



■ HONDA driver Tpr Ricky Crane (2 RTR) had the privilege of spinning his car on the Paddock Hill bend, an experience that simply added to his enjoyment of the day.

He said: "I am a person for speed and I'm into my bikes. I had a lot of leave and I wanted to fill it with some exciting stuff, so here I am.

"I have not done a track day before and it has been really good.

"We got to go round a proper race track doing proper speeds, I even managed to spin my car in the gravel, which was a real bonus.

"I am definitely going to do it again, it is great to get away from it all and blow off some steam."

■ HAVING sold his car in the months before visiting Brands Hatch, Tpr Dan Roberts (2 RTR) shared driving duties with his friend Tpr Martyn Copleston.

"I could not wait to get here," he told *Soldier*. "There is a real sense of freedom and you can drive as fast as you want. I have never done a track day before and it has been so much more than I hoped, it is really exciting and you get a sweat on going round the corners at speed. It is brilliant.

"I definitely want to do it again. When I get back off tour I am going to get a car and do more track days like this.

"It has been a great way to let off steam and is an opportunity to do something different to the normal Army stuff."

■ TPR Martyn Copleston (2 RTR) brought his BMW 320 to Brands Hatch in what was his first track day experience.

"I have done off-road hill climbs but nothing on the track," he explained.

"My car handled like a fish but I got up to 80mph along the back straight, it was really good fun.

"With something like this you can do those speeds legally, there are no police. It has been a great experience ahead of my operational deployment."

**Report: Richard Long**  
**Pictures: Graeme Main**

**F**OR serving personnel about to deploy on Operation Herrick 13, the past few months have featured an intense period of training aimed at preparing them for life in the heart of Helmand province.

While perfecting the vital skills and drills for Afghanistan is of paramount importance, these soldiers also need to escape the pressure-cooker environment ahead of what will inevitably be a challenging tour.

The world-famous Brands Hatch racing circuit provided an ideal opportunity for troops from the 2nd Royal Tank Regiment to do exactly that in the

weeks before their deployment.

The race acers took to the asphalt in their own road cars in what proved to be a highly-enjoyable track day and organiser Maj Jim Cameron (2 RTR) told *Soldier* about the welcome distraction the event offered.

"We have been working really hard since January, converting to the vehicles we will be using in Afghanistan," he explained.

"We have been getting to grips with Viking and the pre-deployment training has thrashed us, it is really hard work.

## BRANDS HATCH IS EVOCATIVE AND HISTORIC

"Soldiers are young men and women who are relatively well paid and driving offences can be a big problem for them.

"If they lose their licence they are no good in theatre as a Viking driver. Something like this gives them an opportunity to let off steam.

"There is free instruction for them and they can get the best out of their cars without the speeding fines.

"Brands Hatch is evocative and historic. This track has played a central role in British motor sport since the 1930s.



■ CPL Gareth Harley (2 RTR) brought his Ford Focus RS to the track just four months after buying the vehicle and was determined to push it to the limits.

He said: "I have had a massive love of cars since I was little, when I used to watch Formula One with my dad.

"It is amazing, I loved the sense of speed going into the corners. I only got this car four months ago and this is the first time it has had a good legal thrash.

"It has been a good change from the normal sports. I never knew this kind of thing went on in the Army. The boss has been doing it for quite a while and it is great to try something different."

■ BRANDS Hatch gave LCpl Neil Dunn (2 RTR) an opportunity to test the modifications he has made to his car and the soldier was pleased with the results.

"I bought my Seat two years ago but it is hard to get full use of it on the roads, so this has been brilliant," he explained.

"My mate called me about it [the track day] and asked if I wanted to take part.

"We managed to get this a lot cheaper than normal and you have to take every opportunity you can.

"It has been a good distraction from the training we have been doing."

# LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

**Herrick-bound troops take to the track ahead of deployment**

"We have got a 1.6-litre Honda Civic going round, he will not set any lap records but he is having a great time out on the track."

Maj Cameron sees motor racing as the ideal way to unwind from the pressures of Service life.

The officer competes in the MSV Track Day Series and took 120 soldiers to this year's Goodwood Festival of Speed.

Personnel also attended the DTM German Touring Car event earlier this month.

Despite featuring a shortened circuit, the track day offered *Soldier* and the personnel from 2 RTR a taste of some of the most famous twists and turns in motor racing.

Starting on the Brabham Straight, the drivers soon plunged into the right-hander at Paddock

Hill, a bend that takes your breath away before you head up Hailwood Hill towards the hairpin Druids Corner.

From there the road cars tackled the Graham Hill bend before travelling along Cooper Straight to the swooping Clark Curve that leads to the finish line.

The circuit saw the drivers hitting speeds of more than 100mph in what was the first track day experience for the novice racers.

With Helmand now firmly on the horizon, Brands Hatch formed the perfect escape from the pressure and challenges that lie ahead.

Once the tour is complete, these racers have vowed to return to the track and fuel their need for speed once more. ■

● MotorSport Vision holds regular track days at Brands Hatch and other circuits, with discount prices available for group bookings. For more information visit [www.clubmsv.co.uk](http://www.clubmsv.co.uk) or call 0870 8505014

