

NO 2: ARMY BOOT CAMP

'I have lost over a stone'

Samantha Holland, 28, who is an internet product manager, is getting married in Mexico to schoolteacher Michael Parks, 37, in May



'I'd love to get fit and stay fit. I want to tone up as I'm getting married abroad and don't want to cover up too much. I'd like to lose weight, too – ideally a stone as I'm a size 12/14 and want to get down to size 10/12. I travel a lot for work and find it really hard to stick to a good diet and find time to exercise regularly, so hopefully this will kick-start a new lifestyle for me.'

The get-fit plan

British Military Fitness organises workout sessions in parks nationwide with instructors who have worked in the Armed Forces. Two trainers convene on scheduled evenings throughout the week. Anyone can join to do the hour workout (from £120 for a 10-session block), which involves cardio and strength exercises. Visit britmilfit.com; 0870 241 2517.

The first session

'The group, of about 20, was split into the "unfit" group (wearing blue bibs) and "fit" group (wearing red bibs). I was with the "unfit" group and we got straight to work with our trainer, running around doing various exercises. I was at the

back of the group, but it was good fun. The trainer was motivating and funny. He did bark orders at us, but it was more silly than scary.'

One month in

'I feel fitter and healthier, and that's made me want to eat more healthily. I've been doing about two to three workouts a week. We don't get nutritional or health advice – you simply turn up and start moving. The instructors are always changing and the group is never the same, either. You meet new people and do new exercises. I'm usually at the back of the class, but the

'My favourite sessions were the rainy nights when we were sliding around and falling in the mud!'

instructors always give you opportunities to catch up. They push you to keep going, so you don't get complacent.'

Two months in

'I'm really enjoying it and a work colleague noticed how much weight I'd lost. The sessions are always different. Sometimes you run around, using lampposts or trees as markers, and other times you do strength exercises with another member of the group, pushing against them or lifting yourself off them.'

'I find the biggest encouragement is the other members. Even though you hardly see the same person twice, we all support each other and we've all been "at the back of the class". There's always someone worse than you! It's a real mix of fat, thin, tall, short, young and old, so no one feels out of place. The

best thing about MilFit is that it's so anonymous. It gets so dark in the park in the evenings and you can get lost in it and don't have anyone staring at you. The trainers call you by your bib number most of the time and no one knows anything about you, which means you can just get on with it and improve at your own pace.'

Three months in

'I can't believe I've lost more than a stone. It's really noticeable around my legs and hips. I've definitely improved the way I eat, and I'm making healthier choices, like choosing soup and salad over pasta or sandwiches. For me it's not about calorie counting, it's common sense. The weight loss is mostly due to taking regular exercise (that almost killed me!) at MilFit.'

'It sounds strange, but my favourite sessions were the rainy, cold nights when we were sliding around and falling in the mud! There are no excuses with the trainers and they make you exercise in the worst weather. These were the sessions where we laughed the most, where we could be a bit silly and let ourselves go.'

'A big motivator is that no matter how much effort you make, you're still moving around and exercising so it's impossible not to improve your fitness levels. I'm definitely going to keep going after my wedding.'

SAMANTHA'S TOP TIPS

- * Exercise with other people so you can keep motivated and support each other.
- * Do efficient workouts that are exhausting rather than just tiring or you won't see results.
- * Don't be too hard on yourself about your diet. Just use common sense and try to make more good choices than bad choices. →

