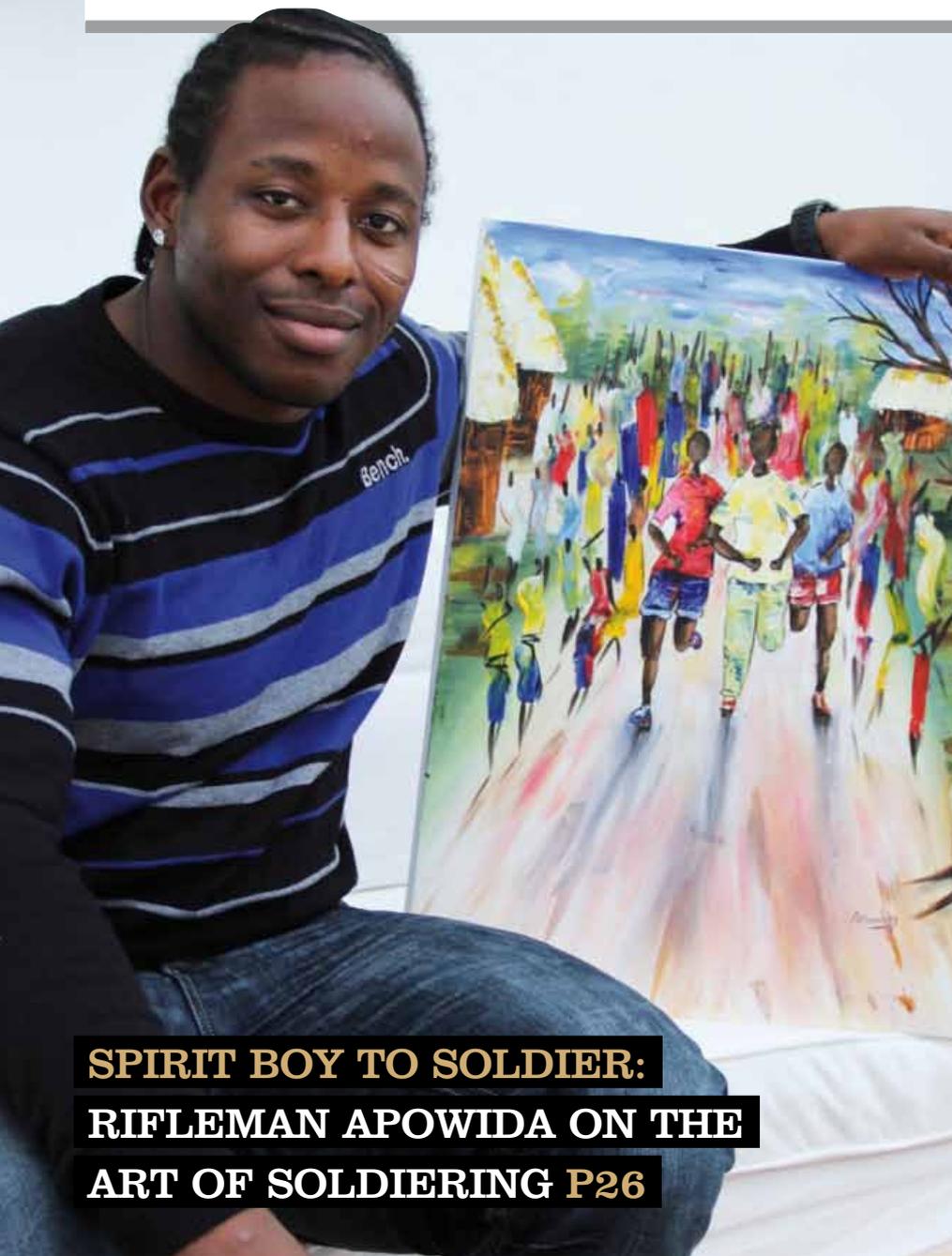
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The award for Most Outstanding Airman was presented to Sergeant Anna Irwin by Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall
Image taken by Darren Fletcher

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RSM Dave Pearce has served in Northern Ireland, Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan

EDITOR'S NOTE

DefenceFocus

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LORRAINE MCBRIDE

This month, our magazine is guest edited by Lorraine McBride, roving reporter, celeb-stalker and Defence Focus stalwart for almost 13 years.



Exactly 150 issues ago, I landed my dream job with *Defence Focus*.

From the get-go, it was the variety of stories that had me hooked.

One sign of fast-changing attitudes was our first cover story, "It's OK to be Gay",

after the Government lifted the ban on gay people serving in the Armed Forces.

It was a huge privilege to interview Britain's last survivors of the First World War. I visited Harry Patch at his care home. Self-effacing Harry was the last survivor from the trenches in Passchendaele. He recalled a dying Cornishman who begged Harry to shoot him. But before he could draw his revolver, the soldier gasped one final word, 'Mother', and died. That one word ran through Harry's brain for 88 years.

It was equally impossible not to be blown away by the bravery of modern troops honoured for gallantry. I was also

humbled by the optimism of war widow Jacqui Thompson whose husband Gary was Britain's oldest reservist to die in Afghanistan. Jacqui and her admirable family celebrated Gary's life and fondly imagined his mock-horror when newspapers wrongly reported that he was 52 rather than 51.

Memorable locations include Kosovo, Cyprus, Belgium, Paris, Clyde and Buckingham Palace for a scoop with Prince Andrew looking back on his naval career. A pinch-me moment was walking through the Palace, slightly deafened by the military music, thinking "Blimey, their staff are patriotic", when it dawned that the music came from the Queen's Guard band playing on the Palace forecourt.

It was fascinating to interview 10 former Defence Secretaries, hearing the dramas that defined their time in office. There's even been the odd celeb; such as Bruce Forsyth (who remarkably served in the RAF on D-Day), Leslie Phillips, and Olympian Dame Kelly Holmes and watching the then unknown rower, Heather Stanning, train a year before taking Olympic gold. Inevitably, after 13 years, I've got itchy feet but I will cherish my memories of working alongside some truly extraordinary people from every corner of Defence. It's been quite a ride.



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MEETING THE CHALLENGES THAT FACE THE NATION

MARK FRANCOIS, MINISTER OF STATE FOR THE ARMED FORCES REFLECTS ON THE LAST YEAR IN DEFENCE

As the year draws to a close, we can look back over what has been another busy year. Operations in Afghanistan have not only proved busy but also pivotal to achieving our long-term strategy. The Afghans have continued to take up more and more responsibility; their ability to do so is testament to the hard work of many thousands of sailors, soldiers, airmen and Defence civilians.

We have paid a high price this year as in previous years, with, tragically, eight Service personnel having made the ultimate sacrifice. But the progress we have made has meant that as we move into 2014 we can continue to step further back as we prepare for the end of combat operations. Of course, challenges remain, and whilst people will naturally focus on the end point, we must bear in mind that there is still another 12 months of our combat operation to go. I am committed to ensuring we finish our mission in good order.

While Afghanistan remains Defence's main effort, it is by no means the only part of the world where the UK Armed Forces made a difference in 2013. The start of the year saw our personnel deployed in Mali, supporting our French allies in preventing that country from being overrun by Al-Qaeda-linked groups. November and December, meanwhile, saw the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force work together to deliver critical aid support to the people of the disaster-struck Philippines and there was much else to keep us busy in between.

For me personally, this year has brought many fascinating experiences. I was very proud to see the first Genium prosthetics being fitted to some of our brave servicemen who have lost limbs in Afghanistan. Working alongside charities such as Help for Heroes and the Royal British Legion, we have made real progress in the care of those who have given so much and it is right we continue to support them through their rehabilitation.

In November, I represented MOD at the Cenotaph and the National Memorial Arboretum, a humbling experience as the nation came together to remember those who have gone before us, and those still serving overseas, away from home and in harm's way.

Remembrance also provided the opportunity for me to gather together some of those Members of Parliament with previous military experience. Many people are surprised when I tell them that some sixty current MPs have served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces (my own time was spent with the Royal Anglian Regiment, Territorial Army). The picture below was taken when more than thirty of us gathered at the Guard's Chapel at Wellington Barracks to remember the fallen. It was a poignant moment.

The pace of service life is a quick one, but we have consistently met the challenges that have faced the nation and I hope that all Defence personnel reading this can look forward to some time at Christmas with their families.



The Rt Hon Mark Francois MP, Minister of State for the Armed Forces

Picture: Sergeant Jez Doak

For those of you who are deployed, I hope that you have a safe time and you have my utmost respect and thanks for the work you do. **DF**



Veteran MPs remembrance service in the Royal Military Chapel

Picture: PO(Phot) Derek Wade



Fire breather: HMS *Dragon's Lynx* helicopter fires infrared flares



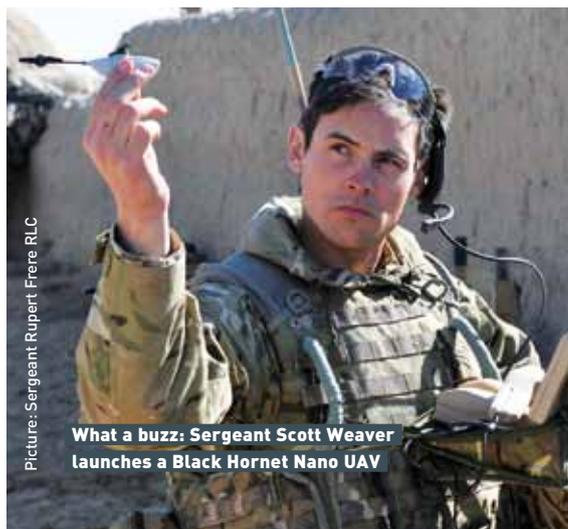
Strong arm: a Royal Marine receives a warm welcome while delivering aid to the Philippines

Picture: LAP/Phil Nicky Wilson



Cut above: award-winning chef Private Lee Berry

Picture: Corporal Ross Fernie



What a buzz: Sergeant Scott Weaver launches a Black Hornet Nano UAV

Picture: Sergeant Rupert Frere RLC



Picture: Sergeant Adrian Harten



Picture: LA[Phot] Dave Jenkins



Polished performance: more than a thousand soldiers and airmen celebrate the Queen's birthday



Flag day: soldiers recreate the famous 'Raising the Flag on Iwo Jima' on Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh's Park to promote Armed Forces Day

Picture: Mark Owens



Dog's life: a military working dog in Kabul

Picture: Corporal Jamie Peters RLC



Proud moment: Afghan soldiers are presented with certificates for their efforts at the national battle school

Picture: Sergeant Dan Bardsley RLC



Diamond nine: the Red Arrows training over RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus

Picture: Corporal Graham Taylor RAF



Official recognition: Most Outstanding Sailor Award was presented by Ronnie Wood to Petty Officer Emily McCullough, reunited with husband Sean after months apart

Picture: Darren Fletcher

MILLIES HONOUR MILITARY HEROES

THE EVENT PAID TRIBUTE TO THE EXCELLENCE AND COURAGE OF THE ARMED FORCES REPORTS LORRAINE MCBRIDE

The hard work and achievements of the Armed Forces were recognised at the sixth annual Sun Military Awards (The Millies). The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall were guests of honour at the event – billed as “A Night of Heroes” – held at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich. They were joined by Prime Minister David Cameron

and wife Samantha, defence ministers, senior military, government and political figures and stars from entertainment and sport to pay tribute to exceptional individuals in one of the most moving TV events of the year.

In eight categories, the awards organised by The Sun newspaper honoured the bravery and excellence of the men and

women serving at home and overseas. Also celebrated were members of the public who in various ways work tirelessly to support military personnel.

Among the winners was triple amputee Corporal Josh Boggi, from the Royal Engineers, who was presented with the award for Overcoming Adversity by Olympian Sir Bradley Wiggins. Josh was

injured on New Year's Eve in 2010 but completed the 420-mile Big Battlefield Bike Ride just three years later and is now aiming to compete in the Paralympics in Rio in 2016. In a message to other injured servicemen, Josh said: "If I do inspire people, I don't dwell on it. I'm just a normal bloke trying to lead a normal life. If you take a bad turn in life, there's always something you can do to improve. You just get on with being the best person you can."

Sir Bradley said: "The word humble gets thrown around a lot but we're all in admiration for what he's done, not just for the way he's picked himself up and thrown himself into it, but Josh's story in redefining his life through cycling is incredibly courageous. Hopefully we'll see him in Rio."

David Cameron presented the award for Best Reservist to Lance Corporal Keith Mallon of the Royal Yeomanry. By day, Keith works for a publishing house but he's also a member of the Royal Yeomanry team responsible for detecting IEDs laid by the Taliban.

Paying tribute to the Armed Forces, Mr Cameron said: "When we say thank you, you say 'it's just our job', but we know you go above and beyond the call of duty and we thank you for that." Citing military values of courage and comradeship, he added: "These are the values we should cherish that we need more of in our country... You truly represent the best of British and it's humbling to be in your presence."

MOVING MOMENT

One of the most moving moments was when Petty Officer Emily McCullough from the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service received the Most Outstanding Sailor/Marine Award from Ronnie Wood for her exemplary care of patients during two tours of Afghanistan and one in Iraq.

The dedicated military nurse has only seen her submariner husband Sean for just a few weeks since they married in 2012, and her acceptance speech was interrupted when Sean surprised her on stage in a tearful reunion. Emily said later: "To be singled out is just such an honour. This whole thing has been crackers and I'm so embarrassed that I cried all over the stage but I just couldn't help it as it's so overwhelming!"

Ronnie Wood said: "It's amazingly important to celebrate our unsung heroes. You don't realise what goes on and take it for granted. But when you meet them and see what they do it's mind-blowing."

Holly Willoughby presented the award for Most Outstanding Soldier to Rifleman Josh Dodds, from B Company, 4th Battalion The Rifles, who killed a Taliban sniper

on his first tour of duty. "You just think of doing your job and making sure everyone is safe; you don't feel scared as it's a good adrenaline rush."

Later, Holly Willoughby took time to send a message to troops serving abroad at Christmas. She said: "My message is stay safe. I'll be thinking of you and raising a glass over my Christmas dinner. Look after yourselves and come back soon."

COOL HEAD

Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall presented the award for Most Outstanding Airman to Sergeant Anna Irwin, from 18 (Bomber) Squadron, who helped load her Chinook with injured personnel in the aftermath of a Taliban attack. Even when a rocket-propelled grenade struck close by, Sergeant Irwin kept a cool head to keep the helicopter on the ground until all were safely on board.

Going out of her way to thank her comrades, Anna said: "When we go out, it's not just the crew behind what we do, it is everybody that is involved and that's why I wanted to include them. The award is for something that happened on a particular night but the award wouldn't have happened without all those people."

The award for Support to the Armed Forces went to Families' Activity Breaks who help bereaved families pick up the pieces by providing action-packed holidays.

Sergeant Rachael Robinson, from A Flight, 22 Squadron, RAF Search and Rescue Force, received the Life Saver Award for risking her life again and again to rescue a seriously injured French fisherman at sea.

Backstage, a completely gobsmacked Rachael dedicated her success to her dad who died last month. Asked where her drive came from, Rachael said: "I just don't want anyone to die when I'm on shift, as that would be my worst nightmare, so I just keep going. I can't believe it really." Ricky Gervais handed Rachael her award and hailed her incredible achievements.

Ricky said: "It is an amazing evening and I'm determined not to cry. It's so humbling when people thank you for turning up but these people risk their lives."

The highly competitive category of Best Unit was topped by the 904 Expeditionary Air Wing Tornado Detachment who have flown missions continually for 23 years.

There were also two Special Recognition Awards. The first went to veterans of the Battle of the Atlantic. Veteran Albert Owings, 90, a former radio officer, described the award as "very emotional". The second award went to Camp Bastion's Support to Operations personnel in Afghanistan. 



Life Saver winner, Sergeant Rachael Robinson, and Ricky Gervais

Picture: Paul Edwards



Best Reservist Lance Corporal Keith Mallon

Picture: Dan Charity



Overcoming Adversity: Corporal Josh Boggi receives his award from Sir Bradley Wiggins

Picture: Darren Fletcher



Vigilant: the Reverend Keith Robus conducts a remembrance service



Inner peace: the church at Camp Souter in Kabul

Picture: Corporal Jamie Peters RLC



Sunset: Kabul city from Camp Souter

Picture: Corporal Jamie Peters RLC

TOUGH TALKING

CHAPLAIN TO THE KABUL SUPPORT UNIT, THE REVEREND KEITH ROBUS RN IS HAPPY TO LISTEN WRITES IAN CARR

However tough you are, there are times when you need a bit of help to get you through. It is when life's burden becomes too heavy that people often turn to the padres. While the Armed Forces are a multi-faith organisation, the padres offer a kind of support that transcends religious beliefs and worship.

"As a padre I offer to those of any or of no faith, friendship, confidential advice, or just a person who will listen without judging," said Royal Navy chaplain the Reverend Keith Robus, who was based in Kabul for this year's summer tour.

Living alongside their flock on operations, military chaplains can understand the hardships, dangers and difficulties that the troops face, whoever they are and however hard bitten they may appear to be.

"Although I am a Royal Naval chaplain, and normally my flock would be sailors and Royal Marines, here in Kabul I minister to all troops and civilians. In the end, people are people and each need support in different ways."

Christian worship, exploration and prayer are there for those who seek it, but

that is only part of the padre's work.

"My main role is to listen and let the person tell their story in an environment of trust and calm reflection. If it is helpful I might make suggestions about how they could proceed, but often just the process of reflection and being taken seriously by someone is enough to bring forward a solution."

Perhaps it is because military personnel learn early in their careers that the padres are the people who don't shout at them that makes it easier to talk to them about things that are bothering them suggests Reverend Robus. "We give them a chance to be themselves and think things through," he said.

In these days of Wi-Fi, Skype and email, British troops can keep in touch with their friends and family better than ever before. That of course can be a massive morale-boost, but sometimes it can also emphasise the great distance separating them from home. "If you are missing your family and you hear that your daughter has fallen and cut her head, yes you can see it on Skype, but you can't pick her up and cuddle her, or do the things you want to do as a parent. It can make

your day-to-day life here difficult."

As part of his pastoral duties, which he shared with ministers from other ISAF nations, Reverend Robus conducted the short remembrance services held each Sunday morning outside the ISAF Commanders HQ. "The names of coalition troops who have been killed in action are read out, followed by an Afghan officer who reads out the number of Afghan National Security Forces who have been killed in the past week," said Reverend Robus. "They were poignant moments and brought home to us all the sacrifices that these brave people are making week after week on behalf of their country."

Before joining the Royal Navy, Reverend Robus spent 22 years as a parish priest in West London. For a while he served in the Royal Naval Reserve before joining the regulars four years ago. He describes making the decision as his calling. "It has meant that I have met some tremendous people. When you see the commitment and discipline of these young men and women who want to do well and get on in life, and who are prepared to do so much for others, it gives you so much hope for humanity." **DF**

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WORK IN PROGRESS

TRANSFORMATION TSAR JONATHAN SLATER SAYS LORD LEVENE'S SECOND ANNUAL REPORT RECOGNISES SUCCESS

DF: When did you begin as DG for Defence Transformation and Corporate Strategy?

JS: It was a little over two years ago when I was asked to take the recommendations in Lord Levene's report and turn them into projects.

DF: What was the first problem you faced?

JS: When I arrived I found that there was general support for Levene's recommendations and that he was right about the organisation being insufficiently rigorous about how it spent public money. But there was scepticism about the Department's ability to change.

DF: Why were people sceptical?

JS: As far as the staff were concerned, the view was that our leaders were not good enough at managing change. The Your Say civilian survey results tell you that. And this was a very big change, involving the whole of our operating model, so there was scepticism about it.

DF: What other pressures were there?

JS: MOD was in the middle of a very significant downsizing, so changing the way we work at the same time as reducing staff levels and fighting a war overseas, and gearing up to play a significant role in the Olympics meant we were going to be stretched.

DF: Does Levene's latest annual report show that we have made progress?

JS: Yes, he says that we've made good progress so far. But the task is not complete by any means. Putting in a new operating model is just a means to an end. Its purpose is to change the way that we work and behave. Levene says he can see signs of that beginning to happen, but it's still work in progress.

DF: How are we doing establishing Head Office's strategic role?

JS: We started with Levene's recommendation to change things at Board-level. Now it is comprised of the people who have ultimate responsibility for deciding how we spend our money. And they have succeeded in balancing the budget – we haven't had that for at least

10 years. Then we delegated funding to the Commands to live within the overall budget set. Now we need to make sure that Head Office sits between the Board and the Commands acting in a coherent way. Levene recognises that it is smaller and becoming more strategic, but there is more to be done to ensure coherence.

DF: What is the next step for Head Office?

JS: We are putting in place a regular senior management group, chaired by the Permanent Secretary, which will bring together the civilian and military three-stars in Head Office to make sure the Head Office is joined up and coordinated.

DF: Levene talks a lot about behavioural change. How is that going?

JS: We have brought it down to three words, which are be, think, do.

That's Be, as in be a leader. We mean that in the business space. I think we all agree that our leadership on the battlespace is second-to-none. The challenge is to get people to show the same leadership capability when they are back in the office as when they are on operations. We especially want them to be more empowering to their staff.

Think, as in think Defence, i.e. joined up, and Do as in do it better, i.e. innovate. We are looking for clear frameworks to be set so staff can work effectively under delegated authority rather than always looking upwards for permissions.

DF: Is this approach being adopted across the whole of government?

JS: I would say that the nature of our challenge is not unique to Defence and that the Civil Service reform agenda is designed to, among other things, encourage people to work collectively across boundaries and in a more empowered way.

DF: So people can expect to have more responsibility in future?

JS: Yes, and less in the way of too many controls on how they do their tasks, and not too much second-guessing by too many senior managers.

We have delegated funding responsibility for the programme to the

Commands, saying 'you don't have to come to us to agree the details of your programmes, you need to design them for yourselves'. That's the first step. They then need to delegate that authority down through their own organisations.

DF: Can you say more about what you mean by 'Think' Defence?

JS: It is about people increasingly seeing themselves as part of a collective endeavour. Again, this happens naturally if you are on operations. If you are a soldier taking a hill, you expect everyone involved to be a part of that endeavour. But, back in the business space, historically, too much time has been spent competing for the same resource. We have to have a more joined up approach. The creation of Joint Forces Command is an example. It was one of Levene's recommendations. It has proved an effective way of encouraging a more collective approach to things like defence intelligence, health, all of those things where it's more sensible to do things jointly across the Armed Forces.

DF: And doing Defence better?

JS: Doing it better is about encouraging innovation and new ways of working. To take a simple example, which is in common with the broader Civil Service reform agenda, using digital means to deliver services.

In the old days Service personnel would have to use a paper-based system to sort out accommodation. Now it is done online.

That's DIO taking advantage of technology to work in a new way. We have demonstrated improvement over the year, but there is much more to do.

DF: Delegated authority also means accountability. How does that work?

JS: In April we established quarterly meetings between the Permanent Secretary, CDS and the TLB holders, the people who run the large constituent parts of the Department.

In these meetings they account for delivering the progress that has been committed to in our plans. We've made good progress and Levene recognises that. Let's see what he thinks when he comes back in 12 months' time. 



BACK WITH A BANG

THE BRITISH MILITARY TOURNAMENT CELEBRATES LEGENDARY EVENTS AND HEROES IN BRITISH HISTORY



Something for everyone: the tournament combines troops, bangs, camels, music and storytelling



Motorbike magic: Captain Richard Carr

Freddie Joyce, 18, captain of Powerful told how his crew must block out the roar from the crowd.

Captain of Terrible, Jamie White, added: "I'm not scared of losing a finger but I'm scared of losing and not putting on a good show for people."

Military music is another staple of the show. Linsey Carnegie has performed with a Royal Marines Band in the Royal Albert Hall, on Horse Guards Parade and at Tattoos worldwide, but couldn't wait to sample the atmosphere of Earls Court.

She said: "I've heard a lot about it from our 'old and bold' so it was exciting to discover that we'll be part of something as big as this."

Lieutenant Colonel Cliff Dare co-ordinated the tournament. He said: "It gives us the opportunity to showcase what we do and link up with the communities that we serve. We meet the public and they're able to understand a bit more about the Royal Marines and the Royal Navy."

The British Military Tournament returned to Earls Court to celebrate the achievements of heroes and legends from military history writes Lorraine McBride. They included the codebreakers of Bletchley Park, Nelson at Trafalgar and Lawrence of Arabia, with serving soldiers, sailors and airmen taking centre stage.

The show took place at Earls Court on 7 and 8 December. Prince William was guest of honour on 8 December, the first time he has attended the event.

Anthony Andrews narrated the two-hour celebration, featuring dramatic re-enactments, death-defying stunts, set pieces, storytelling, music, and even a submarine emerging through the floor.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:

- Massed Bands of the Royal Marines, the Central Band of the RAF and the London Scottish Regiment Pipes and Drums
- The legendary Field Gun Run
- Vintage and current armoured vehicles, a hot air balloon and an Apache helicopter
- 100 horses and two camels

A fictional crisis even allowed the Royal Marines to show off their muscle power. When pirates 'hijacked' a global positioning system satellite to entice a ship closer ashore to take hostages, a light aircraft

was ditched and Royal Marines reinforcements summoned from HMS Ocean.

A popular highlight was the White Helmets Motorcycle Display Team. At the dress rehearsal, Captain Richard Carr from the 24-strong team said: "Our best-known trick is the 'fan' formation on motorbikes. People enjoy coming back to see us year after year. We love performing in front of a big audience which adds to the buzz." Performing a compact, fast version of their usual crowd-pleasers, Captain Carr said: "We've kept all the exciting, big impact tricks, including a jump over four tanks."

Sergeant Stevie Marshall said: "With a focus on teamwork and trust, the lads might not be doing 'green mean' stuff but still focus on Army values. At shows like this, we're the guys that make boys want to join the Army in future."

For the finale, Lance Corporal Ian Greenhalgh performed wheelies on a quad bike at high speed dressed as a giant bear, while the blast of field guns tore through the arena. He said: "It's hard because I can't see a lot but the crowd make it a great show. What goes through my mind? Don't fall off!"

Lieutenant Commander Ian Flayne of the Naval Reserve co-ordinated the Field Gun competition with crews from Powerful and Terrible who disassemble and carry the field guns across chasms of 200 metres.

In addition to the show, a raft of fun activities included the opportunity to use an Enigma machine to create a coded message, while the public met members of the Army, Royal Navy and RAF and got their hands on the latest military kit.



Tanks for coming: tanks take centre-stage



Field Gun fun: always highly competitive

Pictures: David Hutton



TOGETHER WE FLY HIGHER.

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STATE-OF-THE-ART GENIUM PROSTHETICS ARE GIVING INJURED SERVICE PERSONNEL A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

We take walking for granted. It may sound stupid, but really, when was the last time you consciously thought about putting one leg in front of the other? Probably not since we were toddlers, taking our first wobbly tentative steps towards a madly waving and encouraging mum.

For people who've had above-the-knee leg amputations, having to concentrate on every step can be an immense challenge.

But like everything these days, technology is on hand to make the everyday a little bit easier. Earlier this year Philip Hammond committed over £6.5 million to guarantee that injured personnel and veterans with above-the-knee amputations could receive the latest prosthetics technology where clinically indicated.

One of these is the Genium microprocessor prosthetic leg. Since March more than 50 injured Service personnel have been fitted with 90 'bionic' legs at Headley Court, the Ministry of Defence's multi-million-pound rehabilitation facility in Surrey.

The Genium limbs are incredibly futuristic. When you see them next to the previous generation of prosthetics they look light years away. The really space-age bit is in the knee, which contains sensors to detect movement, similar to the Wii games console, allowing the limb to move in a natural way. Mark Thoburn, senior clinician at Headley Court explains: "It's a very high-tech product. Microprocessors control the hydraulics in the limb. And it allows us to fine-tune them to achieve everything the patient is hoping to achieve in a normal life."

And that's the key phrase: normal life. It's not just about paralympic heroes achieving superhuman feats; mostly it's about people who want to live a normal life, go to work, play with their kids, go to the gym or enjoy a holiday.

Army reservist Sergeant Craig Gadd was an engineer search advisor on Herrick 13 in 2010, part of an IED task force whose job it was to clear a compound next to Camp Pritzer in the Nahr-e Saraj district.

Craig's team had been in and out of



the compound all day clearing IEDs, and as they were leaving he stepped on a pressure plate. "It was just a device that was missed," he said. He lost his left leg from mid-thigh.

Conscious throughout his evacuation back to Camp Bastion, unsurprisingly it was his family that were going through his mind. "I was constantly telling the family 'don't worry, I'm not doing the searching, I do planning, co-ordinating, I'm the man at the back, I'll be stepping in the footsteps of my searchers'. My first thought when I got blown up was 'no, no, not me'."

After emergency care at Bastion, he was flown back to the UK, where he was transferred to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham where the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine is based.

"Initially, your life is turned upside down. I didn't know any amputees, didn't know any of my colleagues it had happened to, and you do worry for the future."

But Craig isn't the sort of bloke that sits around and mopes. He was up within a few days of arriving in hospital.

"I remember being in hospital for a few days and I made it to the bathroom and looked at myself and thought 'well, it's

gone, there's no point crying'."

One of the things that kept him positive in the early days in Birmingham was all the good things he had heard about Headley Court. What he says makes the difference there is that there's no culture of sympathy. "You'll be up and about in no time. Nobody really cares you're an amputee, there's plenty more here. So you just have to constantly move forward. I've had some tough days, but generally it's been pretty good really."

And of course the main thing that has helped Craig keep a smile on his face is his family. "I've got a two-and-a-half-year-old, and only the other day she asked me about my leg and I said 'daddy lost it in Afghanistan' and she said 'daddy, if we go back to Afghanistan, do you think we could go find your leg?', 'err well, maybe not!'"

So with no chance of going back and finding that lost leg, the next best thing was to get fitted with a prosthetic. The Genium leg wasn't available when he was first at Headley Court two years ago so he was on an earlier generation leg, the KX06. Although Craig describes it as 'a good leg', it wasn't until he got on the Genium that he really began to see a way back to normal life. "It enables you to do everything that you used to do before. Some of the other legs, you need a specific leg for an activity, but when you go on holiday you can't really take a bag of legs, whereas a Genium enables you to do pretty much everyday things."

It's the simple things non-amputees take for granted that can be the most limiting for an amputee. Before the Genium, Craig could only walk up and down stairs one step at a time. "With this one I can walk up and down the stairs, step over step." Another feature of the microprocessor knee is standing. The knee detects and reacts to the user's movement, allowing it to sense when they are standing still. After a few seconds, the knee locks in place. "With a lot of the other legs, you always have to remain with your core engaged to hold the leg up," Craig says. "Whereas this one, it senses that you're stood still, it'll go into a lock stance and won't bend, and then as soon as you

move it'll free and let you carry on walking, so it's a really clever leg."

So clever that the team from Headley Court have had a steep learning curve to get to grips with the technology. "Although we've used some hi-tech products, this is three times as clever," says Mark. "We all had to go on training courses, there was a lot of involvement with the manufacturer. But now, we are the subject matter experts in the UK on these products."

Craig is full of praise for the team at Headley Court. "Obviously the skill level the guys have got here is all dealing with high-level amputations, due to the sort of injuries the guys have sustained it's very different to your average NHS patient, so their skill and expertise does come into it massively."

The team have fitted a lot of limbs now and they know the legs inside out. It's not just the whizzy microprocessors, it's about how the limb fits the patient. Every amputee is different, every amputation is different. The prosthetics have to work with all shapes and sizes and all types of lifestyle. As Craig says: "It's not a one-size-fits-all. The socket is massively important as well. You can have the best leg in the world on the end of your stump, but if you haven't got a decent fitting socket then it doesn't matter."

It's down to the skill and professionalism of the Headley Court team who tailor-make each prosthesis to those wearing them. Each Genium leg is fine-tuned to the patient. When that set-up is correct the team can then programme the limb to achieve those normal everyday functions that we all take for granted. "Those functions could include things like extended standing; there's a programme you can have for doing press-ups where it locks the limb in full extension. So really that's about asking the patient what they want," Mark says.

The team work very closely with the physios. Once the patients get their limbs they do a lot of intensive physio. The way they walk and their understanding of the limbs changes. Quite often the team then have to make little adjustments to alignment or the programme to ensure that everything is as fine-tuned as it can be.

Once the team have done all it can it's then up to the patient to make the most of their prosthetic.

"Wearing a prosthetic limb is the difference between being in a wheelchair the rest of your life or getting on with the stuff that you used to do before," Craig says. "I was really active, young family, always doing a million and one things outside of the Army. Being able to do that still, as an amputee, you're living a normal life, just the same as everybody else." 

Sergeant Craig Gadd explains why Genium is so good



“It enables you to do everything that you used to do before”

HELPING HANDS

WHEN DISASTERS STRIKE, IT'S ALL HANDS ON DECK TO HELP THANKS TO THE NAVY'S TRAINING WRITES IAN CARR

Another hurricane has brought havoc to a coastal community. But although dead bodies have been seen among the wreckage, and terrified survivors in the town have no food or water, while others have fled into the surrounding hills, no stories of this human tragedy will ever hit the headlines.

Footage filmed by a news camera crew picking its way through the debris won't ever be broadcast. It is not the first time that the inhabitants of the isolated settlement of Bull Point have had to suffer in silence.

Each time disaster has struck it is the Royal Navy that has helped restore order. It happens so often that you might think that the mayor would have the neighbouring naval base at Plymouth on speed dial.

Happily for the inhabitants, such regular devastation has nothing to do with the effects of global warming, but everything to do with the disaster relief exercise (Distex) element of FOST – the Flag Officer Sea Training course which certifies crews and vessels as being sufficiently prepared for any eventuality.

"Distex is just one element of the six-week-long operational sea training that we run," said Lieutenant Commander John Barry. "In that time ships' crews will have been trained and assessed on a spectrum of activities including war-fighting, non-combatant evacuation, salvage and towing, anti-submarine warfare and of course disaster relief."

Today's lifesavers whose endeavours will be recorded by the simulated press are the crew from the Dutch frigate *De Zeven Provinciën*. Both the Dutch and the German

Navy come to the Royal Navy to undergo, some might say endure, FOST. Indeed many of their officers and senior ratings are embedded on the staff.

A week before the exercise at Bull Point, the Dutch ship was given bad weather warnings and a request to arrive as soon as possible. Regular updates followed, including damage reports, some detailed, some compiled as if by civilians. "We have modified Distex to mirror the experiences of HMS *Daring* in the Philippines," said Lieutenant Commander Barry.

As part of their briefing the crew of the Dutch frigate were told that 'mapping of the local area was not available, but Google maps are known to have good coverage'.

"That's exactly what *Daring* had to do," said Lieutenant Commander Barry. "A lot of organisations like the UN produce bespoke briefing documents and I'm trying to get



Smoked out: a casualty is rescued from a smoke-filled building

hold of them to use on future Distex. *Daring* also worked with embedded reps from DFID and Save the Children. I've established links with them to invite them to help us to mould future exercises and make them even more realistic."

On the night before the exercise, the Dutch ship was visited by Lieutenant Commander Barry and by the Mayor of Bull Point, Mr John Bull, who, in real life, is Commander Emmanuel Rouve of the French Navy. "That was to simulate initial contact. We gave a situation report in the light of what happened in the Philippines.

"So it was along the lines of saying 'this is what I saw, there was a lot of smoke over here, it smelled funny'. We based the briefing on the feedback from HMS *Illustrious* and in particular from HMS *Daring*, which was the first responder around some of the islands," said Lieutenant Commander Barry.

FOST have a menu of scenarios that they can use during Distex. These are refined and influenced by real-life experiences. "HMS *Daring* has spent a lot of time reroofing and putting back corrugated sheets that have been ripped off by the storm, so we will be including those kinds of scenarios," said Lieutenant Commander Barry.

When a ship the size of a destroyer or a frigate responds to a call for help, there is a limit to what they can achieve. But the impact of that intervention is crucial. They get the immediate life-saving response underway by providing emergency food, drinking water, administering basic first aid and doing whatever they can to reduce the chance of contagious diseases spreading.

"One of the things they will have to sort out today is a contaminated flood as the sewage works has been swamped by a tidal surge," said Lieutenant Commander Barry.

Once all this has been squared away the recce teams must then stabilise the situation. Ships' engineers repair broken generators and water pumps to restore the supply of fresh water, while others shore up damaged walls, take a headcount to account for any missing people and establish a morgue to deal with fatalities with sensitivity and respect.

For the crew, Distex is about applying their core skills and drills in an unfamiliar environment. "On a ship you might be dealing with a very similar sort of casualty that you have to deal with on land. But because it's not inside a metal box it can throw you," said Lieutenant Commander Lyndsey Netherwood who is here to pick up tips for when her ship, HMS *Iron Duke*, faces the same challenge early in 2014.

After that their next task is to establish a detailed picture of the situation so that



Roofless: rescuing casualties from a collapsed building

Pictures: Sergeant Su McGinlay

they can give a useful brief to the follow-on forces and agencies so that they can use that information to target their efforts.

Following their briefing from Mayor John Bull, the crew of the *De Zeven Provinciën* spent the night making up stores, compiling or listening to briefs and planning how they were going to tackle the day ahead. And, as a new day began, the inhabitants of Bull Point were getting desperate. The Dutch recce parties and equipment began to arrive by sea boat and later by Lynx helicopter. Organising the order of arrival of people and kit and in what numbers is the first challenge.

"Arguably the most difficult bit of the Distex is the command and control of personnel on the ground. Our site is quite small, around 500 metres square, which is hard enough. In the Philippines you are dealing with an archipelago of 100 islands. Where do you start?" said Lieutenant Commander Barry. "That is something we focus on quite hard. How does the commander use their recce teams to build up a picture and work out the priorities.

"There are five basic criteria we assess. Did we account for everyone? Did we identify all the injuries? Did we treat them all? Did we find all the incidents and at least end up with a plan for dealing with them all?"

Injecting even more realism to the collapsed buildings, cars on fire, smoke-filled rooms and swamps of sewage are the volunteers from University Royal Naval Units, junior rates who are rotating between ships, members of the Casualty Union and, for the first time, actors from a group called Amputees in Action who simulate seriously wounded civilians.

At each incident a FOST instructor outlines the scenario. "There's a baby crying at the end of that flooded corridor, but you can't go down there because the wall's about to collapse. Look around, there may be things that can help you."

Adding an extra dimension are Joe Cannon and Tom Chambers from ShelterBox, an international disaster relief

charity. Joe has helped in 22 disasters around the world. "Navy personnel don't get a lot of opportunity to work alongside non-governmental organisations (NGOs). That's why we are involved, to give them an idea of what it's like dealing with civilians who won't necessarily do as they are told.

"When you get a disaster, the military aren't normally in charge, usually it's the local government or their agencies. Often there are other NGOs around, like us, who the Navy has to liaise with. Sometimes military personnel aren't used to dealing with people outside their chain of command, so exercises like this help."

After four hours of toil and drama the fires are out, the water leaks have been dealt with, and everyone has been accounted for. Mayor John Bull is satisfied.

Speaking to *Defence Focus*, this time as his alter ego, Commander Emmanuel Rouve is full of praise for FOST. "This has been the best exercise I have seen for testing a ship's command and control. It shows the real capacity of a ship's team and gives individuals a chance to show initiative within an overall control. And it really shows the importance of a frigate or a destroyer when dealing with this kind of a disaster." **DF**

FOST FACTS

- Flag Officer Sea Training has been a centre of excellence for basic and operational training since 1958
- FOST takes six weeks and includes exercises in warfighting, non-combatant evacuation, salvage and towing and disaster relief
- More than 100 ships and submarines from the Royal Navy, NATO and allied nations benefit from FOST each year
- Between 30 and 40 volunteers help with each disaster relief exercise

LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVES

TWO AMPUTEES OVERCOME THEIR INJURIES BY TAKING ON 100-FOOT WAVES. REPORT BY LEIGH HAMILTON

By the time this magazine hits the stands, a group of soldiers will be well into their attempt to row across the Atlantic Ocean. The team, comprising two able-bodied and two amputee rowers, is taking on the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, which can take months to complete.

The challenge covers 3,000 miles from San Sebastian in La Gomera to Nelson's Dockyard, English Harbour, Antigua. The Row 2 Recovery team is up against 16 others and is expected to reach the finish line in January 2014, after spending Christmas and New Year at sea.

The four-man crew is made up of skipper Captain James Kayll, Captain Mark Jenkins, Corporal Cayle Royce and Corporal Scott Blaney, all of whom have spent months preparing for the physical and mental challenges that come with rowing across an ocean.

For most people, taking on such a momentous challenge would be a decision that required a lot of thought, but for Corporal Cayle Royce it was a no-brainer: "I've always wanted to do crazy ventures. I just love exposure, I love big open spaces, I love physical challenges. This is, as far as I'm concerned, one of the best tests."

Corporal Royce was wounded in Afghanistan in May 2012 when he stepped on an explosive device while serving as a sharpshooter with the Brigade Reconnaissance Force. This resulted in above-the-knee amputation of both legs, facial scarring, the loss of several fingers on his left hand and neck trauma.

Although he sustained serious injuries which have changed the way he lives his life, Corporal Royce sees the Atlantic Challenge as a way to continue enjoying extreme sports: "I don't see it as 'I'm injured, I need to prove myself. I need to make sure that people don't think I'm an invalid'.

"This is the person that I was beforehand and I've been given an opportunity to participate in a similar venture and I absolutely want to be involved in it."

As well as talking to a previous Row 2 Recovery team who took on the Atlantic Challenge, this year's complement has spent time researching the psychological implications of taking on such an ordeal. They have also endured tough training regimes as a team and individually.

In an attempt to get them physically ready for the crossing, the team recently completed a 24-hour simulated row in the relative dryness of a gym. The training saw each rower spend two hours on and two hours off a rowing machine to replicate the pattern the men will endure on the ocean waves. Although two of the team are amputees, each rower will spend the same amount of time in the hot seat.

Corporal Scott Blaney suffered an above-the-knee amputation and soft-tissue injuries from a bomb while conducting operations in Afghanistan in 2007.

Corporal Blaney has a similar outlook to his team mate. Determined to live life to the full, he swam across the channel in 2009 and now campaigns to raise the profile of injured Service personnel.

Despite sustaining such serious injuries, Corporal Blaney believes he has to think positively: "I woke up in Selly Oak hospital in intensive care with my dad and everyone stood around me. Since then I've thought 'let's

Bracing: the Row 2 Recovery team will face extreme weather conditions in the Atlantic



get over this, let's not feel sorry for yourself Scott. You're alive, be happy about that'.

"I told myself I would walk in a few months and be able to ride a bike within a year. I did my first marathon within two years of losing my leg. The year after that I swam across the Channel."

Having such drive surely makes up for having absolutely no rowing experience. The seafaring know-how comes from the team's able-bodied skipper Captain James Kayll who has rowed the Indian Ocean. For Captain Kayll, signing up for the Atlantic Challenge was a natural decision: "I knew Row 2 Recovery had done this in 2011/2012 because I knew some of the guys who did it and I followed them closely when they went across."

"This time round it was as simple as seeing a post on Facebook saying that Row 2 Recovery was going to form another crew. I got in touch and asked if I could help and they said yes."

Although being on the open sea and feeling the thrill of exposure is reason enough for Captain Kayll to take part, a deeper more meaningful rationale lies beneath the surface: "The reason someone like me wants to do something like this is for the adventure, but this is a completely different project with regards to the injured guys. I'm in a position to be able to give something back to them."

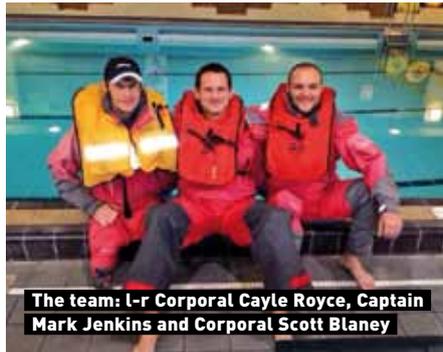
"They've given a huge amount already through their service and obviously through their injuries, so with my experience in ocean rowing I can help them achieve their goals and their dreams."

The other able-bodied crew member is Captain Mark Jenkins who serves with the Royal Army Medical Corps as a physiotherapy officer. Although his knowledge of the ocean is limited, Captain Jenkins is ready for the challenge: "My experience of the sea is in no way extensive, especially in comparison to James the skipper. I've spent a bit of time on sailing boats, deep sea fishing, but nothing on this scale. It will certainly be a challenge for me getting used to that environment."

Teamwork and pulling together, often literally, to achieve the incredible is something that appeals to all four team members. Captain Jenkins said: "Being part of a small team is fantastic and that's what a lot of people in the Army enjoy. I know Cayle, Scott and James are looking forward to that."

"When you are injured you miss that and getting back into it is part of their rehabilitation and part of the experience that they're going to have. But also for myself and James as well, working as part of a team, trying to achieve, is fantastic."

But, even with all the bravado and



The team: l-r Corporal Cayle Royce, Captain Mark Jenkins and Corporal Scott Blaney



Changes: certain aspects of the boat have been adapted for the injured personnel



Challenge: the team takes part in a 24-hour training exercise

positive thinking in the world, no matter how you look at it, rowing across the Atlantic Ocean is very dangerous. Weather conditions are unpredictable and at times will be incredibly scary. Captain Kayll calmly explained: "There are chances of tropical revolving storms, squalls and generic low weather systems that can track across where we'll be and these can pose a pretty large threat to us."

"We're only on a 29-foot-long piece of glass fibre and that's not very big when you've got five kilometres of depth beneath you and 3,000 miles of water from land to land."

"If something does go wrong, we can communicate immediately with the organisers and with the safety boat and they should come to assist us."

In addition to the weather, human factors will play a part. Not only will there be sea-sickness and the possibility of salt boils and salt rashes from the water, there will also be discomfort in the cabin of the boat as the hatches will be closed at all times because of the risk of capsize. On the other hand, when the soldiers are rowing, they will be soaking wet from the waves, so they will go from one extreme to another.

As all teams taking part in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge aren't allowed any resupplies of food, drink or equipment during the race, rations are taken on board to make sure they have enough sustenance to see them through for 90 days. Freeze-dried rations are the staple diet and there will be a variety of energy bars and drinks, as well as vitamins and minerals, to keep them going and motivated.

In addition to having a support vessel,

which will be sailing with the boat, the team will be able to communicate within the craft.

Captain Kayll explained: "We have a radio so we can talk from one cabin to another, which may seem unnecessary, but if you are in a storm and everything's battened down, you need to be able to talk to the guys in the other cabin. It will have fleet broadband so we will be able to send emails over a broadband satellite system."

Until they get a manageable routine up and running, initially the logistics of manoeuvring four bodies around the small boat will be challenging. Corporal Royce said: "I think it's going to be awkward shuffling around for Scott and me initially. We can't stand up so there's always going to be a body in the way."

Captain Kayll added: "It's going to be challenging for us because I think that as much as Cayle and Scott will do as much as they can, there will be certain things they can't do, which means that we will have to do a lot of the work that goes on in the aft cabin such as navigation and cooking."

Once the teething problems have been ironed out and everyone has become used to life on the ocean waves, all four soldiers will have their eyes firmly on the prize. Corporal Royce summarised: "Night stars, big seas; it's all very exciting. It's uncomfortable, it's scary, it's out of the norm; not something you'd do every day. It's just you and a bunch of blokes out at sea. I think the whole trip is pretty cool actually."

Find out more about the team at www.row2recovery.com and follow their progress at www.taliskerwhiskyatlanticchallenge.com 

GARY BARLOW

EVERYTHING CHANGES

**FIONA SIMPSON GETS A SNEAK
PREVIEW OF GARY BARLOW'S
DOCUMENTARY OF HIS RECENT
TRIP TO AFGHANISTAN**

Picture: Corporal Ross Fernie RLC

Gary Barlow held a concert to entertain the troops of 7th Armoured Brigade at Camp Bastion in Afghanistan

In October this year a bit of showbiz glitz and glamour came to Camp Bastion, with the arrival of X Factor judge and Take That star Gary Barlow.

Gary visited Bastion to spend two days with soldiers, sailors and airmen, both regulars and reserves, based at the hub of UK operations in Afghanistan. The visit culminated in a concert in front of 1,000 members of the Armed Forces, and it is all captured in a documentary due to air on ITV on 23 December.

But it's not exactly your ordinary forces concert with Gary on stage with his backing band. He spent the days before the performance scouring the camp for people who could get up on stage and be a part of it. Gary explained: "I didn't want to go there and be on a stage higher than everyone else singing and expecting everyone to just applaud me. I wanted to go there and really include everybody."

And he certainly achieves this. In what Gary describes in the documentary as "the most memorable concert of my life", he is joined on stage by singers, guitarists, and even a ukulele player, all serving members of the Armed Forces based at Camp Bastion. And the team also had a stroke of luck as members of the Royal Artillery Band were visiting at the time.

"The luck really did fall our way that we had that band with us, the Royal Artillery Band, and I knew then 'we're going to get a good show now' and we just added the other people to it. The final show was just brilliant. To see everyone achieve what they wanted felt like it was an evening of good feeling."

The trip to Afghanistan was something that Gary had wanted to do for some time, but it had never come together before. "I'd heard of comedians who'd done it but I thought it would be great to get some music out there."

It couldn't have been more different from his usual pop star lifestyle. From getting on a C-17 transport plane with hundreds of troops to being caught in a sandstorm in camp, Gary got to see life how it really is for the UK Armed Forces based out there.

"I wasn't really worried about being in a dangerous place. I felt like I was always going to be safe there and, through the early meetings that we'd all had, there was nothing that was worrying me. The only bit that bothered me was the landing into Camp Bastion, at night with all the lights out!"

Gary is keen to point out that the real stars of the show were the people he met in Bastion. "I think we are all aware of what a great job they [British Armed Forces] are all doing but to go and see it is something else.



Gary Barlow takes a five-kilometre run with British troops at Camp Bastion in Afghanistan

Picture: Sergeant Dan Bardsley

To go and see the way it all works, this big team, that everybody is working towards the same goal, it's incredible."

In scenes reminiscent of the X Factor auditions, Gary met up with promising musicians and singers in Camp Bastion. These included Senior Aircraftman Johnny Marengi, a 21-year-old RAF medic on his first tour. Johnny never imagined when he went to Afghanistan that he would be singing a solo in front of his fellow troops, let alone being accompanied by Gary Barlow on the piano!

"The concert was definitely the best bit of the whole trip for me," said Gary. "Not only the audience and the banter that they had, it was also getting the guys on stage. It was a great result and great seeing everyone afterwards and they'd all had a ball and their mates had cheered them on; it was just a great atmosphere, great positivity."

Also amongst the all-star Bastion band was Lance Corporal Sean Fowler, a 45-year-old Army reservist. A keen guitarist, Sean had brought his instrument with him to Camp Bastion and was gobsmacked when the X Factor star turned up and encouraged him to play. However, it wasn't just Sean who was affected by the meeting. Gary remembered: "I was fascinated by him [Sean]. He was my age and had just decided 'I want to do this'. His pride was very infectious. When you are around people like that who are so driven that they change their whole life to do something, you've got to admire it."

The fact that we got to put people like him in our show and in our band, that was the reason for going there. If we'd have only met Sean, that would have been enough for me because he was just a great guy, a great advert for the whole thing."

Major Richard Jones from PJHQ helped to organise the visit. He saw first-hand how important it is for the guys out there that someone like Gary Barlow makes the effort to come out and see them (and he knows, logistically, quite how much of a big effort these things can be). "I think it has

a bigger effect than I think people would imagine on the guys who are out there on an operational tour. Clearly, meeting Gary isn't normality as far as we're concerned! But it does bring a bit of home to us and the fact that he has gone out of his way is hugely important to the guys."

As for Gary himself, he had some preconceptions of what life would be like out there and much of that was turned on its head when he actually got there. "I thought the atmosphere was going to be quite down, that people would be like 'this place is horrible, we want to go home'. Of course, they do want to see their families but it's like 'no, I've trained for years to be here, and I'm at the top of my game, I want to be here'."

Talking about his experience Gary explained how he is always inspired by people who love what they do, no matter what that is. And out in Afghanistan he certainly met a lot of people to be inspired by.

Gary Barlow: Journey to Afghanistan is on ITV at 9pm on 23 December 2013. **DF**



Gary Barlow in Afghanistan with Flight Lieutenant Collette Knill

Picture: Freddie Claire

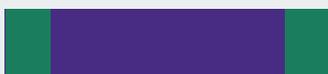


Picture: Sergeant Pete Mobbs

Stable career: Dave Pearce is the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) for the King's Troop Royal Horse Artillery

MY MEDALS

RSM Dave Pearce joined the Army as a gunner straight from school in June 1992. Here, he looks back on his eight medals. Interview by Lorraine McBride.



NORTHERN IRELAND

I was an Army kid. My father was a gunner and I joined the Army in Germany and sat the entrance test before even my school exams. It was all I knew, but it was something I really wanted to do. Of course, Dad was thrilled.

When the CO told us we were going, I felt pure excitement. At 18, I was a young rifleman with no fear. Our training was so hard, we were put through a mincer, so when I first ran out on patrol

in Armagh and did our zig-zag run, I thought 'God, is this it?' I expected bullets flying and World War Three. It was a very quiet town but when something happened it was normally a biggie.

A groundbreaking moment came when the peace treaty was signed. Northern Ireland set me up for the rest of my career. I loved learning vehicle recognition and took real pride in it. I can still remember them now. Sad isn't it? I can't remember my times tables, yet can still remember terrorist number plates from 1994. We lost Lance Corporal Jock

Wilson on FA Cup Final day when the IRA planted a bomb at a checkpoint and I was involved in the aftermath. It was my first feeling of terror and adrenaline.

Straight after the bomb, I fell down concrete stairs fully laden up, and for a couple of days I didn't feel a thing until my arm blew up because my adrenaline was pumping so much. My tour was all excitement, but you don't think of danger when you're single. I didn't know what to expect from Ireland but it was a cracking tour for a young soldier.



CYPRUS

My UN medal is for peacekeeping in 1996/97. We sat between the Turks and the Greek Cypriots. UN blue barrels marked each side's lines but, in the morning, we often found them pushed forward ever so slightly until we painted around

them so they couldn't steal ground from each other.

Every morning the Turkish Army sang chants of defiance to Greece and allegiance to Turkey. During peace talks, they held a concert in the buffer zone, with potential for disaster. They invited 3,000 Turkish Cypriots and 3,000 Greek Cypriots, with bands playing on a football field. We watched, fearing violence would erupt at any moment, but it went off beautifully.

In the buffer zone, we'd see a Turkish soldier and greet him, 'All right mate', and he'd reply in a pure Scouse or Manc accent which made us double-take and say 'what are you doing here?' One guy was on honeymoon in Turkey when he was grabbed for national service.

Nicosia was on our doorstep and the moment I was off-duty I jumped in my car to find something interesting. I've always been interested in

history and an old boy called Danny ran a bar on the Turkish side that was popular with soldiers. He was a Turkish paratrooper in 1974 so we drank in his tiny bar and he'd tell us how he'd parachuted into the mountains in Cyprus and fought with the Greeks. Then we'd visit the Greek side – we had the best of both worlds.

KOSOVO

When we went over the border with 16 Air Assault Brigade at the front in 1999, it proved a groundbreaking tour. After weeks of allied bombing, we drove into Kosovo and, while the Kosovans were delighted, the Serbs were less pleased.

As we advanced into Kosovo, the Russians raced us to the airfield at Pristina Airport, but they got there before us and blocked us in with their vehicles.

It felt very east meets west and we had a bit of a standoff at a checkpoint with weapons pointing everywhere, but got through in the end. We pushed on, saw burning schools, cars, smoldering buildings and injured victims. Sometimes I marvelled at what human beings could do to each other. There's a human code of conduct and I couldn't hit an old lady over the head with a pistol.

As the Serbs withdrew, we had a period of Kosovan Albanian reprisals. Then the tables turned and innocent Serbians got battered until 5 Airborne Brigade effectively kicked the door down and stabilised the area.

I was the Commanding Officer's signaller and had a privileged position sitting in on negotiations at Café Europa on the border watching the Serbian Generals squirming.

Brigadier Freer was quite bolshie, someone I'd always respected, and he didn't take any prisoners. Young soldiers look to people to inspire them and lead from the front and he certainly did that. As tours go, Kosovo was right up there.

IRAQ

In 2003, Saddam was very much in power. We went over the border at night with 16 Air Assault Brigade to start the land battle. We gathered at the border 24 hours before we were due to cross but when Saddam's men set fire to the oil plants, everything was brought forward. It was surreal driving into a foreign country, watching tank battles erupt around us.

Camaraderie was fabulous. The Parachute Gun Battery wasn't for the fainthearted but we trained hard in Kuwait. Soldiers just want adventure and we fought, worked and slept on an open plain, which was a real buzz. In one operation, our brief was to drive through Nazaria and support 1 PARA as they launched a heli-assault.

As we approached the outskirts we saw miles of US Marine Corps convoys gridlocked. Worming our way to the front, US Humvees were upside down.

Our brief was to crack on but it felt like a real *Black Hawk Down* moment when we stripped the vehicles and took out the windows because the Americans were getting hammered on certain bridges. We were all ready to go but then at the 11th hour we were ordered to go no further.

Towards the end of our tour, the Royal Military Policemen were killed in a siege at a police station. When word spreads, you feel sad, useless and sorry for someone else's family. Our tour was simple: go in and beat the Iraqi army but after that, it came down to horrendous insurgency.

Iraq had its moments but our artillery duels were pretty hairy. Our new radar position was so good that our CO ordered us to stop because we were running out of ammunition. The Iraqis had a go back but we ultimately silenced their guns, which was our aim.

AFGHANISTAN

My first tour in 2008 was a fact-finding exercise. An instructor at the Royal School of Artillery, I went out as an observer but ended up in the thick of it.

In Forward Operating Base Inkerman I was with 29 Commando. Afghanistan was a tricky beast and our minds were constantly sharp so that rockets or IEDs didn't catch us. Two years later, there was a marked improvement in the Afghan National Army and Police. A lot of resources, time and effort meant they were starting to lead operations on my last tour.

The Afghans are an intriguing race. Their world is different to ours and it's definitely an old-school way to live. I stood in a sangar looking out over villages and compounds and it always reminded me of *Star Wars*.

Nobody ever conquered the Afghans and there's a reason: they're very complex, very tribal. Your average Afghan in a rural village probably doesn't know or care who Hamad Karzai is as long as his crop comes in.

Certainly the British Army made Helmand a safer place and I'd like to visit in peacetime. You've got breathtaking views, mountains and rivers; it's an adventure-training dream. I often stood looking out over the mountains thinking 'oh, I'd love to go up there'. After all, it's the foothills to the Himalayas.

I'm out of the Army in December 2015 and my time has flown, but I'd do it all again. My own boys are three and eight, so serving in Afghanistan over Christmas was particularly hard even though we had a cracking day. But I'm glad I've had all my experiences and wouldn't change a thing.



Men and women of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines serve their country, often at times of danger. Established in 1922, the RNBT helps non-commissioned Sailors, Marines and their families (The RNBT Family) throughout their lives. Your donation will help us to help them.

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PORTSMOUTH, Hampshire, PO2 8RN
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E: rnbt@rnbt.org.uk www.rnbt.org.uk

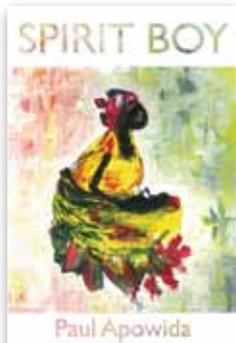


FROM SPIRIT BOY TO SOLDIER

PAUL APOWIDA IS A SOLDIER AND ARTIST WHOSE DEBUT BOOK HAS JUST BEEN PUBLISHED WRITES LORRAINE MCBRIDE



Pen portrait: Rifleman Apowida has just published his critically acclaimed first book



It is rare for a ruff-tufted infantryman to combine soldiering with delicate artistry and publish a well-crafted autobiography. And all by the tender age of 28. But then Rifleman Paul Apowida is no ordinary soldier.

Many soldiers face danger on active service but Ghanaian-born Apowida faced his greatest danger as a tiny baby when he lost his mother to meningitis, shortly followed by his father and six relations in quick succession.

In a country where odds are stacked against survival, Paul's terrified community believed that the infant was cursed as a spirit child, seen as an evil spirit who would bring harm to the village. And, in line with their deep cultural beliefs, he was poisoned and left to die in the baking African sun.

Rescued by a nun, Paul survived a total of three attempts on his life, all before his fifth birthday. Smuggled into a children's home, he grew up to become a soldier with the British Army and a successful artist.

Apowida's new book *Spirit Boy* documents his attempted murder, his early life in an orphanage and his eventual return to his village as an adult. He believes

his book sends out a powerful message. "I wanted to let my community know that being a spirit child isn't what they imagine as they can't know what a spirit child will grow up to be in future. At the end of the day, if I was a spirit child, I wouldn't have achieved all these good things. It also lets people know that no matter what you go through, you don't have to let it define you."

After a stint at art college Apowida moved to England in 2007. He joined the British Army the following year and served in Afghanistan with 1st Battalion The Rifles. Graphic descriptions of damage caused by

an IED on a car – and far worse a dog – are unflinching in his depiction of a Taliban ambush. "I never pictured what hell would look like until this."

Apowida's memoir has generated extraordinary interest and he says that strangers who read it tell him they have been both hooked and inspired.

Paul hopes that by raising awareness his story will play a part in stamping out the killing of spirit children. Attitudes are changing partly thanks to the British-based charity AfriKids who work with disabled youngsters and who funded Apowida's art



All pictures courtesy of AfriKids charity

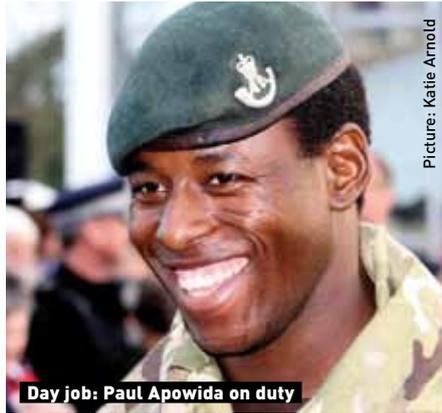
course by selling his paintings.

"Things are improving but I wouldn't say 100 per cent. AfriKids tries to stop these acts in northern Ghana. My artwork also helps put people through schools, builds new schools, and gives children the opportunities they didn't have before."

Being in Afghanistan in fear of death made Paul reflect on his whole life. General Nick Parker, Colonel Commandant of The Rifles, presented medals at their homecoming parade. When Apowida spoke to the press to publicise AfriKids, the General watched with interest before offering fatherly advice.

"At some point you're going to have to decide who you are. Do you want to be Paul the spirit boy forever? Or are you going to be Rifleman Apowida and get on with the rest of your life? You can be a great soldier, but if you're always thinking about the past, then what sort of future are you going to have?"

Apowida took the advice in the manner in which it was intended. "I had a big smile and it made me think what a big family the Army is," he said, touched. "The Army taught me a lot of things, and, whenever I'm downhearted, I've got friends to talk to who can help me."



Picture: Katie Arnold

Day job: Paul Apowida on duty



You've been framed: Rifleman Apowida's handiwork on display

Partly to lay ghosts to rest, Apowida returned to Ghana and found that, while life was imperfect, the transformation that had happened filled him with hope for the future.

He also met the concoction men who almost ended his life, and attempted to find a shred of justification for their actions.

"They explained that it wasn't their fault, but the influence of their family, and that, with a spirit child, they do what they have to do." Apowida trails off and the implications hang unspoken.

"It's wrong because they didn't know what caused the deaths of my relations," he continues, "but lack of education causes these things to happen."

Rifleman Apowida leaves the Army in 2014 and hopes to become a professional artist or author. A film adaptation of his book is on the cards and he wouldn't turn down Idris Elba portraying him on the big screen, and, with his optimism and ability to succeed, don't bet against it.

"It would be my dream to see my story made into a film, but my dreams are coming true."

Spirit Boy by Paul Apowida is published by Silvertail books, £20. 



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ABC OF WINTER HEALTH

FLUSTERED ABOUT FLU JABS? NERVOUS ABOUT THE NOROVIRUS? COMMUNITY PHARMACIST ANGELA CHALMERS ANSWERS THOSE NIGGLY SEASONAL QUESTIONS



Q: Antibiotics; do they cure colds?

A: Antibiotics are useless against cold and flu viruses, and thankfully most people are now aware of this due to successful public health campaigns. However, viruses promote secondary bacterial infections as they can leave the tissues of the lungs, throat, ear and nose weak and inflamed. See your GP if you develop difficulty swallowing, swollen glands or white spots at the back of your throat, as it could be a bacterial throat infection. If you develop thick, coloured

mucus from your nose, or pain and phlegm from your chest, you should also see your GP.

Antibiotics only work against bacteria, so taking them in the absence of harmful bacteria can lead to bacterial resistance developing. This stops antibiotics from working and reduces the treatment options available in the future. Resistance is now becoming a real problem in modern medicine, with drug companies struggling to invent new antibiotics.

Q: Bugs; is the winter vomiting bug active only in winter?

A: The dreaded norovirus is also called the winter vomiting bug as it tends to peak over winter, but can in fact occur all year round. Good hand hygiene is essential to avoid picking up and spreading this virus; however you should be aware that alcohol hand gel does not work against norovirus. This involves washing your hands thoroughly with warm water and soap. This is especially important after going to the toilet,

vomiting or having diarrhoea, or when preparing food, as the norovirus is easily spread through these routes. You are infectious for 48 to 72 hours after your symptoms have gone, so stay at home to prevent spreading it. At home, work or school, it is wise not to share towels or flannels, and to disinfect surfaces with a bleach-based cleaner, as the norovirus can survive on hard surfaces.

Q: Colds; what's the difference between a cold and flu?

A: The common cold tends to have milder symptoms such as runny nose, sneezing, sore throat, headache, cough and feeling a bit under the weather. Flu can also have these symptoms and much worse – such as fever, chills, all-over body pains and skin sensitivity, as the immune system fights the influenza virus. Most people would be able to carry on as normal with a cold, but with flu you need to go to bed, as your body needs to rest while it fights the virus. Both a cold and flu can last up to a week, but flu can leave you feeling tired and lethargic for weeks after.

Drink fluids to stay hydrated, and keep warm. If your appetite is affected, try to eat smaller meals throughout the day to give your body more energy to fight the virus. Try snacking on fresh fruit, as it contains lots of antioxidants and vitamins to help boost the immune system.

In terms of treatment, both paracetamol and ibuprofen can help ease body pains and headache, and also help reduce fever. Combination cold and flu remedies tend to contain paracetamol or ibuprofen with an added decongestant to unblock the nose and dry up nasal secretions. They may also contain ingredients to break up a chesty cough (an expectorant) or to help minimise an irritating dry cough (a suppressant). People are often overwhelmed by the number of cough, cold and flu remedies on the shelf. It can be tricky choosing the right one; however, this is where your pharmacist can help – they will ask about your individual symptoms to ensure you receive the remedy that is right for you. **DF**

STILL UNSURE?

Visit www.nhs.uk for the latest news about flu vaccinations and other seasonal health issues.

This article first appeared in issue 25 of Benhealth, the quarterly member magazine of Benenden Healthcare (www.benenden.co.uk).

VITAL NUMBERS

THERE ARE PEOPLE OUT THERE READY TO HELP YOU

RN Benevolent Trust: Grants, advice and income supplements for veterans. Call 0239 2690112 or email rnbt@rnbt.org.uk.

RN Association: Comradeship for all serving and ex-Service members of the RN, RM, QARNNS, WRNS, Reserves, RFA and RNXS. royal-naval-association.co.uk

Royal Marines Benevolent Fund: Relieves hardship among serving and former Marines and dependents. royalmarines.charities@charity.vfrees.com or call 02392 547201.

ABF The Soldiers Charity: Support to soldiers and veterans. www.soldierscharity.org or call 0845 241 4820.

RAF Benevolent Fund: Help for RAF personnel past and present. rafbf.org or call 0800 1692942.

The Charity for Civil Servants: Helps anyone who has worked for the Civil Service and their dependents. Advice about support and financial help. csbf.org.uk or call 0800 056 2424.

Army Welfare Service: HQ AWS has relocated to Upavon. Confidential support for soldiers and families. army.mod.uk/welfare-support/family/default.aspx or call (UK) 01980 615975.

RAF Association (RAFA): Comradeship and care for current and former RAF members. rafa.org.uk/welfare.asp.

HIVE: Tri-Service information covering issues like education and health. 167 offices. hive.mod.uk.

Royal British Legion: Charity providing financial, social and emotional support to vets and serving, and dependents. www.britishlegion.org.uk or call 08457 725 725.

RFA Association (RAFAA): Comradeship and care for current and former RFA personnel. www.rfa-association.org.uk or contact 01772 685427.

SSAFA Forces Help: Supports serving personnel, veterans and the families of both. Practical and financial assistance

and emotional support. ssafa.org.uk or call 0845 1300 975.

Harassment, bullying or discrimination:

JSP 763, The MOD Harassment Complaints Procedures, is a guide for Services and civilians. Contact the Defence Business Services on 0800 345 7772 (+441225 829572 from overseas) or em: PeopleServices@pppa.mod.uk.

Matters of conscience

and whistleblowing under the Public Interest Disclosure Act. Call 0800 3457772. Select option four.

Service Personnel and Veterans Agency:

Pay, pensions and personnel support for the Services and veterans, including the JPA system, and Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre: 0800 0853600; 0800 1692277 or veterans-uk.info

MOD Occupational Welfare Service:

Confidential advice on work and personal issues. Call 0800 345 7047

Service Complaints Commissioner: To make a complaint or seek advice, email: contact@oscc.gsi.gov.uk

Naval Personal & Family Service and Royal Marines Welfare:

NPFS & RMW have three main offices in the UK, where the serving person's next of kin resides determines which office to contact.

■ Eastern area office - HMS Nelson - Tel: 023 92 722 712 - after hours 023 92 726 159.

■ Western area office - HMS Drake - Tel: 01752 555 041 - after hours 01752 555 220.

■ Northern area office - Helensburgh - Tel: 01436 672 798 - after hours 01436 674 321 (Ext 4005)

RM Welfare - 01752 836 395 (via duty officer, guardroom RM Stonehouse).

The Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS):

Charity providing welfare support from frontline to recovery for wounded, sick and injured serving personnel and their families when they are in hospital, rehabilitation or recovery centres. www.dmws.org.uk or call 01264 774000

SUDOKU

			8				7	
	4			6		2		
1		6						5
		8		3				4
			6		9			
	9			7		1		
5						6		8
		4		1			9	
	1				7			

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

4	1	3	7	5	2	8	6	9
5	9	2	6	8	4	3	1	7
8	6	7	1	9	3	2	4	5
9	7	8	3	2	1	6	5	4
3	4	6	5	7	8	1	9	2
1	2	5	4	6	9	7	8	3
7	3	1	9	4	6	5	2	8
6	8	4	2	3	5	9	7	1
2	5	9	8	1	7	4	3	6

Solution to the November 2013 puzzle

CHESS



Compiled by: Carl Portman

Chess players know full well how competitive the game is. For young and old, the thrill of victory and the pain of defeat are integral factors in the game. Chess does not build character, it reveals it.

I coach in schools and a recent experience brought this home to me. A young lad was winning his game but it all started to go very wrong, and as his opponent began wiping his pieces from the board, he began to cry. I went over to him and asked what was wrong. He said 'I'm committing suicide here' which was a very strong reaction. Yet he didn't want to resign and end the pain - he was determined to carry on fighting. His opponent became casual, thinking that the game would win itself and before long there was a stalemate at the board. The tears had now dried up and the other lad shoved the pieces across the board on the brink of his own tears. I reminded them that there's always another game and they cheered up, but I was impressed with their desire to want to win. Don't tell me that chess is a quiet, calm game for geeks. It is for gladiators! Wassail!



This position is from the game Fidlow-Felice New Jersey 1972. Black seems to have everything under control, but does he? Showing that chess is a truly beautiful game, white can give checkmate in four moves. How? Try solving it without the use of a computer.

The first correct answer drawn wins a chess book donated by Chess & Bridge, London.

Send your answers to me at carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk please.

The answer to November's problem was 19.Bd6+ Re7 20.Rxg7 Qxd6 21.Rxg8+ resigns. The winner will be announced. October's winner was Jennifer Higgs from DE&S.

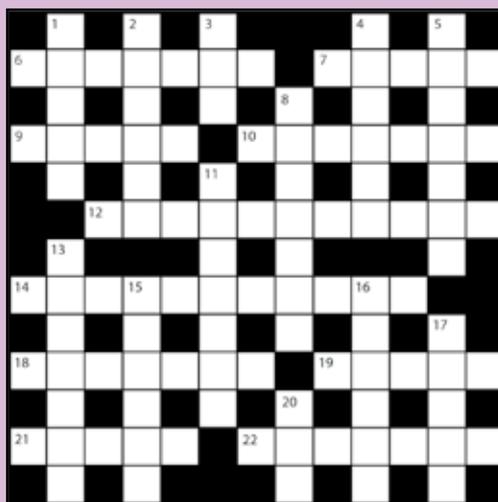
TOPICAL CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 6. See 4 Down
- 7. Afghanistan's capital city (5)
- 9. First appearance for a football team (5)
- 10. Small but delicious crustaceans! (7)
- 12. William Shakespeare, Arthur Miller and Harold Pinter (11)
- 14. See 20 Down
- 18. View or judgement on something (7)
- 19. See 2 Down
- 21. Cowell, the television judge (5)
- 22. Mythological bird which rises from the ashes (7)

DOWN

- 1. Main character in the movie *The Little Mermaid* (5)
- 2. And 19 Across. In his seventeenth century diary, he describes events such as the Great Plague and the Fire of London (6,5)
- 3. *Mr Blue* _____, a hit single for the



- Electric Light Orchestra (3)
- 4. And 6 Across. 2013 movie about the making of *Mary Poppins* (6,2,5)
- 5. Kermit the Frog, Miss Piggy and Fozzie Bear (7)
- 8. And 13 Down. Comedy star of silent movies who created the figure of *The Tramp* (7,7)
- 11. Physical feature indicating a medical

- condition (7)
- 13. See 8 Down
- 15. City which hosted the 2012 Olympic Games (6)
- 16. Its Roman numeral is XI (6)
- 17. Minogue, the pop princess (5)
- 20. And 14 Across. Country devastated by Typhoon Haiyan in November 2013 (3,11)

SOLUTION (NO PEEKING)

- Down**
- 1. Ariel 2. Samuel
 - 3. Sky 4. Saving 5. Muppets
 - 8. Charlie 11. Symptom
 - 13. Chaplin 15. London
 - 16. Eleven 17. Kylie
 - 20. The
- Across**
- 6. Mr Banks 7. Kabul
 - 9. Debut 10. Shrimps
 - 12. Playwrights 14. Philippines
 - 18. Opinion 19. Peps
 - 21. Simon 22. Phoenix

MOTOR MAGIC

Speeding to a DVD player near you



The No1 box office smash *Rush* is racing to Blu-ray and DVD this January. Directed by Ron Howard and starring Chris Hemsworth, Daniel Brühl and Olivia Wilde, *Rush* won universal acclaim on release.

Set against the sexy, golden age of Formula 1 racing, *Rush* is based on the true story of one of competitive sport's great rivalries. The charismatic Brit driver James Hunt (Hemsworth) competes against the methodical, brilliant Niki Lauda (Brühl) to be top dog in a world where one wrong decision can ultimately lead to death. Focusing on the now legendary 1976

Formula 1 season, *Rush* sharply contrasts the drivers' personal styles as both put their all into winning in a world that doesn't allow for margin of error.

Visually stunning, hugely entertaining, and almost unbearably tense, *Rush* is a blistering thriller in its own right, even without an interest in motor racing. So fasten your seatbelt and get ready to experience a *Rush* like no other.

Rush is out on Blu-ray and DVD on 27 January 2014 from studio canal.



PRIZE
We've got five copies of the smash-hit film *Rush* up for grabs

TO WIN

Email your name, address and telephone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk by 20 January 2014. Don't forget to enter *Rush* in the subject line. Good luck!

PRIZE
Defence Focus has a two night break in Torquay waiting for one reader



TORQUAY TREAT

One lucky reader will win two nights in Torquay

Melba House Hotel is an elegant Victorian villa situated in the beautiful English Riviera town of Torquay. It has a tranquil atmosphere, and is the ideal place to relax, whether you're on holiday or business. Just a short stroll from the town centre, seafront and the Riviera International Conference Centre, it's handy convenient too.

The hotel terrace captures the afternoon sunshine and is a pleasant place to relax after a day out, with uninterrupted

views of cricket or rugby matches opposite the hotel, or simply unwind with a drink and watch the world go by.

With plenty to do locally, Torquay Golf Club is just over two miles away and tourists will love visiting South Devon's beautiful bay that boasts three major shopping centres: Fleet Walk, Union Square, and, further afield, The Willows, a huge out-of-town shopping centre. Vicki Aslan, a former member of MOD, owns Melba House Hotel,

which was recently refurbished to a high standard. Vicki is also keen to offer a 10 per cent discount to all members of the Armed Forces and civil servants. Prices start from £76 for a superior double room in high season (or £71 low season) and includes full English breakfast. Regular doubles are £71/£66.

Either book online at www.melbahouse.co.uk or call 01803 213167.

TO WIN

Email your name, address and phone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk by 20 January 2014. Don't forget to enter *Torquay* in the subject line.

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