

# Morale, Psychological Wellbeing of UK Armed Forces and Entertainment:

A Report for the British Forces Foundation

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*An association exists between falling morale and rising mental health problems. Factors that sustain morale, therefore, protect against psychological disorders.*

Executive Summary



*George Formby entertaining troops in Normandy, 30 July 1944. Imperial War Museum: B8256*

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*Entertainment is a morale sustaining factor. Its provision has to be perceived as equitable and fair. Disproportionate delivery to rear areas causes resentment among front-line troops who experience greater risks.*

Executive Summary



*Jim Davidson, Founder of The British Forces Foundation, with Emma Bunton entertaining troops in Gibraltar, 2003.*  
The British Forces Foundation

# Executive Summary

Morale is not a given and has an intangible quality. It cannot be monitored solely by what an individual or group say, nor simply by what he or they do; morale is a state of mind expressed in varying degrees through language and behaviour.

Many variables are indicative of poor morale (desertion, absenteeism, disciplinary offences and sickness) though none is an absolute guide. They require experience and knowledge of military culture for their accurate interpretation as all can occur in units of high morale.

Esprit de corps and group cohesion contribute to good morale and can operate at a range of levels. They too are not an absolute guarantee. Today with the 'battle group' system, esprit de corps is unlikely to have a significant impact beyond battalion level.

No single factor can be guaranteed to raise morale. Amongst the variables that can raise or sustain morale are confidence in commanders, unit cohesion, belief in the task, the fair provision of rest and recreation.

An association exists between falling morale and rising mental health problems. Factors that sustain morale, therefore, protect against psychological disorders. They do not confer absolute protection as service personnel, if subjected to long-term or exceptionally severe stress, are likely to experience psychological problems.

Entertainment is a morale sustaining factor. Its provision has to be perceived as equitable and fair.

Disproportionate delivery to rear areas causes resentment among front-line troops who experience greater risks.

Poor quality entertainment, or entertainment inappropriately delivered, can depress morale by conveying to service personnel a lack of understanding or interest in their welfare.

Timing the delivery of entertainment is important as it can maximize the effect on morale. Entertainment has to be tailored to military audiences; civilian performers need an understanding of service culture to establish rapport.

Although technological innovation has broadened the range of entertainment, the significance of the live show, with direct human contact, has not diminished.

Good-quality entertainment, that which is memorable and conveys a sense of commitment, can serve to lift and sustain morale. How long this effect lasts has not been studied in detail. Anecdotal reports suggest that major stars can have a significant impact.

To date mental health problems experienced by UK armed forces in Afghanistan have remained relatively low (PTSD rates average 3% though rise to 7% for front-line troops). The contribution made by welfare packages, including entertainment, to well-being has yet to be quantified in population studies and merits further research.



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# Glossary of Abbreviations

ABC	Army Broadcasting Committee
AFPEO	Armed Forces Professional Entertainment Office
AFRS	American Forces Radio Services
AKC	Army Kinema Corps
BABS	British Army Broadcasting Service
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
BDD	British Defence Doctrine
BEF	British Expeditionary Force
BFBS	British Forces Broadcasting Service
BFN	British Forces Network
BFF	British Forces Foundation
CSE	Combined Services Entertainment
CSR	Combat stress reaction
DGW&E	Director General of Welfare and Education
DWP	Deployed Welfare Package
ENSA	Entertainments National Service Association
FOB	Forward operating base
IWM	Imperial War Museum
MHAT	Mental Health Advisory Team
NACB	Navy and Army Canteen Board
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
OMHNE	Operational Mental Health Needs Evaluation
ORBS	Overseas Recording Broadcast Service
PJHQ	Permanent Joint Headquarters, Norwood
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
RiP	Relief in place
RNFC	Royal Naval Film Corporation
SSVC	Services Sound and Vision Corporation
USO	United Services Organisation
WO	War Office

*Poor quality entertainment, or entertainment inappropriately delivered, can depress morale by conveying to service personnel a lack of understanding or interest in their welfare.*

#### Executive Summary



*Vera Lynn visits a munitions factory in the UK, 1941. Imperial War Museum: B553*



# Foreword

This report was commissioned at the request of The British Forces Foundation who after extensive research felt it was best carried out by King's College London. The British Forces Foundation applied for and received specific restricted funding for the report from the D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust and general funding from a number of other sources and organisations that support the charity in order to maintain its independence. They are all thanked for their generous support as are the many contributors. The impressive work, independence and dedication of Professor Edgar Jones deserves special recognition.

Whilst the concept of boosting the morale of servicemen and women through entertainment and other entertainment based projects seemed to pass the 'common sense' test and receive great praise from the beneficiaries, The British Forces Foundation has always been conscious that it has no evidence to suggest what it is doing is doing any lasting good. As an organisation that prides itself on its effect and effectiveness this presented an important gap in its evidential foundations.

The verbal brief to Professor Jones by me as Chief Executive of The British Forces Foundation was, "I want you to put me out of a job, as I would rather know today that I am wasting my time, than tomorrow, if that is the case we will do something else." The full written brief was initially articulated as follows:

*'In the ten British principles of war, as listed and defined in the 2008 edition of BDD (which also provides explanation), "Maintenance of Morale" is listed as the second most important tenant of warfare. Morale is defined as "a positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, perceptions of worth and group cohesion".*

*As with so many other areas of research, this boils down to the question – Why? Essentially we have spent more than a decade in the business of morale but without any academic understanding of the impact or importance of this work.*

*We understand that this subject would only be looked into if it stands up as a necessary area of psychological research but with ever more troops returning home to*

*a population entirely removed from "la vie militaire" and the long term mental implications perhaps this is an overdue area for greater scrutiny. Or there are studies we are unaware of.*

*Ideally The BFF would be looking towards a rigorous academic piece with the aim of: defining what morale is and why it is important and then quantifying the impact of boosting the morale of British servicemen and women, through live entertainment and other methods, on preventing psychological and emotional distress at a later stage? However, any approach that brings a greater appreciation or understanding would be of enormous value (even if that outcome indicated we are wasting our time).'*

It was accepted the task was a broad and difficult one and would perhaps not be achieved in its entirety but the attempt is nonetheless important. This report is an excellent attempt, producing results and conclusions hitherto unknown and opening the path for further important research. The report will be of great benefit to a wide group including the Ministry of Defence, charities and politicians.

In some quarters this report has caused nervousness due to the existence of a Government contract for live entertainment and perhaps being a precursor to a future bid and as such access to some information has not been made available due to commercial confidence. That is not and never has been the report's motivation although the report would be incomplete if it did not examine the existing provision of live entertainment by both the contractor and The British Forces Foundation.

The purpose and focus of the report, indeed its importance, is to inform future activity, where it should be concentrated and understanding of morale and the impact of entertainment in order to benefit those on the frontline serving their country. Often their interests are lost in procedure and bureaucracy as they stifle flexibility, speed of action and the opportunity to seize the moment. Successful entertainment has always captured the moment.

Mark Cann  
Chief Executive, The British Forces Foundation

*Although technological innovation has broadened the range of entertainment, the significance of the live show, with direct human contact, has not diminished.*

#### Executive Summary



*David Beckham visiting troops in Afghanistan, May 2010. SSVc*

# Introduction

This report commissioned by the British Forces Foundation addresses three central questions:

## 1. THE NATURE OF MORALE AS IT APPLIES TO THE UK ARMED FORCES

There are a range of definitions, including that in the 2008 edition of BDD: 'morale is a positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, perceptions of worth and group cohesion'. This contrasts with a narrower, but plausibly more useful, definition used during the Second World War: 'Morale', wrote Stephen Taylor, director of the Home Intelligence Division of the Ministry of Information in October 1941, should be defined 'not by what a person thinks or says, but by what he does and how he does it'; it was 'the state of conduct and behaviour of an individual or group'.

## 2. WHAT IMPACT DOES MORALE HAVE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?

It is widely stated that high morale protects the mental health of service personnel exposed to danger or prolonged periods of stress. Equally, low morale is hypothesised as increasing the risk of short-term breakdown (combat stress reaction) and longer-term psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety states, depression and alcohol dependency. However, the connection has not been studied in depth and is often regarded in policy documents as a given.

## 3. DOES ENTERTAINMENT IN ITS VARIOUS FORMS RAISE THE MORALE OF UK ARMED FORCES AND HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?

During the First World War, concert parties were sent from the UK to entertain troops serving with the BEF in France and Belgium in the belief this would sustain their morale during a long war of attrition. During the Second World War, ENSA, a semi-official organisation, recruited artistes of all types and celebrity to entertain troops at home and overseas. It is widely believed that Vera Lynn's visit to the 14th Army in spring 1944 had a major impact on the morale of troops in Burma, whilst the five- and seven-month tours of Joyce Grenfell to the Middle East and India stand as a record of endurance and commitment. In the post-war period, the formation of CSE saw the three services take control of entertainment for the UK armed forces. To gain a full understanding of the value of entertainment, it is important to study its role in detail from 1914 onwards. A wide variety of methods were used to organise and manage these services and this study will assess their impact not only on the troops immediately affected but also those nearby and the wider population in the UK. It will also assess the relative merits of entertainment delivered by an in-house, government organisation versus an independent charity supported by public donations. To what extent, for example, have The BFF succeeded in forming a bridge between the armed forces and the general public. In short, does live entertainment provide more to service personnel than a short-term distraction from arduous duties and serve to convey a sense of continuing support and understanding?



*The Saturdays, Craig Campbell, Ruth Jones and Rob Brydon thanking the troops.* The British Forces Foundation.



# The Nature of Morale

## 1.1 DEFINITIONS OF MORALE

Within the military, there are a range of definitions, including that in the 2008 edition of British Defence Doctrine: 'morale is a positive state of mind derived from inspired political and military leadership, a shared sense of purpose and values, well-being, perceptions of worth and group cohesion' (Anon, JDP 0-01, 2008, 2-3). This contrasts with a narrower, but plausibly more useful, definition used during the Second World War. 'Morale', wrote Stephen Taylor, director of the Home Intelligence Division of the Ministry of Information in October 1941, should be defined 'not by what a person thinks or says, but by what he does and how he does it'; it was 'the state of conduct and behaviour of an individual or group'. Writing with reference to air-raids and their effect on the civilian population,



*Noel Coward at a British airfield to entertain British troops in Persia and Iraq, September 1943. Imperial War Museum: E26000*

J.T. MacCurdy, a psychiatrist, added 'morale is meaningless, or at least ineffective, unless it promotes action... A most important expression of morale is confidence in activity to be undertaken' (MacCurdy, 1943, 141).

At the end of the Second World War, Lt Colonel John Sparrow, an assistant adjutant-general at the War Office, completed a report on morale in the British Army. He defined morale as 'the attitude of the soldier towards his employment' and considered it to be a measure of 'keenness' (Sparrow, 1949, 1). According to Colonel Sparrow, the highest morale of troops in the UK engaged in home defence was found in units 'engaged on intensive training', while the morale of servicemen overseas 'improved in proportion to the extent and importance of active operations, and it was always troops in the line that provided the fewest problems of morale' (Sparrow, 1949, 11). The last statement is questionable but the premise underlining both observations is that purposeful activity both raises and sustains morale.

However, the concept of morale is not exclusive to the military and can be applied to any group of people whether at work or engaged in recreation. Occupational psychologists suggest that morale constitutes three elements: satisfaction, motivation and group cohesiveness (Motowidlo and Borman, 1978). These variables were chosen, in part, because they can be measured by psychometric tests.

## 1.2 INDICATORS OF MORALE IN THE ARMED FORCES

Morale has a nebulous quality and there are no absolute guides. Nevertheless, most authors are agreed that units which perform efficiently usually manifest good morale. Conversely, signs that morale is falling or low include absenteeism, desertion, high sickness rates, general untidiness and frequent disciplinary offences. However, none of these measures is an infallible measure of morale. Take, for example, discipline. During the Second World War, Lord Moran observed that fighter pilots once on the ground were an unruly group and would not keep 'a stringent discipline such as the guards accept' (Moran, 1945, 176). At sea, submariners dressed casually and 'the inspection and saluting business hardly exist'. During the First World War, Australian battalions 'could not believe that discipline

as we understand that term was necessary. They got on quite well in battle without it' (Moran, 1945, 176). During periods of combat, morale was high in all three groups, though formal discipline was lax.

Mutiny is perhaps the most extreme expression of a collapse of morale. Even mutiny is not an infallible guide as some forms can indicate the presence of strong morale and esprit de corps. Take, for example, the case of soldiers who refuse to obey an order to leave the combat zone having been wounded or fallen ill. In the recent Iraq campaign (Operation TELIC), there are accounts of Royal Marines concealing burns so that they could remain with their unit, and of a marine attempting to hide a broken leg so that he could fly to Afghanistan (Operation HERRICK). During the Second World War, 192 soldiers of the 50th (Northumbrian) and 51st (Highland) Divisions, having recovered from wounds, mutinied at Salerno in September 1943. Expecting to return to their original units, they objected to being sent as reinforcements to infantry battalions where they had no comrades or regimental association (Holmes, 2003, 327-28). Arguably it was the strength of their esprit de corps, forged in the Western Desert, which caused them to refuse to obey orders.

During 1941-42 in the Western Desert, some cited untidy dress and lax saluting among British troops as evidence to support an assessment of low morale (Sparrow, 1949, 5; James, 1955, 140). However, like mutiny, these factors are not a sure guide to morale. Field Marshal Wolsley argued that this is a matter of judgement: 'to know where to relax, where to remain firm or where to tighten the reins requires the exercise of great common sense aided by experience in the customs of war' (1871, 4). Field Marshall Montgomery himself recognised that pre-war standards of discipline appropriate to regular soldiers could not be applied to a conscript army engaged in intense fighting: 'human weaknesses were fully appreciated and a man's lot was made as easy for him as possible. This is why he [Montgomery] was so lenient in the matter of dress' (de Guingand, 1947, 469).

Desertion reached such proportions during the campaign for Italy that on three occasions commanders called for the reintroduction of the death penalty as a deterrent (French, 2000, 138). It was rumoured that there were 20,000 Allied deserters in Italy, and though this figure exceeds the official total by almost ten to one, it reflected a serious problem (Holmes, 1997, 218). Did high desertion rates necessarily indicate that morale was low in British troops? For some desertion was a function of war

weariness at a time when there was no foreseeable likelihood of the conflict ending. When five of Alex Bowlby's comrades in the Greenjackets, a front-line unit with an impressive record, deserted including the section commander, there was a measure of sympathy for them: 'if they've 'ad enough, now's the time to pack it in' (Bowlby, 1969, 16). The battalion had fought in the Western Desert before deploying to Italy and some soldiers believed that they had used up their quota of luck and further combat would see their death; for these a sense of injustice may have prompted their desertion. Thus indicators, such as disciplinary offences, sickness rates, absenteeism are important, but not infallible, guides to the state of morale. They have meaning only when set within the general military context and require, as Wolsley argued, experience and judgment in their interpretation. Equally, low sickness rates and the presence of good discipline often, but not always, indicate good morale. As Sparrow argued, the highest discipline could be observed in a detention barracks where morale was plausibly low (Sparrow, 1949, 2).

### 1.3 MORALE IN CONTEXT

Indicators of morale are in part specific to military context. A sign of buoyant morale on the battlefield may be different from that in a rear zones. For example, an untidy soldier on the battlefield may well have high combat motivation, whereas similar dress observed at a base, protected from the dangers of battle, may indicate poor morale.

### 1.4 FACTORS THAT MAINTAIN OR RAISE MORALE

Commanders are agreed that it is far easier to erode than to raise morale so factors that lift the spirits of troops are of great importance. Sparrow identified a number of variables that supported morale: a positive military situation, confidence in leaders, efficiency of training and weapons, comradeship and esprit de corps, good living conditions, medical services, entertainments and welfare generally, the efficient administration of leave, posting and promotion (1949, 3).

Lt Colonel J.S.Y. Rogers, medical officer to 4th Black Watch during the First World War, argued that attention to the welfare of soldiers could do much to both raise and maintain morale:

*If the medical officer takes an interest in the men, if he sees that the men are comfortably, well housed, kept clean with plenty of baths... if the men realise that the medical officer is taking an interest in the general health and welfare of the battalion (asking them to do*



impossible things irritates them and tends towards a nervous element); if the men have any grievance see if you can get it redressed... Take an interest in their sport; see that they get plenty of sporting competitions. If you do all this the men will give you their confidence (Southborough, 1922, 64).

Colonel Rogers believed that periods of rest, particularly when a battalion was engaged in a tough sector such as the Ypres salient, were beneficial and reduced the rate of psychological breakdown (1922, 63).

By late 1942, the preservation of manpower had become a key concern for the British Army. General Bernard Montgomery, commander of 21 Army Group, recognised the need to conserve the strength of his fighting units because recruitment could no longer compensate for losses (French, 2000, 244). Infantry, in particular, were in short supply (Fraser, 2002, 204). High morale in modern terminology served as a force multiplier. Montgomery identified a number of factors that supported morale:

The soldier who is well provided for, who is not disturbed by petty and unnecessary inconveniences, who knows that everything possible is being done for him, who is well clothed and well fed, is a contented soldier... Morale suffers as a result of boredom. Boredom is usually caused by a lack of variety, not by a lack of anything to do. Baths, clean clothing, entertainment, newspapers and the many little things which good administration will provide, all kill boredom, but they must be properly organised. Entertainment, if a man misses his meal to see it, is of little value (Montgomery, 1944, 38).

Field Marshal Lord Carver, who had served as an armoured brigade commander during the campaign for north-west Europe, argued that the positive factors that support morale played a greater part in maintaining unit effectiveness than disciplinary punishments, such as imprisonment or even death for desertion (Carver, 1989, 70). 'The maintenance of close emotional links between comrades', he identified as ranking 'high among these positive factors, reinforced by the belief in [an] outfit's superiority over others, and... pride in that'.

Alcohol has traditionally played a key role in sustaining morale during arduous campaigning. Indeed, the term 'Dutch courage' derives from gin taken by English troops in the Low Countries to stiffen their resolve during the Thirty Years War. Indeed, during the Battle of Waterloo many British regiments gave out spirits both before and during the conflict. Seamen in

the Royal Navy received a daily ration of alcohol (brandy until 1655 when replaced by rum) until July 1970 in recognition of the hazards not only of combat but routine life on a sailing vessel (Jones and Fear, 2011).

The decision taken during the harsh winter of 1914-15 to reintroduce a rum ration for UK troops serving with the British Expeditionary Force caused fierce controversy in the medical press. Doctors were divided between those who saw this as a justified morale-boosting measure and those who considered it wholly harmful to health and performance. The official allowance was 2.5 fluid ounces twice a week increased to daily for soldiers in the trenches. Victor Horsley, the eminent surgeon, countered the widely-held idea that alcohol had medicinal benefits (Horsley, 1915). In particular, soldiers believed that rum would both feed and warm them as well as serving as a stimulant. Although Horsley and other doctors showed that alcohol had deleterious effects on function, such as accuracy in shooting (Astley Cooper, 1915), rum continued to be issued throughout the conflict because of its popularity amongst front-line troops. Some doctors argued that its impact on morale was such that it outweighed any physical adverse effects: 'when we are completely exhausted, and utterly incapable of further effort... the supreme value of alcohol at this desperate moment is that it frees this reserve [of energy], places at the service of the organism for that instant use' (Mercier, 1915, 489). In his evidence to the 1922 enquiry into shell shock, Lt. Colonel J.S.Y. Rogers, medical officer to 4th Black Watch, observed 'had it not been for the rum ration I do not think we should have won the war. Before the men went over the top they had a good meal and a double ration of rum and coffee' (Southborough, 1922, 68). Today the abuse of alcohol, rather than post-traumatic stress disorder, is the main problem facing the psychological health of UK armed forces. It has proved an intractable issue not least because of its long association with the military but also because it is widely perceived as having a beneficial effect on unit cohesion and morale.

Both success and failure in the conduct of a campaign have an important impact on morale. Montgomery believed that 'high morale is a pearl of a very great price and the surest way to obtain it is by success in battle' (Sparrow, 1949, 2). In summer 1942, a series of defeats in the Western Desert, for example, followed by the loss of Singapore and the sinking of HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales* saw morale in UK armed forces and civilians fall to a significant low (Jones et al, 2006, 63). Wars of attrition also present

commanders with difficulties of sustaining morale when victory remains a distant or remote possibility. Morale in the British Expeditionary Force fell after the failure of the autumn offensives of 1917, while large sections of the French Army mutinied in August 1917. Plausibly, the current campaign in Afghanistan, also a war of attrition with no immediate or easy outcome, has the capacity to erode morale, though recent studies have not identified a fall in unit cohesion (Jones, et al, in press).

In 1943, before US troops were fully engaged in fighting, American commanders believed that the morale of conscripts could be raised by patriotic propaganda, films and lectures designed to stress the value of Western democracy and the evils of fascism (Schreiber, 1943). High morale, it was argued, 'springs from a full knowledge of the meaning and significance of this war. It is a state of mind which can come to an individual only when he fully understands the very fundamental issues at hand' (1943, 198). However, the notion that morale can be buttressed by patriotic propaganda was questioned by Shills and Janowitz's (1998) analysis of the German Army in the final phase of World War Two. Observers had been struck by the tenacity and cohesion of the Wehrmacht even though



*An ENSA concert party entertaining troops in Normandy, 26 July 1944.*  
Imperial War Museum: B8050

it faced certain defeat. At first, its high morale was ascribed to the strength of National Socialist indoctrination. However, Shills and Janowitz's study suggested that political beliefs played very little part in the ability of units to remain effective. Yet, caution is needed in interpreting Shills and Janowitz's findings. They are based partly on POW interrogations carried out during the war and it is plausible that captured soldiers were more likely to emphasize the role of local social factors and their own military professionalism, than of National Socialist ideology (Rush, 1999). Indeed, Shills and Janowitz acknowledged the role that ideology played amongst what they call the hard-core National Socialists, but estimate that the latter accounted for no more than 10–15 per cent of the fighting forces, mainly the junior officers (Wessely, 2006).

Shills and Janowitz identified a 'primary group structure' as lying at the heart of morale. The strength of the bonds between men in the same unit, between them and their officers and NCOs were crucial and it was only when physical casualties and other factors degraded these links that disintegration followed. Rates of desertion were far higher amongst soldiers who could not be assimilated into primary groups – notably Austrians, Poles and Russians who had been coerced into military service with the German Army. Their capacity to identify with the group was limited, whilst core members felt little in common with them. Factors, therefore, that bound men together were of great importance as 'where the primary group developed a high degree of cohesion, morale was high and resistance effective, or at least very determined' (Shills and Janowitz, 1998, 301).

Group cohesion in itself is not sufficient to inspire combat motivation. During the First World War, the German Army recruited large numbers of Poles and initially concentrated them within a small number of battalions. This was designed to foster unity and belonging. However, because the Poles lacked the patriotic identification of Germans, primary cohesion was often manifested in mass desertion and unreliability under fire (Watson, 2011; Watson, 2008, 193). The remedy adopted by the German High Command was to dilute the mixture of racial minorities in its front-line troops.

Furthermore, inflexible or extreme unit cohesion can undermine morale. Resourceful and determined young officers awarded wartime commissions and deployed to regular battalions during the First World War sometimes found themselves treated as second-class citizens. Captain Robert Graves suffered in this way

in 1 Royal Welch Fusiliers as did Second Lieutenant Evans who was on attachment from 7 (Merioneth and Montgomery) Battalion. Even in December 1916 when so many 'temporary gentlemen' had been killed or wounded at the Somme, officers in the two regular battalions opposed any suggestion that the 'amateurs' be granted membership of the regimental association (McPhail and Guest, 2001, 13). Soldiers could be seriously wounded or die in the Royal Welch Fusiliers but they or their relatives would not be acknowledged once the conflict had ended. This example of extreme esprit de corps was unlikely to have encouraged high morale among volunteer or conscript servicemen.

Commanders such as Montgomery believed that soldiers recruited from a democracy needed to believe in the rightness of their cause, even if only at a passive level. Others, such as Field Marshal Slim, went further and argued that soldiers had to have 'belief in a cause' (Slim, 1956, 209). He wrote:

The essence of morale is that it should endure - have certain foundations. These foundations are spiritual, intellectual and material, and that is the order of their importance. Spiritual first because only spiritual foundations can stand real strain. Next intellectual because men are swayed by reason as well as feeling. Material last... because the very highest kinds of morale are often met when material conditions are lowest (Slim, 1956, 208).

Slim used the word 'spiritual' not in its religious sense but to denote belief in the mission and the righteousness of their cause. Against an aggressive enemy with racial and cultural differences, Slim inspired a demoralised army not only with the idea of defending India and the reconquest of Burma but also the destruction of the Japanese Army. Today, in Afghanistan UK forces face an enemy with a different culture and religion which serves foster a belief in the cause.

### 1.5 FACTORS THAT ERODE MORALE

A sense of injustice, of not being treated fairly, was identified as eroding morale. The belief that those in charge have little or no concern for servicemen's welfare damaged morale. For example, Lord Moran recalled that soldiers in the 1st Royal Fusiliers complained when they were required to remain in front-line trenches longer than normal because the Kitchener battalion replacing them was not considered sufficiently reliable. Some felt they were being asked to take additional risks unfairly: fusiliers asked 'if he [the colonel who had agreed to the extended stay] doesn't

look after our interests who will?' (Moran, 1945, 83).

When in January 1942 the adjutant-general's department began to collect regular reports on the morale of troops both at home and overseas, it became apparent that morale throughout the British Army was far from high (Crang, 1997, 60-61). Within the UK, poor accommodation, a lack of good quality food, dull routine tasks and the failure to provide canteens and entertainment in many camps were identified as crucial failings. The poor relationship between junior officers and their men, combined with what was seen as the sham of senior officers and government ministers conducting grand, formal inspections of troops without a word of encouragement to other ranks led to a sense of alienation from the higher military authorities (Crang, 1997, 67). The Morale Committee set up by the War Office in March 1942 sought to both monitor and address grievances. A raft of measures followed: privileges of rank were reduced, efforts were made to improve man-management, a system of weekly 'request hours' was instituted when men could approach officers informally, formal inspections kept to a minimum, and greater attention was paid to communications between troops and the authorities. It was important to convey to conscripted soldiers that their well-being was a matter of concern and was being addressed in practical ways. The provision of entertainment was one element but popular opinion about the serviceman and his role was also identified as significant. A morale report for September 1940 had noted that soldiers were immensely grateful for any 'interest' or 'sympathy' shown towards him by the general public as long as it was offered without a show. It was important, therefore, to build up the image of the British Army in the public mind. If a soldier felt appreciated and respected then this fed directly into his morale.

During the Second World War, the Royal Navy, as the senior service, and the Royal Air Force boosted by the publicity attached to the Battle of Britain had strong popular images. The Army as the largest of the three services and largely composed of conscripts occupied a far less positive place in popular culture. Considerable effort was made by the War Office to improve its public image. Films, such as *Desert Victory* produced by the Ministry of Information in 1943 and *The Way Ahead* (1944) were made, radio broadcasts and newspaper articles commissioned to present soldiers in a positive light, while an attempt to smarten battledress by the issue of collar and ties to other ranks. Morale in the British Army rose from the low point of 1942 in part because the public became more appreciative of its efforts as victories followed in the Western Desert, Italy and in northwest Europe.

## 1.6 ESPRIT DE CORPS: TASK AND SOCIAL COHESION

Esprit de corps is defined as loyalty and identification with a group (Holmes, 2003, 50). Pride in a unit is also linked to comradeship and unit cohesion. It can operate at any level from company through to battalion, division and even attach to a particular army. For example, the Eighth Army during the Second World War gathered a particular following due to a strong sense of group identity forged through campaigns in both North Africa and Italy. Similarly, a sense of shared hardships in Burma fused a strong sense of esprit de corps around the Fourteenth Army which later found expression in the Burma Star Association.

Traditionally, esprit de corps was formed at a company or battalion level during training. Field Marshal Wolesley argued that it was 'made up of trifles... Take the best rifle battalion and clothe it in red, it would soon cease to be the dashing body of skirmishers it is now' (1871, 3). It relied on social cohesion amongst recruits and identification with the regiment, its history, customs and manner of operation. Campaigning can add a further level of commitment when soldiers extend their loyalties to a particular brigade, division or even an army as a result of collective efforts to achieve common goals or tasks. Robert J. McCoun labelled this as 'task cohesion', as distinct from social cohesion or group pride (McCoun, 1993).

Unit solidarity stemming from a common task is particularly relevant today with the formation of 'battle groups', tailored for specific operations. In Afghanistan, a company may be taken from a battalion to reinforce another unit. With the increasing tempo of operations battalions also move between a succession of battle groups so that there is insufficient time to form a social association with a larger unit. This shows the increasing importance of professionalism and what is often called 'swift trust' amongst units and sub-units put together quite rapidly. Indeed, during long campaigns servicemen have always been required to make rapid judgements about the reliability of unknown replacements (Bowlby, 1969). However, studies reviewed by McCoun suggested that combat personnel could perform effectively, regardless of whether they related to one another socially, so long as they are committed to their mission. The concept of the battle group, which gives greater flexibility on the ground, creates a need to maintain high morale at a battalion or company level and to establish a strong sense of shared purpose.

## 1.7 SUMMARY

Current doctrine argues that there are three components that underpin the UK armed forces ability to operate and fight: moral, physical and conceptual (Anon, JDP 0-01, 2008). The physical element refers to the means of conducting operations, the conceptual relates to the ideas that govern fighting, whilst morale is the ability to get personnel to conduct campaigns, in essence the will to fight.

Morale is not a given. 'The factors of morale are intangible', observed MacCurdy (1943, 128), 'because they are psychological'. Within a group, morale fluctuates on a daily basis and can be brought down or elevated by a single event of significance. Although assessments can be made of its current state, predictions about future morale are notoriously difficult. Counter-intuitively, for example, the death of a single soldier within a unit of good morale often draws men together and stiffens their resolve. Within the military, it cannot be taken for granted and requires constant vigilance to assess its level and address issues that may undermine team spirit.

Montgomery famously wrote in his preparatory instructions for the battle of El-Alamein: 'morale is the big thing in war. We must raise the morale of our soldiers to the highest pitch' (McPherson, 1950, 13). The heavy bombardment that he ordered before the attack was in part to demoralise the Afrika Corps but also to boost the spirits of the attackers by showing that they were supported by a sustained and destructive artillery barrage. Asked after the war what he considered the single most important factor in war, Montgomery replied, 'without high morale, no success can be achieved, however good may be the strategic or tactical plan, or anything else' (1950, 13).

Field Marshal Slim is recognised as one of the most successful leaders of the Second World War largely because he transformed the morale and fighting capability of the 14th Army in Burma. Not only had this force been defeated by the Japanese, it was severely demoralised. His men felt isolated and forgotten, whilst many believed that they did not have the capacity to defeat an enemy skilled in jungle warfare. Slim succeeded in rebuilding his force, restored their confidence and took them back to Burma and ultimate victory. Reflecting on this achievement, he wrote that

morale is a state of mind. It is that intangible force which will move a whole group of men to give their last ounce to achieve something, without counting the cost to themselves; that makes them feel that they are part of something greater than themselves (Slim, 1956, 208).



# Morale and Psychological Well-being

It is widely stated that high morale protects the mental health of service personnel exposed to danger or prolonged periods of stress. Equally, low morale is hypothesised as increasing the risk of short-term breakdown (combat stress reaction) and longer-term psychological disorders such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety states, depression and alcohol dependency. However, the connection has not been studied in depth and is often regarded as a given.

## 2.1 MORALE AND SHELL SHOCK DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In the late nineteenth century, the dramatic increase in firepower caused by industrialization and the expectation of heavy casualties in attacking troops, led staff officers to emphasise the need for an offensive mentality. Morale and training were given a pre-eminent role in what was called the 'psychological battlefield' (Travers, 1987, 43-51). In the past, it was argued, farm labourers, accustomed to killing animals and living off the land, had joined the British Army. Tough and resilient farmers had formed the armies of Wellington. By the 1880s such volunteers had been diluted by urban youths drawn from shops, offices and factories, who were considered intrinsically weak. The dilemma, therefore, was how to transform such recruits into a 'sharp fighting machine' with the determination and resilience to overcome the carnage inflicted by modern weaponry. Staff officers were divided between 'optimists' who believed that training and high morale would inculcate the necessary offensive spirit, and 'pessimists' who argued that the solution lay with the development of more powerful artillery to make the task of attacking troops less onerous.

The relationship between morale and psychological well-being was a major question during the First World War when an epidemic of shell shock swept through the British Expeditionary Force. Some units, however, sustained high casualties but continued to operate as an effective fighting force. One such example was the 2nd Cameronians (Scottish Rifles) at the battle of Neuve Chapelle in March 1915 (Baynes, 1967). Over six days of combat, the battalion was reduced from 900 to 150 men yet remained a disciplined fighting force, having suffered 83% casualties. How can we explain this phenomenon? Lt Colonel John Baynes argued that a combination of high morale and regimental pride lay at the root of this determined fighting. He argued that

the morale and esprit de corps were based on mutual trust between officers and men, a sense of duty in all ranks, strong discipline and sound administration. Secondly, this was a regular battalion drawn from industrial Lanarkshire and Glasgow composed of unskilled labourers and miners who were familiar with privation, hard working conditions and risk of death and injury before enlistment. Army service brought a better diet and living conditions, sense of belonging and comradeship, physical fitness and team spirit.

At first, shell shock was understood as a physical wound, a form of concussion or toxic exposure. However, once it had become clear that it was a psychological disorder, what today might be described as combat stress reaction (CSR), army commanders became concerned. When the Battle of the Somme failed to achieve a breakthrough and it had become clear that this was a war of attrition, the need to keep as many men as possible in the front line became imperative. Shell shock had the capacity to weaken the teeth arms not only by tying up large numbers of combat troops in hospitals but also resulting in their transfer to combat support and base roles on discharge from treatment. In 1920 the government set up the War Office Committee of Inquiry into "Shell Shock" to find out the cause of disorder and explore ways of preventing any recurrence in future conflicts.

Evidence was gathered from military doctors and commanders. Some commanders, such as Lt Colonel Lord Gort, VC, of the Grenadier Guards, argued that morale and training were crucial in preventing shell shock: 'among the regular battalions with a good class of men the circumstances were rather different to those in the New Army units... in the face of strong morale and esprit de corps shell shock would be practically non-existent' (Southborough, 1922, 48, 50). This belief was echoed by Lt General Sir John Goodwin, Director-General Army Medical Services, who added 'in a really good, well-trained, well-disciplined regiment, no matter what the stress is, there is comparatively little in the way of breaking down' (1922, 15). Captain J.I.C. Dunn, medical officer to the Royal Fusiliers, observed that in units of poor morale, battalions of the Labour Corps, 'appeared to be very tolerant of defective and unstable men, almost to waiting until a breakdown occurred' (1922, 59), while Lt Colonel J.S.Y. Rogers, medical officer to 4th Black



Watch recalled that 'the company officer who has the best company will have the least number of cases of neurosis' (1922, 65). The committee itself concluded that to prevent shell shock in the future 'every possible means should be taken to promote morale, esprit de corps and a high standard of discipline' (1922, 190).

## 2.2 BREAKDOWN AND MORALE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Nevertheless, the sanguine findings of the War Office Committee of 1922, that high morale and good quality leadership provided long-term protection against psychological disorder, were not confirmed by studies conducted in the Second World War. By 1943, evidence gathered from Arctic convoys, Bomber Command and the campaign in the Western Desert showed that even elite servicemen in units of high morale could break down if exposed to extended periods of intense stress. It was important, therefore, to prepare and manage combat troops to maximise the time that they were effective in a front-line role.

This understanding related to Lord Moran's concept of courage, which was based on his own experience as a regimental medical officer attached to the Royal Fusiliers during the First World War and interviews of pilots conducted during the Second. In *The Anatomy of Courage* (1945), Moran proposed a psycho-biological view of military effectiveness. He believed that servicemen are born with a 'bank account' of courage (a metaphor first stated by T.E. Lawrence to describe his own combat experience in the First World War) and the amount varies between individuals. Every time an individual goes into combat, he spends some of his courage. Training, morale, confidence in equipment and 'loyalty to a fine battalion' may slow down the rate of expenditure (1945, 70). Periods of rest and recreation allow the account to be replenished but never to its original level so that eventually the entire capital is exhausted and the soldier suffers a breakdown. Lord Carver recalled of the Second World War that he had 'removed four commanding officers, all of them highly decorated and respected men, older than myself and with more battle experience than I. But they had had it, and for the sake both of their units and of themselves, they had to go' (Carver, 1989, 70).

Other metaphors that caught hold in military culture to describe psychological demands of combat included nerves being stretched as tight as piano wires, a breakdown being conceptualized as a sudden snap. Alternatively the stress of campaigning was akin to winding up a clock spring to the point where the mechanism broke or rapidly unwound and was not

able to be wound up again.

After three years service in the Western Desert as consulting psychiatrist to the Eighth Army, Brigadier G.W.B. James concluded that units with high morale 'seldom produced more than a few cases of true psychiatric breakdown' (James, 1955, 140). By contrast, 'as in the 1914-18 war, it was observed repeatedly that the highest number of psychiatric casualties occurred in units with poor physique, low intelligence, poor training, discipline and leadership'. 'Poor morale', James believed, was 'a menace to the military competence of the force as a whole'.

In his 1950 War Office report on Discipline, Brigadier A.B. McPherson concluded, 'experience late in the war goes to show that absence rarely occurred among men of good morale and discipline... for a man who has reached a state of mental or physical exhaustion, acute discontent or even actual fear, it [desertion] is perhaps a choice between two evils, whether to stay and endure these conditions of boredom, unhappiness or sheer fright, or to leave it all behind' (McPherson, 1950, 50).

## 2.3 CONTEMPORARY STUDIES OF MORALE AND MENTAL HEALTH

A study of 614 randomly selected US Army enlisted personnel stationed overseas recorded self-report measures of motivation and satisfaction with various aspects of military life (Motowidlo and Borman, 1978). These scores were then correlated with external ratings of company effectiveness (including disciplinary offences, sick rates, performance awards, re-enlistment rates and inspection scores). Officer's ratings of unit morale were found to correlate with self-report measures of motivation and satisfaction and with administrative indices of company effectiveness. The authors concluded that morale in units may partly be a function of how satisfied soldiers are in general with their army lives.

Although deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan have prompted an increasing number of studies of the mental health of UK and US troops, few have correlated their findings with morale. Most investigations have focused on rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other psychological disorders. The closest that any of these studies have approached the question of morale is to ask subjects for an assessment of unit cohesion. A major study by Iversen et al (2008) surveyed 4,762 regular service personnel deployed to Iraq in 2003 and found that PTSD is more likely to occur in those of lower rank, low educational attainment and a history of

childhood adversity. They also suggested that unit cohesion may have protected against psychological disorder in those troops deployed to front-line duties. In January-February 2009, a survey was conducted of a 15% sample of UK armed forces deployed to Iraq during Operation TELIC 13 (Mulligan et al, 2010). Based on a self-report questionnaire, 3.4% of participants scored as having probable PTSD. Although no data was collected on morale itself, subjects had been asked to score the level of cohesion in their unit. Increased risk of reporting PTSD was associated with weaker unit cohesion, and indeed a self-rated assessment of poor overall general health was associated with poorer unit cohesion and poorer perceived leadership.

Studies of UK reservists deployed to Iraq have shown that they experienced elevated rates of mental disorders, including PTSD, when compared with regular troops (Hotopf et al, 2006). Among the explanations proposed for their psychological vulnerability is weakness of unit cohesion (Browne et al, 2007). In questionnaires, reservists reported lower levels of comradeship and unit cohesion than regulars deployed to Iraq. These factors have been shown to be the single most sustaining and motivating force among troops, and psychiatric injuries are more prevalent in personnel who do not form close relationships within their parent unit (Rielly, 2000). Indeed, during the 1991 Gulf War those reserve units of the US Army which recorded lower levels of cohesion and effective leadership were also found to be at greater risk of poor psychological health (Malone et al, 1996).

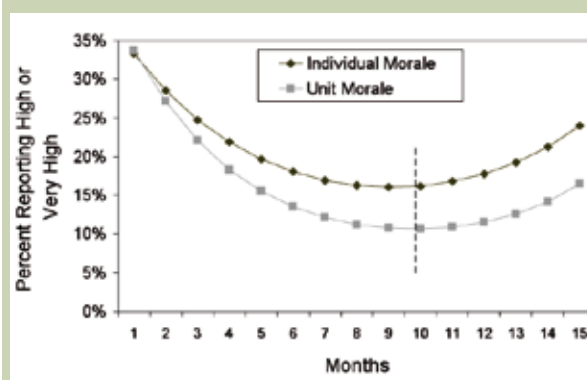
#### 2.4 COMPARATIVE STUDIES OF US FORCES DEPLOYED TO IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

US Mental Health Advisory Team Reports (MHAT) represent one of the largest mental health surveillance programmes undertaken in a combat zone. Since 2003, six teams have been deployed to Iraq and four to Afghanistan. The evidence that they have gathered is not only detailed but allows trends to be identified over time.

The MHAT team deployed to Iraq in 2005-06 found that morale among US soldiers and marines was generally poor; 45% of those surveyed reported low or very low unit morale. Two causes were identified: first, the imposition of garrison rules in combat zones without any obvious practical purpose (MHAT, 2006, 17). These included inconsistent dress regulations. Secondly, access to 'welfare and recreational assets' was considered unfair, so that soldiers and marines engaged in high-risk operations outside bases were disadvantaged in terms of the provision of rest and

recreation facilities. Members of combat units, in contrast to support and base units, had to 'wait in long lines at the MWR [morale, welfare and recreational] sites to use the phone or e-mail, who can rarely take the afternoon off to attend MWR events or concerts, and who have difficulty taking advantage of the in-theatre R&R programme' (MHAT, 2006, 18). In other words, the failure to provide equal access to entertainment was a factor in reducing the morale of front-line troops.

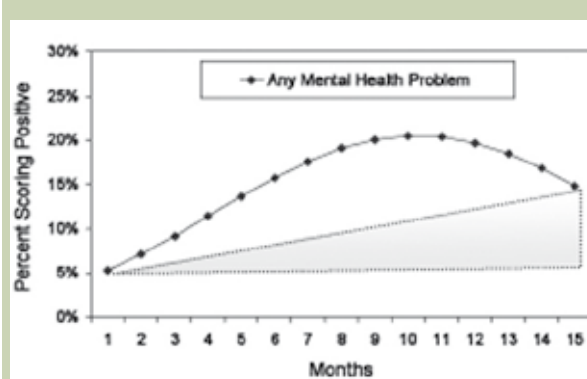
Figure 1: Individual and Unit Morale of US Service Personnel in Iraq during 2007



Source: MHAT V Report (2008), p. 41.

The MHAT team deployed to Iraq in November-December 2007 surveyed 2,295 subjects and found an association between falling morale and an increase in mental health problems (MHAT, 2008, 24-26, 40-42). Most US service personnel deployed to Iraq were undertaking tours of over 9 months and some as long as fifteen. Morale declined during the first two-thirds of a tour, reaching a low at 10 months (Figure 1), the same point at which mental health problems rose to a peak (Figure 2). Both individual reports of morale and

Figure 2: Mental health problems reported by US Service personnel in Iraq during 2007



Source: MHAT V Report (2008), p. 42.

assessments of unit morale were significantly lower than in 2005, whilst mental health problems were significantly higher. 'R&R' was included among protective factors and possibly as a consequence of the findings of 2006, a higher proportion of service personnel were taking in-theatre R&R: 9.2% compared with 5% in 2006 (MHAT, 2008, 54).

The MHAT team deployed to Iraq in 2008-09 was concerned with the elevated rates of suicide recorded for US armed forces. To address increased levels of self-harm, resilience training was designed to strengthen psychological health by teaching individuals techniques for stress reduction, post-traumatic growth, self mastery and team building (MHAT, 2009a, 81). The establishment and enforcement of work-rest cycles was an important element in the management of a healthy lifestyle once in theatre. 'Everyone', the report concluded, 'needs "down time" – even leaders... A R&R plan should be established early to build up predictability for team members. When fatigue is high, individual defences are down and those who are



*Gracie Fields sings at a munitions factory in the UK, 1941.*  
Imperial War Museum: P76

already susceptible to suicidal tendencies only become more so' (MHAT, 2009a, 81). In other words, a fair and comprehensive programme of rest, recreation and entertainment was part of a larger strategy to improve the mental health of US armed forces deployed to Iraq.

The 2009 MHAT Report on US forces deployed to Afghanistan found improved levels of morale (17% of the sample reporting high or very high morale) and concluded that this was 'mostly influenced by factors that directly affected them [soldiers and marines] both as an individual and as a unit such as leadership and personal time off' (MHAT, 2009b, 18). However, this trend was not sustained as the MHAT Report undertaken in 2010 and published in February of the following year found that the morale of US Army units deployed to Afghanistan had fallen significantly compared with assessments for 2005 and 2009 (MHAT, 2011, 5). In addition, 'rates of combined psychological problem measure (acute stress, depression, or anxiety)' were also significantly higher than 2005. These appear to have been caused by an increase in both the frequency of combat exposures and the proportion of service personnel on multiple deployments to Afghanistan. Soldiers on their third or fourth tour reported significantly more psychological problems and use of mental health medications than soldiers on their first or second deployment. The percentage of US Marines reporting high or very high unit morale was significantly lower in 2010 than in 2006 or 2007, while the rate of US Marines reporting psychological problems (acute stress symptoms, depression or anxiety) was significantly higher in 2010 than in 2006 or 2007 (MHAT, 2011, 6).

A key finding from the MHAT reports submitted between 2003 and 2011 is that an enduring relationship exists between morale and well-being. Falling morale is associated with an increase in mental health problems. The 2011 Report also suggests that multiple tours combined with combat intensification serve to lower morale and increase the level of psychological problems. The report identified 'high ratings of NCO leadership, unit cohesion and perceived unit readiness' as factors that were likely to promote resilience (MHAT, 2011, 52). Resilience is assumed to be a teachable trait and associated with leadership skills and models. Whilst these findings relate to US troops, they have a general applicability and have served to inform the recent debate about tour lengths for UK armed forces. The proposal to increase deployments to Afghanistan from six to nine months was rejected in part because of concerns about adverse effects on morale and well-being.

# Entertainment and Psychological Well-being

It has long been accepted that soldiers on campaign require periods of rest and relaxation not only to extend the period for which they are effective but also to sustain their morale. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when British troops served overseas for periods of up to seven years, the tedium of garrison duty was broken by visiting magicians, acrobats and other performers. Frank Richards who served with the Royal Welch Fusiliers in India during the Edwardian period recalled that the Indian rope trick was a popular form of entertainment:

When we were at Agra one of our chaps who was a bit of a magician himself went on leave to Benares, and on his return, said that he had seen the rope trick performed there by a fakir who was the King-pin of all magicians in the world... I had often heard him say before he went to Benares that he would give a year of his life to see the rope-trick performed (Richards, 1936, 118-19).

With the recruitment of vast volunteer and conscript armies during both World Wars the need to provide entertainment was raised to an industrial scale. Evidence gathered from these conflicts provides important guidance for the present.

## 3.1 ENTERTAINMENT DEFINED

Entertainment in the armed forces covers a wide range of activities from soldiers singing around a piano in the mess, listening to a wireless programme to military brothels. Whilst prostitutes were widely used by young men faced with the prospect of death during both World Wars (to the extent that Montgomery countenanced the setting up of an official brothel in Tripoli to control infection rates), they are not the subject of this report (Harrison, 2004). In the absence of organised shows, servicemen on campaign have always entertained themselves. In a battalion there will always be members who can play an instrument or sing and will be called upon to perform to their pals. Spike Milligan, for example, played the trumpet and sang jazz vocals when in the Royal Artillery and was drawn into professional entertainment as a result of informal performances to his fellow gunners. Today service personnel with musical or singing talent are given an opportunity to perform in front of their colleagues in decompression shows at Camp Bloodhound, Cyprus.

The value of entertainment may be illustrated by the fact that prisoners-of-war, a group with consistently low morale, often organised shows themselves as a way of breaking the tedium and providing a temporary lift. Former Stalag Luft III prisoner Dick Churchill recalled, 'you became absorbed in the music, the surroundings recede into the background, you can imagine you weren't there for a while' (MacKenzie, 2004, 209). The quality of performances was often high not least because professional actors were amongst the POWs, including Denholm Elliott, Rupert Davies, Roy Dotrice and Clive Dunn (Gilbert, 2006, 174). There may, indeed, exist a basic human need for entertainment given its ubiquity across cultures at all times and the fact that people create their own shows when professional performances are not available.

This report focuses on organised entertainment that provided for the armed forces by professional artistes. It does not explore the provision of prostitutes even though the military have at various times organised and policed these facilities themselves.

## 3.2 ENTERTAINING THE TROOPS DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

As a largely static conflict of attrition, the First World War presented considerable problems of morale. Trench warfare exhausted troops both mentally and physically creating a need to raise their spirits once withdrawn from the front-line. Rear areas, including the UK, were used for training and recreation. Entertainment was provided on a large scale. Because there was comparatively little military movement, this could be organised on a semi-permanent basis. By the end of the war not only did concert and repertory parties tour France and Belgium, often travelling to forward areas, but other groups of actors and singers were deployed to specific base areas on three-month tours performing in existing or newly constructed theatres (Collins, 1997).

From December 1914 onwards, concert parties regularly travelled to France, performing at base hospitals. Officially sanctioned by the War Office, they were ad hoc voluntary groups that had to provide their own transport and equipment. The first, consisting of six cars and two pianos, landed at Boulogne and immediately gave a show in the local casino converted into a hospital. The party included Gladys Cooper, an actress, Ben Davies, tenor, Will Van Allen, comedian,



Ivy St Helier, comedy artist and pianist, and Willie Frame, a Scottish comic singer. Their tour lasted a month, though that undertaken in 1916 by Leslie Henson, George Grossmith and others consisted of a show for 600 soldiers and then a return to the UK.

As a member of the Women's Emergency Corps, Lena Ashwell, the actress and manager, sought to organise entertainment for the troops on a national basis (Smith, 2006). In February 1915, she raised funds for and led a two-week tour of base camps and hospitals in France (Collins, 1997, 149). Thereafter concert parties toured France and Belgium for between four and six weeks, travelling as close as possible to the front-line. On average about five groups left the UK every month. Because of the risks, they were largely composed of men until 1917, when conscription created such shortages, that female performers were allowed in increasing numbers. Ashwell and Princess Helena Victoria took responsibility for the artistes' professional and social conduct, ruling that participants should make 'no advertisement, no... use of the war to aggrandise one's



*Joan Regan in Berlin with a CSE show in 1959. SSVC*

professional popularity' (Collins, 1997, 150). With three performances a day, a third of concerts were put on in military hospitals. Reginald Johnson, a schoolmaster and baritone, joined one of Ashwell's parties. Evening shows were often in YMCA huts holding between 500 and 2,000 soldiers. Their appetite for entertainment was voracious: 'we would find the hall packed to the utmost' he recalled, 'the gangways themselves filled, and outside the windows groups of twenty to thirty of the unfortunate ones who could not get in, and though at times the rain poured on them they did not budge from those windows, but picked up what scraps of the concert they could get' (Bilsborrow, 1965, 113-14). Ashwell believed that entertainment was as important as first aid: 'in our professional capacity we might be of as much use as the Red Cross or St John's ambulance, for does not the soul of man need as much help as his body?' (Ashwell, 1922, 4).

Lena Ashwell's concert parties travelled to the Middle East as well as France and Belgium. A performance at El Kantara in Egypt in April 1918 was attended by Siegfried Sassoon, who captured the soldiers' longing for 'life with its song and dance – life with its brief gaiety' (McPhail & Guest, 2001, 152). Some of the troops had been overseas for two years and appreciated the connection with home. In his poem 'Concert Party (Egyptian base camp)', he wrote: 'O sing us the songs, the songs of our own land.... These eyes that keep their memories of the places so long beyond their sight' (Sassoon, 1961, 100).

In France, concert parties often performed to troops that had just left the trenches. Nelson Jackson a member of the 'Firing Liners' recalled that an audience of 400 soldiers newly out of the line 'seized on every song, violin solo and jape as though they were children at a Christmas party' (Collins, 1997, 156). One commanding officer wrote that concerts 'act as a tonic and uplift to us, which does not wear off in a hurry'. In an age without radio, television, the internet and mobile phones, the concert party offered not only a tangible link with the UK but a diversion from military duty.

With over a million British troops in France at any one time and large camps, hospitals and bases established along the coast, permanent entertainment groups were set up in December 1915 to work in designated zones. Artistes undertook a three-month tour, though unlike concert parties, remained in areas of comparative safety. Typically each company consisted of four or five female dancers, an accompanist, instrumentalist, singers and a comedian. Because they performed in one place for an extended period of time,



they tended to establish a greater bond with troops and also set up theatre clubs and bands amongst the soldiers themselves. Furthermore, civilian repertory companies were set up at Le Havre, Rouen, Abbeville, Etaples, Dieppe and Trouville, performing in camp theatres and hospitals.

Major actors and singers rarely travelled to France, in part because of restrictions imposed by the War Office (Collins, 1997). A notable exception was Harry Lauder, one of Britain's leading musical-hall artistes. The death of his son, killed in action in December 1916, prompted Lauder to enlist. When his application was refused, he lobbied the War Office to entertain troops as close to the front-line as possible. His first concert, held in June 1917, was at the Boulogne Base Hospital and comprised a programme of well-known songs. At Vimy Ridge, he performed to troops in a bomb crater within range of German artillery. Lauder toured the battlefield holding impromptu concerts in rest camps, dug-outs, chateaux and barns, drawing audiences of between a hundred or several thousand. On one occasion, the concert had to be abandoned as his trench came under fire. On his return to the UK, Lauder set up a fund with a target of one million pounds to support disabled veterans. Another high-profile visitor was the playwright, George Bernard Shaw, who travelled to France in January 1917 to give a series of talks to troops, while John Harvey-Martin, a well-known actor, delivered rousing monologues from Shakespeare and recitals from Dickens (Collins, 1997, 141).

In 1916 at Park Hall Camp, Oswestry, Captain Basil Dean, who before the war had been the actor-manager of the Liverpool Repertory Theatre, was asked by his colonel to organise a concert party competition to raise morale in the battalion (Collins, 1997, 85). The success of the venture led to the construction of the Garrison Institute and Theatre there. Twice nightly performances were given seven days a week, plays of all kinds alternating with film shows. Dean was subsequently transferred to Western Command to build and run a theatre at Kinmel Park Camp, six miles south of Rhyl (Dean, 1956, 26). The vast complex consisted of over twenty barracks, together with shops, canteens and chapels. The large number of young soldiers assembled there for training had little organised recreation. Captain Robert Graves, who was stationed at Kinmel Park from February to November 1918, was able to relieve the boredom by riding through the countryside, an option not available to private soldiers and NCOs (Graves, 1929, 224). In view of his experience and the need to provide organised recreation, early in 1917 Dean was posted to the War

Office to take charge of the Entertainment Branch of the Navy and Army Canteen Board (NACB). Using money from the President's Regimental Unit (the repository for regimental funds), he supervised the construction of theatres at larger garrisons and camps in the UK. The branch also ran its own theatrical companies, each with a repertoire of plays and actors suited to the particular type of entertainment: drama, musical-comedies, revues, farce and others. Entertainment was not free, a small admission charge being levied, including at many of the concert parties held in France.

No study has been conducted on the value of entertainment provided to servicemen during the First World War. However, the scale of the enterprise and funds committed suggested that military authorities perceived a benefit. Analysis was more penetrating in the Second World War, not least because of the failings identified at ENSA by 1942.

### 3.3 ENSA AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) was set up in June 1939 following proposals by Leslie Henson, Owen Nares and Godfrey Tearle, actors, together with Basil Dean, a producer and director, to put on live shows for the UK armed forces. Planning had begun in summer 1938 when war seemed likely and a pamphlet outlining their proposal to provide entertainment not only for troops in the UK and abroad but also civilians in munitions factories, hospitals and evacuees was circulated to members of parliament (Dean, 1956). From the outset, ENSA was a non-government initiative run from Dean's offices at the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane. In September 1939, it was linked to the armed forces through an Entertainment Branch of the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI), which took responsibility for the organisation, control and finance of the entertainments. ENSA provided the performers, while the NAAFI generated the funding.

As producers, the Dean and Henson had established contacts in show business and were able to persuade major stars to give their time for relatively modest payment. On the outbreak of war all theatres and cinemas were closed and performers, who had not been not conscripted, found themselves unemployed. Many volunteered their services. Within a month, 15 concert parties, consisting of over 100 artistes, had been assembled and were despatched to camps and barracks throughout the UK. A schedule of ticket prices was introduced for the larger shows, though small-scale entertainments and those in forward areas remained free.

The first major star to go overseas to entertain the BEF in France was Gracie Fields, who performed at two concerts (Douai and Arras) in November 1939, part of which was broadcast by the BBC to provide a link between the troops and their families in the UK. Dean had directed Fields in pre-war movies. She was then the UK's biggest star and had an international reputation. It was a considerable coup for ENSA to engage her. From a working class background in Rochdale with a range of performing styles, she appealed to both factory workers and soldiers; they could relate to her and the power of her celebrity attracted large crowds. Together with Harry Lauder in the First World War, Gracie Fields was a high-status performer who was tailor-made for a military audience.

In autumn 1940, Ernest Bevin set up an interdepartmental committee of inquiry into the status and operation of ENSA under the chairmanship of Lord May (Dean, 1956, 158). Including the directors of welfare for each of the three services, it reported in March 1941 and ENSA was formally recognised as the sole source of supply of professional entertainment for the armed forces and civilians engaged in government contracts. It became a semi-official body supervised and funded by the NAAFI and the National Service Entertainments Board. Liaison officers for the three services and the Ministry of Labour were appointed and integrated within its executive structure.

The major problem with ENSA, apparent by the end of 1941, was the acute shortage of good quality performers (Dean, 1956, 230). When war had been declared, conscription had swept up all artistes of service age, irrespective of their talent and celebrity. Only those males who were elderly or medically unfit remained. In his enthusiasm, Dean had taken on a role for ENSA that it could not sustain. Joyce Grenfell was even more critical and argued that 'he really doesn't care, and he can't listen' (Grenfell, 1989, 116). Jack Hawkins encountered these problems at first hand as the British Army's liaison officer to ENSA in India. A star actor before the war, he had been commissioned into the Royal Welch Fusiliers. He recalled the poor quality of acts and woeful administration:

I don't suppose that even the world's most unsuccessful theatrical agent has ever had to handle quite so many deadbeat acts as were sent to me... So far as ENSA headquarters in Drury Lane were concerned, we were not only at the bottom of their catalogue of priorities, we were the bottom (Hawkins, 1975).

Only when an experienced administrator was

appointed to an ENSA department or region did things run efficiently. Eric Dunstan, an ex-BBC manager, took charge in Bombay; knowledgeable, efficient and socially skilled, Joyce Grenfell observed: 'he is very ruthless, and if a show, although rehearsed and passed by Drury Lane, doesn't pass standard, he re-orders it and sends home the artistes who won't do or who don't know how to behave' (Grenfell, 1989, 194).

Stung by criticisms, Dean sought to raise the quality of his performers. In December 1941, ENSA with government support arranged to bring two stars a month from the United States to entertain troops and munitions workers in the UK. Although paid expenses, the stars were not paid a fee nor were they allowed to accept commercial engagements (T231/49, 3 December 1941). Gracie Fields flew from America in 1941 on a 39-day tour of camps and factories. Unpaid, she gave performances on all but five days, undertaking 86 concerts and entertaining a total audience of 410,000 (T161/1127, ENSA Record, 15).

Some major British stars were reluctant to join ENSA not simply because of the significant drop in salary but also because of the variable and often inadequate administration (Dean, 1956, 241). Grenfell recorded long and difficult journeys only to arrive at a camp or hospital where no one knew of their visit, while army entertainments and welfare officers attached to ENSA were often of poor quality. Noël Coward, for example, refused to join ENSA but in 1943 organised his own twelve week tour of North Africa and the Middle East (Grenfell, 1943, xx, xxx).

### 3.4 ENSA AND MORALE IN THE UK

During the Second World War, morale was considered so important that in March 1942 the War Office set up special committee to monitor morale at home and overseas. Its secret reports prepared for the Executive Committee of the Army Council provide telling evidence about the value of entertainment. By 1942, the British Army in the UK was judged as being 'bored and "browned off"' (WO162/51, May-July 1942, 1). Factors depressing morale included purposeless duties, formal inspections and 'spit and polish' routines (Crang, 1997, 63-64), while shortcomings were identified in activities designed to improve the mood of the troops:

Films are a universally popular form of entertainment and evoke more enthusiasm than any of the very best of ENSA entertainments. A good deal of adverse comment appears in troops' letters and elsewhere of unnecessarily broad jokes and suggestive turns in ENSA entertainments (WO162/51, May-July 1942, 6).



*Joyce Grenfell reading out requests for FBS whilst on a GSE tour of North Africa in 1954. SSVC*

Efforts were made to improve the quality of shows and by early 1943 a morale report observed 'ENSA on the whole has had a better press than hitherto, but all still depends on the quality of the particular troupe' (WO163/161, November 1942-January 1943, 12). In attempting to raise standards, the number of shows fell and by autumn 1943 units stationed in isolated areas or in Scotland complained of neglect (WO163/162, August-October 1943, 7). ENSA never resolved the supply issue and in January 1944 received

*a mixed reception: everything depends on the quality of the individual company; there are many complaints of the poor standard of the inferior parties. Two commanders say that troops would like more good 'straight' plays. Where units can put on their own shows it has a markedly good effect on morale (WO163/162, November 1943-January 1944, 4).*

For the British Army at home variable standards remained until the end of the war, in part, because it was recognised that troops serving overseas in combat zones had the greatest need of organised entertainment. With the advance into Italy and the Normandy campaign, ENSA rightly diverted its better quality artistes abroad (WO163/54, August-November 1944, 4). This impacted on the quality and quantity of performances at home during 1944 and 1945: 'it is again apparent that inferior grades of shows are likely to do more harm than good. It is, however, generally appreciated that the best artistes are needed in overseas theatres' (WO163/54, February-April 1945, 3). In January 1945, it was concluded that 'unless first grade ENSA parties could be provided, many commanders would as soon be without their services' (WO163/54, November 1944-January 1945, 8). However, the lack of enthusiasm for ENSA shows in the UK was considered less of a problem because of the 'availability of public entertainment in the vicinity of troops' (WO163/54, July 1945, 7).

### 3.5 ENSA AND MORALE OVERSEAS

A consistent complaint voiced in the middle years of the war was that major stars engaged by ENSA only

took part in large shows and were reluctant to travel overseas. In April 1944 whilst in the Middle East, Joyce Grenfell wrote,

*The general view among the men out here is that they get too much mediocre entertainment. If they saw one really good, well produced, talented show per month, it would be far better than boring them with rotten goods twice a month (Grenfell, 1989, 96-97).*

Morale reports from 1944 supported Grenfell's judgements. In Malta, subjected to air-raids and requiring a hazardous sea voyage, ENSA shows were 'few and far between', while in India a 'shortage of "stars"' was reported (WO163/54, September-November 1944, 14, 17). The absence of 'wholesome amusements' in Calcutta became a serious medical issue for Field Marshal Slim as members of the Fourteenth Army about to be deployed to Burma sought out 'less reputable relaxations'. Concerned that venereal disease would erode the fighting strength, Slim called on local theatrical companies to offer alternative entertainment, performing 'for us when the stars of ENSA were too distant and aloof as their celestial counterparts' (Slim, 1956, 153). Burma and South East Asia also suffered because of transport difficulties. By late 1944, following the tour of Vera Lynn, an improvement in the 'supply of entertainment and amenities for the troops' was acknowledged, though,

*there is still a very long way to go before they can be compared with those enjoyed by US troops in the area, or by British troops in Europe. Most units stress the need for more ENSA. A complaint about ENSA which is very widespread is that parties do not stay long enough in one place for more than a few of the men in the area to see the show (WO163/54, September-November 1944, 18).*

A problem facing the War Office was that ENSA remained a semi-independent organisation and its artistes were not formally contracted to work for the armed forces. Major stars could not be ordered overseas to perform to servicemen.

Perhaps because of competition from entertainers within the armed forces and in attempt to soften criticisms, ENSA artistes were granted permission to wear an official uniform in summer 1943. Because other non-combatants, war correspondents and members of the YMCA together with American performers were all uniformed, it was decided that members of ENSA should follow suit. Because ENSA artistes had been granted officer status, their uniform was based on army

service dress (Dean, 1956, 384). Although no insignia of rank were worn, a cap badge and a shoulder flash with the initials 'ENSA' were designed. Artistes were required to wear uniform when in war zones and a battle-dress version was also issued. Many stars considered the uniform inappropriate and wore it only to keep their outfits clean for performances.

With the high-profile invasion of Normandy in June 1944, Dean made an effort to deploy his best-known stars. In July and August, Flanagan and Allen, Gertrude Lawrence, Ivor Novello, Margaret Rutherford and George Formby all gave ENSA concerts. A total of 309 live performances were given (T161/1127, ENSA Record, 5). Although Dean focused entertainment on 21 Army Group once the beachhead had been established, he could not sustain the coverage once troops began to advance rapidly through northern France. By autumn 1944, when British troops had reached the Low Countries, deficits were again reported:

*There has been a grave shortage of ENSA parties which it has been necessary to supplement by local talent. Complaints are made about the age of films shown to the troops, particularly in comparison with those shown to the American forces (WO163/54, September-November 1944, 12).*

Whilst ENSA could provide high-quality entertainment for a short period in a battle zone close to the UK, its coverage elsewhere was not of the same frequency or standard. Dean promised to resolve the shortage in northwest Europe by February 1945. In an effort to provide more quality shows Laurence Olivier and Ralph Richardson were created honorary army lieutenants in ENSA to perform Shakespeare's plays for the troops in a six week tour of Europe.

Dubbed the 'force's sweetheart', Vera Lynn became an iconic performer as a result of a four-month ENSA tour of Burma undertaken in spring 1944. An established star, she went to Dean's Drury Lane office and offered to undertake an overseas tour, asking to be sent to a place not often visited by entertainers (Lynn, 2009, 165). Dean recommended Burma. Aged twenty-seven and accompanied by her pianist, Len Edwards, she set off in her ENSA uniform, leaving her husband, a bandsman in the RAF, in the UK. 'Basic ENSA salaries', Lynn recalled, 'fluctuated between £10 and £20 a week, no matter who you were. So that the sacrifice shouldn't be too great for him, I gave Len my salary during the trip' (Lynn, 2009, 166). At the time she was one of the UK's most popular singers and had to cancel bookings to undertake such a lengthy tour.

Vera Lynn entertained troops wherever she found them in groups as large as 6,000 and as small as two. She performed on improvised stages, in hospitals and in jungle clearings. In addition, she took time to talk to the wounded, enduring basic accommodation and lengthy journeys by airplane and truck. On one hospital visit, it occurred to her that 'maybe even more important than the singing and the music and the whole professional side of entertaining fighting men was the direct, individual contact' (Lynn, 2009, 171). By spring 1944, many soldiers had been away from home for years, and Lynn believed that she provided a direct link with their families: 'it was only when they were on their own with me that they would cry, asking me a lot of questions about life back home' (Lynn, 2009, 174).

Between 1944 and 1945, Joyce Grenfell was exceptional in undertaking two lengthy tours for ENSA (one of five-months and another of seven-months) of Italy, North Africa, the Middle East and India. Like Lynn, she shared the discomforts of servicemen and won respect for her commitment. An over-night star in 1939 with a husband in the army, Grenfell wanted to do something more for the war effort than hospital welfare work. Early in 1943, Noël Coward had suggested that she entertain troops overseas, and she contacted ENSA. Grenfell visited large numbers of field hospitals where she performed to seriously ill and convalescing soldiers. After giving a performance to servicemen recovering from major surgery, Grenfell wrote 'there was a definite need for us there. Wish we could have stayed longer' (Grenfell, 1989, 71). It was harrowing work and took determination:

*Oh God, the sights I've seen today... Bed after bed of mutilated men, heads, faces, bodies. It's the most inhuman, ghastly bloody, hellish thing in the world. I couldn't think to work or even feel in the end (Grenfell, 1989, 65).*

Her motivation, commitment and talent made Grenfell a hit with the armed forces. Like Lynn, she believed that her overseas tours were the most important events in her career.

Grenfell and Lynn were not the only performers who braved combat zones. Field Marshall Slim recalled attending an ENSA show at Allagappa in spring 1945. Several hundred men had been assembled by the air force almost within artillery range of the enemy. Slim was about to leave when he was informed that 'a Japanese raiding party was across the road I should have to travel' as a result he was able to stay for the remainder of the show 'with a clear conscience... and



afterwards to thank the artistes, one of whom was a lady' (Slim, 1956, 479-80).

In the latter stages of the war to address the low standard and shortage of ENSA shows overseas, greater encouragement was given to servicemen with performance skills or ambition to entertain their own units. However, conscription had taken no account of their pre-war jobs and such individuals were scattered throughout the armed forces without a record of their deployment. Accordingly, the Director of Army Welfare set up a Central Pool of Artistes to locate their whereabouts. Known as 'Stars in Battledress' and having been trained to defend themselves if attacked, they were deployed to more dangerous locations than ENSA parties (Pertwee, 2005). Service performers were sometimes more talented than the professional entertainers engaged by ENSA. Spike Milligan, Eric Sykes, Ian Carmichael, Kenneth Connor and Terry Thomas all transferred from military duties to entertain troops. Frankie Howerd, having failed a number of ENSA auditions was eventually successful in joining a concert party. Having joined the RAF Regiment, Tony Hancock failed an audition for ENSA but found his way to the stage by way of Ralph Reader's RAF Gang Show. Kenneth Williams served with the Royal Engineers survey section as a map-maker. With the end of hostilities, he transferred to the Combined Services Entertainment Unit touring Malaya, Burma and Singapore.

### 3.6 SUMMARY OF ENSA'S ROLE

ENSA had an ambiguous position. Either it should have been wholly run by the War Office and its artistes conscripted and deployed in the manner of service personnel, or it should have remained a civilian charity with no military trappings, relying on the generosity of performers. Its role was never properly defined leading to misunderstanding and criticism.

### 3.7 BRITISH FORCES BROADCASTING IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Whilst German and Russian authorities were quick to perceive the value of radio programmes targeted at their armed forces, at the outset the British made no such provision (Morgan, 1953). In 1940 the BBC hastily put together a forces programme to counter the German propaganda targeted at the British Expeditionary Force by Radio Normandie (Maschwitz, 1942, 2). Whilst troops training in the UK could listen to the BBC, servicemen stationed overseas were sometimes unable to receive a signal. British troops stationed in Iceland, for example, had to endure tough winters with little to alleviate the boredom of routine duties. The void was

filled by servicemen themselves producing shows and talks for broadcast from an Icelandic recoding studio (Grace, 2003, 3). The belated supply of 60 radios lifted spirits by allowing servicemen in outlying posts to listen to programmes (WO163/88, January 1942, 6).

With fighting in North Africa, the Middle East Command also set up its own broadcasting unit in 1941 and programmes were transmitted to British troops from Cairo, Jerusalem, Beirut and Baghdad. Increasingly aware of the value of radio programmes and news broadcasts to sustain morale, the Adjutant General, Sir Robert Adam, created an Army Broadcasting Committee in March 1942. Among its members was Brigadier H.A. Sandiford, Director of Army Psychiatry, and Major General H. Willans, Director General of Welfare and Education, a directorate set up in December 1940 to maintain morale (Summerfield, 1981, 137). At the first meeting, Major General Willans acknowledged that 'broadcasting in the army had not hitherto received the attention that it merited'. By contrast, the American military authorities, who were setting up dedicated radio stations in the UK, 'attached the greatest importance to it for purposes of morale' (WO163/200, 4 September 1942, 2-3). It was estimated that only 46% of British troops in the UK had regular access to newspapers (Maschwitz, 1942). As a result, radio programmes were seen as key medium of direct communication. The problem was that broadcasts were designed for the civilian population and did not address the needs of soldiers. A core role of the committee was 'to determine the likes and dislikes of the soldier' and to assist with programme content and the practicalities of broadcasting.

During the early phases of the war, soldiers who had first-hand experience of the operations were rightly critical of the quality of broadcasts. Servicemen complained that


*they are not told the whole truth by either the press or the BBC when things go wrong and there is criticism that attempts are made to conceal reverses by giving undue prominence to minor successes. They feel the country should be trusted to stand being told the true story (WO163/88, February 1942, 1).*

Furthermore, 'great annoyance has been expressed against the BBC and the press for their over-exuberance and hankering for quick results, which it is felt, does not do justice to the difficulties and magnitude of the task' (WO163/88, February 1942, 5).

In May 1942 the US War Department had set up the Armed Forces Radio Service (AFRS). Programmes

  
**ROYAL OPERA HOUSE**  
 CAIRO


**NAAFI** Presents  
**ENSA** Entertainments


 NAAFI  
 PRESENTS  
 ENSA ENTERTAINMENTS FOR HM FORCES

**BALLET**  
**RAMBERT**

Director: MARIE RAMBERT  
 with  
 Sally GILMOUR

A BRITISH  
 DRAMA SEAS

COMBINED SERVICES ENTERTAINMENT  
 PRESENT  
**THE BOB MONKHOUSE SHOW** WITH BOB MONKHOUSE

COMBINED SERVICES ENTERTAINMENT  
 PRESENT  
**HARRY SECOMBE**  
*in*  
**SECOMBE HERE**

COMBINED SERVICES ENTERTAINMENT  
 PRESENT  
**THE MAX BYGRAVE SHOW**  
 with  
**MAX BYGRAVES**  
**THE SATIN BOARDS**  
**AJ WEBBER**  
 and  
**JOHNNY LIS**  
**GIBRALTAR** on  
**25 26 27 Sept at 1930 hrs**

  
**SA2 BAND**  
 SPIKE'S ALL STAR BAND

  
 BRITISH FORCES FOUNDATION  
 proudly presents



**HEREFORD BOUND VII**  
 Roger Daltrey Roger Taylor Graham Gouldman

**Thursday 16th December 2010**  
**Sergeants' Mess at 8pm**


**THE WHO**  

**QUEEN**  

**T.O.C.C.**

*Legendary recording artists, singing their greatest hits and musicians from the Who's Who of Rock and Pop, join Queen's musical director and keyboard player Spike Edney for a night of fun and explosive music.*  
**Tickets cost £10 each - 200 available.**  
**All tickets will be sold over Marjorie's desk. Any profit will go to the Clock Tower Fund. Dress - casual.**  
Registered Charity No. 1075109





*John Bishop visiting patients and staff at Queen Elizabeth Hospital February 2011. The British Forces Foundation*



*Ozzy Osbourne at Headley Court, December 2009. SSVC*

recorded in America on 16-inch discs were flown to radio stations in Europe, Asia and the South Pacific. Major stars, such as Bob Hope, Bing Crosby, Judy Garland, Frank Sinatra and Dinah Shore, took part. With the deployment of American troops to Tunisia in 1943, British troops in North Africa were able to listen to programmes designed for US service personnel. Although British forces negotiated 90 minutes of re-broadcast BBC programmes and three hours of Overseas Recorded Broadcasting Service (ORBS) programmes per day, Major Maschwitz reported that 'American control of the programme is absolute and, at the moment, not too sympathetic to British interests' (Maschwitz, 1943, 1). No live British broadcasts were permitted. Maschwitz identified a pressing need for 'local forces broadcasting... as a vehicle for "home-made" programmes of intensified local interest, available for use by commanders'.

In response Lt Colonel Gale Pedrick-Harvey, the newly appointed broadcasting officer to the Central Mediterranean Force, Major Philip Slessor, a former BBC announcer, and Major Emlyn Griffiths, a theatrical agent, decided to set up a studio in Algiers to provide programmes specifically for British troops (Grace, 2003, 5). Using a captured German transmitter, they began broadcasting on 1 January 1944. The British Forces Experimental Station, as it was called, provided a model for static and mobile stations set up in Italy and northwest Europe (Grace, 1996, 4). By March 1944, the Army Broadcasting Committee had been convinced of the value of 'local transmissions under army control', operated by specialist staff in uniform to provide a 'complete service adapted to the needs of a particular area' (Director of Army Welfare Service, 1944, 1-2). Programme content would be 'a combination of locally-produced material, including messages from local commanders, recorded material supplied by the War Office broadcasting branch and the relaying of BBC short-wave'. Such a policy, they believed would exercise a positive influence on the soldier's state of mind.

The British Army Broadcasting Service (BABS) operated an increasing number of mobile stations, which often positioned themselves close to the front line to provide a service for fighting troops. Uniformed broadcasters had to be over the age of thirty and were recruited from soldiers found medically unfit or those recovering from wounds. By autumn 1944, Mobile Station B4 in Italy was broadcasting 13 hours per day with five news bulletins as key points. It issued a weekly programme entitled 'The Forward Forces Radio Times', and maintained a position about three miles

from the frontline (Grace, 2003, 9-10). An important element in these broadcasts was the provision of accurate and relevant news.

Having observed the value of the two mobile stations operating in Italy, D-Day planners designed field broadcast units for the British Liberation Army (Grace, 1996, 4). In the event, pressure on logistics saw the plan abandoned until November 1944 when No. 1 Field Broadcasting Unit was mobilised. Consisting of four mobile stations, it deployed to Belgium in December 1944. Broadcasting from 6 am with programmes of music and news, they often operated close to the front-line. On one occasion BLA Station No. 2 was forced to retreat in a column of tanks when German forces counter-attacked in the Ardennes (Grace, 1996, 8). A shortage of wireless sets in distant commands, however, remained the 'subject of much adverse comment' (WO163/54, September-November 1944, 13).

### 3.8 POST-1945 AND COMBINED SERVICES ENTERTAINMENT

By 1945 the three services had recognised the value of entertainment in maintaining or lifting morale. It was also evident that poor quality entertainment had an adverse effect. At the end of the war artistes and managers returned to their normal peacetime occupations. The introduction of National Service presented the armed forces with a dilemma: how should recreation be organised in future? Extensive discussions took place with the Treasury, War Office, Admiralty and Air Ministry (ADM1/17957, October 1945). The core problem was identified as the need to provide 'equal standards as regards quality and quantity in all overseas commands'.

Despite the willingness of Dean to continue to manage ENSA, there was no enthusiasm to keep the organisation. Dean had fallen out with a number of generals, memories of the variable quality of shows endured and there was also a belief that the standard rate of £10 a week for performers had been too high in relation to the basic pay of servicemen (Briscoe, 2011). As a result, it was agreed that it would be wound up in August 1946 (T213/266). Combined Services Entertainment (CSE) was formed to take on the role for all three services. In contrast to ENSA, its management was orientated towards the military with two senior officers in executive posts and two junior officers with links to the civilian entertainment industry (Smith, 2006). However, with a reduction in the size of the armed forces, the budget for entertainment (£4.5 million spent in 1944-45) faced a significant cut. The Treasury refused to make a contribution from public



taxation and argued that the three services were financially responsible for their own entertainment. In June 1947, it was estimated that the NAAFI would generate £300,000 a year towards CSE, the armed forces budget would contribute £265,000, leaving £210,000 to be found from public funds.

A problem faced by CSE was the recruitment of a broad base of talented performers to support the UK's continuing global commitment. Established stars returned to their peacetime roles, believing that they had made their contribution to the war effort. With the end of the conflict and the introduction of National Service, young talented artistes could no longer defer their military service in return for agreeing to entertain the armed forces; during the latter stages of the war, performers had undertaken at least six weeks work for ENSA in the year in return for delayed conscription. The services themselves were keen to continue with the 'Stars in Battledress' system whereby serving artistes were encouraged to entertain their fellow troops. With British forces deployed in Europe, the Middle East and throughout the Far East, this offered a cost-effective solution and gave aspiring talent an opportunity to develop their careers.



*Benny Hill in Cyprus in 1961 with some young admirers. SSVC*

The cinema network operated by ENSA during the war was devolved to the three services. The War Office set up the Army Kinema Corporation (AKC) and by 1958 administered 48 cinemas in BAOR, the RAF Cinema Corporation had a circuit of 12 'Astra' cinemas in Germany, while the Royal Naval Film Corporation (RNFC), which had been established as a limited company in September 1939, supplied recreational films to the fleet.

### 3.9 CSE: THE KOREAN WAR AND SUEZ

CSE budgets were set according to the needs of British forces at home and on the Rhine. The Korean War was unexpected and stretched the defence budget to the limit. There was insufficient funding at CSE to mount a programme of entertainment in distant Korea. With a budget of only £8,500 for 1951-52, very little was provided (T213/266, June 1952). In the following year, 1952-53, £21,000 was spent on shows. To avoid servicemen being charged admission fees, it had been agreed that two-thirds of cost of live entertainment in Korea would come from public funds, the remainder being borne by the Army Central Fund (in effect NAAFI rebates).

When British forces were deployed to the Canal Zone in 1956, the question of funding this additional call on entertainment arose. 'For morale purposes', it was considered 'essential' that troops 'be entertained by at least one party of five to seven artistes every month, each touring for about eight weeks'. As in Korea, it was agreed that 'the whole cost of cinema entertainment, and two-thirds of the cost of live entertainment, should be borne by public funds, the remaining one-third of the latter being met from service non-public funds' (T213/266, 19 November 1956).

Between 1946 and 1964 with comparatively limited funds, CSE mounted 599 shows, involving 5,483 artistes. They covered a wide range of locations: British Army of the Rhine (BAOR), British Troops Austria (BTA), Central Mediterranean Force (CMF), Gibraltar, South East Asia Land Forces, Far East Land Forces, Korea, Middle East Land Forces, Kenya and Aden. The organisation was also able to attract a number of major stars, some of whom were ex-servicemen who may have felt a loyalty to the armed forces. Star performers included Harry Secombe, Tony Hancock, Frankie Howerd, Jack Warner, Jimmy Edwards, Anne Shelton, Joyce Grenfell, Acker Bilk, Dick Emery, Ted Ray, Vic Oliver, Dickie Valentine, John Mills, Gracie Fields, David Nixon and Bruce Forsyth. These artistes were paid for their performances, though given the financial constraints of the post-war



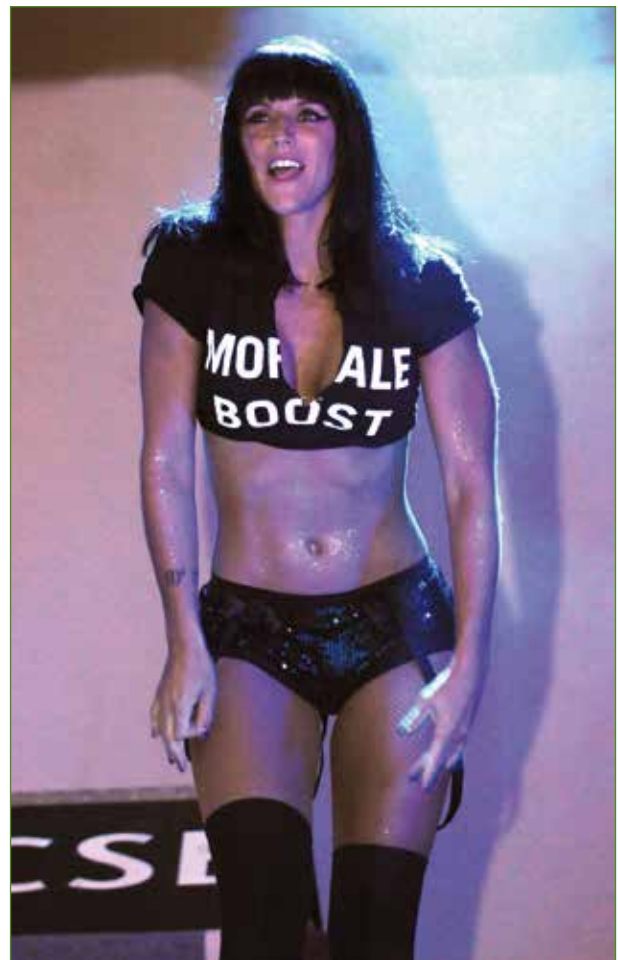
*Brainscape performing to troops in Afghanistan in February 2011. SSVc*

economy it is unlikely that their fees were large. The rate set by ENSA during the war years may have continued during the 1950s and 1960s.

### 3.10 BRITISH FORCES BROADCASTING SERVICE

The four BLA mobile stations of No. 1 Field Broadcast Unit advanced into Germany behind front-line units and established their headquarters in Hamburg. They secured the tenancy of the Musikhalle and servicemen with specialist skills converted it into broadcasting studios (Grace, 1996, 11). With the official opening of the Hamburg station in July 1945, the British Forces Network (BFN) began to broadcast. From the outset BFN set out to make its own programmes (features, drama and light entertainment) as well as providing international and local news for UK armed forces stationed in Germany.

In the immediate post-war period, the largest concentration of British troops overseas was in Germany. In the early 1960s, for example, the British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) had 22,000 families, at a time when there were 9,000 in Singapore, 6,000 in Cyprus, 5,000 in Malta and North Africa, 3,000 in Aden, 2,500 in Malaya and 2,000 in Hong Kong (AIR2/16525, October 1964). The aims of BFN in Germany were to provide broadly based entertainment



*Charlotte Chapman in Al Udied, October 2011. SSVc*

and news bulletins 'to ensure that members of the services and the Control Commission are informed promptly of events of importance in Germany and not later than the Germans hear of them from Nordwest Deutscher Rundfunk' (FO1056/3, October 1948, 1). Programme content was largely light music (35%), dance and swing (17%), serious music (13%). Variety acts (8%), features and drama (6%), talks (5%), together with news (11%) completed the content. The policy agreed in autumn 1948 was 'to gradually elevate the standard of programmes', though how this was to be achieved was left in the hands of the station director.

Under the directorship of Bryan Cave-Browne-Cave, British Forces Network changed its name in spring 1965 to the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS). Lt Colonel Cave-Browne-Cave had served in the Army Broadcasting Service in India before setting up Radio South East Asia Command near Colombo in May 1946 (Grace, 2003, 32). The importance of accurate news was demonstrated when service personnel found themselves caught up local conflicts. The value of a BFBS radio

was demonstrated twice in 1967, namely in Benghazi during the Arab-Israeli War and during the withdrawal from Aden. Locally-engaged staff are very unreliable in times of political unrest and also constitute an unacceptable security hazard if given access to service installations (AIR2/16525, Memo BFBS FARLEF, 8 February 1968, annex A).

The value of radio stations in theatre, demonstrated in Italy and northwest Europe during the Second World War was not lost on planners. During preparations for the Gulf War in the summer of 1990, BFBS assembled staff and equipment to set up a radio station in Saudi Arabia. Although slower to set up the facility than the American Forces Radio Services (AFRS), Desert Radio BFBS Middle East began broadcasting on 17 December from Camp 4 near Al Jubayl (Grace, 2003, 172). Continuing to operate until June 1991, its value was assessed by General Peter de la Billiere: 'Forces broadcasting... makes a great contribution to morale. Until we got BFBS, the servicemen had nothing to listen to except American Forces' programmes and the fearful harridan known as "Baghdad Betty"' (Grace, 2003, 180).

In 2003 a BFBS radio station was set up in Kuwait at Camp Arifjan and the first live show was broadcast on 3 March (Grace, 2003, 206). When the war began BFBS staff were regularly exposed to missile alerts,

required to put on NBC kit and take cover. In October 2009, BFBS set up a station in Afghanistan at Camp Bastion to provide news and entertainment tailored to the needs of serving personnel. With a team of ten (two presenters, two video journalists and six technicians), it is linked to armed forces welfare services.

### 3.11 RE-ORGANISATION OF BFBS AND CSE

In 1965 CSE was integrated within the British Forces Broadcasting Service (BFBS) and administered by the Headquarters Forces Entertainment Service based in King's Buildings, Dean Stanley Street, Westminster. BFBS was a government organisation and its managers were members of the Civil Service. At about the same time the AKC and RAF Cinema Corporation were combined into a single independent charity, the Services Kinema Corporation, centred on Chalfont Grove in Buckinghamshire. The Royal Naval Film Corporation, which had registered as a charity, continued as a separate organisation, largely due to pressure from Lord Mountbatten, its patron.

Initially, the integration of CSE within BFBS resulted in no substantial change of operation. Touring shows were put on in clubs and messes in Germany, Singapore, Cyprus, Hong Kong, Malta, Aden and various locations in North Africa and the Persian Gulf (WO32/20008, BFBS, 1968). A 'star artist policy' determined the organisation of shows:

Experience has shown that to be a success every show which is staged for services overseas must have at least one well known and popular star performer. It has therefore become a firm policy to first secure the services of a star artist and to build the show around him (or her). This was very successful in the 1967/68 season with shows built around such personalities as Harry Secombe, Dickie Henderson and Ivor Emmanuel (WO32/20008, BFBS, 1968).

In summer 1968, cuts in the establishment and output of CSE were agreed. They had experienced difficulties in finding a period when a star has a break between engagements and to accommodate his or her commitments had been forced to keep tours relatively short. During 1967-68, CSE were fortunate in that a number of leading artistes were willing to travel overseas to entertain troops because of the fighting in Aden. With the withdrawal of troops from the colony in November 1967, it was predicted that CSE would struggle to recruit high-profile performers in the coming years because with the end of National Service and no major overseas operations, the military footprint in the UK appeared to be set in irreversible decline. However,



the loss of interest by stars was not considered problematic as a gradual reduction in the strength of British forces and the places where they were located had also reduced the demand for CSE shows. By summer 1968 only five shows for the Near East and a further five for the Middle East were planned for the coming year, in contrast to 27 offered by CSE ten years earlier.

The idea of providing a television channel for UK armed forces, as well as radio broadcasts, was first raised in 1959 (Grace, 1996, 159). Rejected on grounds of cost, the proposal was raised again in 1973 and in the following year received approval from the Treasury. London Weekend Television (LWT) won the contract to provide services, chosen because as a small company (only on the air at weekends) it could adapt to BFBS's needs. John Harrison, formerly of BFN Cologne and the BBC, was appointed as the first controller of BFBS Television and the service went live on 18 September 1975 (Grace, 1996, 165). A popular programme, 'Take Five', took the form of an interview with a celebrity who was shortly to appear in a BFBS television show. Among those who appeared on 'Take Five' for no payment were Ernie Wise, Frankie Howerd, Joanna Lumley, Rolf Harris, Tom Baker and Tom O'Connor.

A problem faced by CSE in the 1970s and 1980s was that the UK's armed forces were increasingly low profile. Operations, in the main, were confined to Northern Ireland. Established entertainers, such as Harry Secombe or Frankie Howerd, no longer appealed to servicemen in their twenties. Young comedians tended to be left wing and saw little reason to perform to troops engaged in what were perceived as policing duties. It was difficult, therefore, to recruit rising stars. Agents selling to CSE would sometimes offer a package of a well-known artiste together with others of lesser quality, knowing that competition for this work was limited. Furthermore, as a result of the 1976 Defence Review, CSE and BFBS were subject to significant cuts, many staff being made redundant (Grace, 2003, 121). The funds available to pay good-quality performers were increasingly stretched.

Jim Davidson stood apart as a high-profile, popular star with an interest in the military. In 1976, he performed two shows for CSE in Northern Ireland and, having found the experience rewarding, undertook a tour to Cyprus in the following year. Trips to Belize and the Falkland Islands followed. At a time when support for the UK armed forces was unfashionable among much of the entertainment community, Davidson's commitment to troops abroad attracted some criticism

from younger comedians who aligned themselves with humanitarian projects such as Band Aid and Comic Relief. However, as the major star within CSE, Davidson had influence and he built up a range of key contacts within the military. Because, he found entertaining troops rewarding and attracted a significant income from television and other work, from the mid-1980s Davidson decided to donate his fee from CSE to a charity. In part, this was designed to show that this was a heartfelt and genuine contribution. In 2001, his long-term commitment to forces' welfare was acknowledged by the Labour administration by the award of an OBE.

### 3.12 SERVICES SOUND AND VISION CORPORATION

The Services Sound and Vision Corporation (SSVC) was set up in 1982 at Chalfont Grove as a registered charity and was an amalgam of BFBS, the Services Kinema Corporation and CSE. Its income derived almost exclusively from contracts negotiated with the Ministry of Defence to provide packages of entertainment, although from 1994 it established several successful trading companies which donated all profits to the charity. In particular, Teleport London International earned SSVC several million pounds when it was sold in 1998. Although a charity, SSVC does not seek funding from the general public. Contracts are negotiated on a cost-plus basis and any profits that accrue are ploughed back into a welfare fund to provide facilities and services for UK armed forces.

In November 1991, the system input for BFBS television programmes moved from Rheindahlen to Chalfont, and two years later the service was enhanced by night-time broadcasting from the Open University headquarters in Milton Keynes. Satellite broadcasting was used for the first time during the 1991 Gulf War to relay programmes to service personnel on Operation GRANBY (Grace, 1996, 186). The founding of the SSVC satellite transmission subsidiary, Teleport London International, allowed rapid expansion of the BFBS television network such that by 2005 it was transmitting seven worldwide channels, including one exclusively for all RN ships at sea.

### 3.13 WELFARE POLICY FOR UK ARMED FORCES OVERSEAS

In 1998-99 Brigadier Robin Bacon completed an 'Operational Welfare Review' for UK armed forces. Following this review it was agreed that service personnel deployed overseas were entitled to a minimum level of welfare, which included two CSE shows in a six-month tour of duty. Under the current



Deployed Welfare Package (DWP) the crew of a Royal Navy vessel are entitled to one show in four months at sea (Anon, 2003, 5E-1).

Every year during the 1990s CSE agreed an annual contract with the Ministry of Defence to provide live entertainment. The number of shows varied according to the agreed budget and the operational demands made of UK armed forces (Tables 1 and 2).

**Table 1 Overseas Tours undertaken by CSE, 1996-2001**

Year	Overseas tours	Number of Shows	Cost (£)
1996	21	152	784,329
1997	27	181	936,072
1998	20	142	1,071,768
1999	20	118	878,272
2000	24	96	747,670
2001	17	86	1,172,525
Total	129	775	5,589,636

**Table 2 Overseas tours by CSE by region, 1996-2001**

Year	Bosnia	Kosovo & Macedonia	Northern Ireland	Falklands	Cyprus	Others	HM Ships
1996	3	-	8	5	2	2	2
1997	2	-	11	5	1	5	4
1998	3	-	6	5	1	4	2
1999	3	5	5	1	1	3	2
2000	4	7	5	1	-	3	4
2001	3	2	2	2	1	6	1
Total	18	14	37	19	6	23	15

Source: Letter from Adam Ingram MP to Bernard Jenkin MP, 30 November 2001.

In November 2001 a parliamentary question was asked by Bernard Jenkin MP about the cost of a major tour promoted by CSE in October for UK armed forces training in Oman for the impending Iraq conflict. Held during Exercise Saif Sareea II to provide a break from desert training, Geri Halliwell, Bobby Davro and Steps had been contracted to perform two shows a week apart. At the time, concerns were raised about the cost of the eight-day tour (£550,000), which had been met from the operational welfare budget. The issue at debate was whether public funds should be used to pay the fees of high-profile performers. SSVC had recently signed a five-year contract to provide live entertainment through CSE and the MoD advised at the time that an annual 'spectacular' event of this type could now be afforded by reducing the number of lesser shows. In the event, none of these took place and the issue was resolved in part because BFF increasingly took

on the role of providing shows with major stars who offered their services without charge.

### 3.14 FORMATION OF THE BRITISH FORCES FOUNDATION

By the late 1990s, Jim Davidson had become concerned by the quality of shows offered by CSE for UK armed forces overseas. Experiencing organisational problems on a tour of Macedonia, he decided to set up a charity that would provide high-quality performers at short notice and for no fee. He discussed his plans with Air-Vice Marshal David Crwys-Williams, chief executive of SSVC. At a time of government retrenchment, Crwys-Williams was concerned that the promise to the Ministry of Defence of large, high-profile shows funded by a charity might result in budgetary cuts and a further diminution in what SSVC could provide across ever widening theatres of operation. Both agreed to act in concert and to serve on the boards of their respective organisations. In the event, David Crwys-Williams became a trustee of BFF, though neither Davidson nor any other member of BFF were invited to join the board of SSVC.

Set up in March 1999, The British Forces Foundation (BFF) registered as a charity enlisting the support of senior commanders. As the person primarily responsible for establishing the organisation, Jim Davidson was elected chairman. Its first chief executive was Commodore Barry Leighton, succeeded in July 2000 by Mark Cann. In July 1999 Margaret Thatcher had agreed to serve as the BFF's president while Prince Charles became the patron. The BFF was driven by the conviction that UK armed forces deserved high-quality entertainment both in the UK and in theatre.

The philosophy and rationale of BFF was to provide entertainment on the basis of need or request. Whilst CSE provided the bulk of live shows, BFF was able to respond quickly to requests for a high-profile performer (see Appendix 1). By organising one-off events at short notice, it could move quickly but also attract top

entertainers who gave their services without charge. As a charity that raised its income from the public, BFF sought to offer a tangible link with home and to tap into the goodwill of the general population.

### 3.15 CSE OVER THE LAST DECADE

Table 3 outlines the total number of overseas tours undertaken by CSE between 2002 and 2011. The duration of tours is quantified in terms of show days; that is the number of days a tour is away in theatre rather than the actual number of shows. CSE adopted this method of reporting because tour programmes vary considerably: sometimes more than one show a day, sometimes a travel day between locations, whilst visits by celebrities may not involve a formal show but a series of meet and greet events. The reduced number of

tours in 2005 related to the serious illness and medical retirement of the controller of CSE Forces Entertainment. In September 2005, Nicky Ness took over as Controller BFBS Radio & CSE Forces Entertainment.

Table 4 shows that CSE broadened the geographical scope of its tours over the last ten years as UK armed forces were deployed in a wide range of operations. The most noticeable development was the increased frequency of tours to Afghanistan from 2004 onwards. Tours to Cyprus do not include decompression shows which have been provided by CSE from June 2007.

### 3.16 ENTERTAINMENT FOR UK ARMED FORCES IN AFGHANISTAN

UK armed forces deployed to Afghanistan are exposed to various levels of threat. Danger rises from base areas through forward operating bases (FOBs) to patrol bases (PBs), which are the most exposed. An Operational Mental Health Needs Evaluation (OMHNE) study undertaken in January and February 2010 found that around 70% of troops reported high levels of unit cohesion and that this was associated with having better mental health. The report found that the increased risks encountered in FOBs and PBs were off-set by morale and esprit de corps.

In January 2009, the five-year contract to provide live entertainment to UK armed forces Afghanistan and elsewhere was awarded to CSE by Permanent Joint Headquarters' (PJHQ). Because 47% of service personnel deployed to Afghanistan are under 27 years, CSE shows are tailored to their interests. From providing cabaret style of entertainment, CSE now offers live entertainment targeted at young soldiers: contemporary rock, dancers and Comedy Store

**Table 3 Overseas Tours undertaken by CSE, 2002-2011**

Year	Overseas tours	Number of show days
2002	27	134
2003	29	149
2004	28	162
2005	19	93
2006	31	174
2007	31	170
2008	37	172
2009	36	163
2010	35	168
2011 (to 30 June)	18	71
<b>Total</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>1,456</b>

*Note: these figures do not include shows provided by CSE for the decompression package in Cyprus. Costs were also requested to provide continuity with Table 1 but not supplied on grounds of commercial confidentiality.*

*Source: CSE data*

**Table 4 CSE Tours by region 2002-2011**

	Bosnia	Kosovo	Northern Ireland	Falklands	Cyprus	Guam	HM Ships	Headley Court	SellyOak/QE	Iraq	Turkey	Kuwait	Afghan	Middle East
2002	4	4	2	3	4	1	3				2	1	2	1
2003	2	2		2	3		10			3	1	3		3
2004	3	3	1	2	3		9			3			3	1
2005	3	3		4	3		4			1			1	
2006	5	5		3	5		7			3			5	
2007	2	2		4	4		5	2		3			4	2
2008			1	4	3		9	3	4	3			4	2
2009				2	4		13	2	4	1			6	2
2010				1	3		13	3	2				10	3
2011					4		5	4					4	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>15</b>

*Note: the Cyprus column does not include decompression shows.*

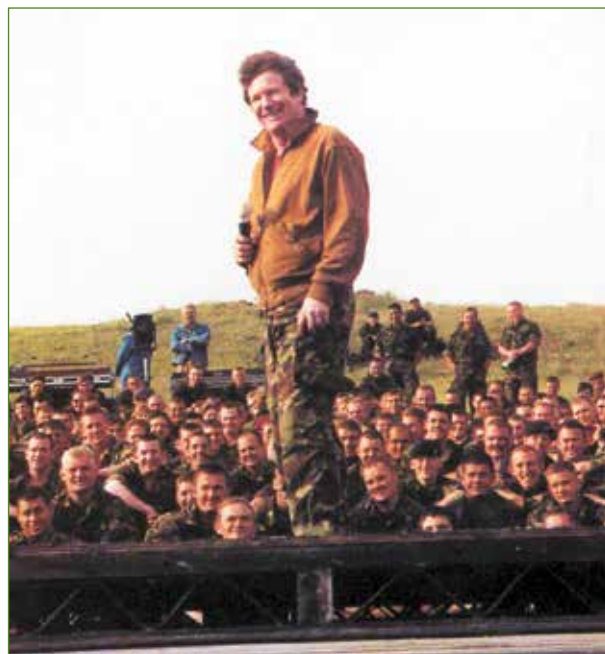
*Source: CSE data*

comedians. CSE send only their most experienced artistes to Afghanistan where conditions are more testing. In February 2011, two comedians with a tour manager undertook their first show at a FOB. In addition, a BFBS radio station was opened at Camp Bastion in October 2009.

In logistics terms, the main problem in putting on a show at Camp Bastion, near Lashkar gah, relates to the air bridge. Space on flights cannot be guaranteed and delays of up to four days are not uncommon. This creates difficulties for BFF stars who have tight schedules. For example, Katherine Jenkins, who had previously made trips to Iraq in 2005 and 2006 and to Afghanistan in 2007, was prevented from visiting Afghanistan in January and December 2010 because of air transport problems. By contrast, CSE performers, who are paid a fee which reflects the nature of the commission, can accommodate longer delays and therefore have a greater chance of overcoming difficulties with the air bridge.

Whilst the value of entertainment delivered to between 120 and 300 front-line troops in a FOB is acknowledged, a force up to 80 soldiers is needed to provide a protective screen. Because helicopters are at a premium transport to and from FOBs can also be problematic. Because of improvised explosive devices, road convoys are dangerous and require further protection. In Normandy, the Provost Company of 6 Airborne Division provided protection to visiting stars such as George Formby. The unit's war diaries indicated that these high-profile performers lifted the morale of combat units (WO 171/436, August 1944). Safety considerations for civilian artistes drove the formation of 'stars in battledress' units which could perform close to the front-line.

Indeed, a perennial problem faced by welfare officers is that their logistic needs inevitably take second place to front-line operations. Ammunition is supplied before food, and food before entertainment. However, once campaigning has established a pattern, opportunity opens for entertainment and indeed the longer that fighting takes place, the greater becomes the demand for welfare activities. Officers responsible for front-line operations ('J3' in modern UK terminology) are often so committed to these vital functions that they have little time to consider welfare ('J1') activities and may fail to appreciate their value. Whilst CSE has a government contract to provide entertainment, BFF as a charity has no formal place in the military timetable and has to negotiate access to troops in theatre. Hard-pressed staff officers engaged in operational roles



*Jim Davidson entertaining troops in Macedonia.*  
SSVC

may not always appreciate the value of a morale-boosting tour.

### 3.17 ENTERTAINMENT AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

The rapid advance of computer and satellite technology has revolutionised the delivery of entertainment. During the First World War, troops in France relied on letters, films and concert parties to relieve the stress of campaigning. In the Second World War, radio broadcasts added to the spectrum of entertainment. Today service personnel in Afghanistan have access to a range of SSVC/BFBS television channels, laptops, i-Players, which provide access to e-newspapers, and mobile phones. With internet access and the development of e-learning programmes, service personnel can even study for qualifications when deployed overseas. Because of the opportunities and challenges presented by the development of communication technology, the DWP is under constant review. There are, for example, proposals to provide i-Pad facilities throughout theatre to reduce the airfreight of books and magazines. In 2009, BFF prepared a Christmas DVD for service personnel overseas, and in 2011 launched an App for i-Phones enabling members of the public to send words of support and appreciation to UK armed forces.

The rapid development in internet technology has widened the scope of both self-entertainment and the provision of entertainment packages. Whilst personal mobile phones are banned, service personnel in Afghanistan have ready access to Wi-Fi and

broadband and can send e-mail, download music, log on to social-media sites and blogs. All defined locations have telephones. This, in turn, creates new challenges as expectations are raised. For example, when a serviceman is killed all external communication is closed (Operation MINIMISE) until the relatives of the deceased have been informed to prevent them discovering this information in an inappropriate manner. Whilst this can usually be achieved within three hours, it can cause a break in communications for a day if relatives are difficult to track down. Because service personnel in the UK have become accustomed to regular communication by e-mail and mobile phone, interruptions or restrictions imposed in theatre for security or other reasons in theatre can have an adverse effect on morale. Equally, ready access to bad news from home may also undermine morale. In the past, when soldiers deployed to India for seven years and only received occasional letters from home, it was easier to manage expectations of news, entertainment and contact.

### 3.18 ENTERTAINMENT AND DECOMPRESSION

The concept of decompression is not new. In the nineteenth century, it was argued that the sea voyage needed to bring troops home from India or the Far East provided a period of calm during which the stress of campaigning was dissipated (Jones and Wessely, 2010). Entertainment on troopships was usually provided by the soldiers themselves unless a concert party or group of performers were making the same journey. An organised show can provide a focus for the corporate release of tension. In October 2002, for example, 45 Commando recently returned from an arduous tour in Afghanistan asked the BFF put on a show at their Arbroath base. The event, which featured Jim Davidson, the Jones Gang, Roger Kitter and Mama Said, was watched by 700 Royal Marines and provided an opportunity for normalisation.

From 2007, a CSE show has been an integral element in the decompression package organised for UK armed forces returning from Afghanistan. Rather than flying directly to the UK, British troops attend a decommissioning process at Bloodhound Camp at Paramali, near the British base of Episkopi. Lasting between 24 hours and 36 hours, returning personnel spend one night in camp. CSE is commissioned to deliver a show every evening of the year and have cast (typically three entertainers and a compere) and crew there ready so to do. The show takes place in a purpose-built theatre or in a mobile cinema if numbers are small. A major Relief in Place (RiP) takes place

every six months and takes between four to seven weeks to process 9,000 troops. Mini RiPs, designed for individual augmentees (IAs) and enablers, take place every three months and accommodate between 1,500 to 2,000 personnel. Depending on the air bridge, CSE put on shows for about 340 nights a year as the 'out of scope' programme for support units is constant even though the numbers may sometimes be small.

Although there is no compelling statistical evidence to establish that decompression improves psychological outcomes, it is widely believed that service personnel require a short period in a third location to adjust from the high pressure of combat (Hacker Hughes et al, 2008). The structured programme provided for British forces includes social events, psycho-educational briefings, controlled re-introduction to alcohol and beach events. A recent study of British troops transiting the Cyprus facility during 2008 showed that 80% of subjects were ambivalent or hostile to decompression beforehand but that 91% found the experience useful (Jones et al, 2011). Those who found the process less helpful included service personnel who had been through the process before, junior officers and senior NCOs. Overall, however, decompression was well received. The CSE show in Cyprus comprises contemporary rock and comedy. An opportunity is provided for the audience to participate in a sing-along, often incorporating the unit's tour song. CSE use Cyprus as a proving ground for their entertainers so that they can gain experience of military audiences and culture before being sent on a tour to Afghanistan. A survey conducted by Ipsos Media CT in spring 2010 of a representative sample (1,011) service personnel returning from Afghanistan showed that 79% agreed that watching BFBS television raised morale and 86% agreed that listening to BFBS radio also raised morale. Of those surveyed, 83% had attended a CSE show as part of the decompression package in Cyprus and of these 95% agreed it was an 'essential' element in the programme.

### 3.19 DIFFERENTIATION BETWEEN SSV/CSE AND BFF

The SSV and BFF have complementary roles. Currently SSV provides the bulk of forces entertainment, through television, three radio programmes and around 140 live shows a year. With a negotiated budget and a brief to provide a large number of shows, CSE audition young and aspiring performers. They need to engage performers who can deploy quickly and whose work schedules will not be adversely affected by difficulties associated with the air bridge. By contrast, the established stars who offer their



services to BFF without a fee are more constrained and financially penalised by flight delays.

BFF organises about five major tours a year (see Appendix 1). However, recent difficulties with the air bridge to Afghanistan have led the charity to explore other ways of linking the support of the British public to service personnel deployed overseas. This relationship was purposefully emphasised on 21 November 2007 at Wembley Stadium where England were playing Croatia in the final qualifying match of Euro 2008. BFF organised a group of soldiers, who had recently returned from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan, to walk around the perimeter of the pitch in a 'Lap of Honour'. The crowd responded enthusiastically and the event caught the public's imagination and was widely reported in the media. The televised lap brought the issue of the individual soldier's role and commitment to the fore at a time when the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan were not universally supported. It represented a tipping point in public opinion and the charity, Help for Heroes, which had been launched on 1 October 2007, also gathered momentum.

This change in the public's perception of the armed forces is difficult to explain. During the 1980s and 1990s celebration of Armistice Day was muted and the wearing of commemorative poppies was far from widespread. Although people now show support for individual servicemen and women (witness the spontaneous expression of sympathy in Wootton Bassett), the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are far from popular. This change in public attitudes may be related to a growing interest in family history and research into the experiences of relatives who fought in the two World Wars. The personalisation of the experience of war, a greater appreciation of the demands that it makes on individuals and a burgeoning interest in military history, may lie at the root of this cultural shift. Driven by a better understanding of the conditions and sacrifices made by British troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, the general public is much more supportive of UK armed forces as witnessed by the rapid growth number of military charities. As a consequence of this cultural shift, young, alternative comedians are now willing to entertain troops increasing the pool of talent available to both CSE and BFF.

Other initiatives promoted by BFF include hospital visits to Selly Oak and Headley Court where some of the most traumatic injuries are treated and service personnel rehabilitated. Major stars who have visited service personnel include David Walliams, Jenson Button and John Bishop. In 2009, the BFF produced a

Christmas DVD for service personnel serving overseas. This contained special messages of goodwill from a large number of celebrities and sports personalities and was included in the Christmas gift box given to all troops deployed away from home. Further Christmas DVDs were made for 2010 and 2011.

However, a focus group and individual interviews have shown that most service personnel do not recognise a clear difference between CSE and BFF. Some soldiers thought they were part of the same organisation and others did not realise that BFF is a charity. They tend to recall the artist or the show, rather than the name of the organisation responsible for its production.

### 3.20 THE AMERICAN MODEL

In the United States two organisations provide entertainment for the armed forces: the United Services Organisation (USO), a private, non-profit body which relies on donations from individuals and corporations, and the US Armed Forces Public Entertainment Office. Although not a government department, USO is recognised by the Department of Defense and the President of the United States serves as its honorary chairman. It was set up in February 1941 by President Franklin D. Roosevelt who called together a group of charities to establish an organisation that would provide emotional support for service personnel. In May 1941, Bob Hope and other celebrities performed to airmen at March Air Force Base in California, and in October of that year USO Camp Shows Inc was incorporated to offer entertainment to US troops across the world. The first front-line tour was undertaken by the comedian, Joe E. Brown, who in March 1942 visited Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. In the following year, Bob Hope led a tour to England, North Africa and Sicily. By summer 1945 USO was producing as many as 700 shows a day around the world. Whilst many major stars (Bing Crosby, Danny Kaye, the Andrews Sisters) took part, the volume required USO to recruit less experienced artistes who viewed this as an opportunity to develop their careers.

In December 1947, all USO clubs and facilities were closed. However, with the threat of war in Korea, the organisation was re-activated in January 1951. Two years later, it was estimated that at last one show a day was being staged in Korea. The Vietnam War again drew major stars to overseas tours. From December 1964 onwards, Bob Hope held a Christmas concert in Vietnam and other celebrities who visited the country included Raquel Welch, Charlton Heston, Nancy Sinatra, John Wayne, Roy Rodgers and Clint Eastwood. USO has grown into a major organisation



*Professor Green in front of 7 Armoured Brigade, Germany in November 2011. The British Forces Foundation*

that does more than provide entertainment for service personnel. In May 2011, the USO and BFF announced a partnership, sharing resources and best practice, to improve the welfare of British and American troops and military families.

The US Armed Forces Professional Entertainment Office (AFPEO), by contrast, is a relatively small governmental department. It was set up in 1951 to

provide an administrative link between USO and servicemen on the ground. It was also tasked with providing shows where the USO Camp Shows were unavailable, and establish a regularly scheduled programme. In contrast to USO, which recruited well-known stars, it tended to recruit emerging talent. However, from 1982 onwards AFPEO also sought to send star performers on tours because of their perceived impact on morale.

### 3.21 PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF ENTERTAINMENT

In spring 1918, Siegfried Sassoon found himself in Egypt with 25 Royal Welch Fusiliers. The division to which his battalion was attached contained a high proportion of soldiers who had been on active service without leave since September 1915 when they had sailed for Gallipoli. One evening, they were entertained by a concert party of two male actors and three female singers organised by Lena Ashwell. Although the performers were not celebrities, they established a powerful bond with the soldier audience:

*Row beyond row, I watched those soldiers, listening so quietly, chins propped on hands, to the songs which epitomised their 'Blighty hunger', their longing for the gaiety and sentiment of life... They listen to 'Dixieland' and 'It's a long, long trail', and 'I hear you calling me'. But it was the voice of life that 'joined in the chorus, boys'; and very powerful and impressive it sounded (Sassoon, 1937, 605).*

Anecdotal reports suggest that a high-quality show, whether a play, singer or comedian, by engaging at an emotional level can leave a strong and lasting impression. Joyce Grenfell reflected on her wartime tours:

*The audience and the artist must be one. The artist's job, as I see it, is to share an experience. In the hospitals I learned to try to help the patients to think outwardly, to lose themselves by joining in and to find a place where personal problems cease to be, a place of peace or... harmony (Grenfell, 1989, xxiv).*

People can often recall performances by a major star many years later if they have been moved by the experience. This implies that shows need to be of reasonable standard to have a positive effect. Evidence from ENSA suggests that poor quality shows could send a demoralising message: that the authorities did not care about troops. If well-executed entertainment has the capacity to raise morale, then poor quality shows must also have the capacity to depress morale.

Despite the proliferation of the means of entertainment permitted by technological innovation, the power of the live show has not diminished. Blogs, twitter and downloads do not have the immediacy and impact of direct human contact. A well-made film can move an audience to tears or terrify them but it remains an artifice, carefully constructed and scripted to achieve a desired end. The live show brings direct human contact and spontaneity, while the audience

have an opportunity to assess the commitment and sincerity of the performer for themselves. Indeed, if an artiste is successful in building a bond with the audience, people may believe that the performance was for them alone.

Of equal importance is the 'meet and greet' activity undertaken by the visiting artiste. Both Vera Lynn and Joyce Grenfell believed that informal meetings with servicemen lifted morale of servicemen, whether in hospital or on active duty. During the Second World War, they were a source of news and a tangible link with home, particularly for soldiers who had been abroad for many years. Although satellite technology has addressed the news and communication problems of the past, service personnel continue to appreciate visits from home, particularly if the star has undertaken an arduous and potentially dangerous journey. Katherine Jenkins, who has visited Iraq, Kosovo and Afghanistan, observed that the break from the routine of regular campaigning provided by a show, together with an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings, has the capacity to lift morale.

That there exists a basic human need for entertainment seems clear from the fact that people create their own shows when professional performances are not available. Servicemen in barracks or in prison-of-war camps organised their own shows often going to considerable lengths to make costumes and scenery. Whilst self-entertainment may relieve boredom and offer a sense of purpose, its impact on morale appears to be less than the visit of a major star, particularly if he or she has made a special journey to perform to troops. Because of their charisma and the opportunity for direct contact, such events stand out in the memory.

Nevertheless, military audiences present particular problems for performers. With shared values and a strong internal culture, civilians are sometimes regarded with scepticism. A performer needs to establish a rapport with the audience and the initial barrier can be overcome only if service culture is understood. Groups of servicemen can be critical, particularly if it is perceived that the artiste lacks credibility or talent. Even experienced comedians can struggle to win over a service audience. However, once a bond has been established, the atmosphere can be more intense than in a civilian theatre where the audience is less unified. A military show, if successful, can generate strong corporate emotion.

# Conclusions

Morale is not a given and has an intangible quality. It cannot be monitored solely by what an individual or group think or say, but by what he or they do and how he or they do it; it is the state of conduct and behaviour of an individual or group. Many variables are indicative of poor morale (desertion, absenteeism, disciplinary offences and sickness) though none are absolute guides. They require experience and knowledge of military culture for their accurate interpretation as all can occur in units of high morale. Esprit de corps and group cohesion contribute to good morale and can operate at a range of levels. They too are not an absolute guarantee. Indeed, units with extreme or inflexible cohesion may be resistant to new recruits or those transferred from other units to the detriment of their morale. Poles enlisted in the Germany Army during the First World War had such strong links that they often deserted en masse. Today with the 'battle group' system, esprit de corps is unlikely to have a significant impact beyond battalion level. No single factor can be guaranteed to raise morale. Amongst the variables that can raise or sustain morale are confidence in commanders, unit cohesion, belief in task, quality of equipment and the fair provision of rest and recreation.

Studies conducted of US armed forces in both Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated an association between morale and psychological well-being. Over a 12-month tour, morale fell to a low at ten months, the time at which mental health problems rose to a peak. Factors that sustain morale, therefore, protect against psychological disorders. However, they do not confer absolute protection as service personnel, if subjected to long-term or exceptionally severe stress, are likely to experience psychological problems. The most recent MHAT report of US troops deployed to Afghanistan showed that service personnel on multiple tours who have been exposed to intensified combat have elevated levels of mental health problems (MHAT, 2011, 5).

Evidence gathered from both World Wars and Iraq showed that entertainment is a morale sustaining factor. Its provision has to be perceived as equitable and fair. Disproportionate delivery to rear areas causes resentment among front-line troops who experience greater risks. Poor quality or inappropriate entertainment can depress morale by conveying to

service personnel a lack understanding or interest in their welfare. Entertainment has to be tailored to military audiences; often close-knit with shared values, they can be critical of civilian performers who need an understanding of service culture to establish a rapport. Good-quality entertainment, that which is memorable and conveys a sense of commitment, can serve to lift and sustain morale. How long this effect lasts has not been studied in detail. Anecdotal reports suggest that major stars can have a significant impact.

To date mental health problems experienced by UK armed forces in Afghanistan have remained relatively low (PTSD rates average 3% though rise to 7% for front-line troops). The contribution made by welfare packages, including entertainment, has yet to be quantified in population studies.

In modern culture, celebrity plays a significant part. The visit of a major star, such as David Beckham to Afghanistan in 2009, can exercise a sustained impact on morale and service personnel continued to speak of this event throughout the tour, and even beyond. As a sportsman with global recognition, Beckham stands in a relatively small group of public figures. There appears to be an association between celebrity and impact on morale. By summer 1942, for example, the Eighth Army exhausted by combat in the Western Desert felt abandoned and forgotten, particularly after a series of defeats at the hands of Rommel. In August 1942, the visit of Winston Churchill, with all the risks of air travel over hostile territory, raised morale significantly. It demonstrated to combat troops that their sacrifices and hardships were recognised. The timing was crucial in giving soldiers a lift before the battle of El Alamein.

Technological innovation has brought considerable change to the provision of organised entertainment (downloads, satellite feeds, DVDs and Apps) and facilitated self-entertainment through facebook, twitter and blogs. Despite this, the place of the live show has not been diminished. Its immediacy and direct human contact makes it both the most challenging form of entertainment but also potentially the most rewarding. Many actors prefer working in the theatre, rather than making films, because the experience empowers them and provides an opportunity to engage with an



audience. It is this characteristic that gives the live show the capacity to raise the morale of service personnel on campaign. The performer has to reflect the beliefs and experiences of the audience. Harry Lauder, Gracie Fields, Vera Lynn and Jim Davidson were popular with service audiences because they understood and reflected their culture; soldiers felt that they were ‘one of us’.

Touring stars represent home. Vera Lynn recalled that providing soldiers in Burma with news from England was as important, if not more, than as singing to them. “How are things at home?” that question was the constant refrain of every hospital

visit’, she recalled (Lynn, 2009, 171). Entertainers offer a tangible link with friends and family. If the star has undertaken the tour without payment and their expenses met by donations from the general public, this adds a level of sincerity and commitment to the performance. However, the broad sweep of entertainment provided for UK armed forces (radio, television and the requirement to provide two shows per six-month tour of duty) could not be sustained by major stars working without a fee. The entertainment provided by BFF and CSE has played an important part in sustaining the morale of UK armed forces and this, in turn, has had a positive impact on their well-being.



*Troops recently returned from Afghanistan receiving a standing ovation at Wembley Stadium in 2007 during The British Forces Foundation’s Lap of Honour before the England v Croatia European Championship Qualifier. The British Forces Foundation*

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# APPENDIX 1

## Summary of major shows and events organised by the British Forces Foundation, 2000-2011

Date	Event	Audience Numbers
Christmas 2000	On board HMS Invincible in Malaga with Jim Davidson (JD), Sir John Mills, Sir Steve Redgrave and Matthew Pinsent, Atomic Kitten, Martine McCutcheon, Bradley Walsh, Suzy Perry, Melinda Messenger and S Club 7. Televised on BBC1.	600
13 June 2001	Show in Germany with JD, Status Quo and Clive Cooper	12,000
19-31 May 2002	Falkland Islands with JD – Televised on BBC1 (4 shows)	1,400
2 October 2002	Show in Arbroath for 45 Commando with JD, The Jones Gang, Roger Kitter and Mama Said	700
April 2003	Shows in Germany with JD (2 shows)	600
29 May-1 June 2003	Shows in Iraq with JD (3 shows) :	2,100
19-23 May 2003	Show in Gibraltar with JD & Emma Bunton	1,000
21-22 February 2004	Show for Royal Marines in Norway with JD, Myleene Klass and Clive Cooper (3 shows)	1,100
29 November 2004	Show for Cheshire Regiment at Bulford, Wiltshire with JD, The Jones Gang, Clive Cooper & Ttorria	650
19 December 2004	Show for SAS Hereford with JD, The Jones Gang & Clive Cooper	300
3-7 February 2005	Show for IMATT in Sierra Leone with JD & Joanne Roberts	500
February 2005	Visit to HMS Grafton whilst in Dubai with JD.	
17 December 2005	Show for SAS Hereford with JD, The Jones Gang, Clive Cooper and Mama Said	300
19 December 2005	Show for Royal Welch Fusiliers at Bessbrook, N Ireland with JD, Katherine Jenkins, Clive Cooper and Mama Said	400
23 December 2005	Shows in Iraq with JD & Katherine Jenkins – Televised ITV Wales (3 shows)	1,800
May 2006	Show on board HMS Argyll whilst in Dubai with JD & Veronique	300
24-26 September 2006	Kosovo with JD, James Blunt and Katherine Jenkins – TV – USA film	800
13-14 December 2006	Shows in Iraq with Katherine Jenkins, Joe Pasquale and food cooked by Gary Rhodes – Televised ITV (2 shows)	1,800
18 December 2006	Show for SAS Hereford with JD, Roy Wood and Kev Orkian	300
12-14 February 2007	Shows in Afghanistan with JD & Katherine Jenkins (3 shows)	4,450
25 April 2007	Show on HMS Cornwall whilst in Dubai with JD & singer	250
25 June 2007	Show in Arbroath for 45 Commando with JD, The Jones Gang and Mama Said	400
August 2007	Joe Pasquale visits injured troops at Selly Oak Hospital	
28-29 September 2007	Shows in Dhekelia & Akrotiri, Cyprus with JD, Katherine Jenkins and Heather Small (2 shows)	900
October 2007	Katherine Jenkins visits troops at Selly Oak Hospital	
21 November 2007	England v Croatia at Wembley Stadium – Lap of Honour by British troops	80,000
19 December 2007	Show for SBS Poole with JD and The Jones Gang & Hollie Kennedy	700
21 December 2007	Show for SAS Hereford with JD & The Jones Gang	300
5 June 2008	Show in Cyprus – organised by the Royal Welsh, but paid £2,000 towards it plus filming of JD DVD	500
21 June 2008	Show for Kings Royal Hussars at Tidworth with JD	500
1 July 2008	Show for Gurkha Regiment in Brunei, organised locally with Nepali acts, but paid for by BFF (£12k)	600

Date	Event	Audience Numbers
1-3 September 2008	Basra with Katherine Jenkins – failed trip – due to flights	
25 September 2008	Show for SBS Poole with JD, and Chas'n'Dave.	350
4 October 2008	Show for Faslane Nuclear Submarine Base with JD & Hollie Evans	400
13 November 2008	Visit by David Walliams to Headley Court	
18 November 2008	Welcome Home Show in Colchester for the Paras with JD, Bobby Davro, The Saturdays, Kev Orkian and Signature	450
15-18 December 2008	Afghanistan attempt with Anthony Scott and Clive Cooper – only as far as Bastion & no shows.	
19 December 2008	Annual Show at Hereford with JD, Rick Wakeman and Clive Cooper	400
4 March 2009	Visit by Jimmy Carr to Headley Court	
10 March 2009	Lap of Honour at Cheltenham Gold Cup	50,000
16 March 2009	Visit by Jimmy Carr to Selly Oak Hospital	
May/June 2009	Filming of Christmas Messages by celebrities for DVD being sent out to all service personnel on operations over Christmas 2010	23,000
10 June 2009	Visit by Dame Tanni-Grey Thompson to Headley Court	
1 October 2009	Show for Faslane with JD, Clive Cooper, Greg Cook, Anthony Scott and Hollie	600
9 October 2009	Show for staff of Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham with JD, Jimmy Carr, Rory Bremner and Rick Wakeman	250 250
12 October 2009	Show in Aldershot for the Welsh Guards with Katherine Jenkins, The Saturdays, Rob Brydon, Ruth Jones and Craig Campbell	700
21 October 2009	Visit by Ben Fogle to Headley Court	
19 November 2009	Show for Families in Aldershot with Jimmy Carr, Ruth Lorenzo, Vice, Tensai, Sean Rumsey, Double Tap and Andy Leach	300
17 December 2009	Annual Show in Hereford with JD, Jimmy Carr and Jethro	400
December 2009	Private screening for service families of 'A Christmas Carol' in London	400
23-24 January 2010	Attempt to get to Afghanistan with JD, James Blunt, Greg Cook and Clive Cooper – failed	
1-4 March 2010	Shows in Oman with JD (2 shows)	650
May/June 2010	Filming of Christmas Messages by celebrities for DVD being sent out to all service personnel on operations over Christmas 2010	23,000
25 July 2010	Lap of Honour at the Cartier Polo Day, Guards Club	25,000
14 October 2010	Visit by Jenson Button to Headley Court	
October 2010 onwards	Launch of 'Buy our Heroes a Drink' Campaign – text messages and free drinks vouchers with Christmas DVD in boxes	23,000
15 November 2010	Welcome Home Show for 40 Commando Marine in Taunton with Craig Campbell, Kev Orkian, Jamie Sutherland and John Warburton	400
16 December 2010	Annual Show in Hereford with Roger Daltrey, Roger Taylor, Graham Gouldman and Spike Edney	450
December 2010	Private screening for service families of 'Harry Potter' film in London	400
20-22 December 2010	Attempt to get to Afghanistan with Katherine Jenkins, James Blunt and Kev Orkian – failed	
6-9 February 2011	Afghanistan with Tim Westwood (Radio 1 DJ)	250
30 March 2011	Comedian John Bishop visits Selly Oak Hospital	
9 April 2011	Lap of Honour at Grand National, Aintree	250
May/June 2011	Filming of Christmas Messages by celebrities for DVD being sent out to all service personnel on operations over Christmas 2011	23,000
1-30 June 2011	Free tickets to Sir Elton John's UK shows	1,400
17 July 2011	Screening of Harry Potter film for families	300
8 August 2011	Tim Westwood (Radio 1 DJ) visit to Headley Court	
4 October 2011	Show in Italy for RAF personnel on Libyan missions with JD and Kev Orkian	200



<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Audience Numbers</b>
October 2011 onwards	'Buy our Heroes a Drink' Campaign – text messages and free drinks vouchers with Christmas DVD in 2011 boxes	23,000
14 November 2011	Show in Brunei for Gurkhas using Nepalese stars from the world of music and dance	3,000
16 November 2011	Show for 30 Commando in Plymouth with StooShe, John Moloney, Russ Powell and Greg Cook	200
17 November 2011	Show for 1 Rifles with Katherine Jenkins, Stavros Flatley, StooShe Kev Orkian and Greg Cook	900
22 November 2011	Show for 7 Armd Bde with Professor Green, Simon Evans, Craig Campbell and Friederike Krum	1,500
12 December 2011	Katherine Jenkins visits staff and patients at Queen Elizabeth Hospital	
15 December 2011	Annual SAS show with The Jones Gang (Kenney Jones, The Who)	450
2 February 2012	Lap of Honour - Wales v Scotland Six Nations at Cardiff	
27 February 2012	Afghanistan visit with James Blunt, Katherine Jenkins and Kev Orkian turned back because of military air bridge issues	
12 March 2012	Ruth Jones (Gavin & Stacey) visit to patients and staff at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham	
1 April 2012	Screening of The Pirates film for families	300
14 May 2012	Comedy show for 2 Rifles at Ballykinler, Northern Ireland, with John Moloney, Kev Orkian and Jamie Sutherland	300
May/June 2012	Filming of Christmas Messages by celebrities for DVD being sent out to all service personnel on operations over Christmas 2012	10,000
3 June 2012	Free Sir Elton John tickets to UK shows	1,800
14 June 2012	Jim Davidson OBE visits Falklands	
10 July 2012	Comedian Jimmy Carr visits Headley Court	
October 2012 onwards	'Buy our Heroes a Drink' Campaign – text messages and free drinks vouchers with Christmas DVD in 2012 boxes	10,000
3 October	Comedy show for Royal Engineers at Chetwynd Barracks - Back to Bases comedy tour	250
4 October 2012	Comedy show for Defence Medical Services Group at Keogh Barracks - Back to Bases comedy tour	250
9 October 2012	Free tickets to George Michael concert	100
10 October 2012	Comedy show for 42 Cdo at Bickleigh Barracks - Back to Bases comedy tour	150
10 October 2012	Comedian John Bishop visit to Headley Court	
11 October 2012	Comedy show for 30 Cdo at Stonehouse Barracks - Back to Bases comedy tour	200
17 October 2012	Comedy show for HMS Collingwood - Back to Bases comedy tour	200
28 October 2012	Show for HMS Dauntless at sea on return to Portsmouth with Jim Davidson OBE, Bobby Davro and Claire Sweeney	180
29 October 2012	Free tickets to Lionel Richie concert	200
8 November 2012	Singer Pixie Lott headlines homecoming show for 3 Yorks Regt after tough Afghanistan tour. Band - Alpha Connection	500
7 December 2012	Royal Demand Performance (Patron HRH Prince of Wales) for staff at Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Starring singer Katie Melua, opera group Amore, comedians John Moloney and Boy with Tape	300
18 February 2013	Katie Melua visits Afghanistan (Camp Bastion plus FOBs) with comedians Kane Brown and Nick Page	3,000
18 March 2013	England footballer Alex Oxlaid-Chamberlain visits Royal Engineers at Chetwynd Barracks to officially launch partnership between BFF and the England Footballers' Foundation	
30 March 2013	Comedian John Bishop visits the SAS in Hereford	400

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Audience Numbers</b>
May/June 2013	Filming of Christmas Messages by celebrities for DVD being sent out to all service personnel on operations over Christmas 2011	23,000
8 May 2013	Show for Duke of Lancaster's Regiment in Catterick with singer/actress Alice Barlow, and comedians Kane Brown, Jamie Sutherland and Kev Orkian	350
25 September 2013	England footballer Ricky Lambert visits Portsmouth Naval Base	
11 October 2013	Comedian Jimmy Carr visits Queen Elizabeth Hospital	
8 November 2013	Free tickets to Sugababes concert	100
15 November 2013	Katherine Jenkins visit to Afghanistan. Included two concerts supported by singer TJ Bilham and comedians Greg Burns and Kane Brown	4,000
5 December 2013	Show for staff at Queen Elizabeth Hospital with Alice Barlow, TJ Bilham, John Moloney and Raymond & Mr Timpkins Revue	300
17 December 2013	Singer Eliza Doolittle headlines show for 40 Cdo in Taunton. Joined by comedian Craig Campbell, Raymond & Mr Timpkins Revue, Alice Barlow and John Robins	400
18 December 2013	Christmas show for CTCRM - Alice Barlow, Craig Campbell, John Robins, Fully Funktional and The Show Must Go On	250
20 January 2014	Comedy show in conjunction with Veterans Aid	200
February half-term	BFF Panto Bus - five performances at four locations for Armed Forces families	700
13 March 2014	Singer Ed Sheeran visits Camp Bastion for mini performances and large concert - with comedian Craig Campbell	5,000
6 May 2014	England footballer visits Portsmouth Naval Base & HMS Daring	200
2 July 2014	Free Sir Elton John tickets	1,200
11 October 2014	Show for HMS Vanguard, Glasgow. Comedian Mark Nelson	300
15 November 2014	Stars of The Inbetweeners visit Cyprus, 3-day 4 location visit	3,000
November - 2014	BFF Panto Bus - 17 performances at 14 locations for Armed Forces families	2,200
12 December 2014	Annual SAS show with singer Collabro, band Fully Funktional, magician Jamie Raven and comedian Kev Orkian	400
8 February 2015	Singer Joss Stone in Djibouti for crew of HMS Kent	180
February half-term	BFF Panto Bus - 14 locations 17 performances for Armed Forces families	2,200
1 June 2015	Free tickets to Sir Elton John concerts	2,000
November - 2015	BFF Panto Bus - 26 locations, 34 performances for Armed Forces families	4,800
4 December 2015	Annual SAS show in Hereford with Pete Firmin, Michael Dwyer, Alicia Lowes and The Soul Lounge	400
Feb 2016 half-term	BFF Panto Bus - 13 locations 15 performances for Armed Forces families	2,000
24 February 2016	Comedy show at RNAS Culdrose with Dan Evans, Noel James, John Moloney and Raymond & Mr Timpkins Revue	180
22 April 2016	Show for British UN Peacekeepers in Nicosia, Cyprus	150
22 May 2016	Comedy show for HMS Protector in Cape Town, South Africa with Alan Committee, Siv Ngesi and Kev Orkian	150
November - 2016	BFF Panto Bus - 51 performances at 35 locations (six countries) for Armed Forces families	7,200
3 December 2016	Free Sir Elton John tickets	250
26 January 2017	Katherine Jenkins performance at NCHQ, Portsmouth and visit to HMS Ironduke	500
Feb 2017 half-term	BFF Panto Bus - 14 locations 16 performances for Armed Forces families	2,200
23 February 2017	Show for British UN Peacekeepers in Nicosia, Cyprus with John Moloney	150
6 May 2017	Shows for RAF Akrotiri and UN Peacekeepers in Nicosia Cyprus with Into the Ark, Alice Barlow and Fully Funktional	250
4 June 2017	Free Sir Elton John tickets	1,000

Date	Event	Audience Numbers
5 October 2017	'Submarine Oscars' at Faslane with Tom Binns, Jonny Awsum and Fully FunKtional	400
30 October 2017	Falklands tour, nine shows at six venues with Andy Askins, Alice Barlow, Kane Brown, Noel James, Jules Nelson and Slim	1,200
November - 2017	BFF Panto Bus - 55 performances at 39 locations (six countries) for Armed Forces families	8,000
Feb 2018 half-term	BFF Panto Bus - 14 locations 16 performances for Armed Forces families	2,200
18 March 2018	Two shows in Middle East - UAE & Kuwait - with Paul Tonkinson, David Ward, Matt, Stellingworth and Jonny Aswum	500
6 April 2018	Shows in Estonia and Poland with John Moloney, Kev Orkian and Holly Ellison	350
27 April 2018	Show in Bahrain with Mike Gunn, Mandy Knight, Dan Evans and Jules Nelson	200
3 June 2018	Free Lionel Richie tickets	1,500
22 June 2018	Show in Romania with Craig Campbell, Holly Ellison, Jamie Raven and Mo Omar	200
14 July 2018	Tommy Lee Jones visit to Tedworth House	
20 September 2018	Show in Somalia with Andy Askins, Kane Brown and Mo Omar	150
29 September 2018	Submarine Oscars in Faslane with Dom Holland and Fully FunKtional	400
8 November 2018	Show in Bahrain with Simon Evans, Raymond & Mr Timpkins, Mo Omar, Andy Askins and Jules Nelson	200
18 November 2018	Show in Gibraltar with Kev Orkian, Raymond & Timpkins, Ben Heathcote and Jetstream	300
November - 2018	BFF Panto Bus - 57 performances at 40 locations (eight countries) for Armed Forces families	8,250
5 December 2018	Welcome home show for Welsh Guards with Katherine Jenkins, Kane Brown, Into the Ark, John Moloney, Noel James, Raymond & Timpkins and the Jules Nelson Band	400
Feb 2019 half-term	BFF Panto Bus - 14 locations 16 performances for Armed Forces families	2,200
21 February 2019	Show in Dubai with Craig Campbell, Kev Orkian, Kane Brown and Jules Nelson	200
27 February 2019	Show in Greece with John Moloney, Craig Campbell, Jules Nelson, Matt Stellingwerf and Tim Clark	200
23 March 2019	Show in Poland with Dom Holland, Jamie Raven, Alice Barlow, Kane Brown and Jules Nelson	150
9 May 2019	Show in Bahrain with Craig Campbell, Paul Tonkinson, Kev Orkian and Ben Heathcote	200
19 May 2019	Three shows in Afghanistan with Simon Evans, Craig Campbell, Kev Orkian and Ben Heathcote plus one show in UAE	700
3 June 2019	Show in Crete with Craig Campbell, Paul Tonkinson, Tim Clark and Jules Nelson	200
4 June 2019	Show in Cyprus with Katherine Jenkins, Craig Campbell, Tim Clark, Rod Woodward and Jules Nelson	250
12 June 2019	Show in Norway with Kev Orkian, Kane Brown and Holly Ellison	150
28 September 2019	Submarine Oscars in Faslane with Simon Evans and Fully FunKtional	400
21 November 2019	Show in Bahrain with Tom Binns, Kane Brown and Holly Ellison	200
November - 2018	BFF Panto Bus - 50 performances at 45 locations (seven countries) for Armed Forces families	7,250
5 December 2019	Show onboard Queen Elizabeth in the Solent with Kane Brown, Craig Campbell and Kane Brown	400
Feb 2020 half-term	BFF Panto Bus - 14 locations 16 performances for Armed Forces families	2,200

**This list does not include those shows undertaken by BFF since December 2015 as part of Global Forces Entertainment Limited (40 individual shows plus eight cycles of decompression).**

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