

Defence**Focus**

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PUS JON THOMPSON

A YEAR IN THE JOB p8



TRUE GRIT

The Desert Rats take over for Herrick 19



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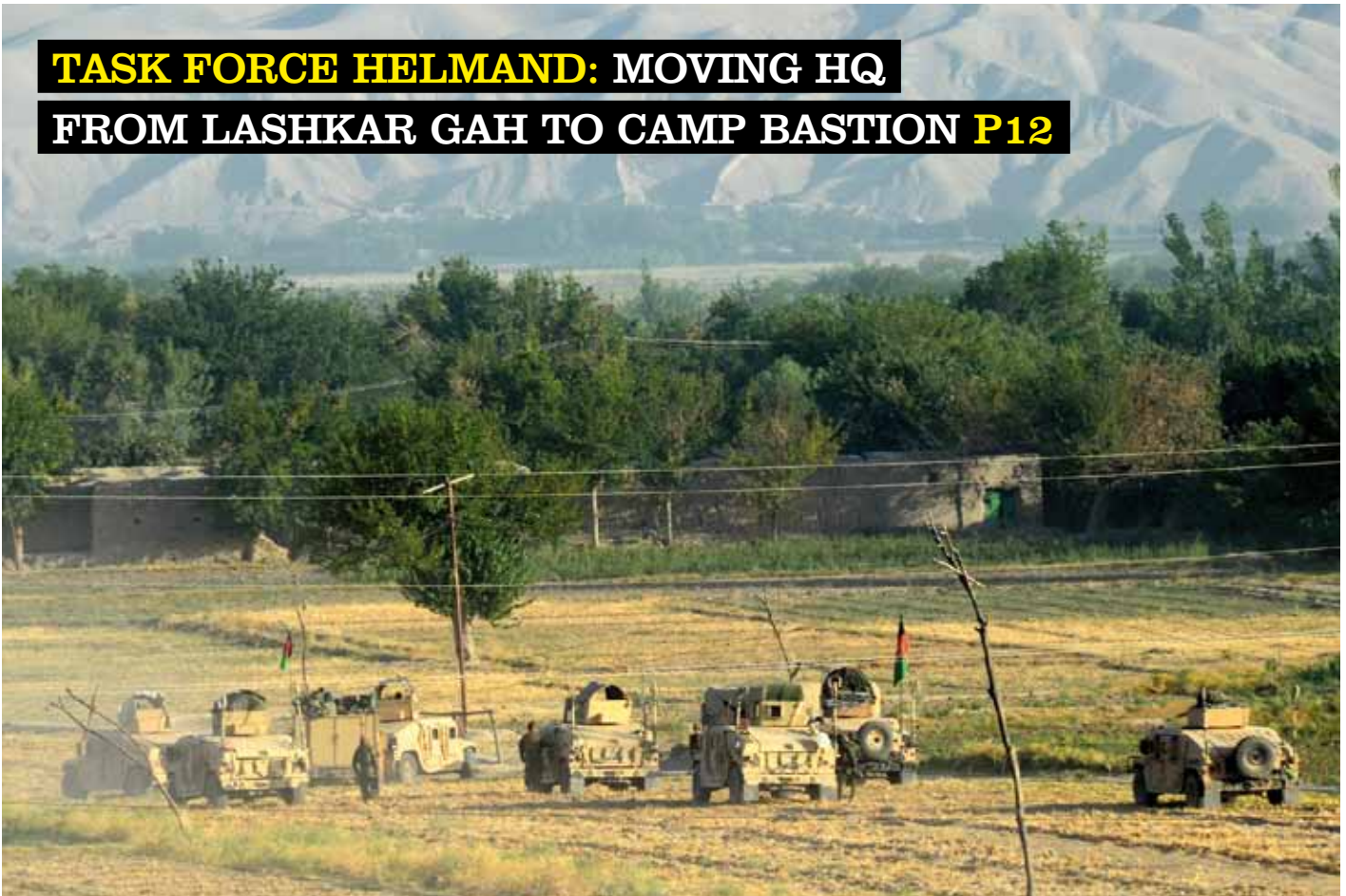
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Picture: Cpl Mike O'Neill RLC LBIPP



EDITOR'S NOTE

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Level 1 Zone C
MOD, Main Building
Whitehall
London SW1A 2HB
General enquiries: 020 721 8 1320

EDITOR: Fiona Simpson
Tel: 020 721 8 3949
email: fiona.simpson102@mod.uk

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Ian Carr
Tel: 020 721 8 2825
email: ian_carr@dmc.mod.uk

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Tristan Kelly
Tel: 020 721 8 4252
email: tristan.kelly569@mod.uk

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Leigh Hamilton
Tel: 020 721 8 5988
email: leigh.hamilton933@mod.uk

ASSISTANT EDITOR: Lorraine McBride
Tel: 020 721 8 2341
email: lorraine_mcbride@dmc.mod.uk

ART EDITOR: Mark Eagle
Tel: 020 721 8 3658
email: designer_defencefocus@dmc.mod.uk

DISTRIBUTION AND SUPPORT: Shell Daruwala
Tel: 020 721 8 1320
email: shell.daruwala932@mod.uk

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FIONA SIMPSON



The focus for *Focus* this month is definitely Afghanistan. With the Desert Rats poised to take over the reins in Camp Bastion from 1st Mechanized Brigade, it seems like a good time to take stock and look at what the focus is for operations in Afghanistan.

Defence Focus's roving reporter Ian Carr has just got back from his annual deployment and his metaphorical story sack is full to the brim with tales from the sand.

Ian was one of the first journalists to see the influence the UK Armed Forces have had on the Afghan National Army Officer Academy which opens its doors to the first set of new recruits in October.

Ian also caught up with the most senior civil servant in Helmand, Catriona Laing, as she was coming to the end of her 18-month tour, to find out how much has changed and what her thoughts are about the region she is leaving.

There's also a look at the logistics of the UK HQ move to Camp Bastion, as the whole kit and caboodle upped sticks and said goodbye to Lashkar Gah.

This month we are saying some goodbyes of our own (sniff, sniff). We no longer have a doctor in the house so it's goodbye and thank you to Nick Imm who writes his 104th and final health column after 11 years with the magazine.

And finally, a fond farewell to Assistant Editor Tristan Kelly. You can read his excellent interview with PUS Jon Thompson on page 8. Tristan leaves us after four years for pastures new at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. They won't love you like we love you, you know!

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DESERT RATS BLOW MEDIA AWAY

7TH ARMoured BRIGADE DISPLAY THEIR SKILLS PRIOR TO DEPLOYING TO AFGHANISTAN WRITES IAN CARR

It is nearly time for the Desert Rats to return to the desert. Although, this time, the desert that the famous 7th Armoured Brigade will be heading to is in Helmand province where they will be taking over the role of Task Force Helmand (TFH).

Their deployment on Op Herrick 19 will see personnel from all three Services working closely with 3/215 Brigade of the Afghan National Army.

And, as is the norm, the media were invited to see some of the skills that the Rats have honed over an extensive period of pre-deployment training.

Media days tend to illustrate the main role that the troops will be playing during their tour. Not long ago the event would have had a dramatic pyrotechnic theme as troops displayed their patrolling and soldiering skills; helicopters would worry their way into contested areas to pick up the wounded. The media day for Herrick 18 on a snow-swept Salisbury Plain focused on troops working with the Afghan Army and Police, advising and mentoring them and helping them to develop their skills. On this occasion, the main event was the drawdown of a forward patrol base, which will be an important feature of Herrick 19.

Success has been seen in transferring responsibility for security to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the development of public trust in their government. This has meant that the current Task Force has been able to press ahead with disengagement and to close those bases for which there is no longer any operational need.

"I fully expect that this process will continue," said Brigade Commander Brigadier James Woodham. "As a result the force that I deploy with will be smaller. As I take over, the force numbers will be about 6,000, falling to 5,200 by the end of the year."

Brigadier Woodham said that he expected Herrick 19 would see the ANSF continuing to develop and that TFH would work with them only when required,

with the focus being on increasing their independence and sustainability. "I fully expect in my time to conclude the process of closing and transferring the UK's bases in Helmand. And as this process takes place we will be able to redeploy more of our people and equipment back to the UK and to Germany."

Which is why the showpiece of the day was the breaking down of a patrol base. Of course, in itself this is nothing new. British troops have been breaking down bases for generations. But, while in years gone by the field guns and equipment would have been moved out on horseback, today it was an

upgraded Chinook Mk4 helicopter. It took the strain of lifting a 105mm light gun, while a demountable rack offload and pickup system (a big army lorry) hauled away the more standard items. An Apache attack helicopter provided air cover while an outer ring of Ridgback armoured vehicles and an inner platoon of soldiers held the ground secure while sappers dismantled a watchtower.

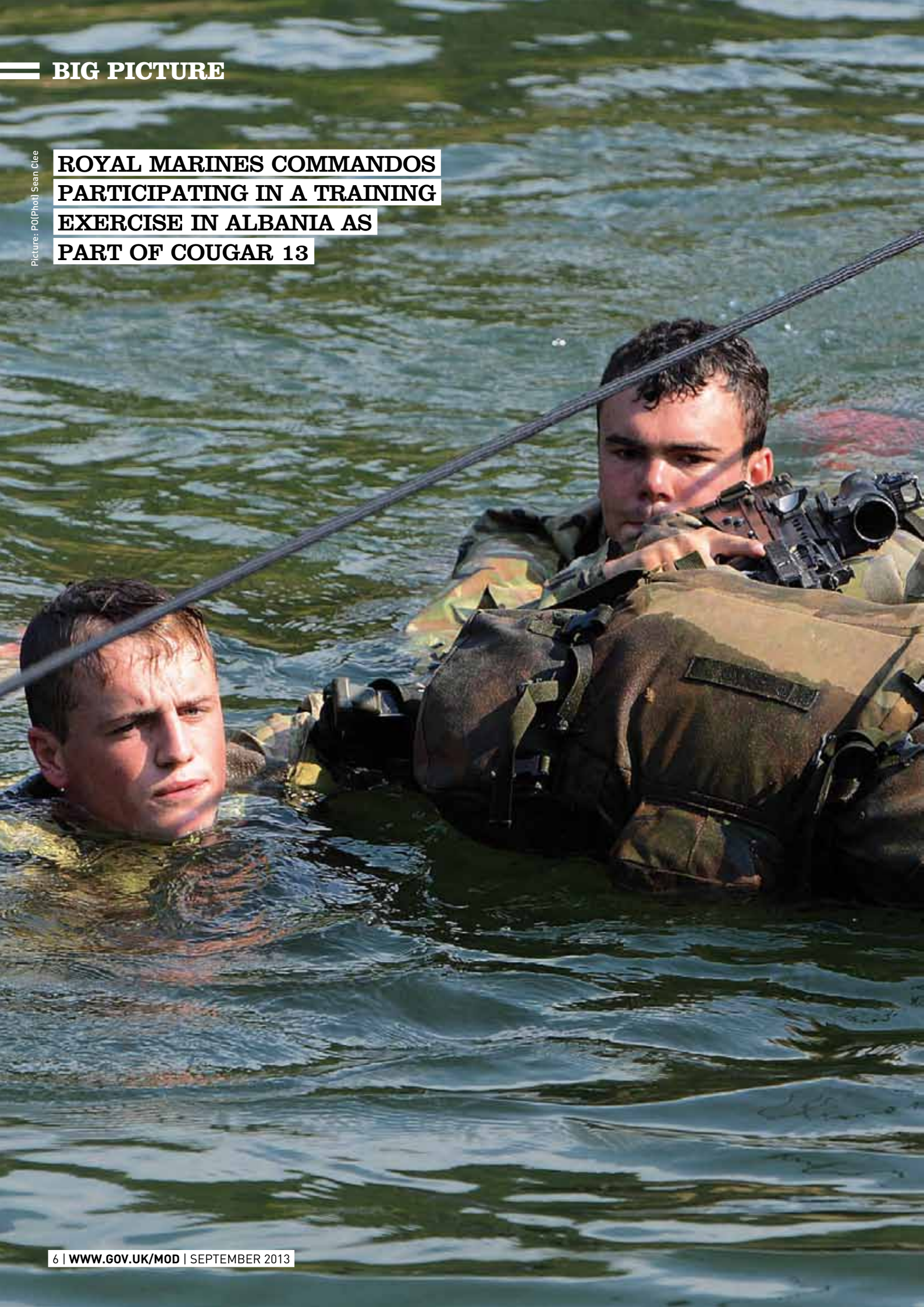
It was an important reminder that, while this tour for UK troops will be less kinetic and more advisory than in the past, basic soldiering skills must nevertheless be maintained to the highest level. **DP**



Picture: Richard Watt

Picture: P0[Phot] Sean Clea

**ROYAL MARINES COMMANDOS
PARTICIPATING IN A TRAINING
EXERCISE IN ALBANIA AS
PART OF COUGAR 13**





“THIS IS TOUGH STUFF”

A GROWN-UP CHAT WITH PERMANENT SECRETARY JON THOMPSON TO MARK HIS FIRST YEAR IN POST

Jon Thompson has been in post as Permanent Secretary for a year, so *Defence Focus* thought it would be a good time to catch up with MOD's top civil servant to find out what has been achieved and what challenges lie ahead.

One thing that he focused on the last time he spoke to us was the need to stabilise the Department, so this seems a good place to start; has this been achieved? Jon gets straight to the point: “No,” he says with a laugh. “We do need to stabilise the Department at some stage but there is still a vast amount of things going on.”

And indeed there are. Jon, turning to a wall chart, explains that there are six main themes occupying his time. These cover outputs such as Afghanistan, workforce reform, transforming the organisation, communications, IT systems and financial resources. It's a hefty inbox, and one that PUS says is tying him down to Main Building more than he would wish.

“I am still getting out and about but I would like to do more,” he says. “You learn what the challenges that people face are. One of the difficulties of working in Main Building is you get lots of pieces of paper that say ‘this is a problem that manifests itself like this’ but unless you can actually see poor office accommodation or grade four Service living accommodation it is a kind of detached view.”

ENGAGING WITH STAFF

Perhaps with this in mind, PUS has been keen to use his blog on the Defence Intranet to act as a forum for debate and a way to get messages across directly. While he concedes that it does attract some very negative comments he says that they are all read and summarised for him and he reads as many as he can himself. So what does he get from it?

“I think I'm learning a lot about what people's genuine frustrations are with the organisation, and a lot of them are focused on people and reward or pay and pensions, and I do understand the frustrations.”

PUS is clear on the reasons why some are frustrated, stating three years

of pay restraint, increasing pension contributions and changes to terms and conditions, before conceding that it is likely to continue for another couple of years.

“Some things we've done have been controversial, like performance management. But people can't say that we're not tackling the things that need addressing in the areas where I can do something. Pay and pensions are completely out of our control.”

But he sees a brighter future ahead and feels this hasn't been adequately communicated. “I don't think we've been clear enough about where we are going as an organisation, so that people might believe that if they stick with us then actually there are better prospects ahead. There will be a push so that people understand where this journey is taking us to.”

DELEGATION IS THE KEY

One of the key steps in that journey has been the move to increased delegation; something that Jon is determined should progress further.

“You can't run an organisation this big from the Head Office; it's just completely bonkers,” he says. “You have to delegate because the best people to run the Army are the Army board. That is my absolute belief. We have just delegated decisions of up to £100m of budget on the equipment side and we will be looking to increase that in time.”

He says that the next big challenge will be to find out how to increase delegation further down within TLBs. “How does it penetrate down the Army or should it penetrate down the Army or the Navy or DIO or whatever? That I think is the next question, but we have made a significant shift from here in Main Building to the front line commands.”

That increased delegation is of course laid down in the New Operating Model, which came into effect in April. So what is the verdict so far?

“Well, so far so good,” he says. “SoFoS, CDS and I were talking about a

particular area that seems to be quite inefficient and very fragmented across TLBs, so what we have done is gone back to TLB holders to say ‘you have responsibility, we have these questions, tell us what you think the answers are’, instead of intervening from the centre.”

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Jon also says that holding to account, which he describes as a kind of grown-up conversation between all seven of the TLBs and the Director General Finance, is going well too.

“We are having an adult-to-adult conversation about responsibility and who has to do what,” he says. “So, so far so good, but I'm also a realist and this is tough stuff; we've made some big changes which is great but I think it will take three or four years to really settle down.”

Holding to account is something Jon wants to see more of at all levels and is clear that all managers, from top to bottom, must step up and have those “difficult conversations” with staff as part of the new performance management process for civilians.

“If you are achieving there will be financial reward,” he says. “But if you are in the lower end group then my sense is you need some help to get out of that group and perform better, and that will be our initial mindset: what sort of help do you need to improve?”

PUS is adamant that the job holder has to take some responsibility for this and the line manager has to have that conversation and be honest about underachievement. “Sometimes it is uncomfortable having those conversations,” he says. “But I have to sit in here and have it with director generals, and sometimes directors and deputy directors, so why can't everyone in a line management position do it?”

He also feels that leaders need to step up and follow his example when it comes to communication.

“It is incumbent on leaders to better communicate what we are trying to do and how that can influence the

**PUS's push: a year on nothing
has dituted Jon Thompson's
ambition to transform MOD**





Hot seat: Jon Thompson on a Chinook in Afghanistan

team.” To this end he says the department has been doing a lot of work with the Senior Civil Service in particular on their responsibility as leaders in communicating.

“We have tried to give them tools to do that. It can’t just be all about me and director generals; it has got to penetrate further down the organisation.”

ANNOYING

One thing PUS certainly has had no problem communicating is his frustration with the MOD IT systems.

“I don’t think it is getting better,” he states bluntly. “It’s just annoying” However, before everyone gets too depressed, he does assure us that they have got “to the heart of the problem”, that being the interface between the infrastructure and the often complicated applications that run on it.

So the infrastructure, i.e. DII, is it getting any better? “Well, I can’t talk to any more people about it,” he says. “All

the staff I talk to about it who have some responsibility for this are wrestling with the problem and have got some plans to try and do something about it, but it is too slow for me, it’s not moving fast enough.” But he has a message: “I will damn well do something in my tenure as Permanent Secretary about the infrastructure on DII,” he insists.

On IT applications, PUS blames decades of underinvestment on information systems and devilishly complicated programmes.

“Some of the stock systems we have got were put in in the 1970s,” he says.

“We have already committed £1bn to changing stock and logistic systems. That is serious money and it takes a long time to sort out decades of underinvestment. We are trying to do it but it is just frustratingly slow.”

BUST BUREAUCRACY

It seems the life of a PUS involves dealing with frustrations, and into that bag must

go bureaucracy, something Jon has stated he wishes to reduce as much as possible.

“I don’t think having all of this corporate policy is empowering the organisation,” he says. “We have made it an art form.”

“There is a long way to go but we will continue to champion this as much as possible. I think there could be a radical reduction in it and we have removed some of those frustrating controls, but I think there are still too many.”

So from decreasing bureaucracy to solving IT bugbears and improving leadership – not to mention a shift from operations to contingency, a looming SDSR and the need to recruit thousands of new Reserves, there is still clearly a lot of change ahead for the Department and the workload for PUS doesn’t look to be easing any time soon. So that ambition of stabilising the Department?

“To be fair I think it was a kind of medium-term ambition,” he said with a wry smile. **DP**



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TIME TO GO

“RELOCATING TASK FORCE HELMAND’S HQ WAS LIKE MOVING HEATHROW AIRPORT WITH THE PLANES STILL LANDING” REPORT BY IAN CARR AT CAMP BASTION

People choose to move for all sorts of reasons. Getting fed up with the journey to work, wanting a better house or a change of job. And then there comes that point in every family’s life when a coming of age means it is time for the young to fly the nest.

You might say that many of these reasons were behind the move of Task Force Helmand HQ from Lashkar Gah to Camp Bastion. But with the twist that in this case it was the ones ready to make their own way in the world, the citizens of Lashkar Gah, who stayed put.

Without a packing case in sight, over a brew in his new HQ in Camp Bastion, Commander TFH Brigadier Rupert Jones told *Defence Focus*: “The move was significant. The Task Force HQ had

been at Lashkar Gah for more than seven years. From there the British Army had commanded and controlled a great many feats of arms. Moving reflects the changing nature of the campaign. The Afghans are increasingly in the lead. They have shown that day-in and day-out they are capable of running security in central Helmand. It is time for us to step back. And besides, moving here puts us closer to the Afghan 3/215 Brigade at Shorabak.”

And as far as the old neighbours in Lashkar Gah are concerned, if the trends shown in the attitude surveys are anything to go by, they don’t seem that bothered that the Brits have gone. They are too busy going about their business.

“ISAF are not important to the people in Helmand anymore, and that’s as it should be,” said Brigadier Jones. “We probably play a slightly more significant role than their polling would suggest, but I see it as

positive that they see us as irrelevant to their security. It’s slightly more relevant to the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF), but I don’t think they are concerned either that we’ve moved our HQ.”

A sensitive type might feel a little hurt by that. Is that how the Brigadier felt? “Quite the reverse. It’s excellent. It’s a vindication of all the work that we’ve done over the years. Actually if it had been different that would have been hurtful. No country likes foreign troops on its soil but the Afghan Government and the ANSF have understood why it was important to have ISAF here. But it is time for us to step back, and they are ready for that.”

Two people concerned about it being a success were Major Dan Ashton, who project managed the move, and Major Liz Byfield, OC of 215 Signal Squadron. These were the people that everyone would be looking at if the phones, computers and comms links didn’t work.

“I’m no historian, but I’d be surprised if anyone could come up with an example of a more complicated, more technical move of an HQ in the British Army when



Move it: headquarters staff from 1 Mechanized Brigade arrive at their new home in Camp Bastion

on operations than this one," said the Brigadier. No pressure then.

Ignore for a moment the complexity of theatre operations, with international agencies contacting the HQ round the clock. Leave aside the fact that as the work of TFH couldn't be interrupted, two HQs, one at either end, would have to run in parallel. But think about this little problem, because of the need to keep things going during operations, for seven years people at Lash have been forced to lash things together.

As the HQ evolved and new systems were added, for all the right reasons and with the words 'we're on ops, just make it happen' ringing in their ears, people have been doing whatever was necessary. How do you unravel that ball of wool?

Major Byfield puts it more elegantly than that. "Some clever stuff had been put in by previous Signal Squadrons. But there wasn't a single document that told us everything that was there. Tactical systems could be a problem because you would see an antenna on top of a building or a piece of equipment and then have to try to work out what it was connected to and who owned it." It didn't help that in the old HQ there was a lot of cabling that wasn't connected to anything as it had been simpler and quicker at the time for the people installing things just to put new cables over the top.

So that was the first task, to document and map who was using what, to do what, and how it was all connected. In terms of the core equipment alone, such as phones and computer monitors, there were more than 1,400 items. As Joint Force Communications and Information Systems were responsible for most of these, they did the lion's share of installation. But then there were the specialist systems. "It meant spending a lot of time talking to people," said Major Byfield. "We asked them, what do you use that for? Who else is connected to it that you know of? Then we had to track it all down and find out who owned it."

Major Ashton was having no easy time either. "I had to think about everything from medical care to where are we going to get our food, to bed spaces, to workstations for 250 people, the infrastructure of the new building, organising new builds and ordering furniture, kit and even bricks – it was like trying to move Heathrow Airport with the planes still landing," he said.

So he didn't overlook anything, Major Ashton relied on mind maps, and took to keeping a notebook at the side of his bed as lists of things that still needed doing kept him awake till the small hours.

But working all those 20-hour days paid off. When the move happened and the conveyor belt of personnel arrived and sat at their workstations and switched on



their computers, Major Byfield had nothing more to say than "oh, it's done. Within 60 hours the level of faults being reported was comparable to those in Lashkar Gah during a normal day," which I think is quite impressive," said Major Ashton.

But both officers are swift to acknowledge that without the support of some incredible people who got behind the project from the start, none of this would have gone as smoothly as it did. Some of these unsung heroes were the technical professionals like Warrant Officer Searle, Major Byfield's foreman of signals, who had to interpret the requirement specifications that Major Byfield sent him and scour Bastion to sort out solutions. Some were talented individuals like the Royal Navy reservist who, unbidden, wrote

a programme that enabled the movement of 86,000 documents without losing their references or the links on each page. And then there were the metalsmiths who made brackets for antennas and stands for pieces of critical equipment.

"I've been propped up all the way by some incredible men and women. Staggering. It just makes my mind boggle," said Major Ashton.

And spare a thought for someone else whose mind ended up boggling. Lance Corporal Gareth Hulin was one of the team pulled in to help. He had the unenviable task of putting together 200 tables and 150 flatpack desks in the new HQ.

So was this something that he was good at? "Let's just say by the 130th one I'd got good at it!" he said. **DF**



Picture: Sergeant Barry Pope RLC



LEADING AT THE FRONT

BRITISH TROOPS ARE BRINGING THE SANDHURST ETHOS TO THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY OFFICER ACADEMY IN KABUL. REPORT BY IAN CARR

Summer in Kabul. A gunmetal grey sky threatens yet more rain, perhaps even another sudden hailstorm like the one that pounded the city yesterday. Although it is August, there are still patches of snow along the mountain range that forms the rim of the bowl in which Kabul sits. It is a dramatic landscape.

We have come to Qargha, roughly 14km to the west of the city and 1,900m above sea level, to visit the Afghan National Army's Officer Academy. As we drive up the track inside the 17.2-kilometre-long perimeter fence to a place where we can look down on the new build, we pass the wreckage of previous conflicts. Tangled Soviet tanks rust in heaps as testament to decades of fighting. Here, many great Afghan leaders

have planned and fought foreign foes. With this military provenance it seems right to build the academy here.

"Qargha has tremendous historical significance for the Afghans," Lieutenant Colonel Grahame Hyland, the 1st Kandak Commander's mentor told *Defence Focus*. "There has always been an Afghan Army based here since before the Soviet invasion of 1979. It is a very meaningful place."

When the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan committed to building an academy to produce ethical and professional young warrior leaders, General Karimi, the Afghan Chief of the General Staff, became the driving force behind the project.

Being himself a product of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, the General

needed no convincing that the famous British institution was the model they needed to follow to identify and develop their own talented young officers.

"He likes the way the Brits go about their business," said Colonel Hyland. "He appreciates the importance of the constant theme of leadership running throughout the 42-week course. He likes the way we use senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and warrant officers to instruct our young officers. He sees the benefit of that and how it will help them to become a more professional army to face the challenges of the future."

For more than a year the UK has led the NATO Training Mission to support the Afghan National Army to develop their academy. From establishing how they will



Wider view: the Afghan National Army Officer Academy at Qargha in Kabul sits inside a 17km perimeter fence



Point duty: Captain Aaron Florence explains how Afghan National Army officer selection works

they will be learning about the Afghans' defence of Herat. When it comes to studying the elements of attacking battles they could look at the Battle of Maiwand and identify what tactics their predecessors employed that helped them to annihilate us. And instead of looking at Wellington's leadership qualities – what relevance has he to an Afghan cadet? – they could look at Shah Massoud's leadership credentials.

How did he manage to hold the Panjshir Valley against the Russians? Dr Duncan Anderson, our war studies expert from Sandhurst, is mentoring his counterpart here. What better example can there be to set for junior officers?"

Along the way, British troops have been mentoring their Afghan counterparts, advising them on manpower, selecting the best candidates, building up kit, developing the course and mastering the coaching and mentoring skills that they will need to teach it, and how they will assess the students.

"On a personal level mentoring is a tricky thing to explain," said Colonel Hyland. "It is unique to the person you are mentoring and to the mentors themselves.

"For me it's about making sure that the kandak commander understands the ramifications of every decision he makes. It's about helping him to see the broader picture, not just the minutiae of delivering the first kandak through the academy but also how it is going to affect the Afghan Army in future. But it is also about humility and understanding that, just because you do something in a certain way, it isn't necessarily the only way it can be done."

Another academy mentor is Captain Aaron Florence. His tour has been all about bedding in the Afghan Army's officer

selection process to recruit the best intake of students for the academy. "We trained the selectors up to the first board which was on 22 June. Altogether there will be 22 selection boards, each of which is three days long. We will select 272 from 998 candidates," said Captain Florence. It's a revolutionary concept for the Afghans, but it is one that they have embraced. So how does this crucial stage work?

Candidates who want to become an officer go to an Afghan equivalent of a recruiting office, where they are sifted, checked against criminal records and biometrically tested.

Those who pass through this filter are then sent to the academy to undergo the selection boards. "We put them through a number of tests," said Captain Florence. "They have to complete an obstacle course, and a physical fitness test – press-ups, a mile-and-a-half run, sit-ups, as many as they can do in two minutes."

They also have to face a general knowledge test – answering questions



Drills and skills: Warrant Officer Peter Witkowski, the academy's RSM

identify and select potential officers for the course, to what the syllabus content will be and how the training will be delivered.

Afghan junior and senior officers and politicians have paid many visits to the UK to see for themselves why we have become internationally recognised in the field of army officer training.

Of course it is nice to be admired, but the purpose of these trips was to help the Afghans to develop their own kind of academy. To produce the quality junior leaders they needed in a way that would make sense to them using methods and examples that would be Afghan-led.

Colonel Hyland offered an illustration of what this means. "For example, when the students are looking at defensive battles in the war studies part of the course,



Highway code: life in Kabul during a vehicle patrol back to Camp Souter from Qargha

such as, who was the first Afghan in space? Which countries border Afghanistan? And they are quizzed on simple current affairs.

Other tests include a board interview, writing a short essay and delivering a short talk on something of their choosing – usually something about their village or their province. But because the point is to produce second lieutenants, a weighting is put on the importance of passing the physical. “This academy is about producing young leaders. It’s no use if they are not physically capable of leading men into battle,” said Captain Florence.

When the candidates arrive they are given a name and a number. For the next 48 hours this will be their identity. This is done to make as sure as possible that when the selectors make their judgements they are based on merit rather than on the possibility that it is a general’s son or daughter that is standing in front of them.

A smart appearance is not one of the criteria that will necessarily sway the board. Performance rather than a posh shirt is what matters. “We do give advice on what sort of clothing candidates should bring, such as don’t forget your trainers for example,” said Captain Florence, “things that we might take for granted, but in fact some candidates just might not have things like that. We’ve had some guys that have come along with just the clothes they stand up in, and then they’ve done the physical test and smashed it. One guy, Red 3, I’ll always remember him, only had flip flops,

so he ran his physical fitness test barefoot – and he came first.”

Since the selections began, Captain Florence has been increasingly able to lift his hand off the tiller. At first he used to be there all the time, now he need only be there at the beginning of the day to make sure everything is running smoothly.

Working with those who will be responsible for instilling the basic soldiering skills that a young officer needs to master has been Warrant Officer Peter Witkowski of 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

As well as helping his opposite


numbers work out how they are going to get the drills and skills inside the heads of their students, WO Witkowski has had the tough job of developing the instructors’ skills. It is a challenge that has taken the British Army generations to perfect.

No where else in the world will you find an NCO who can bark at a young officer and deliver the epithet “Sir” like a cosh to the back of the head. WO Witkowski sees it as no joke. “It’s a very embryonic stage for them. Their NCO-equivalents are not held in the same regard as in our structure.

“If I say something I tend to be listened to, our structures in the British Army are set up that way. There is an emphasis on the NCO providing the officer cadet with instruction. The Afghan officer corps has to learn to hand over that responsibility. It’s a big ask.”

When at full strength, each intake will have 350 students. But for the first two there will be just 270 to allow room to develop the course and manage any initial teething troubles. By September next year each intake will also have a cadre of 90 females.

As the date for the first course nears the team are hoping for good weather.

“We were lucky this winter, it was quite mild. But we can get snow here from November through to March. Inevitably that would have an impact on the training,” said Colonel Hyland. “But we’ll cope, they’ll still be able to train because they will be issued the kit they need.” Good news indeed for candidate Red 3. 



Pipe down: contractors building in the British support camp at the academy

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Breakdown Cover



LOCKING IN THE GAINS

NEARING THE END OF HER 18-MONTH TOUR, CATRIONA LAING, HELMAND PROVINCE HEAD OF MISSION, BASED AT LASHKAR GAH, MEETS IAN CARR

A lot has changed in central Helmand province in a relatively short space of time, especially in the central valley region around Lashkar Gah, home to 80 per cent of the population.

Today, from an Afghan's perspective, security is less of an issue than prices at the market. Unemployment runs at an enviable four per cent, there are girls in schools, health centres for the sick and elected representatives in government. How has this happened, and perhaps more importantly, will it endure?

GAINS

Head of Mission, and the most senior civil servant in Helmand, Catriona Laing, is convinced that it will. "Our strap line is locking in the gains we've made," she told *Defence Focus*. Those gains, she explains, stem from three central priorities. Firstly, supporting the spread of government influence throughout Helmand province. Secondly, making the instruments of government accountable to the people. And finally, demonstrating that proper budgeting and financial planning mean the population can see tangible benefits from supporting the government at the provincial and at the district levels.

Centuries of experience have taught the Afghans to be talented pragmatists. Ingrained is the knowledge that survival depends on having a heightened appreciation of who holds the real power

and then making sure you are on their side.

The question they face every day is, who has the most influence over my life? For a long time the brutal answer was the Taliban. But all they offered was a harsh system of justice. Then it was ISAF, offering security and dollars for irrigation ditches in exchange for the hearts and minds of the population.

The challenge facing Catriona and her team was convincing the local population that the real answer to that question was 'actually, it's you, through your government and your own security forces'. But for that message to stick, Catriona was well aware that the government had to be trusted, and it had to deliver.

"When I started this job I knew we were entering a complex phase and that the transition of authority and responsibility to local institutions for things like security and development would be accelerating," said Catriona. "We were coming to a point where we would have to narrow our focus to only mission-critical outcomes."

HELMAND PLAN

So the first task Catriona set herself was to review the Helmand plan, a route map that was produced to establish a sustainable

future for the province.

"It was a useful document, it covered pretty much everything from infrastructure to governance, but it wasn't very good in terms of prioritisation," said Catriona.

Reviewing the plan meant that she could set her team to work on those things that would make a difference, ensuring the Afghans have a self-sustainable future. "It was clear that everything we did would have to boost the legitimacy of the government and boost the people's trust in it." Which set a curious guideline for the team. If as a result of their efforts local people believed they were doing a good job, then they had failed in their objective. It was the government's legitimacy that needed boosting, not theirs.

When the Helmand plan was in its infancy, redevelopment projects were effectively owned, prioritised and managed by coalition stabilisation teams. A huge amount was achieved; roads were built allowing the population to move their goods and services around but also physically connecting them to their government.

It was the start of a new way of living. With security in place and access to the decision-makers assured, the balance of power was shifting into the hands of the people. "Elected district councils have been very successful," said Catriona. "We have just had the second round of elections in Nad e Ali. This time more than 6,000 people voted. In the last election it was only 600."

And, despite personal risk and the fact that payments for officials have reduced from \$150 to just \$50 a month, there are also more people who want to stand for election. "It's a massive success story. It's Helmand's legacy as it is showing how local government can and should work, and it is shaping the national debate," said Catriona.

With checks and balances in place a sustainable equilibrium has been established. In Helmand there are three power bases, the District Chief of Police (DCOP), the governor and the elected council – effectively the tribal elders. True the elders have always been the voice of their communities, but now they have teeth because everyone in the game is locked in by formal systems which work because they

Picture: Senior Aircraftman Neil Chapman

Field craft: in Helmand province 90 per cent of the economy is based on agriculture

boost their legitimacy.

Take the role of the DCOP as an example. There was a time when, heading his own army of police, a DCOP could all too easily establish himself as a one-man justice system. Now the district council's justice sub-committees call the DCOP in every week to account for what he is doing. If they find he is not delivering, or doing something they find intolerable, they have the power to act.

TRIBAL SYSTEM

"There is a very complex tribal system that we can't hope to understand, but what we can do," said Catriona, "is to help set up the balancing systems so that no single point of power can become too powerful."

Now that the institutional mechanisms are in place and working, and with funding going directly into the Helmand budget, the government can demonstrate that they have the power to deliver the services and investments that the people demand.

And, the thinking goes, if it works here, then why not elsewhere, and not just spreading out to northern Helmand province but nationally too.

It is hoped that with the Afghan National

Security Forces successfully taking the lead during this year's summer fighting and pushing the security bubble northwards, and as the inhabitants of Musa Qal'ah and Kajaki see their southern neighbours enjoying improved standards of living, the desire to be a part of it will soon flourish.

CORRUPT

"It is hard for the Taliban to provide the same narrative as before, 'the government is corrupt, we can provide you with fair justice'," said Catriona. "It is clear that's not the case. The government functions normally, building and maintaining clinics, schools and roads. It will be increasingly hard for the Taliban to motivate fighters."

And if they do take a district centre, what then? "Without access to the government budget they can't do anything. Peoples' expectations are different now," said Catriona.

Ministries and donors in Kabul are interested in the integrated planning and budgeting system work in Helmand. The time is ripe to influence the debate as the Ministry of Finance is preparing its own proposal for the provincial budgeting in the next few months. Catriona is pushing

hard to ensure the Helmand model informs this work. The national government is by tradition very centralist. Kabul decides what each province will spend on things like education in Kandahar and Helmand.

"One of the arguments has been that the provinces can't be trusted and they are not developed enough to cope.

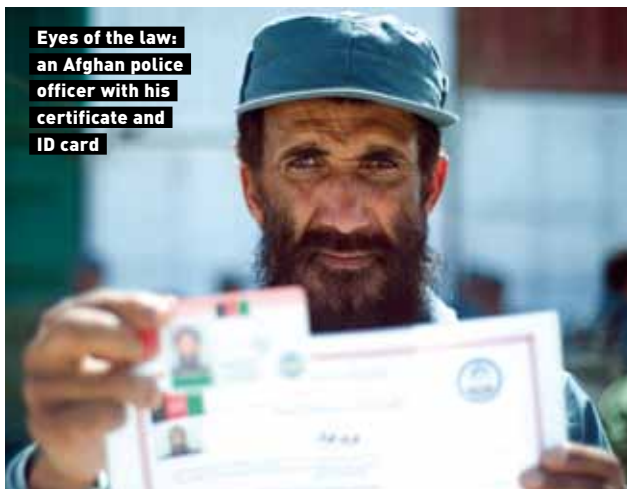
"But Helmand has proved that it is possible and desirable to trust the provinces. It means they can prioritise the projects that matter locally, and they have demonstrated that they are accountable and they scrutinise very firmly the progress of projects they have funded," said Catriona.

This, Catriona hopes, will be her legacy. Which has taken her by surprise. "I am now a big fan of localism," she confides. "I used to think, 'who's interested in local government? I do the big picture stuff!'"

"I knew Helmand would be fascinating. But it's been a surprise how important it is to understand the local dynamic and the impact of allowing local improvisation to flourish, and how important it is to make sure that success is fed back to the centre."

It seems that in central Helmand, change is catching. **DF**

Picture: Sergeant Russ Nolan RLC



Eyes of the law:
an Afghan police
officer with his
certificate and
ID card



Shared view: the Head of Mission chats
with Provincial Governor Naeem Baluch

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GURKHAS UP CLOSE

A RECENT EXHIBITION HAS CHARTED THE ROLE OF THE GURKHA BRIGADE IN MODERN WARFARE. REPORT BY LEIGH HAMILTON

With plans in full swing to create a smaller, integrated and more adaptable Army, the Gurkha Museum in Winchester recently created an exhibition dedicated to Army 2020.

'Planning for the new Army 2020' was on display in August and documented the role that Gurkha soldiers play in current operations and sat alongside the permanent exhibition which charts the 200-year history of the Gurkha Brigade.

Gurkha Museum curator Gavin Edgerley-Harris explained the rationale behind the Army 2020 exhibition: "There was a good opportunity with the Army 2020 review to demonstrate to the public what the structure of the current Army is likely to be and to demonstrate the varying roles of today's Gurkhas as part of today's Army.

"It's useful I think for museums that represent units currently serving in the British Army to be able to put on an exhibition to show the contemporary activities of that unit, not just the historical aspects from earlier in history."

Items on display included a mannequin depicting the high risk search role of the Queen's Gurkha Engineers which was dressed in full combat uniform and greeted visitors on their arrival. It was also complete with body armour and a metal detector which proved popular with younger members of the public.

Seeing these things up close for the first time can be an eye-opening experience. Being able to look at the detail of operational clothing can bring the non-military population a little closer to what being a member of the Armed Forces is like.


A section of the exhibition was dedicated to those who have fallen or have been injured on operations and featured medals and remembrance crosses. Gavin said: "We've tried to display and explain the significance of the gallantry awards that have been made to members of the brigade and also the sacrifice of Gurkha soldiers and those who have been injured in Afghanistan.

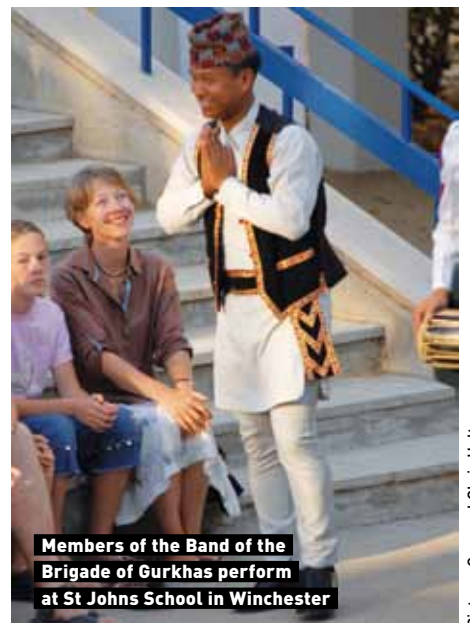
"I don't think people forget, but I don't think it hurts to remind people of the sacrifices that have been made and those who have suffered life-changing injuries."

An SA80 assault rifle and aids for training soldiers in the identification of IEDs, such as mine-marking kits, were included in the exhibition. There were also stands displaying information about the Gurkhas' role in Afghanistan and interactive elements allowed visitors to delve deeper into certain aspects such as training and a soldier's daily routine. The information was gleaned from all the serving units of the Gurkha Brigade.

Currently, there are over 70 personnel born in Nepal in Afghanistan. They are serving in individual roles including within the Theatre Logistics Group and the Camp Bastion Reception, Staging and Onward Integration training facility.

Images played a large role in the exhibition, with some depicting Service personnel in Afghanistan using the same type of metal detector as was on display, as well as images showing the Queen meeting Gurkha soldiers.

With such a rich history and having Chief of the General Staff General Sir Peter Wall as their Colonel Commandant, the Gurkha Brigade certainly has a lot to be proud of. 



Picture: Corporal Chris Halton

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Reservist soldiers
on exercise in Germany



Picture: Staff Sergeant Mark Nesbit RLC

IN RESERVE

PAUL LINCOLN IS MOD'S NEW RESERVES CHAMPION WHO IS PASSING HIS ENTHUSIASM ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION

Growing the Reserve Forces is one of the biggest challenges for MOD, writes Holly Smith. And not just for MOD but for the government as whole. Head of the Civil Service, Sir Bob Kerslake, has asked every Whitehall department to get behind this commitment and appoint a senior civil servant as a Reserves Champion. Ideally they will be serving members of the Reserve Forces or have experience of Service.

As champion for MOD, Paul Lincoln is far from reserved in sharing his enthusiasm for reservists. He joined through the University Officer Training Corps (UOTC) in 1992, beginning an impressive career spanning more than 21 years as a reservist in the infantry.

For Paul, who became a commissioned officer in 1994, joining the Reserves was a natural progression from being in the cadets at school. Aside

from the financial incentive, which was undeniably attractive to him as a student, the UOTC offered discipline and camaraderie similar to the cadets.

"I realised at university you could do something similar but with greater opportunities and challenges," he recalled.

Paul joined MOD in 1991, and was sponsored by the Department as a student engineer in the Defence Engineering and Science Group. As a reservist, he then spent a year as an armoured infantry platoon commander in the regular Army before rejoining MOD.

NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

However, Paul has trodden a diverse career path in Defence since then, navigating between higher education, deployment and his wider civil service responsibilities.

In his present position he works for Joint Forces Command, the self-dubbed

"new kid on the block" of MOD's Top Level Budgets. He is Director of Resources and Policy for this young organisation, set up 18 months ago. His responsibilities encompass running the budget, managing investment, long term manpower and capability planning, and day-to-day financial issues.

"I'm responsible for the civilian workforce and any significant policy issues which crop up across the command."

Unfazed by the breadth of his duties, he acknowledges that being a reservist has significantly added to his day job. Which is why Paul is well placed to be the Department's Reserves Champion. He is MOD's poster-boy of the benefits that being a reservist can give to an individual, and their employers.

You might think that the benefits are most relevant to MOD, especially those working in an area where the Reserves

have direct links to Defence. However, Paul argues the benefits reach far beyond mental and physical development and work at MOD.

"The advantages of reserve service apply much more widely to civil service work than people might give credit for," said Paul. "The current initiative to make Whitehall the exemplar employer of a growing number of reservists emphasises how they're an asset to the Civil Service."

KEEN TO CHAMPION

Paul is keen to champion the benefits to the individual in terms of the improved package available to those who take on the reserves challenge. A number of formal benefits are available to civil servants considering reserve service, including payment for training, a tax-free allowance for those who meet their annual training commitment, and a minimum of 10 days' special paid leave. And under the Armed Forces Pension Scheme, starting in 2015, reservists are eligible for a pension. Anything else?

Paul explained: "You get the benefits of leadership skills which the military are renowned for. Also the Armed Forces are a great place to find camaraderie, friendship and excellent social events. It's amazing when you take civilian friends to an Army social function, how impressed they often are."

As Reserves Champion, Paul is hoping to pass on his enthusiasm around Whitehall. As the most senior civil servant involved with the Reserves, he works to ensure HR systems are doing their best to support reservists, to drive pressing policy changes, to raise issues where they concern individual reservists, and to encourage more people to get involved.

"If I had a strap line, I'd talk about the challenge, the responsibility, the ethos of public service, the camaraderie, and the really great element of fun."

With his experience in both the Reserves and Civil Service, Paul argues for the importance of a large civil service component in the Reserves.

"There are two reasons behind this; first, we need to increase the size of the Reserve Forces, and second, that government should play its part in this drive. Particularly MOD, as we ought to be leading the way. Estimates at the moment say there are around 320 MOD civil servants who are reservists. I'd like to see that increase."

Paul is positive about managing the balance of a civil service career and reserve commitments. Drawing on his own story, he stresses it depends on how much time an individual is willing to commit to the Reserves.

"I spent a lot more time earlier in my

“ There are 320 MOD civil servants who are reservists ”

career within the Reserves, for example my year in the regular Army on a short service voluntary commission. Since then I've taken on several different roles, but they've all been significantly less time consuming than a normal day job."

As for adjusting between the two very different sides of his profession, particularly after operational deployments, Paul admits it is a very personal matter which varies with the individual; there is no panacea. The decompression policy sees all troops, reservists and civilians deployed on overseas operations spending 24 to 48 hours in Cyprus. Facilities include water sports, go-karting and social activities to help people ease back into normal life.

Outside Defence, Paul highlights

operations in both his civil service life and his reserve career. His first operation was in the Balkans in 1997 as an Army infantry platoon commander in 2nd Battalion The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. The knowledge he gained on operations proved valuable when he was later a project manager for creating accommodation and utilities during the Kosovo campaign.

On the civil service side, he spent time as a civilian policy political advisor in Baghdad in 2006/07.

"The skills I gained in the Reserves definitely helped me in that post," said Paul. "The same is true recently as the Command Secretary in PJHQ, where I was involved in the day-to-day running of all worldwide operations as the senior civilian advisor."

Paul recalls his most memorable experience on a reserve deployment as a platoon commander in the Balkans.

"We had several run-ins with local police chiefs who, not liking the fact that we were on their patch, started making death threats. I had to deal with that quite firmly, which included robust diplomacy. I think that sometimes people underestimate the diplomacy skills that are required as part of being a soldier or officer in the Armed Forces."


PASSION COMES ACROSS

Although the amount of time that Paul spends as a reservist has wound down, his passion comes across strongly and he is optimistic about the role the Reserve Forces will take on in the future. As for himself, Paul is unsure but confident about what the future holds. Following the Reserves Forces taking on a more centre-stage role in national defence, attracting the right type of person for the Reserves is a challenge Paul is ready to rise to.

"For anyone who reads this and finds it even vaguely interesting, it's worth having a look at further information and seeing whether there are any attractive opportunities among the huge variety of roles available."

Are you already a reservist in the Civil Service? If so, register your personal e-mail address with the MOD Human Resources Directorate so they can establish a network of reservists.

E-mail: HRD-HRStrat-17@mod.uk and phone: 020 7218 7322.

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/ministry-of-defence/about/recruitment#join-the-reserves 



that a lot of work is done with employers, particularly large ones, to help them understand the balance of their commitment, encouraging support for reservists during every stage of their preparation, deployment and return.

WELFARE ROLE

"One of the key things we try to do is maintain a welfare role for reservists and also civilians who've been deployed. We want to ensure families are properly supported during deployments. We want our people to reintegrate smoothly into their day jobs and lives when they return."

Regarding Paul's own experience, he cites his involvement in numerous

GEMS AWARDS

Gems of ideas:
the awards ceremony
was held in MOD
Main Building



BRIGHT IDEAS WIN GEMS AWARDS

NOW IN ITS 17TH YEAR, MOD'S GEMS SCHEME IS SHOWING NO SHORTAGE OF STAR IDEAS THAT SAVE MILLIONS OF POUNDS



Certified success: CDS General Sir Nicholas Houghton and PUS Jon Thompson congratulate Sergeant Samantha O'Neill

Pictures: Sergeant Jez Doak

The GEMS ideas scheme encourages everyone in Defence wherever they work to send in suggestions to improve the way the Department conducts its business.

Open to all Service and civilian MOD staff, GEMS receives 2,000 suggestions every year generating savings of £12 million. But, as GEMS scheme manager, Stuart Laws, says, "the prime motivator isn't just about saving money but reaping benefits by improving the way that the Department works."

The awards ceremony, held on 4 September, recognised the individuals who sent in innovative suggestions this year and honoured the volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes in TLBs to make the scheme such a success.

At the ceremony, PUS Jon Thompson and CDS General Sir Nicholas Houghton presented certificates



“GEMS is a hugely successful scheme... everyone has a contribution to make”

of recognition to the finalists to mark their contribution and the pair were clearly impressed.

PUS said: “GEMS is a hugely successful scheme. It is tremendously important to build a culture of continuous improvement and creativity where we value ideas that improve our organisation. I also believe everyone has a contribution to make.”

Winner of the ‘Idea of the Year’ was Corporal Mark O’Brien whose suggestion was to use a satellite-linked network of radio stations in Afghanistan. Mark said: “I was quite surprised to win! It was a big project at the time and really exciting to see it come to fruition. I entered it into the GEMS scheme after one of my bosses pointed out how much it had changed things.”

Some ideas were highly technical, whereas some were simple but potentially lifesaving. Andrew Blaikie of Defence Equipment & Support, for example, made a suggestion to fit rear view mirrors to Hyster J2 forklift trucks that will cut the risk of serious accidents.

Another potential lifesaving idea came to Sergeant Samantha O’Neill during her tour in Afghanistan. She identified a pressing problem for women deployed on operations in hostile territory, in that they have to partially undress to urinate.

Samantha suggested that the uniform trousers be modified to accommodate a ‘shewee’, a shaped plastic funnel that allows women to pee standing up. Now, women on patrol no longer need to remove their body armour, at the risk of triggering IEDs and capture.


The idea prompted a full review of women’s uniforms and, while the trouser design wasn’t modified, changes to underwear were made. Sheweese have also been issued to all women deploying to Afghanistan.

“It’s an idea that addresses a very basic need rather than saving MOD millions of pounds but no less a great one,” said Stuart.

According to Stuart, ideas can come from all areas. “We get some really good techie ideas but we also get people who spot something obvious. It’s simply a case that nobody’s thought to highlight the problem.”

Chief Technician John Rawlinson has saved MOD £200,000 by suggesting that a piece of steam cleaning equipment from RAF Kinloss be recycled for use at the RAF Lossiemouth Aircraft Wash Facility. It quickly proved that it could handle the demands of washing two Tornados a day using the current recycling system and has now been in use for nine months.

With the launch of GEMS Online in 2012, it is now easier than ever for staff to submit their brainwaves and track progress electronically and Stuart is keen to encourage everyone to send in their ideas.

“We never know where the next big idea is going to come from,” said Stuart. “Anyone involved with equipment or a process sees things slightly differently so it’s impossible to say who’ll spot the next big thing or identify the change that makes a big difference to everyone. Why not try it?” 



Making his mark: Corporal Mark O’Brien won Idea of the Year

IDEA OF THE YEAR WINNER

Corporal Mark O’Brien’s suggestion of using a satellite-linked network of radio stations in Afghanistan has greatly increased the quality and quantity of radio programmes developed at Lashkar Gah.

Mark is a member of 15 (United Kingdom) Psychological Operations Group, which recently won the 2012 Firmin Sword of Peace.

He has been heavily involved in promoting Afghan positive broadcasting, particularly within Helmand. His contribution has allowed Afghans to promote ideals of inclusivity, equality, fairness and civil society through broadcasting music, poetry, debate programmes and even a soap opera.

Mark’s innovative solution uses the Services Sound and Vision Corporation (also the provider of BFBS) in the UK to broadcast the radio signal, adding local content into what they transmit back to Afghanistan.

It also allows battle group commanders to instantly broadcast a message following a local incident. Recent broadcasts include campaigns to prevent children picking up spent ordnance, tips from farming and veterinary workshops and debating political issues of the day.

FOR MORE ON GEMS

Contact Tina Ellicot, Transformation-DRUBBI-7
Tel: 020 7218 6081. Or visit <https://gemsonline.mod.uk> and www.ideasuk.com

NORTHERN IRELAND

Deploying at the peak of the Troubles in 1979, I felt apprehensive because being Scottish our communities traditionally have strong ties to Ireland.

We deployed just after Lord Mountbatten was murdered. Our own flashpoint came later when Bobby Sands died in Maze Prison on hunger strike. It caused a lot of tension and we had to be on our toes. Based at Aldergrove Airport, whenever we worked at the checkpoint, we got a few wisecracks from people asking if we were 'pleased with ourselves', which we ignored.

Over two years we deployed three times and we learned a lot because it was all so new.

Back then, camaraderie was fantastic when 10 or 11 lads shared a room. We worked long hours and people could get a bit tetchy and now and again someone exploded. Discipline was far more 'character building' with older senior aircraftmen giving us a clip round the ear, rather than march us in front of the CO on a charge. It was dealt with there and then and they'd bark 'don't do that again!' so we learned a lesson.

FALKLAND ISLANDS

The Falklands was a defining moment, though I never thought I'd go. In February 1982 I was posted to RAF Odiham. Newly-married, my wife had never set foot outside Glasgow and I brought her down to RAF Odiham only to disappear on exercise. By April it kicked off and Angela asked me if I'd be involved. Naively, I reassured her by saying 'no way, our aircraft can't fly that far', but two days later, I had to tell her that we were going!

We slept in small tents



Looking back: Warrant Officer Ian Pollock is approaching the end of his career

Picture: Corporal Mark Parkinson

MY MEDALS

Warrant Officer Ian Pollock, 53, joined the RAF Regiment in 1977 aged 17. Now based at RAF Leeming, he looks back on his medals.

and communicated by 'blueys' and I've kept every single rushed letter, filled with spelling mistakes. Our role was to support the newly-

formed Chinook helicopter squadrons on the ground. We were trained to man and fire the guns on the helicopters. We sailed down on HMS



Shooting the breeze in Belize: WO Pollock (centre) on exercise

Norland while the helicopters were on the *Atlantic Conveyor*. We sat on the decks of *Norland* waiting for helicopters to fly us to the *Conveyor*. Our transfer was then cancelled and the next day the *Conveyor* was bombed and sank – a real reality check.

From that point we were attacked daily. If we weren't engaged in our defences, we were confined to bunks, with bombs going off either side, across the bows of the ship. It wasn't a comfortable feeling. I got very religious and attended Mass. One of those times, I thought 'Jesus, this is real!'

In another incident, HMS *Antelope* broke her back after two missiles hit her while we were being transferred between *Norland* and HMS *Fearless*. Bomb disposal were trying to defuse the bombs when she blew up. We had to get off HMS *Norland*, which was en route to pick troops up, so they transferred us to HMS *Fearless* at night, and, as we went across, we saw a huge orange glow as HMS *Antelope* went up. We had a few moments like that.

IRAQ

In 2003, I served in the second Gulf War as a flight sergeant on a field squadron. Basically, wherever the RAF goes they need defence, so one of our squadrons will defend air assets, patrolling outside of the airfield and engaging with the locals. Then if the RAF were attacked on the ground, we dealt with it.

On any deployment, you get into a routine otherwise boredom sets in and people get cheesed off. It got a bit samey and it wasn't our normal task because we were protecting units in a location barely bigger than a football pitch.

Our job was to wait at the pick-up point to look out for anyone following our forces and then get them out quick.

But the need to do this never materialised because Saddam folded quite quickly.

On that deployment, I definitely missed my teenage twins. That particular conflict looked as if it was going to get nasty and I warned my wife 'if this happens, you're going to have to get on with it and explain it to the kids'. I did worry.



AFGHANISTAN

By 2006, I'd already done three tours in Basra, so when we arrived in Afghanistan it just seemed like tons more sand. As Flight Sergeant Training Ops my job was to make sure that troops were trained properly in ground airfield defence in support of air operations. I helped plan the missions, checked that fitness was up to scratch and that

their weapon handling was top-notch. We were the first RAF Regiment squadron to go out, based at Kandahar.

Being responsible for sending guys out and knowing there could be something waiting felt tough. The first crisis came when the Nimrod crashed, then the Canadians carried out a big operation and needed a road clearing. We sent out a patrol to make sure no IEDs had been dug in. I reported that the road had been heavily used and we shouldn't go down there but I was ordered to send my patrol down.

One of my best friends led the patrol and he knew that I was unhappy. He returned to base and I'd just stopped sweating when our debrief was rocked by an explosion. On that very track, two Afghans drove over buried IEDs and were killed outright. Then, a motorbike

approached, saw the wreckage and swerved around it but hit another IED. All told, it killed four Afghan people.

Again, it was a moment when I thought that my friend could have been killed and it would have stayed with me for a long time. It definitely makes you philosophical. The last 10 years have been very difficult for British forces. Terrorists have got very good at what they do and, on every tour, sadly we lose somebody.



ACCUMULATED SERVICE

Military personnel are awarded this for accumulating two years of operational deployment. I went to Northern Ireland and Basra multiple times but my medals don't reflect my tour in Sierra Leone because you need to

spend 30 consecutive days in theatre and I missed the cut by two days!

When I see this medal, I see my career flashing through my mind, particularly as I approach the end of my career in 2015. Yet it feels like only yesterday that I joined up. Putting all the danger aside, I think of the camaraderie, people that I've met and different places that I've served. It has been quite an experience.

I joined up in an era when we got posted to Cyprus, Hong Kong, Germany, Northern Ireland and Belize and beyond. Nowadays, I don't think there's a lot of travel opportunities for the guys with the obvious focus on Iraq and Afghanistan over the last decade. I think that my generation saw the best in terms of travel but I've enjoyed my time hugely and I'll miss it hugely.



"Lords or Wimbledon?"

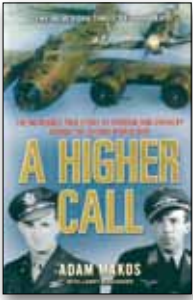
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A HIGHER CALL

The incredible true story of heroism and chivalry during the Second World War

By Adam Makos with Larry Alexander, Atlantic Books, £17.99



THIS IS the true story of Charlie and Franz, two enemy pilots, one Brit, one German, whose lives collided a few days before Christmas 1943, when a badly damaged Allied bomber struggled to fly over wartime Germany. At its controls was a young American pilot, 2nd Lieutenant Charlie Brown.

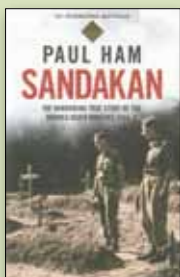
Suddenly a Messerschmitt fighter pulled up on the bomber's tail – Franz, the German pilot, was an ace who, with a squeeze of the trigger, could bring down the struggling bomber. But he didn't fire.

A Higher Call gives a dramatic account of the moment when the two pilots stared across the frozen skies at each other.

What happened next was an act that, if revealed, could have meant the firing squad for Franz. It was an encounter that haunted both pilots until they traced each other and reunited 40 years later.

The story initially emerged as a magazine interview, but readers demanded a sequel which spawned a book documenting the experiences of the two men.

Impeccably researched with remarkable attention to detail and radiating wartime ruthlessness ("you shoot at a machine not a man"), heroism and chivalry, it was eight years in the writing, but worth the wait. So what did happen? You'll have to read the book. **DP**



Sandakan

The harrowing story of the Borneo death marches

By Paul Ham, Doubleday books, £25

IN TERMS of sheer depravity and cruelty, the real-life story of the Sandakan Death Marches in 1944-45, when British and Australian POWs were forced on a 250-mile march is hard to match. Of the 1,000-plus POWs who set out on the epic marches, just six survived.

The evidence is savage, laid bare by the raw testimony of survivors. But beyond the violent beatings and death, it is the individual tales of courage and suffering that linger in the memory. Death and subservience accompanied

daily routine. "Anyone who fails to bow to and salute the Japanese is slapped and beaten; anyone suspected of disloyalty is tortured – often to death." Learning how Kempeitai guards filled a victim's stomach with raw rice and forced water in through a hose makes for uncomfortable reading and, for many victims, death brought a merciful release.

This is both the survivors' story and that of the fallen, radiating cruelty and courage but never less than compelling reading. **DP**



Scram!

The gripping first-hand account of the helicopter war in the Falklands

By Harry Benson, Preface Publishing, £18.99

THIS BOOK is an enthralling, first-hand account by Fleet Air Arm pilot Harry Benson.

A pacy read, told with passion and verve, the foreword declares that the book is the first account of the "helicopter war" in the Falklands but it's so much more than that.

There are plenty of autobiographical details of the author's naval training (including comprehensive details of how to fly a helicopter) and career before you get stuck into his

participation in the Falklands conflict. Benson's trump card is to pepper anecdotal accounts of colleagues' actions in the thick of it, throughout the narrative.

It's real 'Boy's Own' stuff, running the full gamut of humour to pathos among some tear-jerking accounts of the action.

Disasters, chaos, bad communications and poor planning – the usual fog of war, but where troops treat triumph and adversity in exactly the same way. **DP**



THE APACHE ADVANTAGE: FLEXIBLE STRENGTH.

AH-64E Apache delivers multi-mission superiority for peacekeeping requirements, including surveillance, command & control, reconnaissance and border security. On-cost and on-schedule, the newest Apache is the most powerful and effective combat helicopter in the world—a decisive advantage on every mission.

 **BOEING**



**GALLSTONES
AFFECT 20 PER
CENT OF ADULTS
AND CAN CAUSE
DISCOMFORT, SO
DON'T SUFFER IN
SILENCE**

GALLING PROBLEM



By Surgeon
Commander Nick
Imm, a GP at
Navy Command HQ,
HMS *Excellent*.

Hello from Whale Island in Portsmouth where I work in Navy Command Headquarters.

This month, I thought we'd discuss gallstones – it's reckoned that around one in five of the adult population have them. The majority of us won't suffer any problems from them and will probably never even know we have them. For some people though, they can cause a lot of pain and can occasionally result in the need for emergency surgery.

So, what are they? Gallstones can form

in the gall bladder which is found under the liver on the right-hand side of the abdomen. When the liver makes bile, it is stored and concentrated in the gall bladder. Then, when we eat fatty foods, the bile is squeezed out of the gall bladder to help digestion. Bile works like a detergent to break down fat in the food we eat – it contains pigments, cholesterol, salts and other chemicals.

Small stones can develop inside the gall bladder. It's thought that they are due to an imbalance of the ingredients in bile. They become more likely as we get older

and if we are overweight. It's also believed that a diet rich in animal fats increases our chance of getting gallstones.

These stones can cause repeated discomfort as the gall bladder squeezes them after eating. This is called biliary colic. Since bile is squeezed from the gall bladder when we eat fatty foods, biliary colic tends to occur more if your meal contains a lot of fat – a pastry or a bar of chocolate, for example.

“bile works like a detergent to break down fat in our food”


If, however, a stone gets stuck in the neck of the gall bladder, it causes it to swell up and become inflamed. The right side of the abdomen becomes painful and tender. This is called acute cholecystitis. The pain can spread to the right shoulder and vomiting and a fever can develop.

Sometimes surgery is needed straight away. Usually though, this condition can be treated with fluids from a drip and antibiotics, while the operation to remove the gall bladder is needed at a later date. In the past, this operation was performed through quite a large incision but nowadays it can often be done using keyhole surgery performed as a day operation.

Fortunately, the gall bladder is not vital for life and most people lead totally normal lives after the operation.

There are other ways of removing gallstones while leaving the gall bladder intact. Sometimes tablets can be taken to dissolve the stones over many months. Other techniques involve using focused shock waves to break up the stones, though people with very mild symptoms can choose to leave things as they are.

So, if you are experiencing discomfort in the right side of your abdomen, especially after eating fatty foods, it may be that you have gallstones. Make an appointment with your medical team or GP to discuss it.

■ Well, after exactly 11 years working with Focus, this is my final piece. I've really enjoyed writing the column - and I hope at least some of the advice has been useful! Stay safe and healthy! 

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 rnbtd@rnbtd.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.vfree.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.

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

THE CHILDREN'S EDUCATION ADVISORY SERVICE (CEAS)

WHY WOULD I CONTACT CEAS?

Service life can have an impact on children's education. Changing schools, changing friends, settling the children into the schools near your new home in a new area are all things that Service families have to think about, especially with big changes to the basing of military personnel. It can be a worrying time – but CEAS is there to help you to find out the answers to your educational questions and support you if you have a problem.

HOW CAN CEAS HELP ME?

Service families not only have the everyday difficulties that civilian families face but they also have the Service regulations, the complications of education abroad and the legal requirements in different parts of the UK. CEAS can help with all the questions and queries that crop up.

If you are posted from Scotland to

England, Wales or Northern Ireland for example, you might wonder how you can get a school place in an education system that might be different to the one you are leaving.

If the posting is abroad, you need to know about admission to Service education schools, how the drawdown might affect your children or about international schools and allowances. Also, children with special or additional needs may need permission to access the education overseas.

Depending on what stage of education your child is at, they may be in the middle of an exam course (like GCSEs and A-levels), so you may be able to retain your quarter until the assessment or exam course is over. Alternatively, parents might wish to consider boarding school education to give their child educational stability.

Your child may have difficulties at

school with getting extra help, if the school does not understand how deployments can upset children and the value of post-op tour leave and if the child is being bullied or if they are excluded.

Service life can be really complicated but CEAS is there to give you advice and help about your children's schooling. This could be through the helpline, written, emailed advice or one of the three CEAS parent support officers may be able to help you in person.



HOW DO YOU CONTACT CEAS?

The CEAS helpline can be contacted on:

- military network: Upavon (94344) 8244
- civil network: 01980 618244
- fax: 01980 618245
- website: www.gov.uk/childrens-education-advisory-service
- email: enquiries@ceas.uk.com



**The Duke of York's
Royal Military School**
An Academy with Military Traditions

T: 01304 245023  **E: admin.office@doyrms.com**  **www.doyrms.com**

The Duke of York's Royal Military School is a non-selective fully boarding State Academy for children aged 11–18. Set in 150 acres of Kent countryside outside Dover, your child will feel safe and secure in a close-knit community where their friends and teachers will understand military life.

The school has adopted a military ethos in its approach to education for over 200 years as we recognise that children in all walks of life thrive in schools where traditional values such as self-discipline, self-reliance, spirituality, leadership and respect for others are present. What makes our community fun, vibrant and successful is a fusion of these military values with the other elements present in all good schools.

Our pupils enjoy Combined Cadet Force activities from Year 9 to 13, and they have many opportunities to develop their leadership and team working skills. Sponsored by the Ministry of Defence, military parades and ceremonies remain at the heart of our school.

Young people who are kept busy and given the opportunities to develop and prove their self-worth really do excel. We offer a broad-based curriculum which leads to a high degree of success in public examinations, university placements and the world at work. The school's GCSE provision is comprehensive and our success rate is significantly higher than the national average at GCSE (A* to C including Maths and English). The introduction of BTEC Public Services has been popular and we are trialling BTEC Military Music. In the sixth form, a wide range of courses is available, currently 16 at AS Level and 17 at A2 Level.

We have now embarked on a £24.9m building programme to enhance our already impressive school site and facilities. Pupils enjoy all major sports with us and our facilities include an indoor swimming pool, running track, assault course, astroturf area, squash courts and gym.





Queen Victoria School, Dunblane

Wendy Bellars, Head



Open Morning on Saturday, 21st September 2013

Queen Victoria School (QVS) is a co-educational boarding school fully funded by the Ministry of Defence to provide stability and continuity of education for the children of UK Armed Forces personnel who are Scottish, or have served in Scotland or been members of a Scottish regiment.

Set in 45 acres of beautiful Perthshire countryside, Queen Victoria School is easily accessible by road, rail or air.

QVS is tri-Service and most of its pupils have at least one actively serving parent when they enter the school. Our main intake is into the Scottish system's Primary 7 year; there is no exact equivalent with the English system, but the majority of our P7 intake are aged ten or eleven when they join us. That said, there is a wide age range within the year groups. Many of our pupils have come from educationally disrupted backgrounds as they have moved from school to school and education system to education system, according to their families' postings.

Pastoral care is given a very high priority along with careers guidance and personal and social education. Queen Victoria School aims to promote the welfare and happiness of each individual child and develop their self-esteem. In addition, there is a very full programme of sporting, cultural and spiritual development.

Queen Victoria School is a unique boarding school which seeks to achieve the best that is possible for its pupils, priding itself on developing them in the widest possible sense and aiming to achieve success academically, in sport, music, drama and many other extra-curricular areas.

A very special and unique dimension of this school for military families is the ceremonial side which preserves the very best of the School's traditions. Marching as part of the School on one of its six Parade Sundays a year, and on Grand Day – the final day of the academic year – is one of the proudest moments of a Victorian's life (as well as that of his or her parents)! The Pipes, Drums and Dancers of QVS are internationally renowned, having played at tattoos both at home and abroad, most recently in The Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo 2012.

There is no substitute for visiting a school, meeting its pupils and staff and picking up the atmosphere. We are holding an Open Morning on Saturday, 21st September 2013, to which all eligible families are warmly invited. If you would like to know more before travelling to Dunblane to visit us, however, please request a DVD and further information from the Admissions Secretary, Queen Victoria School, Dunblane FK15 0JY, or via our website www.qvs.org.uk

www.doyrms.com

Telephone: 01304 245023

A truly extraordinary school



The Duke of York's
Royal Military School
An Academy with Military Traditions

Why choose us?

Established for 200 years, we understand military life, and will ensure your child is well looked after.

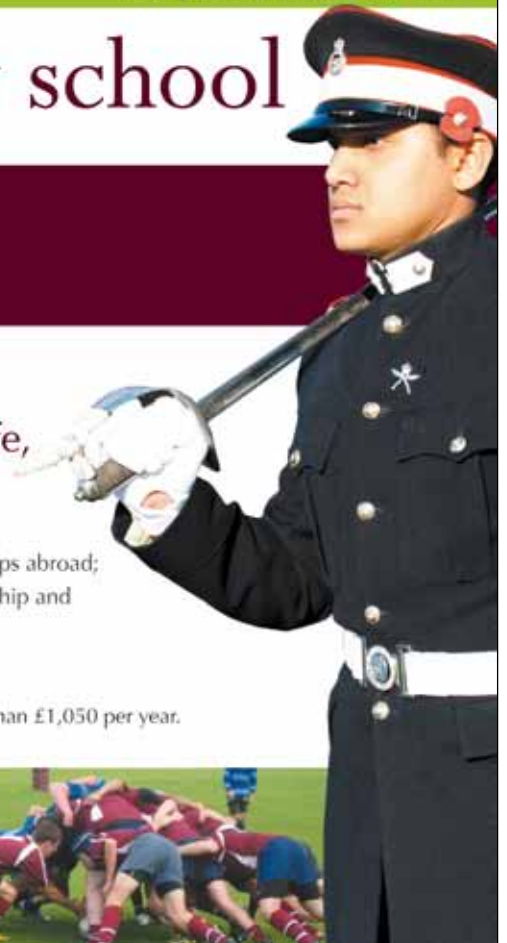
Your child will enjoy:

- an independent school lifestyle with sports, music, drama, Combined Cadet Force and trips abroad;
- an ethos where traditional values such as self-discipline, self-reliance, spirituality, leadership and respect for others is present; and
- a busy and fun community where they can live and study with their friends.

We welcome children aged 11 to 18.

Our fees are only £3,500 per term (£10,500 per year)*. If you qualify for CEA, you will pay less than £1,050 per year.

Come and visit us for a pupil-guided tour.



* Our fees are reviewed annually

SUDOKU

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

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

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

Solution to the August 2013 puzzle

CHESS



Compiled by: Carl Portman

A young chess-playing friend of mind recently had a dilemma. He was struggling to win and he wasn't used to it. As a very strong player indeed he is used to crunching opponents, including Grandmasters, and having his own way. Yet at a recent tournament he could not 'buy a win' as they say in football parlance.

His father even sent me a text to say that 'the wheels were coming off' and would I have a chat with him.

I agreed to try to help so when I arrived at the venue (I was there for the second week) I met a pale-faced individual in a negative frame of mind. After asking for his own thoughts on why he was underperforming I reminded him of some of the great players that have had real stinkers, and that he was not alone.

I asked him to tell me about his best ever chess game and he replied that he didn't really know. I told him 'it's your next one'. This lifted his spirits and I reminded him that form is temporary but class is permanent. For the week I was with him he never lost a single game!



It just goes to show that chess does not build character, it reveals it. The same can surely be said of life.

Study the position below from the game Urban – Krasenkov, Polish Championships 2001. White certainly thought he would be first to deliver mate with his queen so actively placed but black struck first. How?

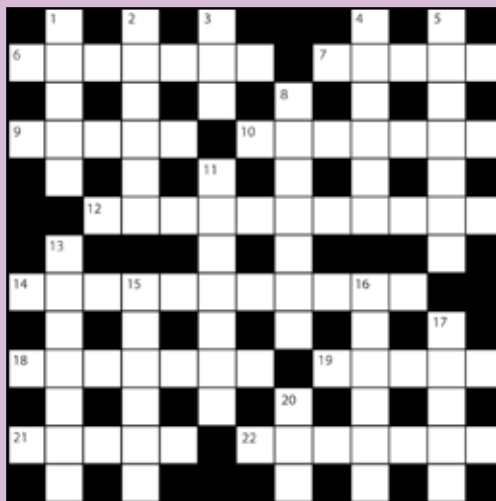
Send your answers to me at carl.portman@hotmail.co.uk please.

The answer to August's problem was 1.Nf6+ and black resigned due to 1...gxf6 2.Qh7+ Kf8 3. Qh8 mate. The winner will be announced.

TOPICAL CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 6. Word used to describe rock produced under conditions involving intense heat (7)
- 7. Britain's middle-distance star of the 2013 World Athletics Championships (5)
- 9. Football, ice hockey or golf (5)
- 10. He scored England's winning goal in their 3-2 victory over Scotland in August (7)
- 12. Professional soldiers hired to serve in a foreign army (11)
- 14. TV show whose characters include Krusty the Clown and Sideshow Bob (3,8)
- 18. An _____ And A Gentleman, a hit film for Richard Gere (7)
- 19. Her hit singles include *Rolling In The Deep* and *Someone Like You* (5)
- 21. Code word for the letter A in radio communication (5)
- 22. Comedy actress whose latest film is *We're The Millers* (7)



DOWN

- 1. Country in which Muslim Brotherhood camps were broken up in August (5)
- 2. The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge's son (6)
- 3. Piece of snooker equipment (3)
- 4. Hairdresser (6)
- 5. Byrne, the actor who stars in the TV drama *In Treatment* (7)
- 8. It is applied to wood and forms a hard, shiny surface when it dries (7)

SOLUTION (NO PEEKING)

- Down**
- 1. Egypt 2. George
 - 3. Cue 4. Barber
 - 5. Gabriel 8. Varnish
 - 11. Scamper 13. The Fall
 - 15. Smiths 16. Nudist
 - 17. Blood 20. Ant
- Across**
- 6. Igneous 7. Farah 9. Sport
 - 10. Lambert 12. Mercenaries
 - 14. The Simpsons
 - 18. Officer 19. Adele
 - 21. Alpha 22. Aniston

- 11. Run with quick, light steps (7)
- 13. 2013 crime drama in which Gillian Anderson plays Stella Gibson, a senior police officer (3,4)
- 15. *The _____*, the rock group featuring Morrissey and Johnny Marr (6)
- 16. Person who goes naked whenever possible (6)
- 17. _____ *On The Tracks*, a classic album by Bob Dylan (5)
- 20. Dec's television partner (3)



PRIZE
Win tickets to the stage show of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Radio Show Live!

Enjoy the stage show of The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Radio Show Live!

THREE lucky readers will win a pair of tickets to The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Radio Show Live! Following a smash-hit UK tour in 2012, the cult hit is back in this groundbreaking new stage production – a radio show like you've never seen before

– packed with laughter, wild sound effects, a live band, HD projections and drinks with extremely silly names. Joining Simon Jones as Arthur Dent are other favourites from the original casts and comedian Mitch Benn as Zaphod Beeblebrox.

There is also a very exciting line up of VIP guest "Voices of the books". They include *Dr Who* star Colin Baker, comedienne Shappi Khorsandi, iconic actress Miriam Margolyes, and Star Wars's Anthony Daniels (C3PO). Visit www.hitchhikerslive.com

TO WIN
Email your name, address and phone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk by Wednesday 16 October. Don't forget to enter Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy Radio Show Live in the subject line. Good luck.

SOX APPEAL

Feeling pressure? – it could be your socks!

WORKFORCE socks are revolutionising the marketplace with their innovative design, created to be both durable and comfy. *Defence Focus* has five pairs of for grabs, retailing from £5.99 to £11.99.

We've all been there at the end of a hard day's work. All you want to do is put your feet up or give them a long soak in the bath. However, if your feet ache after a physically demanding day or stressful job, it may be down to your socks. Most socks either don't offer enough protection or

warmth or are uncomfortable and slip down to the ankle when wearing boots, leaving your feet to painfully rub. However, the Workforce range features include knitted arch support for a precise fit, terry cushion panels, and ventilation panels, while bamboo fibres provide natural antibacterial protection.

TO WIN
Email your name, address and phone number to dmc-newsdesk@mod.uk by 16 October. Include Socks in the subject line. Good luck!



PRIZE
Five pairs of Workforce socks worth up to £11.99 are ours to give away

Raising to Distinction



Queen Victoria School

**Open Morning
Sat 21 Sept 2013**

**Admissions Deadline
Wed 15 Jan 2014**

Queen Victoria School in Dunblane is a co-educational boarding school for children of Armed Forces personnel who are Scottish, have served in Scotland or are part of a Scottish regiment.

The QVS experience encourages and develops well-rounded, confident individuals in an environment of stability and continuity.

The main entry point is into Primary 7 and all places are fully funded for tuition and boarding by the Ministry of Defence.

Families are welcome to find out more by contacting Admissions on +44 (0) 131 310 2927 to arrange a visit.

Queen Victoria School
Dunblane Perthshire
FK15 0JY

www.qvs.org.uk