



Life behind the lines

READING letters from home by torchlight, Christmas in the desert, training in the mud and wet in Germany—they say army life intersperses short bursts of action with long periods of quiet. Life behind the scenes is rarely captured, but a new book by photo-journalist Lalage Snow, whose father and brother both served with the Scots Guards, redresses the balance. She says: 'I wanted people to understand what it's like in the field. How boring it can be. How alien it is sometimes. The downtime and the domestic front are things rarely seen outside the army, and, I believe, give a greater insight into the workings of war itself.' Miss Snow spent a year between the summers of 2007 and 2008 documenting the 1st Battalion Scots Guards. The period was one of the regiment's busiest in recent years, with men deployed in Afghanistan, Iraq and the Falkland Islands, plus the move for F Company from Chelsea Barracks to Westminster. Miss Snow, then 26, accompanied the men on training exercises and lived side by side with them as an 'embed' on operations. The result is *Full Deployment: a year in the life of the Scots Guards* (£39.95). 'I was very lucky with the access I had. It must have been strange for them to have a civilian girl with a camera wandering around. I did get a few love letters from some of the younger boys, who I think were terribly homesick.' Help for Heroes will receive £1 from every copy sold, and a proportion of the profits from books bought direct from Miss Snow (www.lalagesnow.com) will go to the Colonel's Fund. **SG**

A desert Christmas: The 1st Battalion Scots Guards in Basra, Iraq, in 2007

Popular poultry

FOLLOWING hot on the feathered heels of the rising trend for urban chicken-keeping, the newest major increase in metropolitan pet sales is in an unlikely quarter—the quail. Requiring little space and maintenance, but being prolific egg-layers, these small game birds are thought to be ideal pets for those with busy city lives and smaller gardens. Quails are friendly, generally quiet and easy to keep clean. Experts recommend that you take on females rather than males, as the latter have a tendency to crow with displeasure if left alone for too long. The females lay eggs from roughly eight weeks of age, and live for up to six years. Poultry-house designer Omlet is reporting a boom in sales of its quail run—a smaller version of its 'eglu' chicken coop, which can hold up to six birds. The Eglu Go costs from £295 (0845 450 2056; www.omlet.co.uk). The site has a quail-keeping guide, too. **AC**



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From sheep to chic

FOUNDED five years ago by knitwear designer Nicola Sherlock and charity campaigner turned farmer Beate Kubitz, Makepiece produces beautiful wool clothing that is sustainably sourced, has a low impact on the environment and is eco-friendly. Based in Todmorden in the Pennines, the company uses natural yarns from its own sheep and alpaca, angora and mohair farmed in the UK, which is then spun as locally as possible. The collection is knitted within the nearby community, using the minimum chemical processes possible. Because Makepiece uses yarn farmed in the UK, it can ensure that there are proper animal protection and employment rights, not to mention a minimum of road miles from sheep to shop. 'British wool is a fibre with a clean conscience,' says Miss Kubitz. 'It's sustainable, with relatively few environmental issues compared to intensively farmed cotton or petrochemical-based materials.' Makepiece designs are available at selected independent retailers and from www.makepiece.co.uk

Mike Lane/Alamy



Makepiece designs (right) are made with wool from Beate Kubitz's own sheep (above)

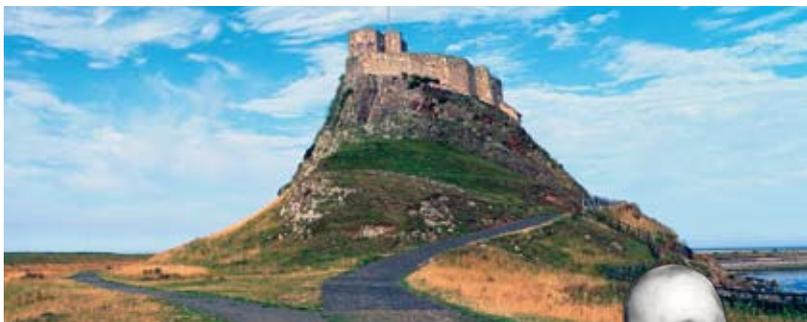
Half a century of sporting history



A time before Argocats: stalking at Ardverikie, which cost £75.60 a week in 1959

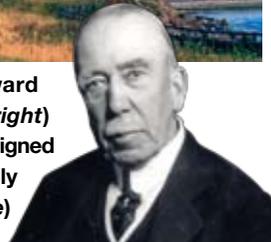
IT was the era of split-cane fishing rods and silk lines, ponies were the sole means of taking a stag off the hill, and a day's driven grouse-shooting cost only £85 per gun. This year, CKD Galbraith, specialist sporting agent with a range of estates across Scotland and Ireland, celebrates its 50th anniversary. To commemorate the event, it has released a special brochure for 2010, which covers the history of the firm and changes in sporting trends since 1959. Among the statistics is the revelation that a week at Inverpattack Lodge, Ardverikie, cost £75.60 per week in 1959, but, today, with 15 stags, it will set you back more than £7,000 for the same period, and that those who wished to try something a little more exotic in the 1950s could try wild-goat stalking—for a mere £54 per day. To order a brochure, telephone 01738 451600 or visit www.sportinglets.co.uk **SG**

Holiday on Lutyens' Holy Island



ST Oswald's, the cottage designed by Lutyens on Holy Island, off the coast of Northumberland, is now available for holiday lets, through the National Trust. It was built in about 1912, as part of the portfolio of Lindisfarne Castle, originally owned by COUNTRY LIFE's first proprietor, Edward Hudson, for whom Lutyens remodelled the Tudor castle perched on a rocky crag into an Edwardian home. The three-bedroom cottage has unrivalled views and Lutyens features, such as a steep pantiled roof. A week's rent ranges from £373 to £1,275. Visit www.nationaltrustcottages.co.uk

Stay in Edward Hudson's (right) Lutyens-designed home on Holy Island (above)



Correction In our article on the COUNTRY LIFE Awards (December 2), it was stated that the Darnley Mausoleum in Cobham, Kent, was handed over to the National Trust this year. In fact, the Trust is still in the process of acquiring the site, with a view to opening it to the public in late spring 2010 (www.nationaltrust.org.uk/southeast).

Val Corbett/CLPL

Country Mouse

The Christmas rush



PHEW—almost there! Christmas tree up. Presents ordered on Amazon. Turkey versus goose debate resolved. Christmas pudding made, cards sent and this, the biggest issue of COUNTRY LIFE this year, off to the printers. The excitement builds.

At home, nine-year-old daughter Anna has 'rediscovered' Father Christmas—briefly an unbeliever when she thought she saw someone looking like me stumbling into her room last year, she has reconfirmed her vows. You have to admire her pragmatism.

Elsewhere, small producers urgently pluck, pickle and ice as Advent closes. Mrs Hedges has boxed and packaged the last of her Tunworth cheeses for Christmas, having had to make more than ever due to wonderful articles in *The Times* and *The Telegraph*. It's busy, busy, busy.

This year, I have decreed that we're not going to eat more, but better. My children told me not to be so pompous and to promise that there would be the usual Cadbury's chocolates in their stockings—Anna rather let her mask slip here. But despite the frenzy of preparation, I wouldn't want it any other way. The big day will arrive whether you're ready or not. I hope that you all are. Good luck and Happy Christmas. **MH**

Town Mouse

A question of decorum



WE can hardly contain ourselves: a new public lavatory is about to be built. In fact, it ought to have gone up already. The exorbitant cost is being met with money delegated by Westminster City Council to individual wards, to spend according to local need. Our ward opted for the lavatory, to prevent what the Victorians would've referred to as 'nuisance' (it was a problem on Nash's Regent Street quadrant, which had columns). City workers emerge from the Tube station, having spent the evening in the watering holes of Canary Wharf, and, after a longish trip, know no shame. People once worried about public spitting, a vice formerly confined to the Continent, yet who could have predicted this new affront to decorum? But the question arises: where should the thing go? The original site has been rejected because of the number of gas pipes and electricity cables underground. The office building on the other side of the street is occupied by anti-terrorist spooks: having just dug up the pavement to erect crash-proof bollards, they would hardly welcome the security risk of a loo on their doorstep. I learn the public library is to close: perhaps it had better go there. They could leave the more episodic books for light reading. **CA**