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An honour for the soldiers' soldier

Recruits will decide who earns new award

A new medal is to be awarded to recruits selected by their mates as the soldier they would most want to serve alongside them on operations.

Commander, Initial Training Group, Brigadier David Homer, late RGJ told *ATRA News* that he "pinched" the idea from his sons' rugby club. "At the end of the season they have a players' player of the year and they have a coaches' player of the year. To become the players' player often means more because it comes from your mates."

The new medal, to be called The Soldiers' Medal, will not be awarded as recognition of success as such. Explained Brig

Homer: "Recruits will consider the question: 'If you're going on your first operational patrol and you've got a battle partner next to you, what's the most important quality you look for in that partner?'"

"The majority will come up with 'trust', followed by 'courage', 'honest,' and 'reliability' – all interpretations of the Army's core values."

"No one will say they want the best shot, the best at battle PT, the best at map reading or the best driver. What they say they want will be human qualities," he said.

The current aim is to introduce recruits to core values in week one – the icebreaker – when they go out into the field for the first time in their first few days at an ATR.

"They will be introduced to the subject of soldiering and what soldiering is all about. And it's really about core values and not about being best shot and so forth – important though those areas are," said Brig Homer.

Recruits will be told during the icebreaker period that they are going to be asked at the end of their course to vote for who they think is the best soldier.

A few surprises

The new award is expected to be highly prized by those who receive it because they will be selected by their mates, not by the training staff, and there will be only one for each platoon.

"Getting it will, I hope, be important to individuals, more so, I think, than getting a cup on parade," said Brig Homer. "It won't necessarily go to the best recruit on the course and I bet there will be a few surprises."

The medal is cast from a silver alloy embossed with the army crest and surrounded with the words "Initial Training Group. Soldiering". The reverse is plain with the six core values embossed on the periphery: Discipline, Courage, Selfless Commitment, Respect for Others, Loyalty and Integrity.

Several ATRs have already started awarding the Soldiers' Medal, and the scheme will be introduced across the whole ITG in the coming months.

● **Pictured: the Lord Lieutenant of Staffordshire, Mr James Hawley, presents Townsend Troop, 1 (Training) Squadron's Soldiers' Medal to Sapper Ben Westerman at ATR Lichfield. Spr Westerman is an electrician with the Corps of Royal Engineers**



Brig David Homer



Golden Kelly keeps 'em on their toes



Double Olympic gold medallist Dame Kelly Holmes is running a series of motivational workshops for potential elite athletes called *On Camp with Kelly*.

And her military past as a PTI meant it was no surprise that she should draw on her experience with the Army in order to enhance the training. ATR (Pirbright) provided training facilities and support staff for a weekend of physical and mental exercises.

Kelly even supplied ration packs so the young athletes on the course could experience living in the field "Army-style". Training staff provided safety cover, especially on the assault

courses, and in return were able to gain valuable experience in motivational training from one of Britain's top athletes.

BBC Sport reporter Mark Ashenden joined the course at Pirbright to get a taste of the action. His report dwelt on pain, pain and more pain as the exercises became harder and harder.

After the final assault course run, he said: "We were left bruised, beaten and battered, and as we stood wobbling at the finish, gasping for air like goldfish out of water, we looked up to see Holmes flying over the remaining obstacles like a 14-year-old."

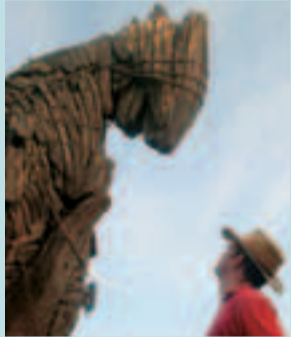
inbrief



Fiona Castle presents the award to Colonel Iain Macfarlane

Smoke-free award

Fiona Castle, widow of entertainer Roy Castle, presented the smoking-free Defence School of Transport at Leconfield, East Yorkshire with a good air award. Commandant DST, Colonel Iain Macfarlane, said: "Simply from a duty of care aspect in an ATRA training environment, it is only logical to persuade soldiers of the harm they do to themselves and others by smoking and also encourage non-smokers not to start!" The non-smoking regime at DST was introduced after full consultation with staff.



WO1 Troy Close gets a closer look at the wooden horse

Troy visits Troy

It was an opportunity not to be missed when WO1 Troy Close from HQ ATRA realised he was close to the reputed site of the siege that bears his name. WO1 Close was part of a group visiting the Gallipoli peninsula to study the First World War campaign — the group's base in Cannakale was close to the wooden horse presented to the town by the makers of the film *Troy*. According to Homer's *Iliad*, the Greeks used the horse to end their 10-year siege of the city over 2,000 years ago.



Cpl Marc Hopgood, back left, and the Deepcut trainees after handing over the table

Table is tops

Pioneer course trainees used their newly-acquired skills to turn out a table for children of the Rainbow Group at Frimley Park Hospital in Surrey. The table, now sitting in the group's outdoor play area, is used by children, staff and parents for a wide range of activities.



YOs from the RSA take over in the FV432 command post during live firing training with AS90 guns on Salisbury Plain. Pictured, left to right are 2Lt John O'Keeffe, 2Lt Jenny White, 2Lt Dan Jones and Lt Faisal Dashti of the Kuwaiti Army; Phase Two trainees find out early in their training with 14 Regt RA at the Royal School of Artillery that it can be heavy work handling a light gun; Young Officers' Course student, 2LT Victoria Grant, in the firing seat of an SA90

Sparkly trainers fire up Larkhill

The Artillery Centre at Larkhill on Salisbury Plain, home to the Royal School of Artillery, has a world reputation as a centre of excellence for all aspects of gunnery training and associated artillery skills.

These range from the operation of unmanned air vehicles for aerial surveillance over the battlefield to missiles for air defence.

Crucial to the School's success is 14 Regiment Royal Artillery which provides support for the school in everything from special to arm classroom and in the field training for all officers and soldiers entering the Royal Regiment to admin support for the Centre. In many ways it acts as an old-fashioned regimental depot. In addition, all gunner continuation training is carried out at Larkhill.

The newly-appointed CO of the regiment is Lt Col Hugh Baker, 40. He is delighted with the young men and women coming to the RSA from Phase One training — mainly from Harrogate or ATR Pirbright.

"The personnel I've seen coming from Phase One have been very impressive," he said. "They're sparkly and bright and not afraid to look you in the eye and answer any question you put to them."

And it's not only the young officers and soldiers coming to the RSA for training that have impressed Lt Col Baker. "The quality of the instructors here is really impressive. They are extremely capable," he said.

Lt Col Baker took over as CO of 14 Regiment RA in September after a year on the Directing Staff of the Joint Service Command and Staff College at Shrivenham.

He joined the Army 16 years ago and has spent most of his regimental soldiering with 29 (Commando) Regiment RA at Plymouth. He is married to Liz and they have two daughters aged 8 and 10. Their home is in Plymouth.



AS90 guns from J Bty 3 RHA engaging Iraqi positions as they support the battlegroup of the First Royal Regiment of Fusiliers outside Basra; Inset, smoke billows from the barrels of 14 Regt RA AS90 guns during live firing training



Members of a 14 Regt RA gun detachment and some of their students with AS90 ammunition fired during training on Salisbury Plain. Pictured, left to right standing, Gnr Christopher Kilcourse, LBdr "TR" Cavid, Bdr Shaun Butcher, Lt Ahmed Al-Shebli (Kuwaiti Army) and 2Lt John Allen, kneeling, Gnr Carlos Fenton and 2Lt Victoria Grant; a rare picture of a light gun on full recoil after firing on Salisbury Plain in support of training for helicopter-born Forward Observation Officers (FOOs); Lt Col Hugh Baker, Commanding Officer 14 Regiment, Royal Artillery

Soldiers help Time Team dig into the past

Twenty soldiers from RSA at Larkhill joined Channel 4 TV's *Time Team* to reconstruct the Wood Henge at Durrington Walls.

Part of the henge — a huge circular earthwork — is sited on ATRA land at Larkhill, just under two miles north east of Stonehenge. It's a striking feature on the landscape of this world heritage site, and while Stonehenge is Britain's most famous prehistoric monument, Durrington Walls is the biggest.

Training staff at the school saw the project as a good opportunity to use the scenario as a command task. The soldiers helped the *Time Team* research how the circle might have been constructed in times before machinery. Working out how to lift huge trees manually into place on paper is one thing, but having the chance to put the theory into practice proved invaluable both for researchers and soldiers.

The episode was aired at the end of November, and hosted as always by Tony Robinson.

The Durrington Walls henge is about 480 metres in diameter. Its ditch, six metres deep, 16 metres wide and topped by a three-metre bank, is almost one mile around. It was built about 4,500 years ago, around the same time as the first phases of construction of Stonehenge.



Above: Soldiers get stuck in to the heavy work



Right: Time Teamers Tony Robinson and Mick Aston

ATRA chief joins presidential elite

Question: what does the ATRA's Director-General Andrew Graham have in common with Generals Patton and Schwarzkopf and Audie Murphy?

Answer: they have all been awarded the Legion of Merit by a US President.

Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, and US Secretary of State Dean Rusk were recipients too.

Major General Graham's award comes after his seven-month spell as Deputy Commanding General of the Multi-National Corps during Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

The citation, signed by US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, reads: "Major General Graham's drive, perseverance and selfless leadership enabled the Combined Task Force 7 and the Multi-National Corps-Iraq to achieve successes under challenging conditions."

"He led the MNC-Iraq during the Najaf uprising and his guidance directly contributed to successful operations in An Najaf, Al Kut and other areas affected by Moqtada Militia aggression.

"General Graham significantly advanced the training and equipping of the Iraqi security forces and his leadership of the Improvised Explosive Device Task Force synchronised explosive ordnance disposal procedures and led to the creation of an IED-emplacement detection research programme.

"His decisive actions in the ever-changing military-political environment supported the establishment of freedom and democracy in Iraq.

"Major General Graham's superb performance of duty is in keeping with the highest standards of military tradition and reflects great credit upon himself, the MNC-Iraq, the British Army and his country."



General Patton



Maj Gen Graham



General Schwarzkopf



Audie Murphy



Lord Mountbatten



Dean Rusk

Sandhurst cadets take it over the edge

The home of the tank, the Armour Centre in Bovington, played host to 22 officer cadets from Royal Military College Sandhurst (RMAS). The Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) hosts visits to the centre to promote the corps to the wider cadet community at Sandhurst.

Unlike previous years where cadets were offered the opportunity to visit only individual regiments, this move will now give "First Termers" a taste of what life is like in the corps at an early stage of their career, and show them what they have to go through in training to be a tank commander.

The morning's activities included a ride in a Challenger 2 training tank and a Scimitar over Bovington's own off-road driver training circuit,



including the "Knife Edge" where the driver demonstrated his skills, balancing the tank on

the crest of a very high and steep purpose-built hill, (designed to improve confidence), demonstrations on the gun loading simulator and informative guided tours conducted by the training staff on wheeled and tracked vehicles used by the Corps.

In the afternoon the Cadets were taken to the Lulworth Ranges to see the impressive Challenger 2 in action. Instructors put the tank through its paces with a fire-power demonstration laying smoke and hitting four targets in quick succession while on the move over rough terrain.

In the evening the Cadets' wound down and reflected on the day's activities while enjoying a cavalry-style dinner in the Officers' Mess.

Badges honoured

The first yearbook of British army badges has received a pat on the back from military historian, TV presenter and author Richard Holmes.

The 552-page illustrated hardback — produced by Lt Col Robin Hodges — features more than 3,000 cap, collar, shoulder, arm and specialist badges and about 1,000 photographs of soldiers. "The book's enduring merit springs from its extraordinary breadth and depth," said Richard.

Lt Col Hodges considers the book a legacy to the Army after almost 37 years' service. "I am extremely proud of the Army and it is clear that other soldiers are just as proud," he said.

- The book is available only from the author. For further details or an order form, write to British Army Badges, Court Hill Farm, Potterne, Devizes, SN10 5PN, telephone 01380 723371 or email robinhodges@armymail.mod.uk



Pte Ricky Massiah

Peak paractice

Tenacious Private Ricky Massiah scored maximum points in his five-day pre-parachute selection course.

Ricky, one of 25 Parachute Company Oudna Platoon members on test, took the best recruit award. "His performance was outstanding and his physical fitness and outright tenacity were an example to us all," said Major Andy Waring. The test consists of eight event and Ricky's total was the highest in recent memory.

- The pre-parachute selection course tests whether a recruit has the self-confidence and motivation needed for service with the Parachute Regiment.



Wagon strain

Two students from Nihon Automobile College in Japan pull their weight as they try to heave one of the Defence School of Transport's vehicles out of the mud. The trainee vehicle technicians were taking part in an exchange visit organised by East Riding College in Beverley, Yorkshire.

They also teamed up with workshop tradesmen including Luke Plummer to help repair some of the school's military vehicles and were toured the school's cross-country driving circuit in SAXON, BV206 and Pinzgauer vehicles.

Training group's new RSM steps in

The appointment of an RSM specifically for ATRA's Initial Training Group has been established.

WO1 (RSM) Greg Harrison of the Grenadier Guards held the post since its inception and has now handed over to WO1 (RSM) Graham Stevenson, 39, of the Coldstream Guards.

Commander of the ITG, Brig David Homer, late RGJ, told ATRA News that there was a need for a "consistent heartbeat" across the Group. And something more was needed than the normal way of formal visits and reports to ensure this consistency.

He said that if the powerful unit sergeant major net could be brought together through an ITG RSM acting as a focal point "for concerns coming up from the sergeants and corporals at the coal face," they could be directly "hard wired" to the Brigadier.

Communication

"I need to know the concerns of the [NCOs] on the ground. I need to hear it straight. The RSM therefore helps me to ensure we have that consistent heartbeat across the group," said Brig Homer. "It's not command stuff, it's just about good communication. And it's a truism that if you get communication right most other things will fall into place."

RSM Harrison said he travelled with the Commander of formal visits to ITG units, and could often pick up information from senior NCOs that would be useful in ensuring that the commander received the broadest possible picture as well as advice from a highly experienced senior soldier.

Embedded in the ITG Instructors' School at Lichfield and helping to "train the trainers," the



WO1 (RSM) Greg Harrison (left) RSM ITG pictured at the ITGIS Lichfield during his hand-over to WO1 (RSM) Graham Stevenson

RSM has oversight of all the instructors coming into the ITG from the Field Army. "Those joining the ITG are all different and contribute in many different ways to the future career of recruits," said Mr Harrison. "The aim is for all recruits to go through Phase One training with the right attitude"

The instructors themselves benefit hugely from a success tour within ITG, he said, and can increase their employability 10-fold when back in

their parent unit. Being able to instruct well is key to a soldiers' career.

Mr Harrison joined the Army in 1981 and his 24 years and 237 days career has included tours in the training organisation at the RMAS, (twice) ITC (Catterick), ATR (Pirbright) and as RSM of the ITG.

When he leaves the army early next year, he plans to go into property development in the Home Counties



Soldiers' Medal winner Sapper Ben Westerman on the march to receive his award at ATR Lichfield

Equipment boost is a breath of fresh air for recruiting

An injection of new medical equipment from HQ ATRA over the past four months has helped the three mainland Recruit Selection Centres (RSCs) at Glencorse, Lichfield and Pirbright to speed up the recruit pipeline process.

About 28 per cent of Potential Recruits (PRs) who attend Selection are deferred for various medical reasons, many of them for respiratory-related conditions.

The RSCs did not previously have the ability to conduct this respiratory or Spirometry Testing "in house" and PRs were sent away for specialist medical appointments. These appointments were often

by Major Andrea Crompton, HQ ITG
Sister Claire Andrews, RSC Lichfield

made weeks or months in advance and were yet another obstacle to be overcome.

The Army has now adopted the best practice procedures developed by the Institute of Naval Medicine and incorporated them into the medical screening process.

Spirometry testing involves feeding diving air from a cylinder through a mouthpiece to a PR exercising on a static cycle. The PR can be assessed at both the pre- and post-exercise phase and, in conjunction with the diving air, it

enables the RSC to discover whether the PR has any form of underlying respiratory weakness.

The whole process now takes 30 minutes, as opposed to 4-6 weeks — result!

Thanks to the new equipment three significant benefits have emerged:

- it takes less time to "join up" which is clearly beneficial both to the PR and the Army
- it enables a greater accuracy of pre-service medical screening, which benefits both the individual and the organisation longer term.
- the RSC medical staff have had the opportunity to develop themselves both personally and professionally by receiving training on new equipment.



... meanwhile, out on the 'battlefield'



Website keeps casualty drills up to scratch

ATRA and MOD Battlefield Casualty Drills Trainers can now keep up to date with what's happening in the world of battlefield casualty drills by visiting a dedicated website.

To access the website, they need to get access to the Army intranet using TAFMIS ChoTs/Cash JAPA and type in : <http://www.bfcas.dii.rmil.uk/>. This will link them straight into the Battlefield Casualty Drills website.

Battlefield Casualty Drills or ITD (A) 3 is the successor to Battlefield First Aid (BFA). Since the change in early 2003, an Aide Memoire and a set of soldier and trainer-friendly drills have been introduced.

The Aide Memoire now fits into the new "Soldiers' Pocket Book" which is due to hit the ground very shortly. All queries on that should be directed to DI Trg.



Gurkha 'students' are top of the class

Congratulations go to all 230 Gurkhas in the Gurkha Company at Helles Barracks at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick in North Yorkshire who have notched up an impressive educational coup. They all volunteered to follow both a Level 2 NVQ Public Services Award and Key Skills Award, finishing the courses in record time while also completing their own arduous 39-week Infantry Training Programme. The courses — provided by Darlington College at Catterick — were delivered by the team of college lecturers based at the NVQ Centre at Vimy Barracks. The PSA NVQ and supportive Key Skills have been available to all British recruits at the ITC for four years, but it

was only in 2004, with the long-awaited law allowing recently retired Gurkha soldiers and their families to become naturalised and thus obtain British citizenship, that it became possible to include the Gurkha Training Company in this scheme. The two awards will be useful to the Gurkha recruits from Nepal, not just for initial promotions during their Army careers, but in progressing up the NVQ qualification ladder. It will also help them obtain employment in civilian life if they decide to settle in the UK after completing their colour service. Job possibilities include most uniform professions, especially police, ambulance, fire, security and prison services.



Richard Almond, Darlington College NVQ assessor, and some of the successful Gurkhas

Pipes and drums sound out a first

The first Army Piping and Drumming Championships were staged at the Army School of Bagpipe Music and Highland Drumming at Inchdrewer House in Edinburgh in October.

The historic event attracted more than 100 competitors from 16 Regiments, Regular and TA.

The competition comprised 14 separate events over two days, from novice through to senior piping as well as bugling, solo drumming and band competitions.

It was the brainchild of the current Director of Army Bagpipe Music (DABM), Capt Stuart Samson (The Highlanders). He said: "Our aim was to provide a focus for all Army pipers, drummers and bands on an annual basis as well as showcasing the wealth of talent within the Army, thus raising the profile."

At the prizegiving, Maj Gen Euan Loudon, General Officer Commanding 2nd Division, congratulated all competitors on the standards set. He reminded them of the importance of the heritage and traditions attached to the art of piping and drumming in the Army.

Major prize winners:

Overall Solo Piping Champion: Private Andrew Carlisle of the 2nd Bn The Royal Irish Regiment. (A close second was Lance Sergeant Ross McCrindle of the Scots Guards).

Champion Drummer: Corporal Neil Sloan of The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

Champion Bugler: Private Andrew William Carlisle of the 3rd Bn The Royal Irish Regiment.

Overall Band Champions and first winners of The Edinburgh Military Tattoo Silver Plate: Glasgow and Strathclyde Universities Officers' Training Corps (UOTC) under the direction of Pipe Major Willie McIntyre.



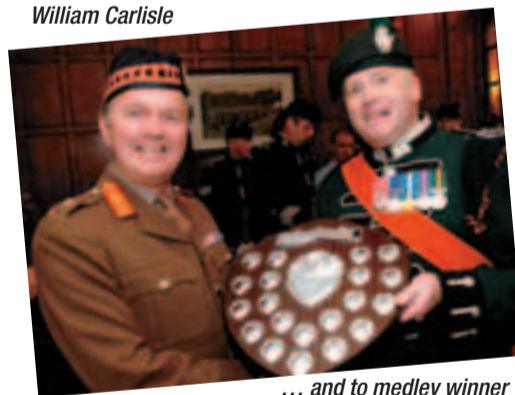
Maj Gen Loudon presents the award to overall piping champion Pte Andrew Carlisle



... and to champion bugler Pte Andrew William Carlisle



... and to piping runner-up L SGT Ross McCrindle



... and to medley winner Pipe Major Jim Knox, 2nd Bn Northern Irish



... and to champion drummer Cpl Neil Sloan



Overall band champions Glasgow UOTC, first winners of the Silver Plate



Farewell gift for Elsie from Brig Monro

Couple call it a day

A couple described as the "cornerstone" of the welfare set-up in the Infantry Training Centre at Catterick Garrison have moved on to a well-earned retirement.

Syd and Elsie Jones called it a day after many years' service in the Salvation Army, capped by seven years at the ITC looking after recruits and permanent staff.

They were a great double act and a cherished institution in the Vickers Club in Vimy Barracks. The care and attention they gave over the years to young recruits from the UK and overseas earned them the personal thanks of the Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram MP, and the commandant, Brigadier Hughie Monro.

At a tree planting in their honour, Elsie said they would miss everyone — "We have been privileged to be here at the ITC," she added.



Brig Monro presents Syd with his gift

Hockey sponsors chip in

NAAFI Financial have sponsored Army hockey for the fifth year with the presentation of a £4,000 cheque to Col Tim Grimshaw CBE, sponsorship director of the Army Hockey Association.

Col Grimshaw said: "Army teams have consistently dominated Inter Services hockey over recent years. Without strong support from our sponsors, we would not be able to sustain such high standards."

Warm welcome for Minister

Armed Forces Minister Adam Ingram MP was given a warm welcome when he visited ATR Pirbright.

He was met by the Commanding Officer, Lt Col Sean O'Gorman and WO1 (RSM) K? M Howard REME. After a short briefing, the Minister visited the church, gymnasium and rehab gym, chatting to recruits on training along the way.

Mountain Tiger expedition conquers high-altitude trek



Campsite at Llamacorral, 3700m: left to right, WO2 Tom Sweeney, Lt Tom Millward and Lt Matt Sibley



WO2 Tom Sweeney and Bdr Des Blackwood climbing up to Laguna Churup, 4400m



Lt Tom Millward looking back down Quebrada Santa Cruz

Peak test of fitness

You have to be fit to tackle high-altitude trekking in the Peruvian Andes – especially with 22kg of kit on your back...

Cordillera Tiger

An eight-man team from ATR Pirbright have completed a demanding trek high up in the Andes in Peru.

The three-week expedition to the Cordillera Blanca region introduced the team – recruited from permanent staff across the regiment – to high altitude trekking and gave them the chance to visit the Inca ruins at Machu Picchu.

Exercise Cordillera Tiger meant months of planning and a training weekend in the Brecon Beacons before the journey to Peru. Once there, the team completed altitude acclimatisation and two self-sustained treks – the first covering the Santa Cruz trail and the Yanayaku pass, the second covering the Huapi Pass – before the cultural visit and R&R package.

“During the acclimatisation period, the team soon realised that working at heights of 4,000 metres

and above was not going to be easy,” said expedition member Captain Mike Smith, of 21C Rowcroft Coy. “But the full extent of the stresses of high altitude trekking was not fully appreciated until the first day of the trekking phase carrying 22kg. We realised this was not going to be a holiday, but a personal battle with the mountains.

“On the Santa Cruz trail, reaching the Punta Union pass, at 4,750 metres, was a great achievement. The local guides thought we had lost the plot – carrying all our own kit, we were doing it the hard way.”

Although hard, the trek allowed the team to appreciate the stunning views and meet some of the friendly locals.

“In true Brit fashion, we played a game of five-a-side football in Colcabamba at 3,400 metres which, unfortunately, we lost 7-5. This would have been a respectable score if the opposition hadn’t been aged six to 10!”

The second trek was much harder and the team encountered demanding conditions, including a harsh snow storm, vague zigzag trail and a tricky river crossing.

The cultural package involved a two-day tour to the sacred valley of the Incas and the world famous Inca ruins at Machu Picchu. “The history and achievements of the lost race were explained to us in detail and left us feeling a sense of awe for the lost civilisation,” said Mike.

“Peru offers some of the most challenging trekking routes and stunning scenery in the world. Thanks to the Commanding Officer of ATR Pirbright for allowing the exercise to take place and to the many organisations that sponsored it, including the REME, RLC, RA and RHA associations. Without this support the exercise would not have been possible.”



Team at Machu Picchu: Left to right, Lt Matt Sibley, Cpl Dave Garrett, Sgt Dave Pearce, Bdr Des Blackwood, Lt Tom Millward, Cpl Mark Thomas, Capt Mike Smith



Capt Mike Smith, expedition leader at Taullipampa. Punta Union is on the skyline, right

Going underground



Lt Sam Barnes

Army, RAF and civilian personnel joined forces for the latest TITAN HALL Joint Services caving exercise run each year by JSMT(C) in Northern Spain. Thirteen students and six instructors experienced 10 memorable days of quality caving in the Cantabrian Mountains, based in the tiny village of Ogarrio. Among them was Lt Sam Barnes of REME who said that after a week of confirming and refining personal skills, groups embarked on the big and challenging expedition trip, involving an extensive cave system and more than 24 hours underground. “All the students came away from Ex TITAN HALL with some form of caving qualification as well as having seen some amazing sights and learnt from a diverse group of people,” said Sam. “Ten days in Spain, great suntan, quality caving, great food and free wine, maybe you should give this caving a try?”

Major Lou back at work after tough triathlon trip

A Recruiting Group staff officer is back at work at Upavon after competing in the Triathlon World Championships in Honolulu, Hawaii. And her husband went along as trainer. Major Lou Whiting was one of the 16 women to represent Great Britain in the 30-34 age group in the standard distance event of 1,500m swim, 40km cycle and 10km run. She proudly took part in the Parade of Nations, when 2,000 athletes from 50 countries walked behind their country's flag to the opening ceremony. USA had the largest contingent of 600+ athletes and the UK was second with just over 300 athletes.

And what did Maj Whiting, 32, think of her race?

"The swim was two circuits and luckily the wind had calmed, reducing the swell and the washing machine motion! The cycle was an out and back course, mainly along a dual carriageway. I dropped my water bottle in the first 200 metres, but it did not cause me any other problems. The run was a little more challenging due to the temperature being in the 80s.

"I finished in 2.35.38 — 10 minutes slower than my normal finishing time for a triathlon over this distance, but this seemed to be the same for most of the other competitors. I was 13th out of 16 female GB athletes, with which I was



Maj Lou Whiting takes a break during her triathlon trip

satisfied, having qualified in the 16th position." Maj Whiting is now aiming for next year's world championships at Lausanne, Switzerland in September and is hoping to qualify at an event to be held at Longleat in June.

Lou Whiting joined the Army nine years ago and has seen regimental service with 1st Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery at Tidworth, and both 32 and 14 Regiments who are based at Larkhill.

She is married to fellow gunner Maj Frank Whiting who also works at Upavon — but prefers cricket to athletics. Lou Whiting is on the Recruiting Group planning staff involved in developing a one army system for recruiting into both the TA and the Regular Army.

She has also recently been appointed the secretary of Army Triathlon.

The Majors Whiting live in an idyllic Wiltshire village not many miles from Upavon where they breed Springer Spaniels and currently have a number of puppies for sale. (01980 618124)

Early next year they will be the first husband and wife pair to face the RA Battery Commanders' Board.

Anyone who is interested in triathlon, whether a novice or a seasoned competitor can find out more by going to the Army Triathlon Website or contact Maj Lou Whiting, Tel: 01980 618124. The ATA holds weekend training sessions throughout the winter and training camps in the UK and Lanzarote.

Referee Andy joins the premier ranks

Catterick's very own Andy Halliday is one of the highest ranked football officials in the UK.

Andy, the WO2 (QMSI) APTC, has moved on to the Premier League's select national list of assistant referees after three years on the main national list.

"This means I officiate in the Premiership, the Football League and nominated European matches," said Andy.

"The last two seasons have brought me trips to Everton, Bolton, Manchester United, Sunderland, Newcastle and Middlesbrough, as well as UEFA Cup matches Sampdoria v Vitoria Setubal in Italy and Rennes v Stuttgart in France."

Three Lions

He was also on duty for the FA Trophy Final in April — which qualified him for the coveted Three Lions badge — and the League One play-off in front of 60,000 fans at the Millennium Stadium, Cardiff.

Andy, who has served 20 years in the Army, seven of them with the Royal Signals before APTC, considers

himself fortunate to have done so well during his 12-year refereeing career.

"I've had the right breaks at the right time to move up the different levels and been in the right job to allow me flexibility to do the required games.

"My wife Cindy is a football coach, which also helps. When you are away doing two or three matches a week, you need a sympathetic partnership to allow you the freedom to carry out the duties needed at the top level."

Pressure

And he enjoys the big games.

"I can easily say I feel exactly the same as doing the Dog and Duck v the Red Lion. I just see it as two teams in different colours. If you allow the pressure to get to you, then it will affect your performance, which you cannot allow to happen.

"I must admit to the hairs on the back of my neck standing on end when coming out of the tunnel. Even the more experienced officials admit to a feeling of anticipation before the game."



Flying the flag... Andy watches closely as Wayne Rooney takes a corner in the Barclays Premiership match between Manchester United and Portsmouth at Old Trafford

PICTURE: JOHN PETERS/MANCHESTER UNITED VIA GETTY IMAGES

In the front row!

Members of the successful 14 Regt RA of the Royal School of Artillery, Larkhill with some of the trophies won at the Army Indoor Rowing Championships at Tidworth Leisure Centre in November. Inst Off Pete Freeman won the 2000m Over-40 lightweight individual event while the Regimental team won the 4 x 1,000m relay event

With the CO, Lt Col Hugh Baker, left, and the RSM, WO1 Simon Howe, right, are, from left, Sgt Phil Bottom, LBdr Rob Phillips and LBdr Scott Gibson. Fourth member of the team, LBdr Justin Hallam, was away on a course.

Other successful ATRA units taking part included ATR Pirbright and SEAE, Arborfield.



Fencing success

Maj Stu Brown, pictured, led the Combined Services Fencing Team to third place in the 36th International Team Fencing Tournament in Kingston, Canada.

The 14-strong team comprised the best fencers from all three Services. Maj Brown, a Sapper Officer, is presently serving as an SO2 at HQ RSME, Chatham.

