



# The Transition and Reinvention of British Army Infantrymen

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For Missy  
&  
The man that bridged the Rhine

## Abstract

Social sciences approaches to the study of Armed Forces Veterans and their capacity to cope with social reintegration, have tended to focus on medicalised accounts of post-service trauma, characterized by Veteran mental health, homelessness, and suicide amongst our Short Service Leavers. Whilst the findings of these largely quantitative projects continue to present new and compelling data, they have a tendency to neglect key aspects of observable phenomenon and often fall-short in representing the broader experience of Veterans transitioning from martial to civilian space. By contrast this study draws on a mixed-methods approach to reveal a more authentic picture of resettlement, indeed the project proposes that resettlement is better understood when viewed as a component of a much broader occupational life-story; one that has a past, a present and importantly a future.

With few notable exceptions (Ashcroft, 2014; Walker 2012; NAO, 2007) research into the British experience of Armed Forces resettlement is extremely difficult to locate, in a sense the process is hindered further by the outsourcing of Resettlement to Right Management Limited in 2015 and delivery, at a cost of £100 million, of the 'Career Transition Partnership' (CTP). And whilst the CTP claim to have helped thousands of veterans into sustainable employment within six months of leaving the Armed Forces; beyond such un-evidenced claims made in their own literature, neither UK government nor CTP has published any evidence based research representative of the degrees of success claimed by the CTP, in delivering cost effective programmes of resettlement.

Moreover in the absence of empirical data, and on the basis of this analysis, an alternative account of resettlement is proposed, one that tests the assumption that the MoD's approach to the resettlement of Armed Forces personnel is either fit for purpose or relevant to the contemporary Armed Forces Veteran. Whilst aspects of the martial life-course have been explored, knowledge of the broader journey that carries the schoolchild to the point of being a veteran has not. Nor have notions of transitioning into and out of the Armed Forces been articulated as public and profoundly sociological issues, as opposed to the medical and psychiatric accounts that dominate this field of study.

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## CONTENTS

Title Sheet	
Dedication	1
Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Contents	5
A Story	12
<b>CHAPTER I</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>Becoming and Being</b>	
1.0 Introduction	14
1.1 Becoming Soldiers: Recruitment and Training	15
1.2 Being Soldiers: The working unit	16
1.3 Becoming Civilians: The Pre-Exit period	18
1.4 Being Civilians: Resettlement	19
1.5 Orientation of the study	20
<b>CHAPTER II</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>A REVIEW OF LITERATURE</b>	
2.0 Introduction	24
2.1 Boy Soldiers	27
2.2 A choice occupation	28
2.3 Becoming: An apprenticeship in Arms	29
2.4 Welcome to Catterick Garrison	31
2.5 The forcing house	33
2.6 A Greedy institution	35
2.7 Invisible lives	37
2.8 Earning One's spurs	38
2.9 Self policing	39
2.10 Uniform differentiation	41
2.11 The Art of being	42
2.12 Rites of passage	43
2.13 Moral Careers	44
2.14 Occupational narrative	46
2.15 The Chief Storyteller	47
2.16 Swinging the lantern	48
2.17 Future selves	49
2.18 Neither fish nor fowl	52

## **CHAPTER III** **58**

### **METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

3.0	Introduction	59
3.1	Transition and Reinvention	60
3.2	Character of the sample	62
3.3	Generalizability	63
3.4	The dynamics of the sample	65
3.5	Finding Nemo	65
3.6	Anonymizing soldier identities	66
3.7	Study Design	67
3.8	Interviews	68
3.9	Reflections on initial phase	70
3.10	Ethics	72
3.11	Use of pen-pictures	74
3.12	Transcribing true voice	75

## **CHAPTER IV** **88**

### **THE RECRUTMENT AND TRAINING OF BRITISH ARMY INFANTRYMEN**

**Theme:** Social Honour  
**Transition:** Civilian to Soldier  
**Reinvention:** Adolescent to Adult

#### Section i

4.1.0	Introduction	89
4.1.1	A Pen Picture of a British Army Infantryman, (the Rifleman)	89
4.1.2	Selecting Soldiers	96
4.1.3	Five New Pence	99
4.1.4	Becoming Soldiers	100
4.1.5	Recruits and Soldiers Under Training	106
4.1.6	Becoming Infantrymen, the Combat Infantryman's Course	110

### **ANALYSIS: BECOMING**

#### Section ii 120

4.2.0	Introduction	121
4.2.1	Recruiting Soldiers ("it takes a Soldier to Recruit a Soldier")	124
4.2.2	The shape of things to come	126
4.2.3	Legally Bound	132
4.2.4	The Incentives	135
4.2.5	External Interaction & Personal Self	145
4.2.6	You're in the army now...	153



## **CHAPTER V** **164**

### **OCCUPATIONAL ACCTUALISATION**

**Theme:** Biographic disruption  
**Transition:** Trained Soldier to Combat Veteran  
**Reinvention:** Non-Combatant to Combatant

Section i	
5.1.0 Introduction	165
5.1.1 A Pen Picture of a British Army Infantryman, (the PARA)	165
5.1.2 The Maroon Machine (From PPE to PPS)	168
5.1.3 Operational Wings	171
5.1.4 The Tempering	173
5.1.5 Trial by Fire	178
5.1.6 Just another Job	182
5.1.7 Journeys End (Never if, but when)	185

### **ANALYSIS: BEING**

Section ii	194
5.2.0 Introduction	195
5.2.1 Mind Fields	201
5.2.2 Swinging the Lantern	204
5.2.3 Black Letter Days	211
5.2.4 What's the point?	217
5.2.5 Till death do us part	221
5.2.6 Conclusion	224

## **CHAPTER VI** **228**

### **RESETTLEMENT AND THE PRE-EXIT PERIOD**

**Theme:** Betrayal  
**Transition:** Professional to Neophyte  
**Reinvention:** Self-Assuredness to Uncertainty

Section i	
6.1.0 Introduction	229
6.1.1 A Pen Picture of a British Army Infantryman, (the Highlander)	229
6.1.2 Harrogate un al 'at	234
6.1.3 Action Tam	236
6.1.4 A Rough Passage Home	240

## ANALYSIS: BETRAYAL

Section ii	246
6.2.0 Introduction	247
6.2.1 Outflow, risk and need	248
6.2.2 The Loss of Honour	250
6.2.3 Tri-Service Resettlement Policy	257
6.2.4 The Termination Timeline	269
6.2.5 No Man's land	280
6.2.6 Not knowing what to know	280
6.2.7 Dependant dependence	281
6.2.8 Timescale and planning	282

## CHAPTER VII 291

### THE EX-SERVICEMAN OR HM FORCES VETERAN

**Theme:** Disdain  
**Transition:** SL to Job-Seeker  
**Reinvention:** Soldier-*self* to Citizen-*self*

Section i	
7.1.0 Introduction	292
7.1.1 A pen picture of a British Army Infantry Veteran (The ex-Guardsman)	292
7.1.2 <i>Nulli Secundus</i>	294
7.1.3 Leaving the Colours	296
7.1.4 Civi Street	298
7.1.5 Marching Out	300
7.1.6 An Ordinary Life	304

## ANALYSIS: DISDAIN

Section ii	310
7.2.0 Introduction	311
7.2.1 Post Service Employability	312
7.2.2 Soldier speak	321
7.2.3 Veteran housing	325
7.2.4 Life Skills	330
7.2.5 Hindsight	335
7.2.6 Education	335
7.2.7 Employment	336
7.2.8 Housing	338

<b>CHAPTER VIII</b>	<b>348</b>
<b>CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	

8.1	Introduction	349
8.2	Recommendations	
	Mental Health	353
	Education	353
	Housing	355
	Employment	355
	Recruitment and Basic Training	356
	Pre-Exit & Resettlement	356
8.3	Conclusions	357

**APPENDICIES**

Appendix	A	Outline to question sets	77
Appendix	B	Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association	78-79
Appendix	C	Notes on PTSD	80
Appendix	D	PTSD Checklist, military: PCL-(M) Description	81
Appendix	E	PTSD CHECKLIST (Military)	82
Appendix	F	Informant attrition rate (Gang Chart)	83
Appendix	G	Cohort Composition data sheet	84
		Key to Appendix G	85
Appendix	i	Phase 1: Basic Training	114
Appendix	ii	Phase 2: Trade training [Combat Infantryman's Course]	115
Appendix	iii	Infantry Recruitment by Region	118
Appendix	iv	1 (UK) Armoured Division Locations (2009, now in York)	157
Appendix	v	3 <sup>rd</sup> (UK) Mechanised Division Locations	158
Appendix	vi	16 Air Assault Brigade, Locations	159
Appendix	vii	Support Command Locations	160
Appendix	viii	London District Locations	161
Appendix	ix	Special Forces Group, Locations	162

Appendix	<b>x</b>	Pegasus Company Test Week	189
Appendix	<b>xi</b>	Basic Parachute Course	191
Appendix	<b>xii</b>	Regional resettlement centres	284
Appendix	<b>xiii</b>	Career Transition Partnership publications	285
Appendix	<b>xiv</b>	Tri-Service resettlement policy	286
Appendix	<b>xv</b>	Glossary of Acronyms; Specific to resettlement	287
Appendix	<b>xvi</b>	Trade transferability and the Royal Logistics Corps	289
Appendix	<b>xvii</b>	Transition to civilian life for members of the Armed Forces thinking of settling in Wales.	344
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>			346
<b>Glossary of military slang</b>			380
<b>Table 1</b>	Transition and Reinvention points		86



A story:       A man fires a rifle for many  
years, and he goes to war.  
And afterward he turns the rifle  
in at the armoury, and he believes  
he's finished with the rifle. But  
no matter what else he might do  
with his hands, love a woman,  
build a house, change his son's  
diaper: his hands remember the  
rifle.

(Swofford, 2005)

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## CHAPTER I

### 1. Introduction

For thousands of young men and women the attraction of a career in the armed forces presents as appealing alternative to many nondescript minimum-wage entrance occupations, or extended periods in further or higher education. For many aspirant adolescents the implicit assurance of a relatively elevated social status, wealth and power, made throughout the course of the recruitment period, undeniably appeals. In part, the success of current approaches to the enlistment of Junior Soldiers can be measured in the biannual migration of the thousands of willing youths selected to undertake military training at the British Army's Foundation College (AFC) in North Yorkshire. Gee and Goodman (2013) emphasize the point that the majority of Junior Entrants [those who enlist at school leaving age 15½-17] enlist at a time in their lives when their knowledge of the social world and therein work, will quite reasonably be limited.

Many clearly struggled at school; in 2012, of those recruited into the Army, 3.5% were assessed at Entry Level 2 for literacy with '39% having a literacy level of an eleven year old' (Ashcroft, 2014, p.56). Disadvantage, for many, occurs on the basis that Military selection, in terms of role or trade, is based on the British Army Recruit Battery Test (BARB<sup>7</sup>), a computer-based, psychometric assessment developed by the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency (DERA) and Plymouth University. In many cases recruits who opt for a career in the infantry do so as a last resort, those who score poorly on the BART test, often those without GCSEs, accepting roles found in the Infantry, Artillery and Cavalry, that said many more aspire to wear a specific cap badge; their unit selection and role being made on the basis of aspiration (Thornborrow, 2006), family ties and a genuine desire to become.

As the single largest component of the British Army the Infantry quite naturally requires the greatest number of recruits [intake] to cope primarily with the largest number of leavers [outflow], thus there are always vacancies in the Foot Regiments. Gee & Goodman, (2013) found that from 2011 to 2012, 35.3% of Regular Army recruits were enlisted into the Infantry regiments, of which 39.2% were Junior Entrants. Studies into the occupational choices soldiers made at the point of their recruitment (Lutz, 2008; Lievens *et al* 2005), highlight a number of interesting trends; Adult Entrants [those aged 18 years and over] for example, often arrive at the Recruiting Office with valuable occupational knowledge based on



successful civilian employments. Of this group many possess transferable skills and qualifications and are more likely to seek out roles traditionally found in the Service Support Arms, their interest fixed on notions of building on their existing trade skills and professional qualifications. For others; monotony, unemployment, or perhaps, as suggested, aspiration may well have motivated the decision to enlist.

## **1.1 Becoming Soldiers**

The traditional face of recruitment once conveyed through the decorated yet ageing Recruitment Sergeant has long been replaced by the internet and fine tuning of the long established channels of recruitment found in youth organisations like the Army Cadet Force or adult cadetships via the University Officer Training Corps. The arrival of a private sector recruiting partner for the British Army in 2013 brought with it the introduction of web-based recruitment software developed and operated by Capita. For the Army it also signalled a break with military traditions dating to the establishment of a ‘New Army’ under Charles II in 1660. Thus far Capita has achieved little in tackling ongoing shortfalls in the recruitment of Adult Entrant soldiers, despite the millions the MoD has invested in this private sector IT solution. In 2015, the Minister of State for Defence [the Rt Hon Anna Soubry MP], revealed that the MoD has already spent £300m of the £1.36bn budget for the Recruiting Partnering Project.

All the while the Army has sustained its view that the recruitment of its soldiers should remain an exclusively in-house activity [as it remains for the Royal Navy & RAF]; one centring on the principle that it ‘takes a soldier to recruit a soldier’. The British Army view the selection of its soldiers on the basis that the person being recruited may one day be working alongside the recruiter, thus it is in the interests of the recruiter to select the very best people he or she possibly can. Who better to assess a potential soldier, who else can authentically measure how a person might react to elevated risk and likelihood of being killed or having to kill; moreover, will the individual survive the often mundane intensity of life in this highly institutionalised organisation? The recruitment of soldiers is by nature a well-tested ritual best accomplished face-to-face, in the most rewarding cases facilitated by young soldiers and therein individuals uniquely placed to describe life in a battalion in uncomplicated, authentic terms.

That said, the notion that the Army will accept almost anyone who possesses the physical fitness, has no criminal record and are British [or Commonwealth citizens] may well evoke impressions of a flourishing business in recruitment. Yet in an age where the benefits system and ease of access into further and higher education can sustain a young person, the opposite actually applies. And whilst applications for the numerous engineering and logistic trades and professions offered have risen, the numbers choosing careers in the ‘combat arms’; those of the Infantry, and Cavalry continue to fall. Indeed to meet their responsibilities to the Strategic Defence & Security Review (2016) the MoD has not only changed the method and frequency by which it delivers data pertinent to Intake and Outflow, but has gone further in redefining the designation of a trained soldier. If we take the example of an infantry soldier, since 2016 the status of ‘being trained’ has shifted from the former classification where both phases of training [basic 6 wks & trade 25 wks] were completed before the individual was considered ‘trained’; moving forward today’s model views a trained soldier as one who has completed Phase 1 Basic Training only [a meagre 6 weeks].

As suggested, the recruit moves swiftly on to the training regiment, where amid the noise and well orchestrated chaos of their arrival, the task of socialisation begins. It takes 32 weeks to train a Combat Infantryman, training methods centring on a well-established regime of technical and physical training, presented alongside a tacit introduction to self-surveillance. Goffman (1961) proposes that the training establishment operates as a “forcing house for changing persons” (Goffman 1961, pg. 22), the change occurring in an environment of total isolation from the home-world, recruits immersed [again totally] in a new and powerfully articulated presenting culture that engenders ‘primary adjustments’ in their sense of Self. The occupational period proper begins with their Combat Infantryman’s Course (CIC) leading in no short time to the ‘working unit’, wherein the novice will soon be tested in many of the competences taught over the course of the preceding years.

## **1.2 Being Soldiers**

For many, the skills component of their training will by now be embedded, their weapon handling and performance whilst undertaking their duties all but uniform with their more experienced colleagues. Occupational actualisation, as the project title suggests, occurs on two levels, in the first through occupational transition, where the skills and meanings soldiers attribute to the objects of their social world becomes tacit through repetitious practice and ongoing assessment; whilst in the second a far more personal adjustment centring on the

newly qualified soldiers ability to assimilate the often mundane routines and rituals specific to their unit as their own; and thus enfolding their Self in to the institution. Due to the nature of their work, a career in any one the infantry regiments will also expose the infanteer to higher degrees of risk; of the few units who operate on the forward edge of the battle area (FEBA) the infantry are the most visible. Their operational experience predominated by combat tasking specific to their role, notably patrolling or defending highly exposed tracts of land and Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) located in the most dangerous environments.

When not on operations, soldiers may find themselves in-garrison, on training, peacekeeping or supporting communities and government through MACC (Military Aid to the Civil Community) and MAGD (Military Aid to Government Department) tasks. Military service, regardless of one's role, ultimately triggers separation and degrees of social isolation; on the one hand isolation from the home world binds in-group cohesion and membership, whilst triggering periods of interrupted biography on the other. Communication to and from barracks will for many families have developed into a well established practice, likewise news from operational theatres will also flow, facilitated by an elaborate network of military communications that delivers internet, telephone and traditional letters in and out of theatre. News from the front is often difficult to communicate, particularly to a home audience unaccustomed to the often-brutal environment in which their relative is currently operating, to that end a raft of narrative strategies emerge.

Instalments are characteristically set against clandestine backdrops, against which unobserved performances are played out and retold by the teller. The construction of soldier-*self* held in the minds, actions and personal biographies of significant others has [in the case of each of the respondents] been shaped by over a decade of instalments of similarly modified narratives. In time soldier-*self* will be compelled to leave the army [it's always been a question of when rather than *if*] and become a civilian, a transition supported by the MoD through the activities of the Pre-Exit period and the individuals Termination Timeline. In most cases retirement is viewed and a chance to reap the rewards of one's working life, yet soldiers on their retirement are often in their twenties, having served 10 years. Additional stressors facing the soldier lie in the notion that at the point of his discharge the soldier not only loses his livelihood and a living wage, but moreover his home, support networks and more pointedly his identity. Now he must reinvent in the company of those who perceive him on the basis of the selves he has emitted for over a decade.

### 1.3 Becoming Civilians

The British Government define HM Armed Forces Veterans as individuals who have served in the Armed Forces for a period of at least one day and drawn a day's pay for that service (Rice, 2009; Dandeker, 2006). This broad and often contested definition (Burdett, 2012) is particular to members of the British ex-forces community, since in the UK-Veteran status impacts on Veteran rights and access to a series of statutory benefits and concessions. In terms of policy the Armed Forces Act (2016) drives the delivery of a number of key provisions from War Pensions and priority access to NHS services, to Veteran educational imbursement through the MoD's Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme. Likewise the dependents of Service Personnel qualify for assistance in their own right, customary support centring on War Widows Pensions; help with boarding school fees through bursaries and Council Tax Relief, each typify the kind of support offered.

Conversely the Armed Forces Covenant (detailed in Section 2 of the Armed Forces Act, 2016) serves as an unofficial pledge only (MoD, 2015; Ashcroft, 2014). Operationally it presents a range of informal guidelines to the British public who the government maintain 'have a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families' (MoD, 2015, pg. 2). The Veteran population in Britain is estimated by the Royal British Legion (RBL) to be around 6.2 million (RBL, 2014) increasing [since 2013] by around 30,000 leavers (MoD, 2016) annually. Veterans have formed part of our broader population for centuries (Keegan & Holmes, 1997), the grounds of their discharges as suggested falling generally into one or another of the following categories. The Short Service Leaver (SSL) exits either before completion of their Basic Training or on conclusion of their first term of service (4 years).

Some have to leave as a consequence of Life Altering Injuries (MacKenzie *et al*, 2005) or severe mental health conditions resulting from OpTempo, [or exhaustibility point of a resource, including people] (Sundin, *et al*, 2010; Fear, *et al*, 2009). Others who have served out their 'Full Colour Service' will have little choice since unless offered 'continuation service' roles or Commissions as Late Entry Officers they will be compelled to leave. A far smaller number will be dismissed as a result of an Administrative Discharge having committed offences either Civil or Military, whilst more still will be made redundant, or accept voluntary redundancy. By contrast, the cohort discussed in this thesis fall into a

somewhat different category, given that their exits occurred after a decade of service whereupon each decided to leave of their own volition.

Although the circumstances surrounding each discharge will be unique to each leaver, what unites the broader service-leaver group is their experience of detachment from the home-world, underpinned by lengthy separation from family and friends (Elder *et al* 1991, pgs. 215-23). This idea of separation is important when considering the age of recruits and their knowledge of the world prior to their enlistments, a factor which over time creates disparity in the lives of leavers, those confronting the problematic task of social reintegration and challenge of reinventing themselves as civilians.

#### **1.4 Being Civilians**

Biographically, the journey that brought the schoolchild to the point of becoming a Veteran started some considerable time earlier, at the point of their recruitment, which as suggested occurred for many in their mid teens, thus most typically lacked either social or occupational knowledge. And whilst the training of British infantrymen is meticulous it is also remarkably specialised, with few transferable skills that might be viewed as the building blocks of a post service career. Certainly not, as might be expected, of a career in the Royal Logistics Corps (RLC) as a Chef, Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME) as an Aeronautical Engineer or of the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC) nurse. These roles are representative of the countless highly sought after trades that possess transferability in both the military and civilian labour markets.

In the same way that early recruitment and process of becoming infantry soldiers will affect post service outcomes, so too will the operational experience of being soldiers (Kelty, *et al* 2010). Simply put, with the exception of working as a firearms police officer or within the ranks of a Private Military Security Company (PMSC) there are few comparative roles to fill in civilian labour markets. Doubtless part of the difficulty in making a successful transition stems from the homocentric lifestyle (Higate, 2012), specialised vocabulary (King, 2006) and homogeneous (Joseph, 1996) routine, since each component defines one's character and construction of one's Self (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Yet, these are revered identities. Their loss, conveying feelings of moral ambiguity; particularly where notions of a mundane occupational future dominate the internal narratives of soldiers on the brink of transition.

Goffman suggests,

“His new role may require action that seems insincere, dishonest, or unfriendly. This he may experience as a loss in moral cleanliness. His new role may require him to forgo the kinds of risk-taking and exertion that he previously enjoyed, and yet his new role may not provide the kind of heroic and exalted action that he expected to find in it. This he may experience as a loss in moral strength.

(Goffman, 1952, p. 4)

Likewise, the process of resettlement that falls at the end of all military careers too often fails to support the transitional needs of the highly specialised infanteer caught in liminal space with little idea as to the workings of civilian labour markets. This is a period marked by disparagement (Finkelstein, 1996), where for the first time in the infantryman’s career their collateral as professional soldiers and transferability of their skills becomes irrelevant. Equally when competing for jobs in civilian labour markets even the most successful infanteer will soon realise that they must restart their occupational lives from the position of neophyte. These four distinct phases of an infantryman’s career too often compound to create disadvantage when the time arrives to reconstruct as a civilian.

### **1.5 Orientation of the study**

This study was designed and conducted at a time when little research had been completed from either an ethnographic or longitudinal perspective that captures a holistic picture of becoming and being infantry soldiers and later Veterans at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. And whilst studies exploring the needs of service leavers have been undertaken, the resulting evidence base informing the development and operationalisation of both resettlement policy and practice remains fragmented. During the course of this study some significant research into UK Service Personal and Veterans had started to emerge (Blakely, 2014; Higate, 2011; Woodward & Jenkins, 2011, Kirke, 2010). Yet only a small number of studies deal ethnographically with the experience of being either a soldier or a Veteran (Burdett *et al* 2012; Stepputat, 2011, MacLeish, 2011; Brown & Phua, 2011; Thornborrow & Brown, 2009).

Indeed, the growing body of literature surrounding the themes discussed has tended to fall into a quantitative (Hatch, 2013; Basham, 2009), medical (Buckman *et al*, 2010; Fear *et al*, 2009; Kubany *et al*, 2000), or psychological (Reifler *et al*, 2014; Smith *et al*, 2013) camp,

with much attention being focused on the mental health outcomes of service personnel (Osório *et al*, 2013) and rise of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Mild Traumatic Brain Injury (mTBI) as areas of particular academic interest. While several studies have impacted positively on Service Personnel and Veteran policy (RBL, 2006; Ashcroft, 2014), more still have highlighted areas where further research is needed in order to fully appreciate the complexity and multifaceted nature of soldiering and the social reintegration of military retirees. This longitudinal study incorporates an ethnographic approach to the analysis of biographical data, conveying knowledge of becoming and being soldiers. Whist the live data generated focused on the observations and discourse of becoming and being civilians. When the life-course is known, the self can be viewed with clarity and those components of self that were shaped in past, can be identified, explored and explained.





## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

## CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### 2.0. Introduction

The following chapter centres on a discussion of the literatures that collectively form the intellectual foundations of the study. It is composed of grounded theory, Armed Forces Sociologies and other scholarly inclusions that offer both an insight and explanation of how the project was approached. According to Higate and Cameron (2006), literatures focused on the Armed Forces may be divided into two broad categories the first 'engineering' and the second 'enlightenment'. These two models of sociological inquiry encompass the Meta themes of unit cohesion, efficiency, problem solving and productivity, whilst the micro themes focus on identity, institutional socialisation and the transition of self as a social and occupational object. The former finds its origins in a largely North American research tradition (Deegan, 2012; Jenkins, *et al*, 2011; Caforio, 2006), shaped with the aim of improving organisational and institutional relations (Siebold, 2007, pp.286-295) through the study military structures (Edmunds, 2012; Basham, 2009; Moskos *et al*, 2000; Moskos 1976).

Examples of the second [enlightenment] seek to provide more personal accounts of becoming and being (Woodward *et al* 2011, pp.252-268), exemplified in the participant observation work of Hockey, (2016) and others (Thornborrow & Brown, 2013; Cockerham, 1973, 1978; Sullivan *et al*, 1958; Pipping, 1947). This project centres on the life-cycle of soldiers as discussed by MacLean & Elder (2007, p.175) and others (Bergman *et al*, 2014; Hatch *et al*, 2013; Elder *et al*, 1991; Becker, 1964), which through a process of elimination will centre on infantry soldiers who symbolise the core disposition of all military occupations. The project is further informed by Stryker & Burke, (2000) and others (Hogg *et al*, 1995; Burke & Reitzes, 1991) who characterize social actions as reciprocal relations that exist between the self and society. From a microsociological perspective the project ties-in with Cooley (1902), Mead, (1934) and later Blumer, (1969) and their view of the self as a product of social interaction, through which the self is compelled to accommodate and assume the roles of others within shared group interactions and identities (Shils & Janowitz, 1948. pp.280-315).

Accordingly soldiers present dispositions judged important to them-selves and others who observe and acknowledge their performance (Woelfel. 1971, p. 86-97) of correspondingly

recognizable group values positively (Picou & Carter, 1976, pp. 12-22). These observations communicate James' (1890) conviction that "a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind" (James 1890, p. 294). Identity Theory (Higate, 2012, 2003; Stryker, 1968) serves to explain how social structures affect the self and how the self affects social behaviour, insomuch as soldiers replicate behaviours that win them approval and seek alternatives to those that do not (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991, pp.517-554). Qualitative Longitudinal methods (Boyde *et al*, 2012; Shirani, 2011; Allen & Meyer, 1990; West & Farrington, 1977, 1973) have been adopted to facilitate both the organization of large data sets and view that they support an investigation of the "nature of critical moments in an unpredictable life journey" symbolic of countless transitions and "change through micro-biographical time" (Neale *et al*. 2012, p. 5).

A longitudinal approach is vital given that the identities discussed were shaped over the course of a career spanning 10 years of military service and beyond incorporating a Pre-Exit, resettlement and post service period of 5 years. McAdams (2001) and others (Creswell, 2013; Shirani & Henwood, 2011, p. 50; Lewis, 2007, pp. 545-556; Baerger, 1999, pp.69-96) view identity as "the internalized and evolving story that results from a person's selective appropriation of past, present and future" (McAdams, 2001, p. 100). Moreover Qualitative Longitudinal methods when viewed as an ethnographic strategy offer a rigorous yet flexible approach that 'enables an exploration of complex timescapes or flows of time' to be undertaken (Neale *et al*. 2012, pp. 4-15). Beyond narratives documenting the liminal and ongoing accounts of Pre-Exit and post service life, a retrospective account of being civilians pre-enlistment was also recorded. In collecting this data the researcher remained sensitive to notions of nostalgia and romanticised accounts of past (Belk, 1990).

Whilst critically aware of the importance memories play in the structuring of future selves the author remained mindful of Kaplan's (1987) reading of nostalgia as 'a species of remembrance' described as an expression of "warm feeling about the past, a past that is imbued with happy memories, pleasures, and joy" (Kaplan, 1987, p. 465). Or Belk's (1990, p. 670) designation of nostalgia as "a wistful mood that may be prompted by an object, a scene, a smell, or a strain of music", likewise as Jenkins, *et al*, (2008) suggest the same of photographs. These accounts whilst seminal in the construction of future selves are nonetheless prone to degrees of distortion. Thus their context and connotation oblige

additional scrutiny if their underlying-meanings (Atkinson, 2004, pp. 97-117; Myers, 1997, pp.241-242) and place in the structuring of identities are to be accurately measured.

Likewise life histories (Miller, 2000) also demonstrate how “groups of local actors with distinct histories and value preferences may draw on their place of work in order to author often contrasting versions of their organization’s identity” (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Humphreys & Brown, 2002; Ashforth, & Mael, 1989; Even, 1963). As suggested these accounts are symbolic of the frames of reference people apply to the construction of occupational and social identities whilst forming the backdrops to their lives. Likewise Smith & Bugni (2006) propose that they are “an important part of interaction, because people assign both symbolic value and forms of agency to them” (Smith & Bugni, 2006, p. 132). The study of lived experience (Atkinson, 1992) or the ‘life world’ (Van Manen, 1997) places an emphasis on the world as lived by a person, rather than a world or reality as something detached from the person (Valle *et al*, 1989, pp. 3-16). Accordingly the project regards the temporal and reciprocal nature of identity construction as central tenets influencing methods and driving the overarching position, design and aims of the project.

The study aims to clarify how occupational and social transition is achieved by people attempting to secure new lives and livelihoods following a significant period of highly restricted occupational and institutional experience (Kleykamp & Montgomery, 2014; Wolpert, 2000; Jolly, 1996). It proposes that the appropriation of [a civilian]-self post service, is profoundly restrained by embedded and highly venerated identities (French, 2005), which Goffman (1961) suggests all too often hinder the process of social reintegration and occupational transferability. The four periods considered in this thesis centre initially on the induction of a civilian-*self* into a period of occupational [military] socialisation (Shils & Janowitz, 1948), wherein the self is reinvented as a result of the occupational transition and adjustment that occur during basic military training. The self that emerges, having adopted the tastes (Bourdieu, 1984) of the regiment as his own, is described here as soldier-*self*. This initiation into soldiering is followed by the institutional experience of ‘being soldiers’ during an operational period; followed by the Pre-Exit [or leaving phase] and final episode of social-reintegration described as the resettlement period. The review that follows explores the unfolding life experience of respondents through literatures and scholarly works germane to the life-course of one group of veterans, whose lives have been marked by the temporal and spatial boundaries of two distinct social-worlds.

## 2.1. Boy Soldiers

At the time of their enlistment the average age of respondents was 17. According to Galor & Zeira (1993) a person's life chances are determined by two key periods, in the first "they may invest in human capital and acquire education, or else work in unskilled occupations". Whilst in the second, "they work in skilled or unskilled occupations according to their education level, consume and leave bequests" (Galor & Zeira, 1993, pg. 36). In the vast majority of cases infantrymen share the characteristics of low status groups (Glass, 2013), Seabrook, and Avison (2012) and more specifically Apply, (2000) support this claim; namely that infantrymen work in an essentially menial occupation, their recruitment often resulting from poor educational attainment and arguably lower degrees of occupational aspiration, [following their initial training] which are intrinsic to low social economic status groups. According to Gee & Goodman (2013) and others (Everett, 2013; Kelty, *et al* 2010; Johansen, 2007) low educational attainment, a lack of occupational skill and backgrounds rooted in socioeconomically deprived upbringings resulting in limited social capital (Bourdieu, 2011, pp. 81-93) seem to be the norm where infantry recruitment is concerned.

Hatt (1950, pp.533-543) has shown that occupational structures are by no means straightforward, hierarchy as such being measured on the basis of a series of interconnected conditions including membership to professional and social networks, one's education, social status and, as Devine (2004) concurs the occupational status of parents. Hatt argues that whilst people in general possess knowledge of the rank of prominent occupations, many from lower status backgrounds do not possess appropriate degrees of knowledge concerning the structures or hierarchical nature of the broader skilled, technical or professional occupations. Therein lower status groups tend to assess occupations in uncomplicated terms, notably basing the value of an occupation, on the merits of its financial return, rather than status or the power it might carry (Form & Geschwender 1962, pg. 36) (also see: Bassani, 2009; Furlong, 2009). The themes of social status, power and wealth attributed to Weber (1946) have been incorporated into each phase of the analysis as a tactic to demonstrate the social position of informants at each stage of their occupational journey.

The recruitment material produced by the British Army and Capita (Cottell, 2013) has been reviewed as data in detail in Chapter IV, however due to its highly subjective nature has not been evaluated in this section. Occupational beginnings in relation to the [pre-recruitment] employability of young people will as Bellino, (1970 pp. 580-583) suggests be determined

largely on the basis of their qualifications and awareness of local labour markets. In the case of many adolescents this period is too often marked as Shanahan (2000, pp.667-692) suggests by a lack of occupational knowledge, which Markus & Nurius (1986) reason will seriously inhibit a young person's career choices. Gee and Goodman (2010) contend in the case of martial employment that at the point of recruitment most infantry candidates possess a below average education, a notion confirmed by research conducted by the MoD (2004, 2006). In the MoD's analysis of socio-economic and educational backgrounds of non-officer recruits' later reported to the House of Commons Defence Committee, a little over 60% of recruits to the infantry had no academic qualifications. Moreover Everett (2013) and Wood, (2006) maintain that the selective targeting of schools from socially deprived areas results in the over-representation of candidates seeking employment in the Armed Forces from disadvantaged backgrounds and in many cases broken homes. Since 2002 ongoing reports of the selective targeting of disadvantaged areas have and continue to be confirmed in oral and written evidence to the House of Commons Defence Committee's Duty of Care review.

## **2.2 A Choice Occupation**

Motivation leading to enlistment in the Armed Forces has been tackled in a number of studies, Ben-Ari & Findler, (2006, p. 149), describe the terror factor that leads to the compliant conscription of the Israeli Defence Force soldier; whilst Alonso & Lewis, (2001, pp.363-380) and Crewson, (1997, pp.499-518) portray notions of the patriotic, public service orientation of the American soldier. By contrast Tannock *et al*, (2013) characterises the act of joining the army as one of three possible routes for 'getting out of the South Wales Valleys' in an effort to find a better life. Alonso & Lewis, (2001, pp.363-380) propose that financial benefits alone are not the only reason American Servicemen and women are attracted to the uniformed services. They suggest that in many cases recruits are encouraged by the social adjustment and the improved social status membership implies; membership [in the case of the US] enabling social mobility.

This does not however appear to be the general rule in the UK (Johansen, 2007, p. 97). According to Everett (2013) the military career is assessed on similar grounds to those described by Tannock *et al*, (2013); for many the Armed Forces represents an occupation of last resort, a means of escaping the mundane home environment and often poor employment prospects open to young people in both large post industrial cities and rural areas alike. Family-ties and links to a specific Regiment often see generations of the same family

encouraged to serve the same battalions. This positioning of Military service is viewed as an enabling strategy, or as van Houten *et al* (2013, pp13-26) observes of elite club membership, as a compensatory strategy devised to guarantee successful intergenerational transmission of occupational status, whilst Johnson & Lidow, (2016, pp.436-448) and Elder (1975, pp. 165-190) discuss the same phenomenon applied specifically the Armed Forces, where generational affiliation to the same regimental institution applies.

Fundamentally the imagery of the military career conveys notions of a credible professional trajectory, yet the principle that recruitment enables an adolescent to legitimately disengage with their secondary school education and as Elder (1986, p. 236) and Elder Jr *et al*, (1991, p.125) point out, their age and peer related employment opportunities and serves; to throw doubt on the appropriateness of such a trajectory for young people Everett (2013). The recruitment of minors as young as 15½ years of age brings into questions the rational of the British government who sanction policies that permit the enlistment of adolescents. Everett, (2013) with Gee & Goodman (2013), Fear *et al* (2009) and Elder (1986), also stresses that the military attain their recruitment quotas as a result of sustained political attention focused on vulnerable groups within society, a notion, as suggested, that has been met with agreement in numerous House of Commons Defence Committee debates.

### **2.3 Becoming: An Apprenticeship in Arms**

As Nair (2010) reminds us, the newcomer must firstly engage with the “process of becoming” before they actually become. The ‘beginning’ of an infantry career starts with basic military training, a period assigned to deliver military instruction dispensed concurrently with an intensive period of socialisation (Shils & Janowitz, 1948, pp. 280-315). In this sense as Segal, (1986, pp.9-38) argues, civilians are introduced to a ‘greedy institution’ (Coser, 1974) through instruction characterised by an elaborate systems of socialisation strategies, purposefully designed to support the task of producing physically fit (Knapik *et al*, 2001, pp.946-954; Knapik *et al*, 1993, pp.598-603) subservient soldiers (McMillan & Rachman, 1988, pp. 373-378). Individuals drawn to the infantry in particular, may well have been attracted by notions of a masculine or rural lifestyles described by Higate (2012, 2009, 2003) and others (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, pp.829-859; Woodward, 2000; Akin & Dobrofsky, 1978, pg. 166).

Arkin, & Dobrofsky, (1978) propose that induction in to the military is undertaken at a time of significant transition, considering that the age of most recruit's falls somewhere between 17 and 20, therein recruitment occurs during the shift from adolescence to adulthood. Thompson, (1991, pp.261-278) suggests that notions of masculinity are an expression of the 'deep structures' that exist within the presenting culture. Moreover as Karner, (1998, pp, 197-232) and Hinojosa (2010, pp.179-194) propose, military forms of masculinity remain traditional, insomuch as they idealise constructs based on the encouragement of identities that embrace physical strength and aggression whilst avoiding expressions of vulnerability or physical and emotional weakness. Nevertheless as forms of hegemonic masculinity they legitimize dominant positions in society and justify the subordination of women, and other marginalized ways of doing being men.

Yet as Connell & Messerschmidt, (2005, pp.829-859) suggest there is an irony to this model of masculinity, since this approach to a military construct of [hegemonic] masculinity subordinates and/or marginalizes men. Particularly as King (2015, pp.379-387; 2013, pp. 4-11) asserts, since from 2016 women have been integrated into all combat elements of the United States Armed Forces and share combat roles with men. In the British case following a recommendation from the chief of the general staff, Gen Sir Nick Carter; in November 2016 women were invited to fight alongside men in the Royal Armoured Corps, opening up to all combat roles by 2018. In the interim, since the infantry remains overwhelmingly male it is likely that a distinctly masculine culture will not prevail for some time to come. Nonetheless the emergence of a genderless military in the UK at least, seems highly possible since commencement of equivalence (Brownson, 2014) has to one degree or another already been institutionalized in recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (King, 2015, pp.379-387).

Traditional impressions of masculinity still dominate the preferred identities considered fitting in military training establishments, encompassing notions of strength, aggression and controlled violence. Yet as Connell & Messerschmidt, (2005, pp.829-859) propose, "constructing a hegemonic masculinity through discursive subordination is viewed as an exercise in wielding symbolic, rather than real, power". While these practices may well remain symbolic, they conform to the impressions of training already embedded in the recruit consciousness; wherein risks (Zinn, 2004, pp.199-221) the deployment of violence and aggression (Thornborrow, 2005), and instruction in the use of corporeal skill and self-discipline are viewed as standard. Consequently, though symbolic they provide the recruit



with a blueprint in how to dominate others. And in so doing according to Connell & Messerschmidt, (2005), 'the military provides men with the symbolic resources for constructing a hegemonically masculine identity', yet these constructs are constructively designed to serve them in the very worst combat situations.

Others are attracted by notions of adventure they assume will be found in the combat occupations (Irwin, 2008; Winslow, 1999; Cockerham, 1973) or as Fear *et al.* (2009) assert they simply lack either the maturity or emotional stability to fully comprehend either the socialisation process or commitment component of their contracts. Picou & Carter, (1976, pgs. 12-22) describe educational training programs as a socialization process, in which the values and norms symbolic of the institution are embedded throughout training; during which time notions of masculinity are overtly presented in everyday and formal language and actions of significant others, notably in the military case through the belligerent discourse of training NCO's.

Military training occurs in isolation of the home world and is structured by and entirely for the benefit of the military, since as Keeling (2015, pp. 275-303), Segal (1986, pgs. 9-38) and Coser (1974) each assert it is essentially a greedy institution. One that Felices-Luna (2011) observes obliges the recruit to discard previous identities and undertake a process self mortification (Goffman, 1961), disculturation or untraining, since previous identities support cultural norms that fall some way off the military model and high degrees of compliance required of the modern infantryman (Hockey, 2016; Knapik, 2001, 1993; Woodward, 2000; Cockerham, 1973; Sullivan *et al.*, 1958). In a sense the previous identities of adolescent recruits were incomplete, due to their age and social position and as Shanahan (2000) describes, lacking in any meaningful connection to an occupation. These were after all the adolescents that Tannock *et al.*, (2013) propose were looking for change.

## **2.4. Welcome to Catterick Garrison**

Institutions are explicitly symbolised by their physical topography and the agencies found in their buildings (Giddens, 1984; Gieryn, 2002). Overtly labelled as Goffman (1968) suggests in equally specific and symbolically loaded designations as barracks, prisons, schools, hospitals and so forth, remaining diverse in that their total character is symbolised by tacit and explicit barriers that are built into their overall design. The structural aspect of the institution is also multifaceted; Bourdieu (1990) reminds us that the design of buildings

sustains distinction and hierarchy by excluding and segregating categories of people. Indeed social reproduction occurs as a consequence of conformity (Barrett, 2006, pp. 129-142) the agency of a barracks [for example] being far more than bricks and mortar in the sense that they are symbolic of compliance (Smith & Bugni, 2006, pp. 123-155), which it sustains externally through conspicuous surveillance (Lyon, 1994) and internally through the classification of space (Legg, 2005; Collinson, 2003, pg. 539).

These forms of tacit social control derive in part from a ‘calculative division of space’ (Foucault, 1979, pg. 92), deployed principally through the use of socially coded and extensively elaborated areas as spaces accessible to specific individual rather than the collective. Beyond the obvious physical structures and barriers a lifetime of primary and in the case of military training, secondary socialisations (Moskos, 1977; Stouffer *et al* 1949; Shils & Janowitz, 1948) will also have facilitated the transfer of institutionally appropriated norms and values; enabling an internal state of self-surveillance (Deetz, 1979, p. 151) and institutional awareness to take hold. Fornel *et al* (2001) view the function of the total institution as a type of social organisation ‘whose role is to coercively transform the self in order to fulfil the “social function” it has adopted’ (Felices-Luna 2011, pg. 70).

As suggested, the tacit agencies and duality of structure in this case shape soldierly practices, whilst soldierly practice serves to constitute and reproduce those structures (Giddens, 1984). In this respect compliance further supported by discrete surveillance (Foucault, 1980) reinforces a system of institutional control, as Quéré (2001) proposes the institution facilitates the operation of compliance by ‘structuring of self’ through the mobilisation of the physical environment. Whilst Goffman (1961) asserts that they are “forcing houses for changing persons” Goffman (1961, pg. 22) asserts that their operation extending to a “social reworking” of individualisation, achieved via processes such as the “mortification of the self”. Therein the individual encounters a regime of personal defacement and social isolation (Elder, 1994), within a divisive authoritarian system; where privilege and punishment are metered out with the aim of creating a situation where the recruit [‘inmate’] may be physically, socially and emotionally disjointed from the social world and previously familiar social realities (Dobrofsky 1978, p.157).

## 2.5 The forcing house

Within the bounds of the military institution the reworking of selves begins with the removal all items of civilian clothing and personal property followed by the issuing of a uniform (Joseph, 1989, 1972). Additionally social mobility between the Officers and the men is strictly regulated (Goffman, 1961, pg. 19) notions of fraternisation between the ranks discouraged. In this respect compliance further supported by discrete surveillance (Foucault, 1980) reinforces a system of institutional control. From a military perspective and particularly that of the recruit undergoing initial training, the socialisation process "is both the medium and the outcome of the practices which constitute social systems" (Giddens 1981, p. 27) or reinforce the structures found in military societies. The physical nature of the environment and implicit control Foucault (1979) describes as the 'calculative division of space' is deployed throughout the military institution, observed in the structural and assumed divisions which channel soldiers collectively (Goffman, 1961) between work, personal, administrative and recreational environments; each of which are as suggested subdivided by military and social rank as well as occupational distinction.

The military institution recognises and exploits the masculine character of the soldierly identity and rewards individuals who adopt and display the institutional norm, characterized in the rural identities described by Woodward (1998, pp.277-300) and others (Thornborrow & Brown, 2009; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Highgate, 2003; McMillan & Rachman, 1988) which become standard to soldiers. In this environment possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) come to the fore, as Janowitz & Shils (1948) describe, through affection, esteem and a sense of power. The physical environment serves to support this transition as Arkin & Dobrofsky, (1978, p. 166) propose, "Through relative physical isolation, community insulation archetypes." A sense of disconnection also guarantees a state of dependency on the institution and supports the development of an institutionally specific self (Elder *et al*, 1991) as part of the socialising process.

Cockerham (1973) reminds us that basic training occurs once in the service career and whilst outwardly representing a time of indoctrination and period where the essential combat skills, are as van Maanen (1983) puts it 'imported'; moreover, the system exploits an opportunity to deliver the real purpose of the 'training establishment' which is to socialise. In a very real sense the internal struggle between impulse, self-interest (Cheal, 1979) and aspiration to align with the presenting culture of the institution may well be viewed as perfectly natural. The physical proximity of recruits alone, as Campos-Castillo & Hitlin (2013, pp.168-192) have

suggested, places the individual in direct contact with a large number of others, or to coin Goffman's (1966, pgs. 14-16) phrase, places them in an exaggerated state of "copresence" their objective condition and individual action being influenced by the 'contemporaneous physical presence of others'.

Copresence as Collins' (2014, p. 107) proposes in his work on 'interaction ritual chains', "posits a system in which social actors increase or replenish personal stores of "emotional energy" through satisfying interaction rituals (Campos-Castillo & Hitlin, 2013, pg. 168). The model identity of the fledgling soldier-*self* therein develops through compliance, communal recognition and adherence to group values (Ashforth & Meal, 1989), yet as discussed resistance is inevitable, as Goffman (1961) suggests it is a reaction or, "stance taking entity, a something that takes up a position somewhere between identification with an organisation and opposition to it" (Goffman, 1961, pg. 22). The task of easing the recruit into the ways of the institution falls to NCOs who Goffman refers to as the "staff or inmates" Goffman proposes that,

"...obedience tests may be elaborated into a form of initiation that has been called 'the welcome' where staff or inmates, or both, go out of their way to give the recruit a clear notion of his plight. As part of this rite of passage, he may be called by a term such as "fish" or "swab", which tells him that he is merely an inmate, and, what is more, that he has a special low status even in this low group"

(Goffman, 1961, pg. 27)

'Beastings' and 'Bull' serve as Turner (1968) suggests; to encourage compliance, relegate impulse and self-interest (Cheal, 1979) and deter independence. They also provide an opportunity to build cohesion, since the failings of an individual result in 'block punishments' where the group are censured collectively. The real self suggests Turner (1976) [under the institution locus] is revealed when an individual complies with the principles of the institution in the face of temptation; whilst the real self [under the impulse locus or real self] is revealed when the individual performs hedonistically and does something because he wants to rather than because it is the right or honourable thing to do (Turner, 1968, pgs. 224-225); stability in terms of identity being achieved where the latter [impulse locus] is presented consistently and without prompt through the medium of the institutional locus.

Compliance is further encouraging by eliminating individuality (Sewell, 1992; Sewell, Haller & Ohlendorf, 1970) through the issue of identical forms dress, the uniform becoming a central marker and key to a soldier's identity (Joseph, 1986). Indeed as Cockerham (1973) asserts, that recruits are informed that such conditions are essential in order that the self that arises from this rite of passage is capable of taking his place in an 'elite' unit. In this case the self is conceived in a communal rather than private reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1991), one shaped as a consequence of communal interaction within the margins of a well supervised community. Privacy in a practical sense becomes a thing of the past (Sullivan, 1958), the self is in this sense truly laid bare (MacLean & Elder, 2007), yet soon the recruit learns that his body is the key resource, the weapon (Hockey, 2002, p148).

The physical environment discussed is also a centre of activity, where work, eating and sleeping "are conducted in the same location and under the same single authority" (Goffman 1968, pg. 17). These are the facets of the institution that serve to promote a sense of collectivism and *esprit de corps* (Hockey, 1996). They draw on central goals and activities that serve to bind the individual to the section (Pipping, 1947), the institution or unit. All activities are carried out in groups of various sizes from the Section to the Platoon and on to the Company (Pipping, 1947). Improvement in skills at the Section level arise from recruits learning to cooperate with one another and work together, which they achieved through a predetermined and uniform schedule of activities (MacLean & Elder, 2007). The training program simultaneously requires compliance in order that the task of moulding the individual to the 'norms' of the institution can take shape (Moskos, 1977). The severe regulations and surveillance imposed by the institution as Foucault (1980) suggests, facilitates the transfer of new institutionally specific identities by denying access to previous identifications (Felices-Luna, 2011; Becker, 2006), namely those found in the 'home world' (Goffman, 1961)

## **2.6 A 'Greedy Institution'**

The military institution is a 'greedy institution' (Segal & Segal, 2004; Vincenti, 1990, p. 78-80; Jolly, 1987) as Coser (1974) states, like all greedy institutions, 'they seek exclusive and undivided loyalty and attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions on those they wish to assimilate into their boundaries. The demands on the person are omnivorous' (Coser, 1974. pg. 4). As suggested these control measures are complimented by notions of self-surveillance (Foucault, 1980) or self-policing strategies that support the policies of the institution and alleviate the need to over-regulate, or rely on the authority of

NCOs to impose the will of the institution. By the time the recruit has completed basic training, his status raised to Trained Soldier, he will have already been institutionalised, his state of self regulation exposing a more often altruistic performance underpinned by a clear perception of an institutionally guided sense right and wrong. Yet as Goffman suggests the Self or aspects of the Self will reside in the cracks.

The grip of the military institution spills over into the families of service personnel as Jolly (1997) suggests the spouse in uniform is also crown property, and as such deployable at a moment's notice. The detachment engendered in service relationships serves as Keeling *et al* (2015, pp.275-303) propose to promote often significant rifts in family stability, difficulties during deployment often accentuate existing problems requiring additional welfare resources to be organised in the absence of the soldier-spouse. Segal & Segal, (2004) whilst describing the American Armed Forces family, tackle notions of operational detachment and general experience of being in the army from the perspective of the institution, and the complex nature of support currently in place to sustain the family. Segal, (1986, pp.9-38) describes the more traditional face of the institution and notion that the family and military present as two distinct and often conflicting greedy institutions; each demanding their own measure of commitment, loyalty, time and energy.

Implications for military families existing on the fringes of a rapidly changing society have become increasingly complex. Traditional stressors like coping with the risk of injury or death of a spouse have become more likely as a result of longer tours of duty, which in themselves create extended periods of family separations (Dandeker, 2006; Black, 1993, pp. pp.273-280). That said separation also enables increased opportunity for respite from the normative constraints on the behavior of spouses and children (Segal & Segal, 2006, pp. 225-233) frequently result in changes to the dynamic of traditional gender roles within the family unit. Likewise, rising trends encouraging the possibility of military/family conflict can be seen in broader societal changes in the role of women generally, particularly in the form of labour force engagement (Castaneda, 2008, pp.389-412) and unambiguous transformation in military family patterns. As Saltzman, (2011, pp. 213-230) suggest, today's army attracts increased interest from married younger soldiers, supports the needs of sole parents, mothers on operational duty (Westwood & Turner, 1996), and dual-service couples.

Whilst obscuring the fundamental role of the armed forces, the military institution provides a vast welfare umbrella designed to cope with the health and wellbeing of its combatants and dependants alike. Stryker, (1968, pp. 558-564) approaches the armed forces family from a symbolic interaction perspective and present the modified explanations of family members by characterising their experiences of being members of the 'regimental family' (Vining & Hacker, 2001, pp.353-373). Part of that membership will in the long term, include resettlement and social reintegration (Wolpert, (2000, pp. 103-119). Kleykamp & Montgomery (2014) have argued for example, that marriage is associated with higher degrees of success when making the transition. Regan (1999) demonstrates how service-partner engagement in 'unit-life' impacts on the partner's resettlement experience, Ragan (1999) suggesting that deeply rooted engagement with garrison support networks often results in the transition difficulties for partners, who have grown to rely on the mutual support of other service dependants. That said Veterans in relationships and particularly those with children, outperform single leavers usually securing independent accommodation (Higate & Cameron, 2004) and as suggested by Kleykamp & Montgomery (2014) enter into employment quicker than their single peers.

## **2.7 Invisible lives**

Military lives are conducted in undisclosed, restricted and often secret environments (Ben-Ari, 1998; Asher; 1991); they are punctuated by a sense social disconnection, endorsing of self mortification, biographical disruption and ongoing production of highly specific often idealised and provisional identities (Ibarra, 1999, pp.764-791). Whereas most institutions are fixed by their physical topography (Goffman, 1961; Cockerham, 1973), the military institution exists as much in the thoughts of soldiers (Schütze, 1992, pp.187-208; Little, 1965, pp. 195-224) as on the ground, or in the fabric of buildings. Indeed the nature of military socialisation and institutionalised state of its actors are the factors which enable the legitimate deployment of soldiers (Winslow, 1999) as self-sufficient beings. The social cohesion realized in training produces a fluid comprehension of institutional being (Stouffer, 1949), and production of a type of self that whilst reliant on the symbolism and rituals embodied in Battalion-*Geist*, or moral consciousness (Hegel, 2010) embedded in Battalion lore; is able to operate freely; in this sense autonomy to perform as a social actor is formed and operationalized on the basis of [*Gewöhnung*] habituation (Hegel & Kainz, 1994) regardless of its locale.

The soldier views the institution as a concept as much as a physical structure in the architectural sense, one that is underpinned by the notion that it relates to the structuring of self (Quéré 2001), facilitated through social cohesion and the wellbeing that derives from working within 'his unit' (Janowitz & Shils, 1948). This primary institutional stance is further enhanced with 'Battlemind Training' (Adler & Castro, 2012; Kellett, 1982) whilst his position within the organization is driven by choice and a desire to serve one's country (Thornborrow & Brown, 2009). Similarities between the military institution and Goffman's Asylum (1961) are conspicuous, from notions of initial mortification (Felices-Luna, 2011) to the sense of loss soldier's experiences when they eventually leave the Battalion (Iversen *et al*, 2005; Jolly, 1996). Indeed time spent in the military will shape all aspects of the life-course profoundly (Elder *et al*, 1991; Coates & Pellegrin, 1965; Brotz & Wilson, 1946, pp.371-375), embedding ideals that will endure long after one's service has been completed.

## **2.8 Earning One's spurs**

Mead's (1934) description of how mind and self arise from social processes, and Goffman's (1961) view of the social situation, in this instance in barracks, parade square or battlefield, form the hubs and outpost of the 'forcing house', where socialisation and cohesion are first realised and thereafter affirmed. From an occupational perspective the study draws on work-identity formation discussed by Knights & McCabe, (1999) and others (Alvesson & Wilmot 2002; Ibarra 1999; Grey 1994), where notions of regulation and presence of discrete surveillance (Foucault, 1980) mechanisms influence the manner in which identities are realised. Discrete surveillance in this case leads to a raised state of internal discipline; during training the self soon learns to cope with his external environment and manage the forces which initially presented as untenable. As his knowledge of the [military] institution embeds so too will his ability to control his environment (Giddens, 1991; Driver, 1985) and identify with his perceptions of self as a soldier.

Conformity and awareness of the many rules and regulation of the institution (Organ & Moorman, 1993) will enable him to evaluate and regulate his performance and ultimately achieve his desired identities (Mead, 1934). Janowitz & Shils (1948 pp. 280-315) suggested that the capacity of soldiers to remain disciplined and resist hardship, was sustained through the personal relations that existed within the primary group. In another more recent study Thornborrow (2005) investigated soldierly identities as a social construct, reproduced largely in storytelling (Humphreys and Brown, 2003), where the unit's moral codes were retold and



assimilated into the identities and social actions of its soldiers. He describes the process of military socialisation as one essentially rooted in ‘aspiration, discipline and soldierly identity’, the individual drive to become (Harding, 2007) being the overwhelming component leading to the social cohesion of [in this case Parachute Regiment] soldiers.

In other studies alternative explanations have been raised, for example King (2006, pg. 493) evaluated ‘military drills’, suggesting that “above all, the communication drills that British troops are collectively trained to perform” constitute the key social rituals and cohesive agents that bind British infantry units. King proposes that there are indeed many different approaches to the question of performance, socialisation and the cohesive qualities of British infantrymen. McMillan, & Rachman, (1988) for example studying trainee British Paratroopers identified three categories of recruit; describing them as the “Courageous”, “Fearless” and the “Over-confident”. Their findings were consistent with Bandura’s (1977) account of self-efficacy and notions of improving self-efficacy through situated training. The physical responses experienced by trainee paratroopers were found to be markedly similar to bomb disposal operators (Cox *et al*, 1983, pp.107-117) and that of World War II infantrymen (Schaffer, 1947).

## **2.9 Self-policing**

Discipline in this context is certainly associated with self, a self that must learn to cope with external environment and rules and regulations of the institution. Foucault characterizes the management of self as ‘dressage’, ‘a whole technique of human dressage by location, confinement, surveillance, the perpetual supervision of behaviour and tasks’ (Foucault, 1984, pg. 105). Evan (1963, pp.436-440) approaches the life-course from an occupational perspective locating the organization at the centre of activity and as a strategic enabler of transformation. The mechanisms inherent in the military institution, like those of Goffman’s theatre (1959), are central to this transformation, including the language, ritual and the tacit knowledge that will need to be learned in order to successfully complete this phase of becoming (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). Stryker (1980) supports this notion, broadly stating that ‘self and identity begins with the assumption that there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society’. Like Mead (1934), Hogg & Terry (2000) view notions of identification as “social processes” founded on a collection of “categorised values” that correspond in this case to the recruits desire to become (van Maanen, 1984).

The process is almost certainly enhanced by the adolescent recruit's lack of prior occupational knowledge, work-related experience and limited world view (Gee & Goodman, 2012). Unawareness, disengagement with local communities, education provisions and in cases poverty, each serve to promote the desire or prospect to become, rendering notions of membership (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002) all the more attractive. The nature of recruitment and subsequent training conducted in the relative isolation of the Training Establishment, serve to eliminate social distraction, immersing the recruit in the truly "total" environment. The recruit, as part of the process of becoming is overwhelmed by one distinct model of being, creating the opportunity for a far deeper connection to be established between the organisations and the self (Janowitz & Shils, 1948). In essence their rite of passage has begun amidst the well choreographed and quite deliberate chaos that Irwin (2008) suggests will lead in no short time to adjustments in status, as provisional selves begin to emerge (Ibarra, 1999).

On an individual basis clarity in comprehending martial progress becomes easier to interpret as the recruit becomes practised in decoding the feedback of significant others (Haller & Woelfel, 1971). *Soldier-self* will begin to emerge as the recruit begins to establish an impression of his identity and status within the institution (Sewell *et al*, 1970), which he will achieve by observing others and through the feedback he receives in relation to his developing presentation of self (Goffman, 1959), self performance and the skills he displays when carrying out martial activities (McCall & Simmons, 1978). The recruit's habitus (Bourdieu, 2005) will soon begin to embody the culturally defined norms and customs specific to his regiment, including symbolic knowledge of place, ritual and the tastes (Bourdieu, 1984) of his unit, which Joseph & Alex, (1972) propose are accented by and through uniform; which enables the organisation to define its boundaries and ensure that members conform to its goals, whilst eliminating conflicts between the 'status-sets' of its members.

Self-policing is an essential component of institutional compliance since it enables the soldier to conform to the standards of the institution unprompted by external force's. To that end as Harvey *et al* (1995, p. 167) suggest, discipline is used as a system of surveillance, where each soldier becomes his own supervisor, it establishes a tangible and distinct forms of power to become the tools for dominating 'bodies' (Foucault, 1977). These forms of power use normalising agencies rather than repression to "invest" the bodies they represent, likewise the military boost notions of self-policing in training through the discourse and compliance of the

training staff. Foucault's reference to Bentham's panopticon serves as an illustration of the institutions operationalisation of the scheme, where the controlled administrative distribution of soldiers [bodies] may be watched, punished and trained for optimal functioning (Foucault, 1977, 1988, pp. 16–49).

## **2.10 Uniform differentiation**

Uniform as a form of dress acts as a totem it discloses and obscures status, verifies legitimacy and membership, whilst from an institutional perspective it also suppresses individuality (Joseph & Alex 1972, pgs. 719-730). Rafaeli & Pratt (1993, pp.32-55) draw a direct line between organisations with high degrees of control over dress and higher degrees of compliance of the workforce. Whilst uniformity in social actions is achieved through the 'habitation' or repeated and affirmed performance of a particular range of actions [drills] through which the unconscious disposition of habitus become embedded; therein the socially proficient performances of social actions become a matter of routine (Bourdieu 2005, pgs. 43). Soldiers often act without being able to explain exactly what they are doing, their actions and reactions symbolic of deeply embedded drills (Shusterman, 2011, pp.4-15; King, 2006, pp.493-512), which colonise their sense of selves as member of a particular organisation, as well as being aspects of occupational survival that function to preserve life.

Thornborrow (2005) notes that during the training period the Parachute Regiment recruit will become aware of two items of dress that characterize both the regiment and therein the self as an institutionally determined object. Similarly McMillan, & Rachman, (1988) describe the assault training phase of a Parachute Regiment soldiers induction, as a highly intensive physical and mental tests designed to assess the aptitude of those wishing to work with Airborne Forces. Considering the nature of training the [albeit tokenistic] award of a 'badge' and maroon coloured beret at its conclusion, is nevertheless a highly prized award, since it serves to further define the individual as an operational parachutist and therein specialist within the infantry field. This is important, since as Joseph & Alex (1972) propose, too often the uniform serves obscure identity, conceals status and in so doing creates a semblance of a homogeneous institution.

The significance of a 'badge' token or otherwise centres on membership, Weber's (1978, pg. 958-959) emphasis on the identification of the officeholder with the office itself, "An office is a vocation;" and "entrance into an office is considered an acceptance of a specific duty of

fealty to the purpose of the office” (Akerlof, & Kranton, 2008, pg. 2). Therein the ‘badge’ is symbolic of both the ‘office’ and personal identity of its bearer (Roth & Schluchter, 1984) it is therefore symbolic of a rite of passage that exceeds the standard trajectory, and membership to an elite within an elite. Insignia also plays its part in the recruitment process the wearing of trade or formation badges on combat and dress uniforms whilst creating a sense of mystique is also indicative of membership claims (Burke *et al*, 2009) and whilst often restricted in their reading (Padilla, & Laner, 2002, p.113) serve to enhance notions of occupational distinction. (Moskos, 1976)

### **2.11 The Art of Being**

On completion of their basic and continuation training the soldier moves on to a working battalion and quickly comes to realise his social world through communication drills (King, 2006), censure, punishment (Thornborrow & Brown, 2006) and self acknowledgement of the overarching progress he has made in relation to his military socialisation and capacity to perform military skills. From an institutional perspective during training he had been further driven by the promise of membership of an “élite” organisation. Having achieved that goal he soon comes to realise that basic training is just that, a basic introduction. In no time he will become aware of the extent of activity surrounding him and having learned to appreciate the significance of all discourse between himself and significant others, he is equipped to respond affirmingly. Harquail (1998, pg. 225) suggests that “when individuals think of themselves as organisation members, they feel like organisation members”.

Basic Training facilitates the first of a succession of transitions demanding a significant reorganisation of self (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). The ideal soldier is in many ways the embodiment of the ‘Organisational Man’, suggested by Whyte (1956). As one that strives for inclusion, s/he places the interests of the organisation first, like Riesman’s (1950) ‘other-directed man’ he is attuned to the impressions of others, his awareness of self finely tuned to his peers and superiors alike. In this second category as Giddings (1988, pg. 259) suggests, he must also develop, “a set of dispositions for managing the transaction between motives and the expectations ‘scripted’ by particular roles”. Indeed as Just (1970) proposes, a soldier’s sense of self will continue develop out of the specific rituals and customs of his battalion and the socialising agents and social cohesion he has come to rely upon since basic training merged into his occupational life.

Within the bounds of the institution the soldier will have encountered the social, abstract and physical objects of his world (Blumer, 1986); his experience constituted within an interactional environment. The various modes by which the soldier now acts toward an object being based on the meanings that those objects hold for him, the meanings usually representing a collective view, which seldom relates to the inherent qualities of the object. The battalion's Colours are not flags but rather the embodiment of the Regiment's fighting traditions, fealty and verification of its geographical footprint. Meanings also evolve as a result of changes to the significance he ascribes to an object through interaction. The 'interpretive process' may well bring him to questioning the prescribed meanings that define it and through a process of self-identification he may come to adapt, reshape or change his perceptions.

## **2.12 Rites of Passage**

Irwin (2008) and others (Seabrook & Avison, 2012, pp.50-68; Winslow, 1999, pp. 29-457) suggest that a number of rites of passage are undertaken from the point of recruitment. Rites of passage, she suggests are viewed as the rituals that serve to mark the transition of individuals from one social status point to the next; for the soldier the shift centres on progress in status from recruit to trained soldier, then deployed soldier to combat veteran. Occupational difference in this case relates largely to role and the shift to an operational mode. Stouffer *et al* (1949) describe the conditions that lead to the operational tour as unique to the military life-course of World War Two Veterans, and like Irwin (2008) and others (Ben-Ari, 1998; Keegan *et al.* 1997) suggests that these transitions distinguish the novice soldier as he emerges from war as a proven combatant, a survivor. Stouffer (1945) asks where else in society are individuals compelled to recover from the rigours of basic training only to be thrust into an equally significant life-event, notably the privation of volunteer combat.

Combat whilst the most striking example of a rite of passage in the military, particularly where the soldier has engaged with his enemy at close quarters, will unavoidably incur some degree of meaningful reflection. Such reflection will ultimately impact on one's disposition to killing, notions of being killed or the effects of life changing injuries. Soldiering requires physical robustness, thus the thought of losing limbs (Wessely, 2009; Schütze, 1992; Gallagher *et al*, 2007, pp.205-215) is terrifying, yet these are typical risks associated with soldiering (Van Maanen, 1983). Moreover a risk engendered by few other occupations, yet

amputation and fatalities are factors unavoidably associated with martial service. Indeed a lexicon of phrases has been created to evade, soften or distance the infantryman from that which is a distinct and probable outcome for many, life-changing injury meaning multiple amputations being one.

Dharm-Datta, (2011, pp.1362-1367) proposed that UK military amputees injured in Afghanistan and Iraq are surviving more severe and complex injuries than in previous conflicts, and that the majority would ultimately be able to return successfully to military duty, though in support roles rather than in their former positions as foot-soldier's. During the period 7 October 2001 to 31 March 2015, the numbers of surviving UK Service personnel that suffered amputations and have been medically discharged were: a. 184 from Afghanistan. b. 15 from Iraq. c. 35 from locations other than Afghanistan and Iraq (MoD<sup>1</sup>, 2015). In the case of the American soldier, Grieger *et al*, (2006, p. 1781) suggests much the same, yet points out that infantrymen unlike the survivors of motor vehicle accidents [Roadside Bombs] do not have a predictable trend of recovery from PTSD across time.

The mental health consequences of battlefield exposure with or without life-changing injuries are common amongst Veterans and Service Personnel alike, and well documented in the work of Adler & Castro, (2012) and others (Buckman *et al*, 2013, 410-415; Hatch, 2013, pp.1045-1064; Harvey *et al*, 2011, pp.666-672; Finnegan *et al*, 2010, pp. 90-96; Dolan, 2005; Glaser & Strauss, 1971, pp 754-767). Whilst the theme of mental health is tackled in the analysis, this thesis is not a mental health study, the examples cited above serve as examples of mental health studies that in themselves demonstrate some degree of the risks and possible outcomes that are symptomatic of infantry careers, and which therefore form part of the backdrop to the rites of passage described.

### **2.13 Moral Careers**

Operational tours take the institution into the field, where apart from a raised level of operational awareness and removal of the more mundane rituals [the bull] the day goes on according to the 'Orders' of the institution. Even in the field however the institution makes every effort to control its soldiers. Its deployment of authority via operating principles and doctrine (ADP: Operations, 2010) are no different from those found and practiced in the UK garrison. Indeed the deployment of punishment and humiliation are uniform in either

environment, in a sense they form part of the 'moral career' (Goffman, 1961). This is a notion confirmed in several studies from Kaplan *et al*, (2007) to Hatch *et al* (2013) and others (Buckman *et al*, 2013; Higate, 2012; Fear *et al*, 2009; Beland, 1992), each centring on notion of loss. In the case of Hatch *et al* (2013) the loss of significant others either during service or at the point of discharge, lead many Veterans to experience serious problems in making adequate social adjustments, or establishing of enduring civilian friendship groups.

Kaplan's (2007) focus, on the other hand centred on a more comprehensive and certainly tragic picture of loss leading to suicide amongst young male Service Leavers. These examples serve as tokens of a significant body of work centring on the mental health consequences of Service careers, whilst illustrating the point that the total nature of the institution has some major drawbacks. Additionally aspects of the 'moral career' are linked to one's internal subjectivity and viewed, as Hockey (1986) suggests, as matters of extreme personal significance, connected to one's image of self and felt identities (Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008. pp.41-60), which are shaped and nurtured by the institution to the point where manufactured subjectivity becomes imprinted on the self (Whetten & Mackey, 2002, pp.393-414; Barker, 1998, pp.257-267). There is of course another face to the 'moral career' one concerning the official position and status of self, relating to rights and obligations or 'jural relations' and the life-style adopted then groomed throughout the course of one's service.

Soldiers and particularly infantrymen are life takers, they shoot to kill (Richards, 1992) and eliminate threats with deadly force (Kretzmer, 2005). In military parlance the soldier doesn't simply become a 'co-operator', he becomes an operator or rifle-man, any notions of killing as a social taboo being promptly removed. Killing or the ability to kill must therein become 'normalised' (Atkinson<sup>[R]</sup>, 2004; Cockerham & Cohen, 1980) it's what he does. His profession is indeed validated, as Kretzmer (2005) proposes. His is a morally justified profession, one that is approved by society and sanctioned by his Church and Government alike. War is by definition a state of armed conflict between different factions and is as such a social activity (van Creveld, 1999. pg. 157), one that defines the place and function of the military as a distinct sub-culture established purposely on the periphery of society (Foley *et al*, 2011). The soldier's task as a 'built in member' is to apply deadly force when and where directed, the institution doesn't teach him to fire for effect it facilitates his socialisation in the legal and moral application of arms (Kellette, 1982; Motivation, 1992).

Collinson (2003) suggests that under the full weight of institutional pressure people are more than capable of adopting the views and values of the organisation, to a degree where the institutional model becomes dominant, regardless of the core principles of broader society. Whilst Everett (2013) argues that the notion of killing, coping with the thought of being killed, handling of human remains and witnessing the depravity of warfare can never be entirely promoted as a societal or occupational norm. Goffman's (2009) notion of the moral carer, and particularly the 'two-sidedness' of careers which on the one hand exist as a revered 'personal' components that inspire positive notions of self and felt identity, whilst on the other appear problematic where the 'public' experience of being soldiers [and knowledge of killing] whilst sound in the jural sense, present challenging obstacles during periods of adjustment. Likewise the stigma attached to PTSD, or loss of social status that follows a career offering very little transferable social capital, draw many to question the value of their service.

## **2.14 Occupational narrative**

In the military setting when soldiers tell tales their assumed knowledge serves to legitimise their status within and membership to the group (O'Brien, 1991). As Brown & Humphreys (2006) assert, occupational experience is constructed and relayed through narrative; which can be seen in the way that soldiers make sense of their world and what they experience around them and then operationalize by attempting to assemble or incorporate a given episode of their lives into narratives. Recounting an episode is also specific to time, audience and the authority of the narrator, Atkinson (1997, pg. 197) describes how professional seniority in a health setting is "partly enacted through differential rights to recount clinical cases". In the military setting the function of the 'Orders Group' is correspondingly structured where the senior soldier or officer conveys and controls the narrative; he alone decides what elements are presented or what is omitted, he also possesses the authority to conceal or reveal the entirety of the proposed action.

Through narrative analysis we are also able to discover how the self learns to comprehend the organisational structures of the institution (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002; Weinberg, 1945) and imagined soldierly identities (Ibarra, 1999) established through the "deeds and activities of soldiering", (Woodward (2011). As Brown (2001, p.113) suggests, "The issue of identity is central to our understanding of how individuals relate to the groups and organisations in which they are participants". Ricoeur's (1981, pg. 32) model of narrative analyses further



“demonstrates the value of telling and reframing stories”. Likewise Atkinson, (2009) discusses types of often neglected narrative that add meaning to the discourse, examples of the wounded or warrior narratives spring to mind where socially discontented Veterans voice notions of fighting to access their rights, or acknowledge their specific membership to often indistinct communities. Chochinov *et al* (2005) convey aspects of the narratives of the dying, which from the perspective of soldier discourse remains a central tenet in the retelling of loss and impact on personal biographies.

### **2.15 The Chief Storyteller**

Where narrative approaches are adopted by researchers possessing membership of the target community, issues of a partisan or overtly sympathetic nature must be taken into account (Atkinson *et al*, 2003 pp.415-428), as well as notions of researcher reflexivity (Higate & Cameron, 2006, pp.219-233) considering their position as chief storyteller. Thornborrow (2006) a former member of his target group raised this point citing Hatch's (1996) notions of 'narrative position', and the importance of defining the relationship between researcher and actors at the centre of the narrative, "the narrator is not restricted to discussing only what any outsider could observe, but is allowed to speak as an insider who has privileged information. ...immersion permits access too contextually and embedded meaning, but also makes the insider conscious of his or her own embeddedness" (Hatch, 1996, pp.359-374).

Awareness of notions of one's embeddedness permits objectivity, as well as creating as Higate & Cameron (2006) suggest, opportunities to consider the reflexive nature of one's interactions. These are significant considerations, which if left unchecked lead to an autocratic, often biased narrative. Genette's (1992) stance on 'narrative position' and 'voice', further developed by Hatch (1996), suggests that there are four narrative positions, that is to suggest that the key storytellers might adopt one of four positions when relaying the account. For the purpose of this rendition of the accounts of infantry service leavers and due to the notion that the researcher possesses membership to the target group it was reasoned appropriate to adopt the 4<sup>th</sup> of Hatches narrative positions, described by Genette (1992) and later Hatch (1996) as the 'omniscient viewpoint', Hatch describes this stance as follows,

“it is at once the most potent and the most difficult to handle. ...because it offers the narrator the flexibility to move between internal and external perspectives and to use the variety of voices available (including the second person 'you') so that the best communicative strategy for a particular idea can be exploited. It also relieves the monotony associated with a singular voice and introduces the pluralism of multiple

perspectives. It is the most difficult because ...the switching between perspectives and voices can result in chaos. ...the loss of the ability to distinguish between narrative positions leads to a sacrifice of perception and understanding. What the omniscient narrator contributes is the possibility of constructing 70 multiple perspectives and voices within researchers and research acts”

(Hatch, 1996, pgs. 9-10)

Hatch's (1996) 'omniscient viewpoint' enabled Thornborrow (2005) to “reveal aspects of his identity as a member of the Parachute Regiment and embed it in the text” of his thesis (Thornborrow, 2005, pg. 27). The position of the self narrative as Goffman (1961, p. 66) reminds us often produce ‘sad tales’ and ‘storylines’ about the tellers own situations (Crewe, B. and Maruna, S., 2006, pp.109-123); that are often presented in complex discourse rooted in occupational language and incidents that require a deeper understanding of the context of the account. Calloway, (1995, pp.249-257) and Baerger & McAdams, (1999, pp.69-96) propose that these accounts raise further questions relating to the coherence of informant narrative, that require additional knowledge of the themes discussed and a sincere and rigorously reflexive approach to their analysis.

## **2.16 Swinging the lantern**

The primary aspects of the study in relation to the narratives of experience, centre on becoming and being (Whetten & Godfrey, 1998) soldiers, as opposed to ‘imagining’ (Ibarra, 1999) aspiring (Picou & Carter, 1976) or coming to terms with aspects of a hitherto unproven occupational aptitudes (Ronfeldt & Grossman, 2008). The narratives of actual soldiering are perhaps the most difficult to access (O’Brien, 1991) and whilst many of the sights, smells and agencies of a life spent in uniform will linger in the memory for decades to come (Belk, 1990) it’s the stories that actually bring them to life (Atkinson<sup>[R]</sup>, 2004; Hoge *et al*, 2004; Apply, 2000; Little, 1964; Shaffer, 1947). Narrative accounts shared between actors, those who reside in the story, often differ marketable from the polished accounts presented to a wider audience, these secondary accounts undergo modification they are adaptations which are used to project the self in a particular light.

In military parlance this process is known as ‘swinging the lantern’, storytelling in the military setting sharing many of the same characteristics common to all occupational narrative (Hoffman, 2005). Yet martial narratives possess the distinct quality of concealment (King, 2003; Schütze, 1992). Most occupations occur close to the home environment, one’s work and private lives sharing the same geographical area, in many instances within the same physical boundaries that the individual has grown up and been schooled in, environments

often shared with parents and ones extended family. This is not the case for soldiers, indeed the biographical disruption occasioned by tours of duty and distance between barracks and home world are often significant. The distance whilst testing on one hand also permits the construction of often fabricated accounts of self, the internal subjectivity that shapes such narrative possessing the power to affect correspondent and recipient alike, shaping either's sense of self, their character, locale and proximal uniqueness to one another (Haggard et al, 2002, pp. 382-385).

Soldiers position revised narrative accounts by way of an explanation for their absence in the biographies of significant others (Fodor, 1975 pgs. 18-35; Wolfe, 1991, pgs. 1073-96), concealing biographical fractures with an audience specific account, (Bell, 1984, pgs. 145-204) coded to mother, brother, girlfriend, colleague and so on. The ongoing construction of the soldier's social reality is regularly tested (Duncanson, 2009, pp. pp.63-80) thus the task of sharing notions of a life in a combat zone are neither a pleasant or straightforward undertaking. It also places an immense editorial pressure on the self as author of narratives created with significant others in mind (Woelfel & Haller, 1971). By adhering to a set of fixed models of self, (Giddens 1988, pg. 259) familiar to the intended audience, the soldier attempts to retain a sense of continuity by projecting variations of the norm (Lizette & Lehren, 2011), therein he improvises and adapts narrative in order to overcome disparity.

## **2.17 Future selves**

Importance in the character and origin of imagined selves (Cooley, 1902) cannot be understated, nor should the basis on which these assumed selves were constructed, or modes by which the self perceives temporal progression or creates future (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978). For over a decade the soldier has learned to thrive within a framework of dual certainty, cosseted on the one hand in the distinct knowledge that his future will be directed by 'significant others' (Picou & Carter 1976; Sewell, 1970), whilst on the other his perception of biographical certainty (Zinn, 2004, pp.199-221) has remained distinctly uncertain. Beyond the most basic entitlements available to the serviceman a tantalising reality persists; one centring on the notion that whilst in-service the 'socially situated' self (Mead, 1934) has learned to thrive by managing a range of coping strategies (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) devised to deal with the privation and discipline native to the external environment (Foucault, 1984).

Soldiers are socialised to accept authority, are resilient and having developed an enduring relationship with their organisations, are incredibly loyal (Winslow, 2007; Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Yet after years of conformity many soldiers never fully tackle the rite of passage that leads to autonomy (Arkin & Dobrofsky, 1978), or learn to make many of the most fundamental decisions familiar to their civilian peers (Elder *et al*, 1991, p. 215). In a sense the project proposes that the end of his adolescence and basic training collided, causing each event to merge simultaneously into a single transition point. Bakhtin's (1981, pg. 7) notions of 'chronotope', correspond to this period where "time and space fuse to create culturally and historically charged location(s)" (see: Folch-Serra, M., 1990). Symbolically this period in a soldier's life is marked as the time when the lights went on. A time when connections and meanings were comprehended and operationalized, a time when the soldier submerged in a distinct culture came to realise his world.

The agencies generated around basic military training are indeed powerful; this period being used by the institution to shape moral judgments about soldierly identities and those of others (Whetten & Mackey, 2002; Whetten & Godfrey, 1998). In this sense the dominance of martial instruction (King 2006), discipline (Thornborrow & Brown, 2006), and ongoing process of socialisation (Janowitz & Shils, 1948) serve only to supplant the age related freedoms, hijinks and 'responsibilities' familiar to his civil peers. To that end the martial career serves to promote a state of extended adolescent, rendering the organization of a socially conscious or responsible-self an often naive undertaking, the soldiers world outlook when relocated into civilian space often presents as idealistic (Stryker, 1987), impractical or naive. Choice and autonomy has never been a strong feature of the employer-employee relationship (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Regardless of whether the soldier is on leave or off duty there is an inbuilt expectation that the individual will report at a moment's notice.

These haphazard patterns of occupational certainty are, as suggested, further exacerbated by the cosseted nature of institutional life that make planning one's future both an unpractised and certainly challenging prospect; since in this context the life-course (Seabrook & Avison, 2012, pp.50-68; MacLean & Elder, 2007; Shanahan, 2000, pp.667-692) has habitually moved forward according to an entirely unpredictable trajectory, one dominated by unexpected or 'fateful moments' (Giddens, 1991) and the control of significant others. The compromise soldiers make in fulfilment of their service whilst bolstered by notions of duty (Hatch, 1989), are hindered by identities rooted in masculinised concepts of being (Higate, 2003;

Buchbinder, 1994), countless episodes of biographical disruption (Kilshaw, 2004) and risk (Zinn, 2004).

Veteran narratives are more often characterized by vague, socially disconnected accounts of embedded occupational knowledge (O'Brien, 1991; Kellett, 1982) and socially situated accounts of recreational activities (Cockerham, 2003), the latter presented in often impolitic language (Higate, 2012) that whilst likely wounded or combat narratives (Frank, 1985), further distances him from the mainstream. The selves undertaking resettlement are products of a homocentric life-course, their accounts and actions a fusion of past experience which in turn influence the future, as Shirani & Henwood stress, "everything people do is embedded and extended in time across the modalities of past, present and future (Adam and Groves, 2007) making it an inescapable aspect of our existence." (2011, Pg. 50)

In this sense the soldier's observed reality has been almost entirely based on his experience of the [battalion] institution (Goffman, 1961, pp. 43-84; Charmaz, 2006, pg. 47); and the meanings he ascribes to institutionally specific activities of past and present, whilst up to this point his future has remained immaterial since during service the institution had assumed responsibility for it. Occupationally the military, and particularly the infantry branch, presents too often as an inconsistent career (Buckman *et al*, 2013; Iversen *et al*, 2005; Giffen & McNeil, 1967 pgs. 848-854), the physical challenges alone (Knapik, 1993; Gates *et al*, 2012) set the maximum contract for NCOs at 22 years, therein seeing a man at the peak of his career [in his 40s] into forced retirement (McDermott, 2007; Wolpert, 2000; Giffen *et al*, 1967). The start point of both the study and the martial life-course can be located in the military institution, where the agents of primary and secondary socialisation quickly lead to high degrees of stability and social cohesion, and where soldiers learn to live as members of the immediate primary group.

Janowitz & Shils (1948) describe the components that constitute a soldier's 'primary gratifications' and effectiveness in the field as follows,

"It appears that a soldier's ability to resist is a function of the capacity of his immediate primary group (his squad or section) to avoid social disintegration. When the individual's immediate group, and its supporting formations, met his basic organic needs, offered him affection and esteem from both officers and comrades, supplied him with a sense of power and adequately regulated his relations with authority, the element of self-concern in battle, which would lead to disruption of the effective functioning of his primary group, was minimized. The capacity of the primary group to resist disintegration was dependent on the acceptance of political, ideological, and

cultural symbols (all secondary symbols) only to the extent that these secondary symbols became directly associated with primary gratifications.”

(Janowitz & Shils, 1948, pg. 218)

The process of learning to perform as an infantryman had to start somewhere; the military institution facilitated that start point, where the transformation from civilian to soldier began and both social performance and membership to the primary group was discovered. Ten years has now passed to a point in the life-course where he must now entertain the transition from soldier to civilian, as suggested having never really been a civilian [adult], this transition back to civilian status presents as an incredibly difficult time.

## **2.18 Neither Fish nor Fowl**

Perhaps unsurprisingly the Service Leaver maintains his confident, robust personas throughout the Pre-Exit period, in what Goffman describes as ‘signs given’. Yet his presentation is often hesitant, the soldier unintentionally betraying impressions he does not intend to project through ‘signs given off’ (Goffman, 1978). The self now performing in liminal space, is neither fully soldier nor civilian. As Collinson (2003, pp. 527–547) suggests these actions become choreographed [back stage] into a sequence of survival strategies. Selves deliberately composed to be seen [front stage] by others, in an effort to offset his rapidly changing public self-image.

“...when located in their wider conditions and consequences, dramaturgical selves can be seen as informing important survival strategies for those under ‘the gaze’. Tending to be neither a passive accommodation nor a total resistance to surveillance, dramaturgical selves are more likely to be characterized by an ambiguous and shifting amalgam of compliance and opposition.”

(Collinson, 2003, pg. 539)

Goffman (1978) argues that we present ourselves in different ways to make identity claims and that in making these claims we attempt to secure both material and social resources for ourselves. Collinson goes on to suggest that by engaging in resistance the employee is attempting to construct an alternative, more positive sense of self, in order to overcome what Goffman (1961) stresses are identities ‘provided, prescribed or circumscribed by the organization’. Goffman (1978) proposes that significance in the practice centres on the individual's self construction, rather than the character of the role assumed,

"What is important is the sense he provides them through his dealing with them of what sort of person he is behind the role he is in."

(Goffman, 1978, pg. 298)

Behind the mask different degrees of insecurity exist and quite rightly so, the completeness of military socialisation and years of conformity make this an incredibly difficult period of transition, not just for the soldier but also for the families of those exiting. Hatch (2013) and others (Dandeker, 2006; Segal, 1986; Coser, 1974) remind us that the military is a 'greedy institution' and one that places enormous demands on the family unit (Buckman, 2002). Vincenti (1990) clarifies this point citing Jolly's (1987) position on Army families,

"Jolly' documents well how many service wives feel they have not only married a soldier, but the army as well. To some extent, service life has its own culture, separate from the rest of society, rather like other minority groups."

(Vincenti, 1990, pg. 78-79)

Jolly (1987) perceives married soldiers as three distinct entities, as Military Men, Family Men and Crown property; when in doubt the soldier's sense of self slips to the familiar, therein the persona of the military man endeavours to dominate. These are attempts to stave off the inferences accentuated in any one of a stream of degradation ceremonies (Garfinkel, 1956, pg. 420-424) some quite subtle others distinctly blunt. Whilst notions of disloyalty or weakness underpin the verbal backlash his decision to exit has generated, one cannot fail to register his response. Summed up in the explicitly masculine presentations of self he now conveys (Higate, 2012), as if in an attempt to confirm his membership and robustness whilst preserving and protecting his sense of self.

That said from the perspective of the soldier it was always a question of when, rather than whether to leave (Béland, 1992), the soldiers at the centre of this study for example have decided to leave mid-career [full service being 22 years], their exits occurring at the 10-15 year point. Since they entered service as adolescents (Gee & Goodman, 2013) they have lived out the entirety of their adult lives within the bounds and regulation of the institution. Their institutional experience also makes them highly perceptive to changes in the tone of feedback received from 'significant others' (Picou & Carter, 1976, pgs. 12-22), which doubtless press home the notion that things are about to change, as this monumental episode of the life-course runs as suggested to an unavoidable conclusion. Unfortunately the strategies and backstage rehearsals (Goffman, 1978) that have facilitated the smooth progress of his career to date are now ineffective, his chances of predicting or controlling his immediate environment let alone his future have now shifted into an uncontrollable phase.

To one degree or another his powers of “self-indication” (Blumer, 1986) have stalled, his embedded position within the institutional offering him very few answers to the questions he now poses to himself. Indeed when assuming the position of another looking back at him, [the ‘Me’] (Mead, 1934) that reflection is likely to be another soldier, thus his emerging social-presentation is symbolic of a distinctly unfocused performance, betraying his apprehension. Whilst the infantryman can perform expertly in any of a number of martial roles he has very little control or knowledge of the character he must now play. His lack of transferable knowledge and occupational language (Higate, 2012; Cornell, 2004) serve only to diminish the degree of control he might exert during the period (Walker, 2012), or support the conveyance of a positive impression of self to others. In a sense the problem stems from ambiguities created during the period which evoke uncertainty, in most cases he has very little idea what will come next since the agencies of resettlement fall some way outside the institutional norm.

The period simply lacks the familiar structures he has grown to depend upon, his institutional knowledge ineffective in tackling this unfamiliar transition, a condition further hindered by his lack experience of being a civilian (Sommers, 1964, pp.332-344). Goffman (1961) describes the institutional experience as one that will leave a distinct and lasting impression on the self, and that life and one’s social position beyond the institution “will never be quite what it was prior to entrance”, stressing that,

“...what the ex-inmate does retain of his institutional experience tells us important things about total institutions. Often entrance will mean for the recruit that he has taken on what might be called a proactive status. Not only is his relative social position within the walls radically different from what it was on the outside, but, as he comes to learn, if and when he gets out, his social position on the outside will never again be quite what it was prior to entrance.”

(Goffman 1961, pg. 7)

Nonetheless this is the period when he must construct some notion of who he will become, yet he faces several obstacles, which serve only to make the period more challenging. The loss of friends, occupation, a home and income are each factors that Jolly (1996) proposes contribute to the weight of anxiety he carries throughout the period. His presentation of self whilst consistent, serves as suggested to mask the apprehension he is now experiencing, Collinson (2003) highlights the problem from the perspective of income, stating that,



“Job insecurity can create material and symbolic anxieties for workers. The fear of losing one’s economic independence can be interwoven with more symbolic anxieties.”

(Collinson, 2003, pg. 532)

From another perspective Hatch (2013) examined differences in levels of social reintegration and links between social integration and mental health among Service Leavers and personnel still in service. In this project displacement caused by the loss of social cohesion, affiliation or membership to a group were found to create significant problems for leavers in transition, whose sense of identity was entrenched in membership to a specific unit,

“Life transitions generally denote exit from one role and entry into another or a significant redefinition in an individual’s role or status (Wheaton 1990). While transitions are often considered as single events, they encompass a sequence of role and status changes that vary by timing and nature...”

(Hatch, 2013, pg. 1046)

In this example the loss of friendship-groups alone was validated as a factor that impinges on the individual’s ability to fully reintegrate, which will as Ashcroft (2014) proposes, be further compounded by financial uncertainty and an overall shift in status. Status is transformed gradually by members of the ‘performance team’ occurring during ‘co-presence’ and leading to spoilt identities and stigma (Goffman, 1963). Status degradation ceremonies discussed by Finkelstein, (1996, pp.671-683) also play their part in spoiling the personal aspect of the moral career in many cases causing unwarranted distress. Nevertheless, when it comes to resettlement the institution endeavours to make the whole process, as Maruna suggests of re-integrating offenders “as stealthy and un-public as possible, here’s your bus pass, go get reintegrated” (2006, p. 23).

The whole process is facilitated through gossip and humiliation (Gluckman, 1963, pp.307-316), or gossip in an organizational context (Noon & Delbridge, 1993, pp.23-36) where one’s professional-self and exit-motives are brought into question. When viewed collectively these factors alone provide an explanation for the sense of reservation soldiers feel when approaching their exits, add to this notions of occupational disconnection, and the emergent anxiety displayed and expressed by soldiers can be appreciated. This thesis seeks to provide a measured account of how one group of Veteran infantrymen imagined themselves civilians prior to leaving the Armed Forces (Walker, 2010) then tested their imagined selves against the backdrop of social reintegration. Played out in the same neighbourhoods they so eagerly vacated some 10 years earlier (Tannock *et al*, 2013). As Smith & Bugni (2006, pp.123-155)

assert, “Physical environments are never “just” backdrops for social interaction; they are an important part of interaction because people assign both symbolic value and forms of agency to them”. To that end the study seeks to identify the basis on which infantry soldiers create future selves, and to isolate the structures and agencies that influence their choice.



## Chapter III

### Methodology and Method

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#### **3:0. Introduction**

This study was designed and conducted at a time when the vast majority of research concerning UK Armed Forces Veterans centred principally on psychosocial projects. Themes dominating the field of research in 2010 ranged from Veteran homelessness, suicide, mental health and a raft of other quantitative investigations emerging from military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Whilst these studies have beyond doubt raised awareness, enhanced knowledge and informed policy, they have nevertheless fallen short in fully exploring the broader question of how and why so many Veterans continue to struggle with social reintegration. Though indispensable the principally quantitative approaches employed [in these largely ‘mental-health’ studies] examine, record and trace presented phenomenon alone, as opposed to the structure or function of the broader problem.

Conversely qualitative research concerned with broader notions of being combatants has also been undertaken and successfully deployed microsociological approaches. Therein Life-course and longitudinal investigations converging on more nebulous phenomenon have proven effective in revealing hitherto concealed aspect of being, as well as raising awareness of military lives and their post service legacies (Elder *et al*, 2003, pp. 3-19; George, 2003, pp. 671-680; Giele & Elder, 1998; Elder, 1994, pp. 4-15). Ethnographic approaches particular to the life experience of Armed Forces personnel are also well represented in robust and diverse studies that have certainly extended knowledge (Jenkins & Woodward, 2011) and in so doing added significant meaning to the field.

More specific examples can be found in studies of beginnings and basic training where notions of secondary socialisation (Shils & Janowitz, 1948) and construction of hegemonic masculinity (Hinojosa, 2010) are prominent; similarly, investigation of life in working units which pivot on themes as diverse as rites of passage (Winslow, 1999) resilience (McGarry *et al*, 2014) and the Armed Forces family (Segal & Segal, 2016) have also profited from qualitative approaches. Likewise, studies located in the career end-point characterized by the Pre-Exit (Walker, 2012) and resettlement period, have gained beyond measure from participant observations studies (Walker, 2012; McDermott, 2007; Hockey, 1986) and discourse analytic approaches (Thornborrow, 2005).

In keeping with these qualitative research traditions this project presents a challenging yet compelling account of the life-course of soldiers. Its ontological position is grounded in the notion that to understand the nature of becoming, being and existing, one needs to understand the mechanisms that drive the life-course; holistically viewing life as a flowing period with a past a present and importantly a future (Neale *et al*, 2012). In keeping with this principle the thesis seeks to explore such a journey, one arising from the transition of civilian adolescents in to military occupations and their experience of being soldiers; followed respectively by their approach to exiting the Armed Forces and challenge of returning to civilian space and civilian lives. The review of literature routinely acknowledged that there are indeed problems associated with social reintegration, which in the worst cases led to social exclusion (Higate, 2001), disconnection from broader society (Siebold, 2001), and the tragedy of suicide (Kapur *et al*, 2009).

What follows is an account of how the study was approached including its design and description of the agencies that led to both the question and evolution of the hypotheses underpinning its rejoin. From the outset it seemed reasonable to measure veteran outcomes on the basis of their capacity to gain employment leading to financial security enabling access to resources [housing, transport...] to be realised. It is hypothesised that the likelihood of a veteran gaining a moderately rewarding future, would be dependent on his educational or skills based qualifications, occupational knowledge and life-experience at the point of discharge. The rationale underpinning the choice of either reference point relates to the transferability of that quality into civilian space and civilian labour markets. On that basis the thesis seeks to evidence the hypothesis that deficiencies linked to educational, occupational and experiential transferability promote poor resettlement outcomes.

### **3.1. Transition and Reinvention**

As the hypothesis and project title imply two overarching and observable phenomena drive post service outcomes. The first, occupational transition when viewed as a phrasal verb, describes the action, condition, or experience of relocating one's occupation collateral [knowledge, skill and familiarity] into new occupational settings, with the aim of augmenting a sense of coherence. The second factor, the reinvention of self, can be triggered as a result of any number of changes occurring throughout one's life-course, its character based on the tacit perceptions people espouse and adopt as part of their own outlook, which manifest in self presentation and the character of a given persona. In the case of this study reinvention is

viewed as a companion to transition; indeed occupational transition more often demands reinvention, in the same way as reinvention when accomplished gives authenticity and authority to the transition itself. Due to the predisposition of previous occupations [or status as unemployed] and awareness of the new desired or target occupation, recording the agency of occupational transition was a relatively straightforward task; verifying the reinvention of self, on the other hand was a somewhat more challenging undertaking.

As suggested the measure of reinvention was determined on the basis of an informant's capacity to posit himself a civilian and adapt his outlooks accordingly, before adopting the characteristics [in part or whole] of a civilian performing in communal rather than [has been his experience] martial space. Legitimacy in the transaction resulting fundamentally in a new sense of self, a citizen-*self*; that said initially an authentic presentation of the latter [selves] is likely to be ad hoc, experimental and complex, in the sense that each self created post-recruitment, was nurtured by the military, shaped in occupationally unambiguous discourse and guided by institutionally embedded and revered rituals. Historically theirs have been patterns of reinvention forged in restricted and remote places; accordingly for reinvention to take place in the unrestricted settings of the 'home-world' presents as a new enterprise, one requiring as yet unpractised and likely unfamiliar approaches. Their relationship to the home as such is more akin to that of a tourist than a resident, so any assumptions that social fluency or dexterity exist will need to be tested. For many of the informants South Wales has only been their home in the context that they were garrisoned here albeit for a decade, all but two of the cohort can actually lay claim to being South Walian.

As fortune would have it the task of structuring the study had been made easier due to the volume of scholarly articles dedicated to one or another phase of the martial life-course, and the symbolically entrenched sequence of events that carried the neophyte from the recruiting office pre-enlistment, and on to the employment office post service. In summary an example of the transition and reinvention described here, might be found in a comparison of people experiencing change as a consequence of having children. The transition being marked by added responsibility, deployment of new skills and organisational adjustment, suggestive of the role or vocation of a carer; whilst the reinvention of the same person relates to the tacit implications indicative of parenthood, based [on occasion] in love or devotion, selflessness and symbolic forms of implicit attachment attributed to being a mother or father.

### **3.2. Character of the Sample**

At the outset the study took the National Audit Office's (2007) and Walker's (2012) lead, in structuring the study around a TriService mixed gender and rank model, however after initial screening was underway it became clear that the preliminary selection was far too wide and possessed too many variables. It was at this point that the concept of service clearly needed refining. Firstly the experience of officers and enlisted service personnel produced a number of strikingly dissimilar outcomes. Today Commissioned Officers serving in the Armed Forces are predominantly graduates, in the case of the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, over 80% of Officer Cadets possess Bachelor's degrees (MoD, 2016). Officers also derive from largely middle and upper class backgrounds (Dobson & Williams, 1989; Gardner, 1973; Otley, 1970) and assume command and specialist appointments on graduating from their respective Academy's.

As a rule Officers do not face the same hardship as others within the Armed Forces community, and are largely successful in finding new civilian roles on completion of their service, for this reason the Corps of Officers have been removed from the study. Broadly speaking the lives of non commissioned Sailors, Solder's and Air Force personnel are played out within concealed, role specific environments, characteristic of their Service or Branch. The one determining feature which binds each together is the notion that they are to one degree or another soldiers, which is to suggest perhaps obviously that as members of the Armed Forces they exist for the sole purpose of national defence. When viewing the Forces collectively it is easy to become distracted by a myriad of variables that differentiate each to a degree that research into the post-service outcomes soon becomes snarled by notions of disparity.

The need to find a common denominator when selecting a sample group becomes complicated when notions of trade and profession are accounted for. Many roles found in the Armed Forces benefit [to differing degrees] from occupational parallels and distinct links to occupations found in civilian labour markets, which in turn create variables significant enough to affect post-service outcome. In referring to a common denominator the researcher implies a need to establish a sample group characterized by a shared agency common to all personnel found across the broader Armed Forces (Siebold, 2001, p.140). To orientate the study it is vital that respondents carry an authentic and familiar quality that is common to all



branches. Generalizability in this sense is fundamental in supporting the hypothesis that several factors control outcomes for better and for worse.

### **3.3 Generalizability**

The claim of generalizability assumed above is built first and foremost on the qualities of the sample, most notably that they are specifically interesting cases and representative of a broader population experiencing problems when transitioning into and out of the Armed Forces. Likewise their personal biographies are collectively underscored by disruption (see: Chapter V.) and separation from the home world (Goffman, 1961) as a consequence of their selection, training and thereafter induction into an unpredictable and highly specialised [restricted] occupation. Social reproduction in this case occurring homogeneously through repetitive acts of public conformity (Barrett, 2006,) punishment (Thornborrow & Brown, 2009) and a mutual aspiration to attain and preserve the highly venerated, collective identities (Cockerham, 1978) symbolically imbued in membership of, and adherence to, a ridged code or group ethos (King, 2004).

Moreover a mixed methods approach, composed of ‘life history’ work and longitudinal methods, have proven resilient in unearthing,

“...the personal attitudes and feelings and interests of the child, in other words, it shows how he conceives his role in relation to other persons and the interpretations which he makes of the situations in which he lives. It is in the personal document that the child reveals his feelings of inferiority and superiority his fears and worries his ideas and his philosophy of life, his antagonisms and his mental conflicts, his prejudice and his rationalization.”

(Shaw, 2013. pg. 4)

And whilst Shaw’s observations of Stanley (the ‘Jack Roller’ 1937) depict a young person, they nonetheless centre on a sample of one, whose life-history when viewed on the merits of Shaw’s method retains a quality and generalizability that far exceeds its sample size; and accordingly leads to a method that “affords the only means of acquiring knowledge of many facts concerning outside situations” (Shaw, 2013. pg. 5). The ontology of transitioning described throughout the broader study acknowledges this relationship as one that hinges on the rigorous treatment of biographical data; within the context of a longitudinal strategy capable of unravelling the ontology of human coexistence, from the ontology of the phenomena that make up that coexistence, and the phenomena that constitutes a lived reality.

To that end generalizability is proposed in part, on the premise that the life-histories of the sample are compatible to those of a larger group. The uniformity of experience explored in the analytic chapters seek to capture these notions of a shared-experience grounded in mutual hardship and aspiration that ultimately lead to cohesion (Shils & Janowitz, 1948); and sense of the self being re-invented progressively through an ongoing sequence of [rights-of-passage] mental and physical challenges, formally endorsed in highly public forms of secondary socialisation (MacLean & Elder, 2007).

An additional argument for generalizability in similar scale samples, can be found in the ‘probe-sample’ (Collins and Evans, 2015), wherein justification for generalizing about entire populations is considered unnecessary, where, as Collins and Evans propose, the probe-sample of the broader population will suffice;

“...if a population is completely uniform in respect of the research question(s) being asked—that is, if every member is identical—then a single member of the population will represent the entire population just as faithfully as a large sample.”

(Collins and Evans, 2015. Pg. 4)

More commonly, the issue of generalisation may be traversed by making reference to the ontology of social relations as they exist within the phenomena, therein to explore the concepts and categories of being that verify their properties and the relationships that exist between them. Collins and Evans use the terms ‘tokens’ and ‘types’ to clarify notions of ‘how those tokens relate to types’, building their case on a Wittgensteinian (1953) notion of “form of life,” viewed as a

“...combination of practice and language, and its many synonyms or related notions such as “thought collective” (Fleck) or “paradigm” (Kuhn). To the extent that a social group shares a form of life, then the social group can be said to be uniform”.

(Collins and Evans, 2015. Pg. 5)

One final observation on generalizability relates to the well documented view that one drawback of the longitudinal approach, centres on the unpredictable nature of respondent withdrawals (Bryman, 2015, pg. 131). This study began with a 20 strong research cohort, which within a year had dwindled down to 6 respondents. Moreover the odds of randomly discovering the shared degrees of commonality enjoyed by core respondents would be incalculable; suggesting that they possessed the quality of being generalisable.

### **3.4 The dynamics of the sample**

As a result a need to rule out trade as a distinct category renders all but three factions within the Armed Forces relevant for inclusion. Thus the Corps of Infantry, Royal Armoured Corps (RAC) and to a lesser degree the Royal Regiment of Artillery (RA) spring to mind as groups likely to be representative of the broader community, since their occupational experience is largely martial. Within this triad Gunnery and Armour were disqualified on the grounds of their mechanical and technical distinction, each finding their centre in vehicular modes of deployment required to set up their main armament. Furthermore within the RA some diverse trades exist, from drone operators to Intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition, and reconnaissance (ISTAR) operators. Likewise in the RAC where mounted ceremonial duties continue to thrive, you'll find farriers, riding instructors and Master Saddlers.

In this sense the infantry stands out, and might be viewed symbolically as occupationally prototypical of the Armed Forces collective, since all other entities are an extension of or created in support of the infantry role. Each Service it might be argued nevertheless finds its centre and primary identity in the same drill rituals and weapons practices that are essentially infantry in their orientation. On these grounds the decision to select an all Infantry research cohort was made, in light of the principles discussed above and in order to yield the most generalisable results. And whilst both the Royal Navy and RAF have their own Infantry component, ie the Corps Royal Marines and RAF Regiment each is dwarfed in structure by the Army's Corps of Infantry. They also possess a different character notably that the Marines are a highly trained Commando elite whilst the RAF Regiment guard Air bases, accordingly an Army Infantry cohort will be selected. An additional factor, resulting from the selection of an infantry cohort, rests on the principle that the infantry recruitment is currently a positively discriminated trade; and therein a male only occupation; consequently all reference to the cohort will be gender specific.

### **3.5. Finding Nemo**

The task of finding volunteer participants was made considerably easier when it had been decided to focus on an all infantry party. South Wales is home to two regular army infantry units the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Parachute Regiment (1PARA) based at MoD St. Athan (formally RAF St. Athan) in the Vale of Glamorgan, and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Rifles (1RIFLES) based at Beachley Barracks Chepstow, Monmouthshire. In addition, soldiers originating in South Wales and therein likely to return and settle in the region, are represented by the soldiers of

the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Royal Welsh (1 R WELSH) based at Lucknow Barracks in Tidworth, Wiltshire and the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Welsh Guards (1 WG) based at Elizabeth Barracks in Pirbright Surrey, or when on the ceremonial duties at Wellington Barracks in central London.

Additional concentrations may also be found at the Infantry Battle School (IBS) at Dering Lines in Brecon, Mid-Wales, and individually posted throughout the region as Permanent Staff Instructors (PSI) embedded in Reserve units, such as 3 R WELSH at Maindy Barracks in Cardiff. The study was initiated by 6 serving infantrymen, known to me professionally, having served with them operationally. I was not an Infanteer however, and served in a combat support rather than a combat role. From this group 98 soldiers who would be leaving the Army between June and November 2009 were identified, and a preliminary invitation to support the project was made to each in writing. A group of 43 volunteers responded and were contacted by telephone to arrange an initial meeting, which was organised to take place on Remembrance Sunday 2008. Of this group 20 were selected on the basis that they intended to settle in the South Wales area, acknowledged [at that point] that they not intended to engage with Private Military Security Companies (PMSC), and finally that they were not undergoing physical or mental health treatment and would therein be actively seeking work.

### **3.6 Anonymizing soldier identities**

The principles underpinning participant anonymity and confidentiality were initially met by informants with amusement. After over a decade of leading almost entirely hidden lives the notion of deploying any form of identity security in social space was met as unnecessary, entertaining and to different degrees viewed as excessive. Yet as the soldiers became Veterans and progressively shaped their public persona, attitudes began to change. In a very real sense as their social capital grew so too did their confidence and sense of self, as emergent social [rather than exclusively institutional] beings their social agency took on a new character, one clearly more aware of the social structures that dominated their activities of daily life. Particularly for those engaged on ‘fiddles’ (benefits’ fraud) whilst in receipt of Jobseekers’ allowance and other state benefits, pondered hard on the possibility of being caught out as a result of their activities being made public. Similarly few had expected the going to be quite as difficult as it had been, and were to a certain extent self-conscious of their lack of progress made during the opening years of their resettlement.

Likewise these informants had no desire to make their personal lives a matter of public record and sought to revise their earlier assumptions that they had nothing to hide. As a precaution and to a certain extent part of the process of making ethical predictions, I had coded each of the informants alphabetically at the outset. Other forecasts relating to the likelihood of certain informants falling-out as the project unfolded, were displayed in a probability table, with those most likely to remain occupying alphabetical dominance, ie Ade, Bob and Col were assumed to be more likely to stay the course than Mac, Oly or Tam. This model was far from foolproof, as would be seen in the case of Tam who remained throughout, Bob who exited the project within weeks and Gaz who tragically committed suicide. That said it was also interesting to muse over why I'd placed each in a given position, Bob for example presented as an extremely confident man, he spoke convincingly during the first round of interviews about going to college and becoming a plumber. As a married man with children of school age, I assumed he would stay the course, yet was back in Iraq having joined a PMSC within weeks of leaving the Army.

An additional factor centred on notions of them being identified by their regiments, which initially caused no concerns but for the reasons discussed above became an issue as time went by. To that end the dilemma occasioned a process known within the study as re-badging, where each informant was asked to select another regiment that he might be identified by. Far from being a tokenistic exercise designed solely to mask identities, this shared exercise resulted in most articulating relatively insightful explanations as to why each wanted to be associated with a given unit; including the parallels each drew between themselves and the character of their pseudo regiments. What was also revealing was the method used to construct their pseudo-selves, revealing in the sense that the exercise uncovered the approach each employed when positing themselves soldiers, thus providing a notional blueprint from which to assess the grounds on which they posited themselves civilians.

### **3.5. Study Design**

In the context of this study the primary function of the semi-structured interview was to record four distinct accounts of becoming and being; beginning with biographical accounts of the pre-enlistment period through to the end of basic training. A second focused on the occupational phase, joining a working as opposed to a training unit, whilst the third and fourth convey new data relating to respondent knowledge of the Pre-Exit and [extended] resettlement period. The first two phases seek to locate entirely biographical description of

enlistment, basic training and life in the working unit whilst the transcript evidence collected during the third and fourth phases will compose of new data gathered in 'real-time' as it unfolds. Whilst semi structured approaches don't necessarily guarantee anticipated or for that matter desired responses [that said, all responses are relevant], they nevertheless possess the quality of flexibility and are therein capable of either securing clarification or facilitating directional change in relation to questions.

In relation to time scale and task, the capture of biographical data pertinent becoming and being soldiers actually took place during the Pre-Exit and to a lesser degree throughout the resettlement period. At this point of the study trust in one's own experience and membership to the Armed Forces community was relied upon to locate the various components of the narrative presented in context with the life-course. The development of question sets was made all the easier due to my own knowledge of being and imbedded awareness of phrases and turns of expression that belong to specific constituent of the life-course. Each phase of the occupational journey can be identified by the location, language and activities described; Catterick for example relates to the basic training of Adults and Combat Infantryman's Course, in much the same way as Harrogate relates to the training of Junior Soldiers. Likewise Crows and Sprogs are newcomers, who have recently passed-out having finished Catterick and been posted out to their parent units. As suggested recognition of these terms and more importantly their meanings arose over the course of the author's military career, rather than as a result of project specific study.

### **3.8 Interviews**

It is important to emphasise that at the beginning of the study my own nostalgic and emotional connection to the armed forces often served to muddy the waters, particularly when conceptualising and categorising the question. And whilst the following lines of inquiry formed the start point-these were early days, which served at the very least to expose the real scope of the problem-enabling the direction of the study to take on a more accurate bearing. What follows is an account of the beginning, opening with a description of first provisional question...

“Why do many veterans find resettlement difficult, is it the experience of being soldiers *per se*, or are there other factors?”

Whilst the question appears exceedingly broad, the primary objective of these opening interviews was as much to collect background data as to document the activities of the

present. Whereas the overarching goal was to make meaning of the phenomenon with an emphasis placed on how informants perceived the activities, relationships and identities conveyed in their discourse, and to a lesser degree in their actions. The analysis began by determining the first level concepts, which were drawn out of the transcripts with highlighter pens. Thus during the first phase (October 2009 – March 2010), ‘Pre-enlistment’ became the first Concept, and School, family and recruitment the categories: (see: appendix A)

### **Question sets**

1. Do pre-service vulnerabilities (poverty, poor education, family breakdown...) rather than factors associated with becoming soldiers, lead to poor outcomes? (Connelly, 2016; Kapur *et al*, 2009; Buckman *et al*, 2013)

#### **Explore**

- How do the Armed Forces select their recruits? What sort of citizen’s join-up, in terms of their pre-service education, occupation/s and life histories?
- How does training and institutional socialisation specific to the Armed Forces correspond to other models found mainstream occupations?

The same process was then applied to the occupational phase where questions were levelled at the experience of being soldiers

2. Does membership to the Armed Forces create problems with post service social reintegration? (Harvey *et al*, 2011; Finnegan *et al*, 2010; Zinn, 2002)

#### **Explore**

- What does a career in the Armed Forces provide the Service Leavers in terms of educational, occupational and experiential transferability?
- What is the impact of operational [combat] experience on the service leaver?

By the time the Pre-Exit period had come to a conclusion most of the biographic details had been collected and with the routine now established it seemed that things were going very well, the data was rich (see: Appendix G) and informants appeared enthusiastic. Then in the fourth month [December 2009] of the project, the composition of the cohort changed irrevocably. (See: Appendix H). Indeed, within the first 3 months; three had joined Private Military Security Companies, three had re-enlisted, one had emigrated to Canada, three had self referred to the Community Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Service, and another had moved to Slough. From the initial 20 respondents, 9 remained. In hindsight the weight of transcription required to support the 20 informants was punishing, nevertheless it was a blow to one’s confidence, yet 4 of those who left the study have remained in contact to date.

The next set of questions rested on the Pre-Exit period proper and for the first time the focus of interviews was entirely in keeping with the activities of the day, however quite naturally some overlap in relation to topics discussed occurred. On the whole however the thrust of the inquiry was as follows;

3. What aspects of the MoD's resettlement provision work to help or hinder the practicalities of resettlement? (Walker, 2012; Higate 2001; National Audit Office, 2007)

**Explore**

- How does the Pre-Exit provision differ from resettlement and what is the purpose of each?
- Who uses or opts in/out of the services provided?

The Pre-exit period passed quickly and data collected was once again rich, corroborating assumptions concerning links between occupation and successful transitions, and influence of pre-enlistment knowledge in context with reinvention of self as a soldier. Some eight months into the project, each member of the existing cohort had physically left the army and had therefore moved into the resettlement phase of their lives. The following line of questioning commenced at that point.

4. What are the long-term consequences of a military career on the lives of Veterans? (Ender, 2010; Langston; 2007; Jolly, 1996)

**Explore**

- What are positive and negative characteristics of a Military service?
- How can success be measured?

The questions detailed above are representative of the themes and perspectives explored at the outset of the study, as a result of following these lines of inquiry a truer picture of the stressors facing Veterans become apparent; leading to a major rethink of the potential scope of the study.

### **3.9 Reflexions on initial phase**

As a result of working through the questions it soon became clear that a change in the direction of the study was needed (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, pg. 21). Changes were made on the grounds that each of the above concepts rather than a solitary event had an influence on the success or failure of Veterans undertaking resettlement. For example a



recruit's social position when assessed against a Weberian (1946) measure of social class stratification would quite naturally present an initial increase in status, wealth and power [at least at home]. Yet as Buckman (2013) and Gee & Goodman's (2010/2013) propose since most recruits were drawn from lower status groups (Sewell *et al*, 1970) almost any change in their lifestyle would be viewed as an improvement. Similarly the impact of actually being soldiers as opposed to becoming soldiers, and influence of a now embedded institutional identity brought a shift in status impacting positively on the soldier's wealth, and to a somewhat lesser degree power (Wanous, 1991).

In this case military employment based in trades and professions with transferability to civil labour markets, played a significant part in determining successful outcomes; success in this case was however dependent on relevance and transferability of qualifications and experience. The same rule applied in general to those who made the most of the Pre-Exit and resettlement provisions, in this case however not only those with trades but also those with [status] rank and therein management experience and qualifications also benefited. According to the National Audit Office (2007) service personnel with transferable skills and qualifications were more likely to use the resettlement provisions offered, it seems obvious enough therefore that the opposite would apply to those without transferable occupational knowledge.

### **Impact on study**

Having confirmed that the broader life-course would need to be explored, the project now opened with a retrospective ethnographic record of,

- i, **Past**, becoming soldiers; encompassing pre-enlistment, recruitment, basic training; and being operational soldiers.  
  
Prior to moving on to the;
- ii, **Present**, characterised by the Pre-Exit period, and task of becoming Veterans, and
- iii, **Future**; actually being civilians as a result of working through the resettlement period and beyond (see: Table 1: pg. 84).

The original task of the question set [above] was to identify a period within the broader career that might be developed into the foundations of the thesis, what hadn't been expected was that the scope of the problem was far larger. It therefore became necessary to change the question to account for the comprehensive nature of the problem and begin the task of developing a more specific method to address the hypothesis and answer the question. What emerged seemed to be far more pertinent set of questions,

### Questions

- How do soldiers posit themselves civilians prior to leaving the Armed Forces”?
- On what do they base their assumed selves?
- On what basis do veterans organise and reorganise their identities?
- What non-military influences’ shape veteran identities?
- What aspects of civilian employment are familiar to service personnel?

The amended questions can be located in any of the phases discussed and possess the quality of being open enough to take on a far more comprehensive sequence of data, and may be framed longitudinally to address a diverse number of selves (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000).

### **3.11 Ethics**

As component of both the research proposal and ethical consent process the administration of ‘paperwork’ pertinent to either was approached with diligence and as far as was possible transparency. To that end the BSA’s Statement of Ethical Practice was referred to and beyond the broader scope of the document areas considered extremely pertinent were addressed. Whilst the BSA’s code of Ethical Practice is intended, “to make members aware of the ethical issues that may arise throughout the research process and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own ethical practice;” it seemed that the researcher would need to speculate somewhat with regard to future adjustments that might or for that might not be required over the course of the study. Since the study was in character longitudinal this process took some considerable effort, my only real concerns centring on the respondents, who if the literature and preliminary interviews were to be accounted for, might possibly have been susceptible to mental health problems.

From my own perspective I was aware of the disruption that resettlement would bring into the lives of informants and the stressors that might accompany the period. I was also aware from the early interviews that many of the informants were from broken homes, had poor educational track records, and had spent much of service on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, which according to the literatures and my own experience led me to believe that

many would be predisposed to conditions associated with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). To that end issues of Safeguarding (BSA, sn. 6) acknowledged in the BSA's Statement (see; Appendix, A) under the header; 'Professional Integrity', appeared particularly pertinent. Which led me to make use of the PTSD Check List-Military (PCL-(M)) (see: Appendices; B, C & D), at the beginning of each interview.

Soon enough the use of the PCL-(M) become a routine component of the interview format, whilst serving as something of an ice-breaker and in a sense provided a pause to discreetly confer the veracity of the project at each meeting. Any notions that distress (BSA, sn. 28) might be caused as a result of discourse hinging on 'disturbing' aspects of soldiering raised as the sequence of life-course inquiries expanded were absorbed by membership; wherein the researcher when viewed as a social actor had played on many of the same stages as the respondent, and possessed a type of shared social agency, and mutuality that stems from shared biographical experience (BSA, sn. 29). What seemed to be a simple enough precursor to the interviews proper, also conformed in principle to the nature of personal and moral relationships, detailed under the header 'Relations with, and Responsibilities towards Research Participants' (BSA, sn. 10), since for many of the informants the fact that I was not undertaking a mental health study *per se*, yet was nevertheless concerned enough for their welfare to take the trouble to provide the forms and personally inquire after their wellbeing, undoubtedly encourage a truer relationship between researcher and those being researched.

Likewise where 'Relationships with research participants' was concerned (BSA, sn. 14) the qualities of trust and integrity were built on similar exercises in sincerity, which led to openness and sharing of knowledge that often overwhelmed the researcher. As suggested these measures were taken on the hypothetical basis that such difficulties might arise in the future. When ethical consent was requested a degree of confusion was created after the intended use of the PCL-(M) detailed in the original research proposal, was questioned. What followed was a meeting with Cardiff Universities' ethics committee which concluded that the use of the PCL-(M) was in keeping with both the needs of informants, most of whom had recently returned from Afghanistan; and deemed appropriate in the sense that the duty of care held by the MoD was now spent, yet as many studies (Buckman, 2013; Jones *et al*, 2013; Adler & Castro, 2012; Finnegan, 2012; Harvey *et al*, 2010; Iversen *et al*, 2009; Dolan, 2005) had and continue to demonstrate, there is a prevalence for PTSD amongst males, of

lower educational attainment, with greater pre-enlistment vulnerability who served in combat roles in the Army.

What also dawned on me were notions of the ethics of assumption, since at one point I was called to the meeting and asked if ‘they [the informants] might be dangerous’, which struck me at the time as being both offensive and uninformed comments. Based I imagined on Sn 8, of the Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association and University; which state;

“Social researchers face a range of potential risks to their safety. Safety issues need to be considered in the design and conduct of social research projects and procedures should be adopted to reduce the risk to researchers.”

Assumptions about a condition as serious as PTSD, particularly when held by senior academics with professional responsibility for research ethics bewildered this researcher, since the only real danger posed by PTSD is to one’s self, particularly when suicidal thoughts and feelings are experienced. It also led me to view the whole exercise as a bureaucratic system in which many of the most important decisions are taken by officials based on often poorly fitting metrics rather than the common sense approach of a researcher striving to deal with some very real social realities as they emerge and are organised within the field. Such an approach places procedural ethics ahead of situated and interpersonal understandings and negotiations (see Calvey, 2008). Acknowledgment of the success of this strategy can be measured in very real terms, since over the course of the first 3 months of the project three of the cohort had self referred to the Community Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

### **3.11 Use of pen pictures**

Knowledge pertaining to the life cycles of soldiers has been evidenced through the narrative accounts collected and observations made throughout the course of the study. From the outset the language used by respondents was clearly restricted, occupationally specialised and often obscured by unit specific terms and phrases. The context of a given explanation or response was also specific to theatre, that is those who served in Afghanistan possessed and deployed phrases unique to a specific tour, in the same way as recruit narrative is populated by the language of training. When writing up the analysis it became clear that a strategy would need to be developed to deal with the expanding bank of footnotes used to explain many of the most basic statements and comments made by soldiers. To that end the pen-

picture was introduced in an effort free up the analysis whilst enhancing the flow and readability of texts.

The pen-pictures also facilitate the need to introduce the respondent through their own authentic accounts of becoming and being. They also carry the transfer of knowledge pertinent to the military to the reader, who one predicts will in most cases have little knowledge of the occupational details and sequence of events that lead civilians into service and in time lead service personnel back into civilian space as private citizens. Therein the pen-picture serves as a guide to military life, each section of the analysis being presented as a representation of a phase of the martial life-course. As suggested each phase of the analysis from recruitment to resettlement has been selected on the merits of its symbolic position in the martial life-course and capacity to evidence occupational transition leading to a reinvented self.

Using this format enabled the analysis proper to centre on the main themes and perspectives without the need to explain the background to each of the points being raised. Notions of biographical disruption for example, [discussed in the second segment of the analysis] could be broached without having to explain the environment in which phenomenon was taking place. Likewise each pen-picture occurs chronologically thus the discourse follows the sequence of events that collectively form the career, the reader benefiting from the story being told in a factual and true to life manner, the details being conveyed in the most naturalistic light achievable.

### **3.12 Transcribing true voice**

Interviews were transcribed at the soonest opportunity following meetings, at the outset of the study interviews were heavily annotated and supported with research notes, since the highly accented speech patterns of several respondents obliged further explanation if the character of their discourse was to be presented in standard English. As the course of interviews went on it became clear that the 'true voices' of informants would need to be presented faithfully, their connotation and contextual worth as social and personal artefacts of being, possessing more value than a semantic or grammatically correct version of what was actually said. To that end the transcripts have been presented as they were delivered on the day of the interview, regional differences between informants being offered in the truest light achievable.



## Appendix: A

Outline to question sets

CONCEPT	CATEGORY	Coding Colour	EXAMPLE
Pre-enlistment	School/Education Residence Family (inc extended) Recruitment & Training		GCSE/NVQ/BTec Care/Adopted/Fostered/Home Siblings/Parents/other Adult-Junior Entrant, Age
Occupational	Education & Training Service Occupation/s Service Experience Postings Health		NCO/Trade/Instructor Rifleman/Medic/Sniper Time in/Appointments/Locations Garrison/Ops/UN/Training Physical/Psychological
Pre-Exit	Family Job Interviews CV-workshops Housing Educating & Training Health		Children, married, in relationship CTP CTP RRC LA/Private Rent/Owner/Family Courses/ Apprenticeships Physical/Psychological
Resettlement	Family (inc extended) Accommodation Health Employment Educating & Training Social		LA/Private Rent/Owner Physical/Psychological ? Courses/Apprenticeships Clubs/Pubs/Hobbies

## **Appendix. B**

### **Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association**

#### **Professional Integrity**

- 6) Members have a responsibility both to **safeguard** the proper interests of those involved in or affected by their work. [...] They need to consider the effects of their involvements and the consequences of their work or its misuse for those they study.
- 8) “Social researchers face a range of potential **risks** to their safety. Safety issues need to be considered in the design and conduct of social research projects and procedures should be adopted to reduce the risk to researchers.”

#### **Relations with and Responsibilities towards Research Participants**

- 10) Sociologists, when they carry out research, enter into personal and moral relationships with those they study, be they individuals, households, social groups or corporate entities.

#### **Relationships with research participants**

- 13) Sociologists have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well-being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. They should strive to protect the rights of those they study, their interests, sensitivities and privacy, while recognising the difficulty of balancing potentially conflicting interests
- 14) Because sociologists study the relatively powerless as well as those more powerful than themselves, research relationships are frequently characterised by disparities of power and status. Despite this, research relationships should be characterised, whenever possible, by trust and integrity.
- 16) As far as possible participation in sociological research should be based on the freely given informed consent of those studied. This implies a responsibility on the sociologist to explain in appropriate detail, and in terms meaningful to participants, what the research is about, who is undertaking and financing it, why it is being undertaken, and how it is to be disseminated and used.



- 17) Research participants should be made aware of their right to refuse participation whenever and for whatever reason they wish. 18) Research participants should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality and should be able to reject the use of data-gathering devices such as tape recorders and video cameras.
- 28) Members should consider carefully the possibility that the research experience may be a disturbing one and should attempt, where necessary, to find ways to minimise or alleviate any distress caused to those participating in research.
- 29) Special care should be taken where research participants are particularly vulnerable by virtue of factors such as age, disability, their physical or mental health. Researchers will need to take into account the legal and ethical complexities involved in those circumstances where there are particular difficulties in eliciting fully informed consent.

## Appendix: C

### NOTES ON PTSD

PTSE is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a life-threatening event such as military combat. It's normal for the mind and body to be in shock after such an event, this typical response becomes PTSD however when the nervous system gets "stuck." Your nervous system has three ways of responding to stressful events:

- **Social** engagement is the most evolved strategy. Socially interaction with other people, making eye contact, listening and talking can quickly calm those affected down and slow down the "fight-or-flight" reaction [or Mobilization].
- **Mobilization** occurs when social engagement isn't appropriate, during combat for example when you need to defend yourself or escape the threat. As soon as the danger has passed, the nervous system calms the body, lowers the heart rate and blood pressure, and restores the body to its normal equilibrium.
- **Immobilization** occurs when you've experienced too much stress and while the danger may have passed, you remain "stuck." The nervous system in this case is unable to return to a state of normal state equilibrium and the individual is unable to progress past the event. This is PTSD. Recovering from PTSD involves transitioning out of the mental and emotional hostilities you're still living in; which would facilitate the nervous system function and enable the individual to become "unstuck."

The only real danger is to one's self, particularly when suicidal thoughts and feelings are experienced, which are common symptoms of PTSD among military veterans. Feeling suicidal is not a character defect, nor doesn't it mean that your insane or for that crazy, weak, or flawed. The advice given to each of the informants was that if they were thinking about taking their own lives that they should seek help directly, or at the very least talk to someone they trusted, or call a suicide helpline:

- In the UK, call 08457 90 90 90.
- Alternatively call these 24/7 help lines: 0800 132 737, or Rethink - 0800 138 1619.
- Or the Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Service at the UHW on 029 2074 2062

## Appendix: D

### PTSD Checklist, military: PCL-(M)

#### Description

The PCL is a 17-item self-report measure of the 17 DSM-IV symptoms of PTSD. Respondents rate how much they were “bothered by that problem in the past month”. Items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“extremely”). There are several versions of the PCL. The original PCL is the PCL-M (military). The PCL-M asks about problems in response to “stressful military experiences.”

#### Scoring

The PCL can be scored in several different ways. A total score (range 17-85) can be obtained by summing the scores from each of the 17 items. Cut-off scores for a probable PTSD diagnosis have been validated for some populations, but may not generalize to other populations. A second way to score the PCL is to follow the DSM-IV criteria. It has been suggested that a combination of these two approaches (i.e., the requisite number of symptoms are endorsed within each cluster AND the total score is above the specified cut point for a specific population) may be best (for a detailed review, see Norris & Hamblen and Orsillo). Separate scores can also be obtained for Criteria B, C, and D.

#### Sample Items

In the past month, how much have you been bothered by:

- PCL-M: “Repeated, disturbing memories, thoughts or images of a stressful military experience?”

- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = A little bit
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Quite a bit
- 5 = Extremely

#### Source

UK MoD Service Personnel & Veterans Agency

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/armed-forces-personnel-ex-and-serving-diagnosed-with-ptsd>

US Department of Veteran Affairs

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/assessment/adult-sr/ptsd-checklist.asp>

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## Appendix: E

### PTSD Checklist (Military)

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instruction to patient: Below is a list of problems and complaints that veterans sometimes have in response to stressful life experiences. Please read each one carefully, put an "X" in the box to indicate how much you have been bothered by that problem *in the last month*.

No.	Response	Not at all (1)	A little bit (2)	Moderately (3)	Quite a bit (4)	Extremely (5)
1.	Repeated, disturbing <i>memories, thoughts, or images</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
2.	Repeated, disturbing <i>dreams</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
3.	Suddenly <i>acting or feeling</i> as if a stressful experience <i>were happening</i> again (as if you were reliving it)?					
4.	Feeling <i>very upset</i> when <i>something</i> reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?					
5.	Having <i>physical reactions</i> (e.g., heart pounding, trouble breathing, or sweating) when <i>something</i> reminded you of a stressful experience from the past?					
6.	Avoid <i>thinking about</i> or <i>talking about</i> a stressful experience from the past or avoid <i>having feelings</i> related to it?					
7.	Avoid <i>activities</i> or <i>situations</i> because they <i>remind you</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
8.	Trouble <i>remembering important parts</i> of a stressful experience from the past?					
9.	Loss of <i>interest in things that you used to enjoy</i> ?					
10.	Feeling <i>distant</i> or <i>cut off</i> from other people?					
11.	Feeling <i>emotionally numb</i> or being unable to have loving feelings for those close to you?					
12.	Feeling as if your <i>future</i> will somehow be <i>cut short</i> ?					
13.	Trouble <i>falling</i> or <i>staying asleep</i> ?					
14.	Feeling <i>irritable</i> or having <i>angry outbursts</i> ?					
15.	Having <i>difficulty concentrating</i> ?					
16.	Being " <i>super alert</i> " or watchful on guard?					
17.	Feeling <i>jumpy</i> or easily startled?					

PCL-M for DSM-IV (11/1/94)

This is a Government document in the public domain.

# Attrition Rate gang chart

Informant attrition rate Appendix F

## Appendix: G

### Cohort Composition at Pre-enlistment & Pre-Exit Health & Marital Status

Nº	ID	Pre-enlistment Qualifications	Birth Place	Enlist Type		Age Enlist	Pre-enlistment Residence	Health		Marital Status	
1	Ade	GCSE X9	Bridgend	JL		16¾	FH-M/F+2			R	
2	Bob	Nil	Belfast	AE		17½	FH-SP-M+2			S	
3	Col	Nil	Newry	AE		22	FC→11-FH-M/F	Jul 08	PH	R	
4	Dez	Nil	Liverpool	JL		16	FH-MGM+[3]			M	
5	Ern	Nil	Melksham	JL		15½	RC+[2]			D	
6	Fab	BSc 2:1	Henley on Thames	AE		22	FH-M/F+1			R	
7	Gaz	GCSE X2	Truro	JL		16	FH-SP-M+2	Mar 10	MH	S	X Suicide
8	Hal	Nil	Southport	JL		16	RC+[4]			W/R	
9	Ian	Nil	Colchester	JL		16	FC+[2]			M	
10	Jon	GCSE X4	Swansea	AE		18	FC+[1]			S	
11	Ken	Nil	London	JL	AE	16 17½	RC→16/I +[4]	Dec 09	MH	CP	
12	Len	NVQ L3	Hounslow	AE		22	FC→17/I +[3]	Nov 09	MH	R	
13	Mac	NVQ L2	Birmingham	AE		17½	RC+[2]	Nov 09	MH	M	
14	Ned	Nil	Cirencester	JL		16	FH-M/F+2			D	
15	Oly	Nil	Brixham	AE		18	FH-MGM+[1]			S	
16	Pat	Nil	Cumbria	JL		16	RC			R	
17	Qui	GCSE X3	Thurso	JL		16	FH-SP-M+3	Oct 09	TA	M	X KIA
18	Ron	Nil	London	AE		19	FH-SP-F+2			W/R	
19	Sid	Nil	Coventry	JL		15½	FH-SP-MGM			M	
20	Tam	GCSE X9	Ballykelly	JL		16⅔	FH-M/F+3			M	

## Key to Appendix G

Pre-Enlistment Residence	<b>FH</b> -Family Home / <b>RC</b> -Residential Care / <b>FC</b> -Foster Care/ <b>I</b> -Independent		
Carers	<b>SP</b> -Single Parent / <b>MGM</b> -Maternal Grandmother / <b>M</b> -Mother / <b>F</b> -Farther (+ [3] or 3 = N <sup>o</sup> of Siblings) [ ] – Living elsewhere		
Marital_Status	<b>S</b> -Single / <b>R</b> -In relationship / <b>D</b> -Divorced / <b>CP</b> -Civil Partnership / <b>W</b> -Widowed		
Enlistment Type	<b>JL</b> -Junior Leader / <b>AE</b> Adult Entrant		
Health	<b>PH</b> Physical Health <b>MH</b> Community Mental Health & Wellbeing Service referral <b>X</b> Deceased [cause of death noted below]		
	GCSE		Nucleus cohort
	Pre-Exit dates		
	Mental Health referrals		
	BSc		
	Junior Leaders		
	Territorial Army & Voluntary Reserve		
	Deceased		
	Physical Health		
	NVQ		
	Adult Entrant		
e.g. 1. FH-MGM + 1 = Family Home, lived with maternal Grandmother-had 1 siblings at Same address  e.g. 2 FC→17/I + [4] = Foster care till 17 [had 4 siblings living elsewhere] then lived Independently			

**Table 1.**

Transition and reinvention points

TRANSITION & REINVENTION POINTS	
Occupational Transition	Reinvention of <i>Self</i>
<b>(1) Recruitment &amp; Basic Training</b>	
Civilian → Soldier	Adolescent → Adult
<b>(2) Occupational actualisation</b>	
Trained Soldier → Combat Veteran	Non-Combatant → Combatant
<b>(3) Pre-Exit</b>	
(Managerial) NCO → Service Leaver	Consummate Professional → Veteran <sup>v</sup>
<b>(4) Resettlement/Post Service</b>	
Jobseeker → Employee	Skilled Practitioner → Neophyte

<sup>v</sup> The term veteran is used here to denote a transitional self, one that exists between the persona of soldier-*self* and an the unknown variable expressed here as jobseeker.





## **CHAPTER IV**

### **Analysis (Section i)**

#### **A Pen-picture of a British Army Infantryman**

##### **Section 1** Ade's story, (the Rifleman)

## Chapter IV

### Ade's story, the **Rifleman**

#### 4.1 Introduction

Ade's life has been acted out against a geographically diverse, often unfamiliar and hazardous backdrop. His occupational experience and knowledge of the world spans a decade of combat relations<sup>1</sup> exposing existential-Ade to countless unique episodes and experiences of becoming and being a soldier. The purpose of this section of the analysis is to explore the origins of that soldier and consider the point in Ade's life when age, aspiration and opportunity collided, permitting him access to this occupationally self-selecting all volunteer organisation. Discourse in this part will centre on first-impressions and unfamiliar rituals drawn from a time when the agency of soldiering was new. In the broadest terms the narrative snapshot presented here serves two functions, fundamentally it seeks to introduce Ade, a British Army Infantry-Veteran through his own narratives of enlistment and training. Whilst secondly, it determines to familiarise the reader epistemologically with the contemporary British Veteran *per se*, and their experience of becoming Service Personnel.

##### 4.1.1 A pen-picture of a British Army Infantrymen: **The Rifleman**

Ade 28, at the time of writing, comes from the Ogmore Vale Region of South Wales in the UK. He has a younger brother 17, who at the outset of the study was completing an aeronautics apprenticeship at the School of Electronic and Aeronautical Engineering<sup>2</sup> (SEAE) and sister 21, who recently graduated from Swansea University having successfully read for a BA in Primary Education. Ade was brought up in the family home by his mother 56, who works in Local Government and father who owned a small haulier firm. Ade was a solid student and attendee, leaving school with an A\* in PE, B in RE and Cs across the rest of his GCSEs. He was also an accomplished sportsman; he'd boxed up-to Middleweight as a European Youth and played rugby for his schools 1<sup>st</sup> XV, local club and County. Ade's decision to leave school after sitting his GCSEs had not been a planned one. Up to that point it had been assumed that A Levels leading to a degree or Modern Apprenticeship would have been a more likely route to employment.

1. **Since** Britain's involvement in the Gulf War, Kuwait: 1991, large combat elements of the UK's Armed Forces have been operationally deployed to a number of international trouble-spots. Former Yugoslavia Croatia, Bosnia, 1992-5; Kosovo, 1998-9; Montenegro 1992-2011; Sierra Leone, 1999; The Afghan War 2001-2014; The Iraq War, 2003-2011. Totaling by 2016; 26 years of Military Operations centring on combat, costing the lives of some 674 soldiers [*Also*: Northern Ireland 1920-Date 1,441].
2. **Royal** Electrical Mechanical Engineers' Training Establishment; an Army Technical Collage.

Whilst Ade was a reluctant scholar, sport motivated him, accordingly A Levels centring on PE with Religious Education and History, seemed to be a more feasible means of accessing either teaching or coaching occupations, alongside his own flourishing sports career.

The Armed Forces had been discussed fleetingly between Ade and his parents; however notions of a professional commission<sup>3</sup> had failed to raise sufficient interest to carry the idea forward. Ade like most 15-16 year olds didn't really have a plan; but was rather content to drift along, attend his courses and generally trust in the notion that working and playing hard would reap its own reward. Then, shortly before sitting his final GCSE examinations, Ade lost his father. After a very brief period of treatment, he'd returned home for palliative care before passing away. Quite understandably the loss of his dad was a life changing event, which undoubtedly changed Ade's outlook on education and the prospect of A Levels. Moreover it seemed to have provided the impetus for Ade to think beyond local labour markets and the possibility of a more challenging lifestyle.

**Ade:** 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009

058Ade: Well I done my GCSEs an was going to do 'em, but we lost me dad an I lost  
059 interest, I was offered other courses but by then I had an idea that I wanted to  
060 leave anyway and thought of joining the Navy.

Ade's knowledge of the Armed Forces pre-enlistment was clearly modest, fuelled locally by little more than an Uncle's anecdotes of life on the high-seas, centring on tales of raids, Ratings<sup>4</sup> and Royals<sup>5</sup>. Uncle John a retired Naval Officer had indeed seen much active service, having enlisted age 16 as an Able Seaman 3<sup>rd</sup> Class, retiring 26 years later as an Engineering Commander<sup>6</sup>. As for the Army, three medals and photograph of his mother's grandfather, who'd fought with the Somerset Light Infantry in the First War and DVD copy of the film 'Bravo Two Zero', summed it up.

**Ade:** 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009

062 Ade: Me dad's brother John had been in the Navy and he had brilliant stories, did the  
063 Falklands on the Antelope, sounded proper so I went to the recruiting office and  
064 said I wanted to join, I boxed a bit an the Navy guy seemed interested and then

<sup>3</sup>. **Commission:** A Commissioned Officer in the Armed Forces is a type of officer whose authority to command derives from the Sovereign. **Profession** based- As opposed to *Command*. Because their authority to command derives from the Sovereign, Commissioned Officers are saluted and addressed Sir or Ma'ma. [Regimental exceptions exist]

<sup>4</sup>. **Rating:** Royal Navy Rank system: [Enlisted] Sailors below the rank of Warrant Officer. [See: fn-8].

<sup>5</sup>. **Royals:** Complimentary (slang) used by Royal Navy personnel, denoting Royal Marine's Commandos.

<sup>6</sup>. **Commander:** Royal Navy Rank system; a Commissioned Officer; [Naval]-Commander, [Army]-Lieutenant Colonel, [RAF]-Wing Commander. **Engineering**, - See; Professional Commission fn3.

065 because I had my GCSE's he wanted to get me a trade sorted, but I'd had tit  
066 full of education and asked about the Marines.

For her part Ade's mum was both pleased and relieved that Ade had pulled himself together so ably after the funeral and was pursuing a legitimate, albeit risky career.

**Ade:** 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009

075 B: ... what did your mum think?  
076 Ade: Complete relief really, nothing was ‘appening down that end of the valley,  
077 except kids topping ‘emselves, I’m not saying that was going to ‘appen though  
078 just that I reckon mam was happy to see me do something with my life, better  
079 that than some crap job on the Brackla. Fuck that, sorry can I say that?

In the years contiguous to Ade's enlistment, 13 youth suicides had overwhelmed his community, centring on what the media had dubbed as a Youth Suicide Cult. Under the circumstances perhaps his mum was justifiably relieved and moreover agreed that the Brackla, an area dominated by trading estates was not perhaps the best place for Ade, an energetic, restless lad to start out in life. Warehouse or sales work she feared would bore him to tears. In hindsight Ade's first visit to the Recruiting Office turned out a little disappointing; his attention lost from the moment the Navy recruiter raised his awareness to the notion of a recruiting calendar, and as suggested attempted to enlist Ade as a technical apprentice.

**Ade:** 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009

066 ...problem was they got funny recruiting  
067 times and I'd have had to waited a year, so I binned it and went home.

In describing his disillusionment Ade is also describing his total unpreparedness; on his first visit Ade arrived with no preconceived notion, interest or loyalty towards a particular cap badge, Army or Navy. And whilst he liked the image of the Royal Marine, his interest was fleeting; marked by his reluctance to wait the year out. People join the Armed Forces for many reasons; for those who possess close family ties to a particular Regiment it's a primary employer, some just need work, whilst others are self motivated and aspire to become a part of a specific unit. Most enquiries moreover are backed-up by some thought as to how the Forces operate and what broadly speaking the different Arms and Services actually do. Having some idea of the various trades and occupations within the Armed Forces at least prepares a person, allowing some degree of informed choice. An aspirational-self needs a glimpse of the future to posit self occupationally before choosing a serious career. Training

then fittles that aspiration into the more distinct identities of the Rifleman, Para, Highlander or Guardsman. To Ade the only recognisable feature lay in the recurring references to the competitive sport, save games he was regimentally impartial. On the home front Ade's life continued to revolve around 'the house' and his only other affordable community or vaguely social outings, which occurred around youth club and the local gym. His mates at this time were either 6<sup>th</sup> Former's, in college studying FE courses, or seeking work. For Ade, a popular and innately active boy, inactivity rather than home or peer-pressure, was the main driver prompting his recruitment.

**Ade:** 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009

067 ... I just hung around for,  
 068 for a few weeks and got so bored I went back to the recruiting office. This  
 069 time I met an Army guy on the way in, he was about 25-30 big bloke but sound.  
 070 Inside he made me a brew and then introduced me to a sergeant. They was both  
 071 RRW, Royal Regiment of Wales like, I told 'em about the Marines and they told me  
 072 about the RRW then I mentioned the Light Infantry; an they mentioned the RRW I  
 073 mentioned the LI again, one and one, an I'm in Catterick.

Ade's description of the period whilst condensed is nevertheless an important start point, demarking his first contact with the Army, his remembrances of the recruiters, their discourse, approach and the result. Ade's description of the recruiters and use of physically descriptives (Ade, 09/08/09-Ln: 063) is also interesting. Akin to Ade many soldiers particularly those in an Airborne or Commando role, have a tendency to self-police themselves with far more commitment than other Regular Army units. In these units attentiveness to one's physical condition becomes a central component of everyday life and therein their identities, including the mandatory censuring of peers and subordinates who fail to toe the party line on issues of physical conditioning and robustness. The occupational language that emerges is consequently over-populated with corporal words, phrases and metaphors. In Guards units where similar reverence is applied to Drill and Turnout, words like 'shoddy or sloppy' might replace 'lazy or fat' as preferred censuring-devices.

Far from being generalised martial idioms, these speech devices and phrases are unit specific, expressing unit identities in occupation terms, aspiring identities growing through exposure to that culturally rich language. Language in the case of the former, grounded in physical terms and expressions linked to a physically demanding occupation. Ade's notion of self pre-enlistment derived largely from sport and his own adherence to notions of his physical conditioning and use in his everyday discourse of correspondingly physical language. Little wonder perhaps that at 16 years of age he was drawn in a sense to the familiar, to an

organisation whose identity is overtly underpinned by an ostensibly physical regime, its ambassadors the picture of health and fitness. Nor in a sense that his remembrances some twelve years later should be articulated in similarly corporal and corporeal language rooted not necessarily in the army, but in Ade's case the biography of a sportsman.

Although the Army Careers & Recruitment Office (ACRO) attracts an all-volunteer cohort, recruiters must still recruit, a process supplemented symbolically in the uniform and speech practices that accomplish the space. Ade was impressed. He liked the uniform, liked the assertive language and matter of fact approach. The uniforms worn by recruiters telling of the MOD's vision of corporate-self and therein how best to project each of the three Armed Services on the high street. Thus the combat uniform of the Army, now familiar white shirt and navy blue trousers or Blue Royal Navy N° 3 Dress, and the far more casual sky blue shirt, thunderbirds jacket, grey slacks and black slippers look of the RAF's Service Working Dress. He also noticed that the recruiters were uniformly fit in appearance, across the three services and sexes, with the Army recruiter's men and women, attired in combat uniforms, looking particularly professional and combatant.

Ade knew he could complete the physical side of Army selection and had heard that the 'intelligence'<sup>7</sup> tests for the infantry required a relatively low score; he was nonetheless cautious, his previous visit being less than inspiring. During a break and further encouraged by the fact that the infantry was recruiting, he and four or five other contenders were left to chat quietly amongst themselves about what they'd seen and heard that morning. Ade knew one of the lads, a personable bloke, a boxer in his early twenties from Wick. He said he was there because he was fed-up with the dole and thought the infantry would be a feasible career move since their work centred on physical robustness, a quality he felt he possessed. There were two other men in the group, older men in their mid twenties. They were in the Territorial Army (TA). The boxer told Ade they were Medics from Llandaff, wanting to go regular,

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1537B: Was it all informative, did you get a sense of what you were letting yourself in for?  
1538Ade: Fuck off mun, I mean you're like that wet behind the neck-ears whatever and they

<sup>7</sup> **Intelligence Tests:** The British Army Recruit Battery test (BARB) checks a candidate's ability to understand information and solve problems mentally. The result, your General Trainability Index (GTI) score, helps the Army match you with roles that most suit your abilities. The BARB test is split into five sections: reasoning, letter checking, number distance, odd one out and symbol rotation. (British Army website)

1539 like hit you with the Club Med version, or the sports, travel and black-balaclavas;  
 1540 to be honest I don't even remember much of that neither, it was simpler and well,  
 1541 overwhelming really. Tyrone knew more about it than me, he's the one told me the  
 1542 boys there was TA, I didn't know what the TA was proper and I certainly didn't  
 1543 know shit about Harrogate, Juniors, Adults nothing really, it was like, fucking  
 1544 note-to-self, never did though thought fuck it; it's all bollocks anyways, they'll  
 1545 teach us all this shit if it's important...

The remaining lads in the group were a couple of Army Cadets,

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1527 B: Do you remember much else about the Recruiting Office? I have to say I  
 1528 can't remember much, it was on St. Mary Street.  
 1529 Ade: Just the Cadets really, gobby little fuckers, probably made WG Junior Sarnt  
 1530 Majors, don't think the lad from Wick got in though, dunno why. To be honest  
 1531 like, I don't remember much of it till we got to depot. Fair-play though being  
 1532 Cadets like must have made phase 1 miles easier; they just got it, fitted-in  
 1533 well quicker and not for long, when you're doing it full time it's not so hard to  
 1534 catch up. They were very helpful mind, ours were anyway, showed you how to  
 1535 save time doing stuff, I think I was like probably a bit nervy back then though.  
 1536 They were very confident kids like, and I 'spose I didn't get it, where the  
 1537 confidence was coming from like, that changed though.

Considering their physical appearance and age, Ade asserted at the time that the Cadets were either brave or 'gobby'. In hindsight Ade was probably witnessing an early attempt at soldier-*self*, rather than youthful menace. Most Army Cadets who decide to join the Regular Army have likely spent between 2 and 4 years as Cadet-Non Commissioned Officers (NCOs)<sup>8</sup> and Warrant Officers (WOs)<sup>9</sup>, badged to an Infantry Regiment, organised into local Platoons, district Companies and a regional Cadet Battalions. They are likely to have pals or family serving in Regular and Reserve Units and both drill and weapon handle with a confidence and proficiency that bears the hallmark of the British Army training system. Ade was bemused by them all the same, they knew exactly why they were there, how the tests worked, knew every rank, regiment and major conflict since Hastings (1066). At 16 each appeared very at ease in the recruiting office, asking for drinks, biscuits and generally making themselves at-home.

**<sup>8.</sup> Non Commissioned Officer (NCO):**

An **NCO** in the Armed Forces is a type of officer whose authority to command derives locally from the Regiment or Battalion, they are sub divided into Junior and Senior bands, the Lance Corporals (L/Cpl) and Corporals (CPLs) being the Junior-(J)NCOs & Sergeants and Colour/Staff Sergeants the Senior-(S)NCO's. Each is addressed by their rank. [See also fn. 13. Junior-NCOs v JNCOs]

**<sup>9.</sup> Warrant Officer (WO):**

A **WO** in the Armed Forces is a type of officer whose authority to command derives from the Secretary of State for Defence. There are two classifications; Warrant Officer Class I and II, they are the senior non-commissioned officers of their Service, holding appointments such as Regimental Sergeant Major a WO1, and Company Sergeant Major a WOII. Whilst not Commissioned Officers, they are not categorized as NCOs, their authority deriving from a Warrant to command. They are addressed Sir or Ma'am. [See also: fn. 13, the 'Q']



In a sense the Cadets were progressing through, rather than joining the Army, graduating from Cadet to Junior Soldier status, in much the same way as the TA lads were hoping to progress into the Regular Army. Therein the Cadet posits him/herself a soldier, because that's what he/she is. Senior Cadets will have completed a version of the course discussed here as 'Phase One' as a part of their ongoing Army Proficiency Training. They will have qualified in skill at arms, fieldcraft, navigation, first aid, leadership and foot-drill. Their own careers indelibly marked-out. Attitudes fortified in the knowledge that their social status within the Cadet Force and civilian friendship groups will rise incrementally as they moved progressively through this familiar, trusted process. Their status and knowledge as Cadets is also transferrable and should impact positively on their Regular Army Basic Training. This is, however a difficult lead to maintain, competition at all Junior Soldiers Training Establishments is stiff; aspiration becoming an absolute necessity if training is to be concluded with a good result.

Cadets aside, Ade's memory of the ACRO seems to extend little further than a remembrance of the recruiter's uniforms their build and the posters, those featuring a battery of young, tanned men and women playing sport or tackling a range of exciting looking tasks. More importantly perhaps Ade seems to have discovered an interest in the roles undertaken by what had been dramatically described as the 'Teeth Arms'<sup>10</sup>. Even at this early stage Ade seems to have concluded that the Teeth Arms were more team-like, their soldiers being the players, who would quite naturally take to the field with the full support of various other military agencies. In short for Ade the roles undertaken by the Corps of Infantry, Armour and Air, those presented in a more rugged, challenging, pithy light, were the ones that caught his eye.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1440 B: You know when you'd sussed what the infantry was, as opposed to say the  
 1441 Gunners, was that the only job you wanted in the Army?  
 1442 Ade: I thought everyone done pretty much the same thing but with a gun, then I  
 1443 thought like actually if you got a guy in-combats fixing a truck for a driver in-  
 1444 combats who's driving a detail [laughter] to a cook, he's in-combats too, then  
 1445 what have you got? And if their wagons, their [...] what do REME work in?

<sup>10</sup>. The British Army is organised into [a] Combat or **Teeth** Arms: The Army's fighting Regiments; their role is to deliver success on the ground by engaging in close combat, they are the Corps of Infantry, Cavalry (Armour) & Air. [b] Combat Support Arms: These provide the Combat Arms with direct & indirect support on the ground. They are the Royal Artillery, Royal Engineers, Royal Signals & the Intelligence Corps. [c] Service Support Arms: These services help the Army to function effectively, from vehicles and equipment, to physical wellbeing. They include the Royal Logistic Corps, Army Medical Services, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Royal Army Veterinary Corps, Royal Army Physical Training Corps, Army Chaplain's Department, Adjutant General's Corps, and Royal Military police.

1446 B: Like Workshops, L-A-D,  
 1447 Ade: Workshops, if their Workshops or their Cookhouses got  
 1448 compromised I'm sure they'd defend 'em to last man. But if you took away  
 1449 the guns and the uniform their all civvies, like that's what they actually are, what  
 1450 they do. The only squadies you're gunnu find in this pile is the boy in the minging  
 1451 combats, whinging 'bout his, the scoff being late. I thought the infantry was  
 1452 special, all the others was there to keep us in the doing, we are the fucking Army.  
 1453 B: So what you saying? You can take away an infantryman's uniform and gun but  
 1454 he'll still be an Infantryman. But for everyone else if you did the same you'd  
 1455 find a civi. Is this something you thought then, or an idea that's come together  
 1456 over the years?  
 1457 Ade: I like how you said the first bit, but what do ew mean.  
 1458 B: Did you see a distinction between the Combat Arms and the rest of the Army  
 1459 when you were being recruited, why the infantry, what set it apart from the rest of  
 1460 the Army. And Ade, when did you start identifying with it, the infantry now.  
 1461 Ade: To be honest I saw the infantry like the Marines, I didn't really get the big deal  
 1462 between regiments they all done the same things to my mind. And I suppose I  
 1463 was never that practical tools like, well not interested really, I'd spent most of my  
 1464 time doing rugby and the thought of having to do a real job killed me, but  
 1465 soldiering was different an I mean Infantry soldiering, rest was just tradesmen in  
 1466 uniform.

Ade was attracted by the agency, team spirit and thought of doing something distinctive with his life, something that would allow him occupationally, to build on his existing sporting and social-selves. These were also jobs with no real connection to civilian occupations or labour markets, and in a sense and an antidote to the Brackla; careers vended in highly specialised occupations centring on physical robustness, security and an apprenticeship in arms.

In relation to infantry recruitment, Ade's disposition to sport and GCSE's placed him in the strongest of positions. At the end of this second visit with his test-results in hand, he was told he would be recommended to go on to the Army Development and Selection Centre (ADSC) and could expect dates and instructions in the post. For Ade then-it had begun. During his short stay at the ADSC Ade would complete a two-day residential selection course, focusing on the BARB tests, physical fitness, personal confidence, team working skills and basic knowledge of the Army. Whilst the latter was a worry to Ade, since he still possessed little by way of embedded knowledge of the Armed Forces, he was more than confident he would score well in each of the other categories of the selection process.

#### **4.1.2 Selecting Soldiers**

Ade had arrived at the ADSC in smart casual clothing, having travelled down by rail. As the train rolled closer to its destination he noticed several equally well turned out young men and women occupying his carriage, six of whom proved to be en route to the Centre. On arrival a lithe old Corporal (early thirties) with a Skull and Crossbones cap badge-(motto) showed a

small party of 4 to their rooms, giving them 5 minutes to change and meet outside in sports kit. They mustered as ordered outside the Headquarters building in a group of around 20 and were taken for a brisk 3 mile cross country run followed by a welcome brief and lights-out. The day that followed started at 06:30hrs with a run, breakfast, morning BARB tests, 10 am, tea break called a NAAFI break, then more running and gym work, followed by lunch and re-tests. At the end of the second days testing Ade and three equally tense roommates preened themselves in preparation for their formal interviews. At this point none knew how they'd performed either educationally or physically and were anxious to say the very least.

Each wanted to join a different unit, one had a brother in 2 Anglians (2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion The Anglian Regiment) another's dad was in the RAMC (Royal Army Medical Corps), the third whilst having no claim to a blood relative in any regiment of the line, had been an Air Training Corps Cadet and wanted to join the Grenadier Guards. Ade felt he had very little to add to their seemingly fathomless military knowledge, or well meaning advice so just sat and listened. Ade, whilst a little stressed, was nonetheless conscious that the Army were interested in him. He knew that his GCSE's counted and that the Army, a sports orientated organisation, would likely measure his sporting achievements on par with his academic and BARB results. All in all Ade was quietly confident. Having bought a new suit for the funeral he viewed himself in the long inspection mirror and recollects thinking that he at least looked the part. Ade had grown up in suits, a-must for Chapel or sporting functions, yet he remembers this outfit as his first adult suit.

After a few moments spent thoughtfully straightening his AIBA<sup>11</sup> tie, he passed a duster over his shoes and was called to interview. Ade's interviewing officer was a ranker<sup>12</sup>, a Major and a stocky able looking man. The Major would inform Ade how he'd scored and whether he believed the lad was a suitable candidate for a career in the Army. The Major asked four questions opening with "Could you kill a man?" Followed by "Are you reading anything at the moment?" Ending with "What Regiment? What job"? Ade told the Major that killing was what soldier do, Legionnaire (Murray, 1974) was the book and he intended joining the 1<sup>st</sup>

<sup>11</sup>. **AIBA:** International Amateur Boxing Association. [Ade's father had tied the Double-Windsor].

<sup>12</sup>. **Ranker:** Late Entry Officer (LEO): A Commissioned Officer who has risen through the ranks, having entered service as a Private Soldier aged 16+, rising the 10 ranks to Major in around 26 years (±). Most, having served as JNCOs, SNCOs & WOs, enter service as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants in their 40s, however benefit from accelerated promotion to the rank of [Naval] Lieutenant, [Army] Captain or [RAF] Flight Lieutenant. They rarely assume command appointments & are more often fulfil the roles of Regimental Quartermasters (RQM), Military Transport Officers (MTO), or assume technical advisory posts. Most Commissioned Officers enter service as 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenants aged 18 +, traversing the 4 ranks to Major in around 22 years depending on their Commission type.

Battalion the Light Infantry as a platoon signaller. The Major must have been either amused or bemused by the young man's confidence, since he was selected to join one of the five Training Companies at the Army Foundation College Harrogate. He had therefore found enlistment in the Army as a Junior Rifleman in the Light Infantry.

It's fair to suggest that at this point in his career Ade had absolutely no idea as to what he was letting himself in for. He'd only dropped-in the phrase '1<sup>st</sup> Battalion', after overhearing the boys in his room discuss the locations of different battalions within their own target units, only then had it dawned on Ade that an infantry Regiment was sub-divided into Battalions. Up to this point the organisation of the British Army hadn't seemed important. Likewise Ade had only mentioned the Light Infantry at the ACRO because he thought the RRW Recruiters were trying albeit light-heartedly, to cajole him into joining their own regiment, his regional Infantry Regiment (see appendix iii). And whilst Ade was flattered and completely understood their motives [he knew how scouts operated], he nonetheless felt he wanted to do something different and since he only knew one other regiment, threw in with the Light Infantry.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

- 1543 B: How did you survive Selection Centre Ade?  
1544 Ade: I have to say I've always been a quick study, never been punched the same way  
1545 twice,  
1546 What does that mean Ade? It doesn't make any sense.  
1547 Ade: Whatever, dew wanna know or what?  
1548 B: Go on then, how did you survive Didcot?  
1549 Ade: It was the kids in the room mun, in Didcot they were like really switched on, it's  
1550 true I didn't understand much of it, but I got the battalion thing and I'd sussed  
1551 that if you said you just wanted to be a rifleman a Tom like, they might think  
1552 well you were a bit thick, that's when the jobs bit of the presentation kicked-in,  
1553 an I thought shit well Signaller sounds better than Driver and I didn't really get  
1554 what a Mortar-man did then. Or a CMT or much else really, I knew loads about  
1555 Akkis though. The Bonehead told me he was an Akki, said he should have  
1556 gone Corps, didn't really understand what he meant then, well I got the gist like.

The Bonehead Ade refers to was a Corporal of the Queens Royal Lancers (Cavalry); their motto a Death-head (Skull & Crossbones) and scroll reading 'OR Glory', their nickname due the nature of their cap badge being Boneheads. The Corporal was one of a small team of Assistant Physical Training Instructors (APTI) referred to colloquially as Akkis [ə'kai]. They were commanded by a WOII, in this case not an Akki or APTI but rather a Senior Instructor or QMSI from the Royal Army Physical Training Corps (RAPTC), based in Aldershot, and

addressed ‘Q’<sup>13</sup> or Sir. Ade, over a conversation about trainers, had been told by the Lancer that if he was interested in the PT Corps, he’d have to serve 4 years before he’d be able to apply for a transfer. And that he’d need to do his Akkis course at the Army School of Physical Training in Aldershot in order to work in the Regimental Gym, each prerequisites of the transfer. Whilst Ade retained only the slightest grasp of the conversation, he knew they were talking about sport and the possibility of becoming an Instructor; a job he didn’t know existed in the Army, but very much liked the sound of. To Ade awash with choice, the army presented as more of an adventure than a seriously considered career trajectory, an exciting sports-packed future and one that paid around £14,000 a year, less food, accommodation and stoppages.

#### **4.1.3 Five New Pence**

Back at the ACRO in Cardiff, Ade was allocated a date to start Training proper, but not before swearing his Oath of Allegiance. On taking the Oath Ade was aware that he’d be making a profound and life changing pact to Crown and was to a degree excited at the prospect and ceremony. Ade had read Murray’s (1974) account of a Legionnaire about to undertake his oath of allegiance ceremony. The plot centres on the Commandant, who eloquently invites the candidate to give the Legion his body, in exchange for which the legion will provide him with everything else. Any enthusiasm fashioned by Murray’s account was rapidly dashed however as the ritual got underway, the mumbled ceremony presented by an aged Army Major(R)-(retired). Ade recalled the Major asking him a few forgettable questions before handing him a card. As ordered Ade dutifully read the text, then the Major handed him a 5 Pence piece and showed him the door.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1518 Ade: Done my Oath in town, is that what you mean?

1519 B: Go on then.

1520 Ade: Fuck all to tell really, old fellah bla-bla-bla ta’ra kind of thing, he was like that

1521 pissed judge on the Fast Show, asked about fellowship or scholarship there was a

1522 ship in there somewhere, I thought it would have been more well I say it now but

1523 more official like.

Whilst a seemingly outdated practice the swearing of an Oath to Crown, imbues the very spirit by which you as a soldier will serve, and formally underlines exactly who you’re

<sup>13</sup> Q: A ‘Q’ or QSMI (Quartermaster Sergeant Major Instructor) is a WO appointment. Like the professional Commission the ‘Qs’ are Professional WOs, whereas the Company Sergeant Major (CSM) also a WOII holds a Command appointment. Since Qs are WOs they are addressed Sir, Ma’am or ‘Q’. [Regimental variations exist]. E.g. RLC-Conductor WOI, REME-Artificer Sergeant Major (ASM) WOI.

volunteering to serve. The taking of the Queen's/King's Shilling forms part of this ceremony wherein the recruit is paid an earnest payment<sup>14</sup> of a shilling, symbolising a day's pay to seal the deal. On a more practical footing until one has Passed-Out as a trained soldier, this is the date recruits refer to as the beginning of their Army career. Other dates of significance will follow, but since this is likely to be the first time the young civilian has made a promise of consequence during their short lives, it is considered a universally significant point in a military career. Most soldiers remember this time and the activity surrounding the pre-enlistment period, each having a different story to tell. The card read:-

I *Adrian Morris Bushnell*, swear by Almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, Her Heirs and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, in Person, Crown and Dignity against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of Her Majesty, Her Heirs and Successors, and of the generals and officers set over me. So help me God.

Diversity aside each veteran concurs that, in their minds, they had embarked on a unique, frightening but exiting journey, one that centred on something bigger than themselves. Not quite the defence of the Realm perhaps, they were only 16, but something nevertheless profound and deeply personal. There'd be no turning back now, at least that's what he told himself and others around him, safe in the knowledge that there'd be plenty of opportunities to bail if the going got too tough. For most informants, memories of this period were indeed difficult to locate, it's a time of extremes, one measured by random yet significant episodes. Illustrated well in the discourse Ade shared with the Lancer, a casual chat between two Fly-halves<sup>15</sup> discussing sports shoes, the elder implicitly conveying additional knowledge, presenting the youth with a privileged sportsman's guide to the Armed Forces.

#### **4.1.4 Becoming Soldiers**

On arrival at Harrogate Station Ade was marshalled expertly off the platform and onto one of three white Army buses. Whilst in transit each recruit was given an envelope labelled with

<sup>14</sup>. **Earnest** Payment: Soldiers daily pay-[18th & 19th C], was an English Shilling; recruits were given a Shilling at the point of their recruitment, as an earnest or good-faith payment.

<sup>15</sup>. **Fly-half**: Rugby position; Located between the Scrum Half and Inside Centre.

the individuals surname and a number. Ade was given his admin bundle by a Rifleman who identified the number as Ade's Army number and told him to "learn the fucker pronto." On arrival at the College proper, Ade's recruit party were de-bussed and assembled in three ranks on the pavement side of their respective buses. After a short burst of appalling language delivered by a Corporal (Cpl) Mack from Yeovil, the intake moved uneasily to the right and marched off. Home for the next 18 months comprised of a 4 storey red brick barrack block, with a centre entrance and lobby leading to the stairs and the accommodation decks.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1552 B: So was Harrogate a shock?  
1553 Ade: Umm well not entirely I mean it was mental at first, I think, it's amazing how  
1554 well we forget things, I remember going up mostly the train, it seemed slow, till  
1555 we got there then well fuck, like six weeks later; I don't remember much in-  
1556 between we must have been run ragged till at least then, oh an Corporal Mack  
1557 fucking legend. I remember the rooms too; well it was the first time I'd been in  
1558 the block proper. By fuck it was hectic mind, never enough time. The room right  
1559 was like if you had to put a picture to the world uniformity in like some kids  
1560 picture dictionary, that'd be the picture. Do you get me, aye like Mack and  
1561 Tyrant, I haven't thought about him for years.

Ade's room created a lasting impression, complete with its six beds each uniformly presented with a plastic covered mattress and linen mattress cover, two sheet, two pillow cases, four blankets and a blue bedspread. The room had six wardrobes, a square bulling<sup>16</sup> table, six top lockers, six bedside carpets, six bedside lockers, six stacking chairs, a bin and four curtains.

That first afternoon on return to the block after a hurried lunch the somewhat dejected recruits were cheered moderately as staff distributed new Depot tracksuits; shortly before inviting the platoon to say farewell to their civilian clothing, less underpants and sports socks for the next 6 weeks. Ade's tracksuit was Rifle Green; he still has a top, and clearly remembers the impact of the sports kit on their sense of identity as they formed up for the first time outside the block. The tracksuits were badged, different colours corresponding to a different Company, yet being a form of uniform they changed the mood and appearance of the platoon. They looked different, Ade suggesting that the difference centred on the notion that they looked like soldiers, like a team, the differentiation of civi clothing being replaced with a standardised sports dress.

<sup>16.</sup> **Bulling:** Symbolised in the act of creating a highly polished surface usually on either leather or metal, thus bulled boots are highly polished parade boots. Derived from the Military slang; Bullshit, (in the British Army) suggesting an exaggerated zeal, esp. for ceremonial drill, cleaning polishing etc usually shortened to bull, a speciality of the Guards Regiments- Horse & Foot.

**Ade:** August 16 2012

1568 Ade: ...I remember when we got the tracksuits, they billed us for 'em out our  
1569 firsts weeks pay, cheeky bastards, I had a dozen by the time I left cut-offs, T  
1570 shirt version. And what I was saying was I felt a lot happier when I had my track  
1571 suit and the Cadets were happy too at least they could show off their drill, but it  
1572 was cool to see like thousands of kids on parade all in Company Sports kit. It  
1573 was, it was probably the first time it turned me on, being part of it like.

Being a sportsperson Ade had long understood the meaning of the word 'team', but was only now coming to realizing the measure of his new club.

The 6 weeks of basic Training that followed unfolded at break-neck speed until soon the unfamiliar equipment issued on days 2 and 3 became very familiar indeed. So too did the 5am starts, being relentlessly shouted at and the pace of life at a training establishment. The different uniforms worn for equally different activities becoming second skins as the recruit training process started to take shape. Training centred loosely on four themes; those of foot drill incorporating turn-out and bearing, skill at arms, fieldcraft and physical training. These topics like the modules of an undergraduate degree are taught concurrently, with an emphasis on fitness and physical robustness embedded in every activity. Punishment, in particular centres on a range of physical challenges, running, push-ups or carrying heavy objects, any (additional) exercise that might increase an individual's resolve to quit.

Ade enjoyed Fieldcraft and Skill at Arms above the others, fieldcraft training focusing chiefly on techniques required to live, move, or make military observations in the field, while remaining undetected.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1577 B: Do you remember getting your kit issued?  
1578 Ade: Aye, tonnes of it, green kit 'Twos, webbing, sports kit, NBC fucking hods I'm  
1579 still finding bits of it even now. The kids love the camp bed and the sweets  
1580 they keep pulling out the bottom of bags and pockets, even me poncho and belt  
1581 kit. You know I really loved fieldcraft, well being in the field like, even on  
1582 scheme. [...] Fieldcraft was quality, I liked that, an shooting [...] we always had  
1583 a good laugh when we was out. Mack the Corporal loved being out too, he was  
1584 well chilled-out when we was on scheme. He was good at it too, the wily old fucker.  
1585 He was an Akki an All-Arms<sup>†</sup>, quality bloke. Bet he's still in, stick-man like...

By week six, skills across the Platoon had developed to a degree where they operated confidently and efficiently, their drills in the field and on the Parade Square whilst crude nonetheless bore the mark of fledgling soldiers. Training wise, Ade viewed the longer field exercises with relish as what began as cold, wet nights out on the training ground became his



livelihood. Soon discomfort was overtaken by resilience and as basic individual skills improved across the cohort they began to operate in small groups called fire-teams (2 X 5 man teams, half a section). After six weeks of running, with and without Bergens<sup>17</sup>, the round of assault and confidence courses, gymnasium, pool, and Company PT their fitness, endurance and stamina had improved markedly. Their drill was also improving, long hot afternoons on the Parade Square had transformed individual awkwardness and uncertainty into sharp well choreographed expressions of cohesion. More importantly perhaps after a little more than 6 weeks; those who were left were beginning to posit themselves as soldiers. The beginnings of soldier-*self* were coming together, built on a thousand previous lives and the common yet intently personal experience of Basic Military Training.

These were also the beginnings of great and enduring friendships, those made during this new and immensely challenging period, yet ones based in mutual hardship, one-upmanship, banter and a shared optimism centring on the desire to become. In this company Ade soon discovered that the real challenges posed by basic training were about mental as well as physical robustness.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1634 B: I wanted to know one thing you found hard about basic training.

1637 Ade: ...in the beginning Education was a bastard, we just  
 1638 used to doss; we were battered all the time mun that was 'ard, staying awake like.  
 1639 And I spose Training Reg bullshit generally, not the kit so much and I didn't mind  
 1640 the physical punishment, but getting your head round the petty bollockings, some  
 1641 little gobchyt you've no respect for, banging-on in your face, an you 'ave to  
 1642 accept it 'cause he's like got a white tape on his arm, shit we were only 16, it  
 1643 was terrifying, that was hard to get into. Totally un-fucking-necessary most of the  
 1644 time like, but that's the whole point of training.  
 1645 B: OK when do you think you first became aware that you were becoming a soldier?  
 1646 Ade: [...] Well when you go back like after that first leave and see a new intake getting  
 1647 a good beating on the square, it's bits like that really. When you start to see your  
 1648 lot as different. 'Cause you're a bit closer to being one of them. Then it just  
 1649 becomes incredibly funny. But when you're doing it first out, it's like more  
 1650 serious a course, 'part from a bit of school, all you do is soldier; two months ago  
 1651 like all I done was school. So I reckon when you suss that all this actually is  
 1652 just to prepare you for the battalion and it ain't personal, then you're like coming  
 1653 along. 'Cause see in a way till you do your not getting fuck all out of training.  
 1654 B: So by looking at the recruits you were able clock that you'd moved up.  
 1655 Ade: Oh totally, just having proper berets and cap badges sets you apart and we had  
 1656 privileges. We knew the routine too and where everything was and everyone had  
 1657 their kit sorted by then, it all 'elps. And it's easy to say all this now but like then I

<sup>17</sup>. **Bergen:** Rucksack, Load Carrying Equipment.

<sup>†</sup>. **All Arms:** All Arms Commando, an Army Commando, as opposed to a Royal Marines Commando. The All Arms Commando Course facilitates the training of all non-Naval personnel.

1658        wasn't thinking of the battalion, I was thinking of like getting my kit done before  
1659        tea, so's I could do rugby practice, 'cause I had fire picket or whatever after. It's  
1660        been funny thinking about though, when it's all new it's overwhelming, but it didn't  
1661        take a genius to work out what was going on. Them that left just never gorr it, took  
1662        every slagging to 'eart, never had the mental robustness them, and like there's no  
1663        way anyone could know that much about your mother. Point is like they never saw it  
1664        for what it was that weren't about them. Couldn't accept that they was just  
1665        roughing us up, knocking a few edges off like.

What they could never have fully anticipated was the true face of life in a total institution, or what the loss of one's elementary freedoms actually meant, or how being ready to deploy 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, over some 365 days of year, really impacts on a young person's life. Whilst all teenagers have their broader freedoms tailored to some degree, the contrast bears no resemblance. As suggested, this was not for most a time of great refection or soul searching, indeed the only sole searching conducted by most of Ade's cohort was likely blister related.

Home sickness was a suffocating condition, many within the intake leaving within weeks of their arrival. Whilst seldom mentioned, Basic Training is an immensely personal journey; on which a proportion of candidates will become isolated in the absence of their trusted support networks and friendship groups. Others who had done well to get this far, fell-out for other reasons medical and family amongst them, a larger proportion however found the Army wasn't as they had imagined and withdraw after making a concerted effort. As for the belligerence of NCOs in their deployment of verbal sanctions, it might be argued that there are very few personable methods of instilling immediacy and focus into scared human beings. To that end asking an already frightened individual to perform an extraordinary task in a highly unstable environment is difficult enough. Add to these conditions the noise, filth and confusion common to all theatres of war, where often vital orders may well need be screamed out at close quarters then some semblance of sense comes to the practice.

All service personnel need to be able to respond to orders and part of that learning process centres on a recruits complete and utter compliance to rank. In training where life and death scenarios are few and far between, parallel speech patterns are rehearsed all too often using trivial, mundane devices, creating standard often inequitable results and notions of the petty. The successful recruit according to Ade, manages to navigate a course between the personal and the occupational journey. They must quickly grasp the notion that survival is in part reliant on friendship or cooperation groups within the platoon and to simply conform, at least at face value. Ade loved his new job, viewed withdrawals as one might a knockout contest

and whilst missing home moderately, was thriving in the institution that was rapidly becoming his new home. Ade was beginning to become a soldier; who unbridled by fitness issues was also observed helping his peers, proving the qualities of leadership and kinship he'd learned as a schoolboy on the playing fields of South Wales.

#### **Ade 16 August 2012**

- 1507 B: Was it tough Ade?  
1508 Ade: Naa it was like a boy's club mun, we was all like tough kids, not bullies like just  
1509 the sort of kids who done sport, Cadets, maybe would have ended up on the  
1510 buildings like doing something with their hands. But we all liked being outside  
1511 rather than lessons. And everyone, an if anyone says different they're lying dogs,  
1512 you all feel different in uniform, it does make you feel more confident and  
1513 and like when you're in it, it's basic it says who you are.

The end of the Week 6 is also marked with a period of leave, preceded by a Passing-In parade to celebrate completion of Phase 1 and return of civilian clothing, now quite alien to the intake. The Parade is seminal; it not only showcases their new found knowledge of military tradition, drill, dress and bearing, but also draws a line under their status, they are now Soldiers Under Training (SUT), not recruits. A parent's day also enables the Army to show off their latest trained soldiers, individuals who only weeks earlier would have been schoolchildren. Parents frequently sum up the transformation they see in their children as overwhelming, describing their new found obedience, politeness and bearing, particularly around Cpl Mack and the other training NCO's as quite remarkable. Their [the NCO's] powers of recollection and charisma in delivering anecdotally child-specific monologues all but charmed and calmed the most anxious parents and without sight or sound of an expletive.

Ade's lasting memory of this period of training is one of a life so excessively timetabled that time itself existed for no other purpose than to signal the start point of an activity.

#### **Ade 16 August 2012**

- 1489 Ade: That's the whole point in it, you're so shagged-out you don't think, an ask  
1490 questions an when you got 2 minutes to sit down, you're either bulling your  
1491 boots or ironing or polishing some fucking thing, did you have leckie bumpers?  
1492 [...] what was I saying, um, you know anyway, it's intense and all the time their  
1493 saying like '*come on mate jack it'll all be over*' and being pricks, pushing all  
1494 the time and wrecking your lockers or your bed-space for fuck all. And some  
1495 proper beatings, I mean fucking brutal, it was harsh mun proper punishing but  
1496 fair play I fucking loved it. And all for a bit of cloth and a shiny badge, when we  
1450 got badged proper I felt like the dogs bollocks. Fucking awesome mun.

In a sense by naively entering into the spirit of things from day one Ade placed himself in an inadvertently strong position, having little to fear of the future since he had little or no knowledge of what the future held. That and the fact that 6 weeks of highly programmed and intense activities left very little room for anything but the most fleeting contemplation of what was actually going on. Outside of the mainstream activities Regimental Histories had to be learned, the rank structure, and a Company level Who's Who. There was formal education, a hobby and Padres hour to attend, always something to do, never enough time to do it. When viewed from the inside out, it's much like learning to live in a state of organised chaos. The trick suggests Ade, is to quickly learn to appreciate the subtext of all communication between self, peers and the Officers serving over you, which itself requires a thorough knowledge of the language of soldiering. Recruits must also be able to sense tempo and respond appropriately to the different states of readiness, to act with urgency or reserve according to a given situation and know beyond doubt that the process is only personal, in the sense that you're the one doing it.

#### **4.1.5 Soldiers Under Training (Recruits & SUT's)**

Having Passed-In as SUTs, now wearing their unit's cap badge as opposed to the College cap badge, the Junior Soldiers undertook to continue their apprenticeships in arms. The infantryman's *raison d'être* is to deliver success on the ground by engaging in close combat; loosely speaking this is achieved by patrolling, locating and finally neutralising or observing the threat. In practice, a patrol is sub-unit of a Platoon, a Section comprising of 4-10 soldiers, in addition to a Section Commander, a Cpl and L/Cpl as second in command (2<sup>1/C</sup>). The patrols function is to pass through the battlefield, on foot or in vehicles, until contact with the enemy is established. Exercises form the bedrock of operational success; the skills learned here, the SUTs are unwaveringly reminded, translate directly to battlefield operations. Whilst incredibly tiring the ground and house clearance exercises that underpin training are both exiting and exhilarating the soldiers enjoying the activity, still animated by the awesome spectacle of a platoon's combined firepower baring down on a fixed point.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1673 Ade:	...But you 'av to take
1674	the rough with the smooth, we had some quality times on scheme, some of them
1675	exercises was first rate mun, an like if you're on the gun you were John Wayning all
1676	the way home. An I 'spose we had quality instructors which made the exercises like
1677	much more real, on the Platoon Night Assault at the end of Harrogate it was awesome,
1678	the firepower, even though we was only using blanks an stuff it was thumping.

Throughout the period of Continuation Training a little under 13 months, the staff continued to apply what the boys viewed as their reverse psychology, taunting the SUTs whenever an opportunity arose. Taunts no longer focused on quitting though, rather professional competences and safety. Now more than capable of taking care of themselves, the beatings, and always imaginative defamatory comments, the Intake were now focused on the end date.

**Ade:** 16 Aug 2012

1661 I have been thinking about it though, well [laughter] Cpl Mack stopped calling us ‘Tarts’,  
1662 after we Passed-In, that was special, like a fucking milestone really he’d call us Tarts  
1663 from day one.

Whilst there was no let up on the physical side and technical training was becoming increasingly complex, skills were improving. Familiarity with the routine and high degrees fitness also took the edge off the demands of training, ability being rewarded in Ade’s case, with an initial promotion to the rank of Junior<sup>18</sup> L/Cpl. The year was further broken up with activities and sport, Wednesday afternoons being set aside for District Sports competitions. Adventurous Training also created an opportunity for the boys to leave the Collage and live in the mountains of North Wales for a fortnight. Using a place called Capel Curig as their base; they spent their day’s rock climbing and mountaineering, or canoeing and caving.

It was their second summer, there was an immense sense of freedom about the camp, no real duties, no Provost Staff<sup>19</sup> or RSM, and more importantly no uniform. In a sense not wearing uniform was statement in itself; suggesting you were doing something special, something off the Regimental Training Programme away from the Common Military Syllabus<sup>20</sup>, which translated into a perceived increase in status. Whilst the broader training was conducted by Mountain Expedition Leaders, Rock Climbing Instructors and the like, the Platoon Staff were

<sup>18</sup>. **Junior-NCO:** At Junior Training Establishments, Junior Soldiers may be locally appointed to hold temporary rank and responsibility as Junior/Senior NCOs & WOs. As Junior Entrants their authority to command is limited in that it only applies to other Junior Soldiers. Thus a Regular Army Private is senior to a Junior-RSM (a Junior-WO). Junior-NCOs in this context are not JNCO’s, adult L/Cpls & Cpls and are referred to by rank prefixed by Junior-.

<sup>19</sup>. **Provost:** A **Provost** is a soldier, JNCO or SNCO appointed locally to serve on the Regimental Police (RP) Shift; Commanded by a Provost Sergeant [locally: Provo Sergeant], a Cpl Guard Commander & L/Cpl as the 2<sup>1</sup>/c of the Guard, they work from the Regimental Guardroom. Duties; Camp security & the detention & escort of prisoners. They are not the Royal Military Police (RMP) & have no powers or authority beyond their own Battalion lines.

<sup>20</sup>. **Common Military Syllabus (CMS):**

The CMS is delivered to all non infantry recruits who join as Adults Entrants & forms the core of the course delivered to all Junior Recruits after Phase 1. The **CIC** is an adult Infantryman’s course conducted over 27 weeks on completion incorporating Phase 1 & 2. The CIC-Para and CIC-Foot-Guards take 30 weeks. Former Juniors receive a 10 week CIC.

ever present. Oddly enough with responsibility for the Platoon now technically relocated to the Adventurous Training Staff, Cpl Mack and his team had very little to do. After a few days of adjustment the NCOs clearly felt at ease in the mountains, themselves soldiers aware that there were no real duties, no Provost Staff or RSM, decided to take the intake to the local pub for a ‘smoker’<sup>21</sup>.

The Recruits still technically under age were delighted. There were very few occasions at Harrogate for the Staff to engage with their soldiers as junior colleagues. Little time to conduct an informal conversation where rank had no place, yet Adventurous Training and days spent on the Range were the exception. On these occasions recruits were given a rare glimpse of the men who were training them. And having moved a deal closer to their ambition of becoming combat infantrymen, were treated differently, regarded with a little more respect and generally empowered. With the year about to close they would shortly be leaving for Catterick, switching from the Common Military Syllabus (CMS) to the Combat Infantryman Course (CIC) proper. Those who had made it this far had proven their soldiering skills, adapted to the routine, and overcome both the mental and physical challenges thrown their way.

Throughout training at Harrogate there had been two major forces driving and motivating the success of the cohort, the first was personal and centred on an attitude or aspiration to be soldiers. The second was fear and the Iron-Tyrant Cpl Mack from Yeovil, a man feared in the ranks largely because he led by example, an example that Ade suggests would alarm a Spartan. As with Phase 1, continuation training passed quickly and soon enough Ade’s intake was one of the Senior Platoons in the College, Ade having advanced to the rank of Junior-CSM. In a little over 18 months he’d been transformed from an adolescent civilian to a soldier; he’d mastered Skill at Arms and knew instinctively how to perform as part of a patrol. He could navigate across open terrain and was fitter than he’d ever been. Additionally he’d commanded his Company on their Passing-Out Parade, no longer parading with a rifle but the Junior-CSMs Stick<sup>22</sup>.

<sup>21</sup>. **Smoker:** An informal gathering in field conditions where each section put up an act for an impromptu Gang-show.

<sup>22</sup>. CSMs **Stick:** WO’s in the British Army carry either Regimental or **Pace** Sticks. A pace stick is a wood finished 37 inch brass compass used to plot the route of a parade in paces. They are usually carried by WOIs. Regimental Sticks are also 37 inch  $\pm$  in length, are capped with a silver cup embossed with the Regimental Motto. They are usually carried by WOIs. [Some exceptions]-Provost Sergeants carry poorer grade Regimental Sticks, Drill instructors carry Pace Sticks.

All of the above had required dedication and preparation, the latter the Parade requiring his dress uniform, bulled boots, Rifleman's belt, Inkerman whistles and chain and the SNCOs Red Sash worn over the left shoulder<sup>23</sup>. In a sense as with all uniform, it wasn't simply a matter of preparation but moreover comprehension. The uniform has to learnt or realized, dress uniforms in particular are the symbols of Regiments with hundreds of year's service, they are telling of past campaigns, qualification, rank and a mélange of additional self-defining information. They create a link between the regiment and modern world through symbols, their power located in their agency their denotation tacit.

Days spent on the parade square and nights on the training areas had produced a new generation of infants, boys whose preparatory training was coming to completion. Most of what he had learned had been taught, yet much had been discovered, thoughts realised on sight of example, attitudes established pragmatically through toil. Ade had long forgotten life as an adolescent civilian back in South Wales. Home visits merely corroborating his decision to join up, mates struggling to leave home, a few driving and only a handful in stable employment, soldier-*self* had entrenched. By now parents had grown accustomed to the notion that their children were in the Army, had become fondly tolerant of the dirty uniforms that had attended each leave, yet the final parade was in a sense a symbolic event as much for them as their children. Some 18 months previously they had deposited their 16 year old boys into the capable hand of Cpl Mack and the team. During that period Harrogate had become a watchword for health, fitness and personal development, parents over the year having come to trust the establishment and its instructors.

Those children had now come of age and had turned out fit, strong and bright young men and women. They had also come of age occupationally as soldiers and would now be graduating, going on to a different type of soldiering, one commissioned for adults. The realisation for parents that the intake were one step closer to the 'real' Army, about to Pass-Off into the unknown, left many in tears. It was also the first time families had seen their kin in full dress

<sup>23</sup>. **Red Sash:** The Sam Browne is a leather sword belt and cross strap, worn by British Army WOIs and Commissioned Officers since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. During the First World War the blood soaked Sam Browne's of fallen Officers were worn by the SNCO who temporally assumed command in the absence of Commissioned or Warrant Officers. It is therefore a battle honour specific to a rank rather than a Regiment. The Light Infantry now 1Rifles are the only Regiment in the British Army to wear SNCO Red Sashes over the left shoulder. They do this in remembrance of one of their predecessor Regiments the Somerset Light Infantry, who adopted this style in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

uniforms, their reactions apposite to the effort that had been poured into their appearance. Harrogate to Ade is now a distant memory, consisting of a string of random, singular interactions and observations that triggered thought. Studying the sheer professionalism of Instructors like Mack as they moved effortlessly in the field under the burden of 80lbs of equipment was inspiring. Whilst the awe he instilled in others across the Establishment, made him a prime candidate for a role model and the sort of man Ade wanted to become.

The leader that Ade would become was fashioned on similar exposure to events large and small many leading to seminal conclusions. On one occasion Ade overheard a well respected Officer chastising a young Cpl for calling his men bods (bodies); as a result thereafter Ade always referred to his section as the men, blokes or the team. He didn't do this because he understood the connotation one address carried over the other, rather that he respected the Officer. It had taken roughly 49 weeks for Ade to learn to speak and understand the infantry dialect of a language uncommonly known as Army English. Where he was going he'd need it, what had started as frenzied introduction to soldiering at Harrogate, had in truth become routine the cohort had made the grade and were briefly enjoying the benefits; however it was time to move on.

#### **4.1.6 Becoming Infantrymen the Combat Infantryman's Course (CIC Line Infantry)**

Ade's arrival at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick was marked by a distinct absence of bull, no shouting, at least in the opening moments and an atmosphere of calm. The Orderly Sergeant<sup>24</sup> was both helpful and welcoming and the RP Shift in the Guardroom positively congenial. It was a Sunday; the camp asleep with the exception of returnees, those returning from leave after completing their Phase 1 as adults, over the previous 6 weeks and Ade's cohort who'd spent the past year doing pretty much the same. Like that of Harrogate, Ade's memories of Phase 2 Training are scattered, focusing on random incidents, life lessons that complimented his occupational training and raised his understanding of the tacit nature of army life.

<sup>24</sup>. **Orderly** Sergeant/Officer:

Each Company within the Battalion must supply sufficient manpower to adequately cover all Battalion duties. The roles of the Orderly Sergeant & Officer are two such Duties. Their job is to provide daily welfare support-hospital visits, supervise camp-wide security & discipline, to inspect the Guard, Fire Picket & Prisoners, attend meals at the regimental restaurant & conduct any additional duties passed down by the Adjutant or RSM. Only Junior Officers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Liut's & Liut's & SNCO carry out these duties.



For the first time, with the exception of NCOs, the cohort were in the company of Adult Entrants, those who as suggested entered the Army only a matter of weeks before undertaking their Phase 2 training. For the Juniors life was simple, with their transferable skills and occupational competencies now embedded and possessing the fitness of Olympians they were positively champing at the bit to get underway. Any illusion created by the previous days calm was shattered the following afternoon, as their formal introduction to Catterick and the CIC proper got underway. After a long warm morning in the lecture theatre receiving the course outline, the sleepy troops were introduced to their new Training NCOs. Cpl Mack's surrogate was a tall slim man around 30, with an action-man scar running through his right eye, rumour had it that he'd been in the SAS<sup>25</sup> and had received the scar from Taliban fighter, he was known as Kenny to his peers and Sgt Lillycrap to everyone else. The rest of the team were equally menacing to look at, yet very positive, energetic and very fit.

After a superb lunch the cohort was wheeled out to weigh their Bergen's for their first CIC run. The Gym Staff at Harrogate had urged the lads to keep their fitness up over the leave period, warning that if all they did was drink, they'd be in for a shock at Catterick. Having elected not to self-police over the Christmas period many were clearly struggling to keep up.

**Ade:** 16 August 2012

1683 Ade: So like Kenny the new Platoon Sergeant is going ballistic, an the boy being sick is  
 1684 looking at him and he goes, "*no gentlemen this just won't do*" an he makes us do it  
 1685 again. Then when we got back he goes, "*de-tour gentlemen*" and we're on the assault  
 1686 course. It went on till like 5-6, carries everything then he say to us like "*Point taken*  
 1687 *gentlemen*" an everyone goes aye [...] well fucking taken.

The activity was a 5 mile Bergen run over new and exhausting ground led by the training staff also wearing weighted Bergen's and running at a pace that defied human anatomy. At the end of the session Sgt Lillycrap pulled Ade, who'd self-policed diligently, to one side,

**Ade:** 27<sup>th</sup> August 2010

1343 Ade: ...that was at Catterick mun, he said '*You Bushnell, I've heard a lot about you*'  
 1344 I'm thinking fuck what's he want. Then he says '*I'll be keeping an eye on*  
 1345 *you son*' and I say aye Sarnt, and he goes '*Sam Mack sends his compliments.*'  
 1346 well I knew I was in then, that was Catterick sorted.

<sup>25</sup>. Sgt **Lillycrap**: [Whilst a pseudo name], Ade's Platoon Sgt at Catterick was a former 22 SAS Cpl, who had been recommended for a Commission, he spent 3 months with the intake before leaving for The Royal Military Academy (RMA), Sandhurst.

Harrogate had taken a group of adolescent civilians and made a home for them as soldiers. They had learnt to march there, sew buttons, shoot and shave, the general skills required of all good soldiers. Catterick on the other hand had a very different vision, their mission to take the trained soldiers and make them into Combat Infantrymen. Their introduction run like their course a fast and furious affair, in Catterick there wasn't the luxury of time afforded training in Harrogate, in Catterick as junior entrants they had 10 weeks. Lessons now revolved around an Infantry syllabus, Marksmanship, Skill at Arms, Field Craft, Battlefield Medicine and Physical Training. Whilst a compact course, CIC instruction came free of additional lessons, hobbies and forced interest groups and whilst there were regimental duties they were few and far between. Ade had also lost his Rank, appreciating his new freedom at a time when he needed to knuckle down and learn the job.

**Ade:** 27<sup>th</sup> August 2010

1331 Ade: See mun you don't think like this when you're going up to Catterick, when like [...]  
1332 some of your mates, tidy boys in the other Companies are going off to be like tankies  
1333 and loggies an whatever. You thinks' it's like more of the same but actually it's not,  
1334 it changes you mun, see Harrogate makes trained soldier right enough, but its Catterick  
1335 makes you into a trained Infantryman, just like Gib is-it [...],  
1336 B: [nod].  
1337 Ade: ...is for you. But you got no clue like what a difference the next bit makes till you done it,  
1338 well you got nothing to compare it to. [Laughing] 'Cause let's be honest there's fuck all  
1339 to compare it to.

Quite correctly Ade discerned the difference between the general training offered by Harrogate and the specific-to-arms training being offered at Catterick. Each course differentiated by need, the need of the later to train Combat Infantrymen to serve with one of the British Army's Regular Infantry Battalions. In fairness the head start they'd earned themselves at Harrogate was visible, their weapons handling and fieldcraft drills seldom leading to censure. And indeed after the wake-up call facilitated by Sgt Lillycrap, few failed to self-police again, most returning to a more familiar and Spartan routine.

Whilst Ade's memories of the CIC-Line Infantry remain slim, he recalls the beginning clearly enough and to the credit of the Staff, possesses a catalogue of knowledge relating to firearms and tactics. He recalls that relationships between SUTs and Instructors were far less starchy, as if the bull had been replaced by new occupationally imaginative forms of censure and punishment. Of greater importance was the notion that Ade now a little over 18 years of age having served for around 18 months was about to be posted out to his parent unit. On

completion of their final exercise the only component of their training left was to learn to drive, pass that and they'd made it.

**Ade:** 16 Aug 2009

456 Ade: No mate driving,  
457 B: Good drills Ade, did that come from depot too?  
458 Ade: I done my driving there 'n-all, I did,  
459 B: You told me, the woman with the whip.  
460 Ade: Sheila mun.  
461 B: Was she hardcore Ade?  
462 Ade: Used a fucking whip on us mun, [laughter] beat the shit out me,  
463 if you fucked the clutch like whatever. Be like mirrors [whip sound],  
414 signal [whip sound], manoeuvre [whip sound]. The only thing harder  
415 than her in Catterick were P Company Staff. Having said that she like  
416 probably trained 'em too.

In attempting to review an experience as personal and complex as Basic Training, it's only natural that many possibly seminal components will have been lost along the way. Yet this is a generalisation, a compressed and highly personalised account of being; one that concludes with Ade's description of his progress thus far.

**Ade:** 16 Aug 2012

1417 B: So were you proper Infantrymen then, did you feel the part?  
1418 Ade: On leave maybe and with the boys like, but we weren't dull  
1419 mun, big-big difference 'tween being trained in something  
1420 and doing it like, we'd done the CIC with the like emprises  
1421 on like-the IC not the first C, that come later.

## Appendix i.

### Phase 1 Basic Training:

Weeks 1 - 6 represent **individual training**.

#### Week 1

- Move in
- Medical and dental inspections
- Military clothing and equipment issued
- Learn in-barracks administration
- Briefed on finance, administration and paperwork
- Introduction to physical training (PT)
- Rifle and drill lessons

#### Week 2

- Swimming training starts
- First overnight exercise and personal administration in the field
- PT: 5 mile runs and circuit training
- Military skills training: fieldcraft and map reading
- Rifle and drill lessons
- Introduction Exercise: Fieldcraft

#### Weeks 3 / 4

- Field Exercise: Individual Fire and Movement
- Rifle and drill lessons
- Progression of PT
- Operational law
- Live rifle firing

#### Weeks 5 / 6

- Field Exercise: Reaction to enemy fire and individual fire and movement
- Foot drill practice and test
- Parents' Day (week 5 **Passing In**)
- Bayonet fighting
- Obstacle course 5 mile march

## Appendix ii.

### Phase 2 Trade training: Combat Infantryman's Course

Weeks 7 - 12 represent **team and section skills training**.

NB: Week 7 for Adult entrants is week 1 of a 10 week CIC-Line Infantry for Harrogate cohort who have completed their extended Phase 1 Training over the previous year.

#### Weeks 7 / 8

- Fieldcraft summative tests
- IT skills
- Introduction to grenades
- PT progression: 8 mile run, circuit training, obstacle course and steeplechase
- 5 and 6 mile march
- Live rifle firing
- Swimming test

#### Weeks 9 / 10

- Battle fitness: loaded marches: 7 and 8 miles, 9 and 10 mile run and obstacle course
- Light Machine Gun (LMG) lessons
- Signals lessons
- Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) training
- Live firing
- Introduction to Trainasium (aerial assault course)

#### Weeks 11 / 12

- Map reading lessons
- Light Machine Gun (LMG) practice
- Battle PT: 8 mile march and steeplechase
- Tactical Field Exercise: Revision and testing

Weeks 13 - 18 cover **platoon skills**.

#### Weeks 13 / 14

- LMG lessons
- Map reading lessons
- Introduction to Stretcher Race and Log Race
- Chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) training
- Adventure training: rock climbing, canoeing and mountain biking
- 9 mile loaded march

## **Weeks 15 / 16**

- CBRN training
- LMG live firing
- Steeplechase
- Driver theory training
- Tactical Exercise
- General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG) training
- Head Mounted Night Vision Goggle training

## **Weeks 17 / 18**

- Urban skills training
- Bayonet fighting
- 12 mile loaded march
- CBRN tests
- Fieldcraft
- Tactical Exercise

## **Weeks 19 / 20**

- LMG firing
- Close Quarter Battle (CQB)
- Pre-Parachute Selection (PPS) test
- Battlefield tour

## **Weeks 21 / 22**

- PPS test continued
- Driver theory training
- 5 day shooting exercise: LMG live firing, fire and movement, grenades and a final exercise

## **Week 23 - 25**

- Final Exercise: Patrol and platoon raids

## **Week 26**

- Battle shooting camp
- Pairs fire and movement
- Section attacks
- Live platoon attack

## **Week 27**

- 10 mile loaded march
- General Purpose Machine Gun (GPMG) lesson
- March and shoot competition

## **Week 28**

- Final admin of kit
- Final medical and documentation
- Passing Out Parade

## **Weeks 29 / 30**

- Driver practical training lessons and driving test

### Appendix iii

#### Infantry Recruitment by Region







## CHAPTER IV

Analysis (Section ii)

### The Recruitment & Training Of British Army Infantrymen (Line Infantry)

**Theme**      Social Honour

## CHAPTER IV

### Beginnings

#### 4.2. Introduction

In this section of the analysis the reflexive meanings *soldier-self* ascribes to this dynamic period of becoming will be explored, commencing with an assessment of occupational and social status of respondents as it existed at the point of their enlistment. It is argued Social Stratification (Weber, 1946) is reliant upon social reproduction from one generation to the next, thus an assessment of wealth, power and social honour, [as it existed in the opening stages of the military career], will satisfy at least one research goal, in that it provides a comprehensive introduction to informant dispositions at the onset of their military careers. Likewise Social Stratification necessitates the deployment of and adherence to a rigid belief system, each condition being fundamental to military training and conditions which are present in the reproduction of British military doctrine conveyed during and sustained after basic training. As a consequence of the enlistment process the recruit will inevitably be delivered into the care of a residential training establishment, therein an analysis of the institutional conditions (Goffman, 1961) experienced by the aspirational citizen is critical, since it sheds light on both the processes and conditions experienced.

If the self is a product of social interaction in any given context then it should be noted that the foundations of *soldier-self* occur within an unconventional environment. In this case the self is conceived in a communal rather than private reality, shaped as a consequence of public interaction within the margins of the Military institution. *Soldier-self* in this instance may well be viewed as Goffman (1961) suggests as a,

“stance taking entity, a something that takes up a position somewhere between identification with an organisation and opposition to it”

(Goffman, 1961. pg. 22).

The self in these terms has a dynamic character capable of transforming and presenting different environmentally specific persona, be it the soldier on parade square, combatant on the battlefield, or friend in the NAAFI bar. The exclusivity of self and one’s identity can be seen in the presentation of self as a publicly confirmed artefact. One viewed through engagement with others, and as the sum of all the parts the fledgling soldier must play throughout his activities of daily living (Kelty *et al*, 2010). *Soldier-self* must therefore be organised into two distinct categories, in the first the individual must learn to reproduce the occupational competences vital to recruit progression, which he will operationalize through

the rehearsal and performance of specific roles, therein shaping his presentation of self and unique sense of identity. This activity is undertaken in order to create a method of combining each of the roles he plays within his own sphere of existence. Secondly as Giddens suggests, he must also develop,

“...a set of dispositions for managing the transaction between motives and the expectations ‘scripted’ by particular roles”.

(1988, pg. 259)

Indeed soldier-*self*, will emerge out of the specific rituals and custom of his battalion and the socialising agents present in basic training. To that end environment is key, since it provides the setting in which social interactions will occur, including the social actors, both recruits and training instructors who will in no short time be instrumental in formation of the type of soldier-*self* fashioned. The Armed Forces exemplify an indisputable form of total institution wherein the Military Training scheme strives to obscure the reality of a system inherently based on exploitation. Therein all notions of military honour, loyalty and duty are viewed as discursive apparatus designed to promote martial reproduction and compliance. The social construction of identity (Cooley, 1902) within the institution requires significant organisation, as suggested the origins of identity being indelibly linked to social interaction and therein the social actors and activities of daily living acted out within the institution.

This chapter therefore offers an agenda for discussion of how young civilians reinvent themselves and evolve occupationally into soldiers, in context with their recruitment, basic and continuation training. Composition of self in this part relates to how an individual posits his social positioning within this very distinct social situation, where in practice the civilian will be repeatedly called upon to deploy ad-hoc versions of self. As suggested some consideration must also be given to the age of informants, in view of the fact that the activities described were played out at a point when most were teenagers. When emergent, adolescent identities were often shaped and further cultivated into specific military types. In-turn successful management of a social situation occurs on those occasions where the would-be soldiers accurately gauge the symbolic context imbued in the episode and responded astutely to each command or challenge less they suffer the consequences.

Discipline within the military institution is an obvious yet complex condition functioning on the one hand externally to facilitate command and control and as an internal condition on the other that shapes and guides both self and identity (Thornborrow & Brown, 2009). Internally it relates to an individual’s power to control his environment and perceptions of self, to

evaluate and regulate performance in order to ultimately achieve his desired identities. Internal discipline is therefore associated with self; the self must however learn to cope with external environment and therein the rules and regulation of the institution. Whilst originally relating to a different setting [the prison], Foucault (1988) characterizes the management of self as,

‘a whole technique of human dressage by location, confinement, surveillance, the perpetual supervision of behaviour and tasks, in short a whole technique of “management” of which the prison was merely one manifestation’  
(Foucault, 1988, p. 105)

In a sense the institution uses a specific military model to shape the identities of recruits and in so doing is able to control and cultivate the desired model of a self regulating soldier. Part of this process will lead to a state of self-policing; where the recruit learns to adhere to the regulations of the institution internally and [in time] without prompt.

That which Foucault (1988) refers to as ‘dressage’, is a precondition that serves to prepare the recruit for a life in a disciplined martial organisation, populated by compliant, obedient and ‘disciplined’ soldiers. And whilst the model is ostensibly untenable it has the additional quality of maintaining a sense of ongoing development seemingly one without end. For many recruits this discursive process leads to notions of anxiety and a constant need for self verification from others, in order to confirm the assumed self as a legitimate member of the collective. In-so-doing recruits must formulate or adapt appropriate forms of existing knowledge in order to achieve best outcomes. Basic Military Training will in most cases be the first instance in the young person’s life where as military recruits they will be faced with the prospect of leaving home and living a life ‘behind the wire’. Requiring each to discard their previous identities and undertake a process described by Felices-Luna (2011) and Goffman (1961, pg. 12) as the mortification of the self. Since previous identities,

“...are supported by a “presenting culture” that needs to be dismantled through a process of disculturation or untraining.”  
(Felices-Luna. 2011, pg. 3)

In this environment the need to devise coping strategies tailored to an existence quite unlike any they will have previously encountered will become a dominant feature of their daily lives. Basic Training is not simply a life changing experience in terms of occupational transition and competence but rather self-defining episode in relation to an individual’s

identity. The mechanisms inherent in the military institution are central to this transformation, inclusive of language, ritual and the tacit knowledge each will need to comprehend in order to successfully complete this phase of martial indoctrination. As suggested, in this section notions of identity and self will be investigated with aim to understanding how individuals tackle the process of reinvention. In most cases the occupational transition discussed occurred during the recruits mid teens, thus occupational transition centring on the shift from civilian to soldier will be supplement by a far more personal transition or reinvention, notably that of youth to adult. With both occupational and maturational changes ongoing the period represents a significant time of personal and occupational adjustment, leading to an entrenched sense of soldier-*self* and the adoption of new core skills, knowledge and values.

#### **4.2.1 Recruiting Soldiers** (“it takes a soldier to recruit a soldier”)

The United Kingdom is the second largest military spender in the world, in order to meet its “Trained Requirement”<sup>26</sup> the British Government invests around £2 billion annually<sup>27</sup> in the Recruitment and training of its Armed Forces personnel. Historically each Service has retained responsibility for their own recruiting strategies; the Army for example, has used the strapline “it takes a soldier to recruit a soldier” to underpin its approach. Whilst ‘Step Up’ and “Be the Best”, each American imports centering on the individual, have long replaced the post war “Join the Army-See the World” banner or 1970-80s notion of joining “The Professionals” as its preferred high-street recruiting slogans. The Army’s recruitment strategy has for many years worked on the assumption that word of mouth promotion is the most effective method of marketing a career in any one of its Regiments or Corps.

The current strategy deployed by the Army is justly complex, in addition to the drop-in facility offered at any local Armed Forces Careers Office, a dedicated ‘Army Engagement Team’, comprising of a separate Youth and Community provision visit schools and colleges,

<sup>26</sup>. **Trained Requirement:** MOD term: An annual estimate is made of the required number of trained full-time personnel, known as the ‘Trained Requirement’.

<sup>27</sup>. **Outturn costs:** 2006-09: Navy: £351M Army: £961M RAF: £723M [Total: 2,035M]. MoD, in HC Defence Committee, Duty of Care, Vol 2, Ev 235.

work or unemployment based locations and a range of other community venues. The Army's Online Careers Office facilitates those unable to attend a presentation at one of the above is managed by Capita the Army's recruiting partner. Whilst further opportunities are cultivated through existing links with the Army Cadet Force and MODs 'Camouflage Magazines' aimed at 12-17 year olds; therein, safeguarding their interest in youths with already established leanings towards the Armed Force.

'It beats double maths - rifle firing and platoon attacks at the school with the coolest curriculum'

(MOD, 2016: Camouflage Website)

The Army also uses the Recruiting Bounty Scheme (RBS) to attract more young people into the Corps of Infantry and Artillery. The RBS rewards serving personnel with a cash bounty for every person they successfully introduced to the Army (Johansen, 2007. pg. 93).

The Military Preparation Colleges may also be viewed as an additional weapon in the recruiter's arsenal, offering a full time alternative to mainstream education for young people aged 14-16. The curriculum as such centres on military and fitness training and is endorsed by UK Government as an appropriate foundation course for young people interested in a career in the Armed Forces. Other than physical and military training however, the only remotely educational component of the course centres on a Level 1 BTEC Certificate in Public Services (GCSE D-F) and a level 1 in IT partitioning. The course specifically attracts young people who have already disengaged with formal education, who in many cases as NEETs, truants or those placed on permanent exclusion enter the scheme often as a last resort. These strategies when viewed collectively target all elements of society, ensuring the recruitment net is cast as broadly as possible.

Each of these measures has become necessary, since retention of personnel has become increasingly problematic, with recruitment *per se* experiencing a steady decline in all branches. A significant change to the traditional face of recruitment practice has now been marked by the establishment of a National Recruiting Centre (NRC) based at Upavon in Wiltshire. The NRC opened in March 2013, marking the first occasion in history where the Army and a private sector concern (Capita) have combined resources. The centre funded by the MOD has thus far fared poorly in attracting the 10,000 recruits required annually to offset outflow (Cottrell, 2013). In addition much criticism has befallen UK Government for

promoting this initiative, which has led to the introduction of mass redundancies and an ongoing round of Armed Forces restructuring as part of the Army 2020 reforms. In an interview conducted in October 2013, with a former British Army Recruiter it became clear that the mood amongst both civilian and military staff at the NRC, is one of extreme anxiety,

**Viv:** 20 October 2013

022 Viv: Time will tell if giving Army recruiting over to Capita  
023 works. I spent 5 plus years working for a Selection  
024 Office in ADSC Pirbright. I know Brig Andrew  
025 Jackson personally, and he'll do his best and duty to  
026 make it work. The vast majority of civilians who  
027 remained after Capita took over have now left in  
028 disgust at their policies. Only two army Selection  
029 Officers remain in Pirbright and are ashamed of  
030 the current situation.

Brigadier Jackson's appointment as commander of the Army side of the NRC, came at a time when the Army was withdrawing from Afghanistan. Jackson's own fears centred on the notion that the Army will "slip off the public's radar" and therein the NRC will fail to reach its planned recruitment targets. In an interview with Jackson, Cottrell (2013) concluded,

"That is why he [Jackson] is throwing all his considerable efforts into the Army's £440m 10-year contract with Capita that is already changing the face of Army recruitment — and threatens to transform it completely".

(Cottrell, 2013)

Regardless of who is operating the recruitment of Army personnel or whether or not government targets are being met, thousands of young people attend their local Armed Forces Careers Office or Online version each year. Most doing so with the intention seeking information or enlistment into one of the remaining Regiments and Corps of the British Army. It is clearly an unstable time for the MOD and a time of immense upheaval for the Army currently facing further redundancies. Yet the key principles providing a basis for the employment of soldiers remain broadly the same. That basis being defined in the MOD's Defense Plan (2013) as 'the defense of the United Kingdom and its interests', and 'strengthening of international peace and stability' (MOD Defense Plan. 2010-2014, pg. 4).

#### **4.2.2 The shape of things to come**

A career in the British Army undoubtedly creates change in a person's life; conveying a combination of opportunity and inherent risk. Whilst on the one hand remuneration for service beyond pay, includes a sense of kinship, self-discipline, physical fitness, personal



development and the opportunities to travel far beyond one's own community, it nonetheless comes at a cost. For many the culture shock is too vivid, the lifestyle too harsh and potential for harassment and bullying occasioned during training simply too much. Age and an individual's background will also determine outcome, not necessarily resulting from maturity but moreover their aspirational resolve to be soldiers and existing degrees of physical and emotional robustness. Prior experience of the Army in the form of the Army Cadets is of itself no guarantee of success, nor for that a military upbringing, nothing in a sense can prepare the individual for basic training, it is something to be experienced rather than speculated.

Those who engage with the system early will almost certainly profit in the long term, the regime being a deliberately brutal one, since it aims to manufacture an individual who can endure hardship and deprivation whilst remaining operationally effective. Logically the process must therefore be set at standard which for many will be simply unattainable (Wanous, 1991, pg. 212). In one sense the whole point of basic training is to filter out those who can, from those who cannot. For those who genuinely aspire to become members of a regular battalion the obstacles presented will be viewed as either necessary or part of the rites of passage into their battalions. Those who fail to embrace the candor of training simply reinforce the notion that indeed not all are suited, (Basham, 2009 pgs. 728-744).

**Dez:** 17 October 2009

211 B: How many were left by say the 1<sup>st</sup> month.  
 212 Dez: Most really like, few shit it from the off, some never got  
 213 there, had their names on the notice board, 'side the office  
 214 but never saw 'em.  
 215 B: Did you never think about jacking?<sup>†</sup>  
 216 Dez: No.  
 217 B: Never, not at all.  
 218 Dez: No I wanted to be there. Fuck going home, fuck that like  
 219 well fuck, me step-dad would 'ad a ball, no I liked it me.

**Col:** 5<sup>th</sup> December 2009

243 B: Did you lose many in the beginning?  
 244 Col: Phase 1 like, good few in the off, fucking good job too, mincers and  
 245 whingers aye, too fucking proud to clean out the shithouse. One kid  
 246 left coz he couldn't hack the mornings, tune in fucking Tokyo, it's  
 247 the fucking British ARMY not the Girl Guides.

<sup>†</sup>. **Jack:** slang [defamatory noun] i. An individual unable to engage, share or cooperate in off duty or interpersonal activities, a loner, devious or parsimonious individual.  
 [Defamatory verb] ii. To withdraw, give up, accept failure, leave.

**Ian:** 12 December 2009

186 B: Why do you think he left then?  
187 Ian: Well [...] I'm not sure not everyone's cut out for this. He was  
188 a cracking lad an all, but I reckon he was there for his farther,  
189 he was WOI in the REME. But his heart were never in it. He  
190 was the first, but there were a fair few on his tail, mostly non-  
191 hackers, a few transferred to the RLC 'cause they could.

Perhaps the opening question to be addressed should communicate a sense of what sort of person joins the Army in the first place. In relation to the recruitment of enlisted infantrymen, it's fair to concede that candidates tend to be drawn from disadvantaged backgrounds, teenagers with low educational attainment being the target of many recruitment initiatives, most joining as a last resort rather than a primary career goal. In the most recent survey of its kind<sup>28</sup>, the personal backgrounds of 500 recruits joining from 1999 to 2000 in the Cardiff catchment area of Wales in the UK revealed that:

- 69% of recruits were found to have come from a broken home;
- 50% were classified as coming from a deprived background;
- 16% had been long-term unemployed before joining;
- 35% had had more than eight jobs since leaving school (nearly all on a casual basis);
- Just over 60% had left school with no academic qualifications;
- 40% were joining the army as a last resort;
- 14% had more than five GCSEs at grades A-C.

Research conducted by the Army in 2004-2005 also commented on the educational performance of recruits tested that financial year, concluding that up to 50% functioned at Entry Level 3 in the case of literacy and Entry Level 2 with regard to numeracy<sup>29</sup>.

**Gaz:** 9 October 2009

151 Gaz: Doing what like, I've got no GCSEs I left school before we  
152 dun 'em in-it, Iz born October. Knew I shud uv in-it, but  
153 like I got offered a place in Harrogate. My mum thought it'd  
154 be like college, [laughter] let me go in-it. Some of my mates  
155 went civi college in Chippenham, got no money like.

**Col:** 5 December 2009

222 Col: I took no exams at school; I'd have fucked 'em up anyhow. Before  
223 we came over like, I wasn't your model student. Did anything to get  
224 out of there, didn't need any encouragement aye, just didn't like them  
225 telling us what to day, some of them Priests were bastard's aye.

<sup>28</sup>. MOD, 'Analysis of socio-economic and educational background of non-officer recruits', in House of Commons Defence Committee, Duty of Care, Vol 2, Ev 256/347. (2004)

<sup>29</sup>. House of Commons Defence Committee, Duty of Care, Vol 2, Ev 70.

**Tam:** 18 December 2009

248 Tam: School, haway tay fuck man I wuz no a scholar, got a few GCSEs  
249 'as cos me-mar wanted me tay do 'em, I wuz nay interested [...]  
250 boring as fuck ken.

Across the twenty individuals interviewed a similar detachment from education seems to be standard, with only 4 possessing A\* - C passes at GCSE, and 12 leaving school with no formal qualifications. There were exceptions however most notably Fab a soldier from the Parachute Regiment stood out educationally having achieved a 2:1 degree in PPE, Fab had attended an Oxbridge College preceded by a public school education. Ade, also fell into the former category having attained one A\* in Physical Education, a B in Religious Education and Cs in his remaining GCSEs, each of which with the exception of maths, centred on humanities subjects. Len and Mac were equally dissimilar from the mainstream, in that they were apprentices prior to enlistment and had successfully qualified at NVQ Level 3 in Hydro Engineering and Hospitality respectively.

Educational attainment alone far from being the only common thread linking informants was further coupled by additional social phenomenon specific to the recruitment of Infantrymen. The Infantry in particular has been found to attract the highest proportion of candidates from deprived backgrounds<sup>30</sup> whilst the MOD refute notions of targeting specific communities, evidence collated by Welsh Assembly Member Leanne Wood in 2006, found that the Army was up to 50% more likely to visit schools in the most deprived areas of Wales than those situated in the more affluent constituencies. Gee and Goodman (2010)<sup>31</sup> drew similar conclusions in relation to recruitment practices deployed in the London area. In a further study published in 2013, they estimated that the proportion of minors serving in the Infantry stood at 39%, stating in relation to the recruitment of minors into the Army that,

“...the Infantry is the largest [component], accounting for a quarter of the Army but containing one third of all its enlisted minors. [...] between 2007-08 and 2011-12, 35.3% of new Regular Army recruits joined Infantry regiments (39.2% of all minors and 33.8% of all adults).”<sup>32</sup>

(Gee & Goodman. 2013, pg. 2.)

<sup>30.</sup> IcWales: ‘Army “targeting deprived areas for recruits”’ [Wales web site], (December 2006.)  
<http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/army-targeting-deprived-areas-recruits-2287723>

<sup>31.</sup> Data from 2009-10: 33.7% of minors in the Army were in the Infantry; calculated from Hansard: House of Commons Debate, 19 January 2011, c824W. Note that the proportion of Army entrants who are minors joining the Infantry is higher than this, at 35.8% in the same year; calculated from Hansard: House of Commons Debate, 13 May 2013, c99W.

<sup>32.</sup> Calculated from Hansard: HC Deb, 13 May 2013, c99W; DASA. (2010). ‘TSP 19 – Intake to and Outflow from UK Regular Forces’

In this study 12 of the 20 respondents were minors at their point of enlistment, though this figure relates specifically to the study cohort rather than Infantry recruitment *per se*, it falls all but 15% short of the national average. In relation to the backgrounds of informants however, five past the age of 7 had been brought up entirely in Social Services Residential Care provisions, with a further four having spent the majority of their formative years in the care system however in Foster Care. Of the remaining ten, six described their upbringing as difficult, three having been brought up by a single parent in all but one case their mothers, with three being raised predominantly by their maternal grandparents. The remaining four describe a happy childhood spent with both parents in a stable home environment shared by siblings.

**Dez:** 5 December 2009

329 Dez: I’z glad really, me Mam was always skint then she fell  
 330 with our Tony an Frank moved in, there weren’t room to  
 331 swing a cat, the ‘ouse was, do you know Kirkdale, [...]  
 332 whatever, no, [...] anyway I went to live with me Nan, me  
 333 granddad had gone by then, love her, then I joined up.

**Mac:** 18 February 2010

436 Mac: No I were brought up in a care home, smashing place  
 437 Worcestershire not Brum you know, it were a proper  
 438 old house gang of us. It’d been in papers but not when  
 439 we were there, smashing place.

**Ian:** 23 October 2009

188 Ian: My last foster dad was ex RAF, bit of a tit actually, Fucking  
 189 Rock Apes<sup>†</sup> spare me, ‘is misses was kind, fit too for an older  
 190 girl, actually she was the only reason I stayed as long as I did.  
 191 But no here’s always been home if that’s what you mean.

Careers guidance afforded to both would-be recruits and their guardians has also been criticized for being deliberately selective and to a degree ambiguous. Recruitment prose in the case of Army publications have a tendency to glamorise armed conflict, often glossing over the very real nature and risks intrinsic to infantry soldiering. Current commitments faced by Britain’s Armed Forces focus on a truly global portfolio. Recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq form but two of many overseas commitments centring on war-fighting, in addition to training, Peacekeeping and patrolling duties from Somalia, Malawi and Sierra Leone to Cyprus and the Falklands Islands.

<sup>†</sup>. **Rock Ape(s):** Defamatory noun [slang army]; Person(s) serving with the RAF Regiment

The ambiguous nature of recruitment has by and large been confirmed by each informant, suggesting that they were either awestruck, overwhelmed or too immature to understand the true nature of recruitment, or simply switched off allowing the process to surge along in the hope that they'd end up with a job.

Ade remembers very little and might well fall into the overwhelmed category, for him it was a rollercoaster ride terminating at Harrogate Station. Tam on the other hand, a forces child was awestruck. He'd attended the recruitment office with his father a former RSM of his proposed Regiment, viewing the meeting as a formality, a necessary evil and simply part of the process. As for Sid and Ern, amongst the youngest in their recruitment parties each admits to being too immature to accurately gauge what was going on.

**Sid:** 12 December 2009

328 Sid: didn't have a fucking Scooby; I was like on a bottle job, I daren't  
329 pull out like fuck, me mates would have had a fieldtrip. Couldn't  
330 have, no, been long passed me 15th first time, I was in the following  
331 March an I weren't 16 before the October. I remember the driving  
332 licence bit coz I told the lass I was seeing, me Mam she had to come  
333 with may she were more on the ball than us.

**Ern:** 14 December 2009

594 Ern: You got-uh laugh though un ew, I went in for a bet, first off, [...] fuck  
595 knows what 'appened, spose it must 'ave looked good or summut. My  
596 support worker she, [...] Ruth 'er name wuz, very like right-on in-it, she  
597 went in with us, all like child rights an stuff, 'at wuz on the way in say,  
598 fucking converted her green by time we woz on-u way out. That's it,  
599 really bullshit baffles brains in-it, well ass alls I 'member.

Additional criticism might also be directed at the somewhat vague explanations given in relation to their contracts, which in general failed to detail the fullest extent to which they might be at risk, or present their terms of service, legal rights or service responsibilities in transparent terms. In relation to the interviewees all but Fab, had grasped the finer detail of the contract, having researched it thoroughly beforehand. Tam had lived the contract so to speak and concluded that if it had been good enough for his older brother and father it was good enough for him, with the remaining soldiers confessing total ignorance their recruitment more often based on boredom a lack of opportunity or the opinion of others.

#### 4.2.3 Legally bound

Military careers like one's terms of service are by nature complex, and whilst a recruit may apply for discharge few know how, fewer still seem to be aware that they have no legal right to withdraw from training before end of the first month. After this initial period, 14 days notice must be given in writing whereupon approval to leave may be granted. This first window of opportunity remains ajar between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> month of service, however during this period no right on the part of the recruit to purchase an earlier discharge exists<sup>33</sup>. Any right to terminate after the 1<sup>st</sup> month is again reliant on an individual's intentions being presented in writing up to the end of the 6 month point when this option expires. From the 6 month point onwards until one's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday recruits may give 3 months notice to leave, again this application must be presented in writing. People leave for many reasons, the routine, sense of susceptibility or isolation being foremost in relation to motives, others simply come to realise that their preconceptions of service were erroneous and leave at the first opportunity.

It is difficult to comprehend the degree of remoteness experienced when joining the Army, or gauge a sense of how isolating and all-consuming the process actually is. Yet fundamentally during these opening days the institution will determine access to all interaction whilst retaining total control of all physical space. The levels of institutional control are considerable, the development of *soldier-self* will be in-part dependent on the physical arrangements and settings in which the recruits will live and train. Indeed physical space in military training establishments are symbolic of control, created as bespoke environments that enable a very specific self to emerge. The structure of training and nature of interaction taking place are similarly regulated at all training venues. From the localised environment or Barracks, including the cookhouse, living quarters, gymnasium, Parade Square and recreation areas, to the external firing ranges and Combat Training Areas, even 'educational visits' to military museums, battlefields and so forth, are each synchronized.

Each activity occurs in a distinctly military and therein controllable space, access to and from external activities facilitated by the institutions transport pool. Whilst the core of activity is conducted in the relative isolation of the Barracks, encounters with the outside world are also

<sup>33</sup>. Queens Regulations (9.416)

governed, since as suggested the external venues are each components of the institution. For some the environment becomes claustrophobic, many opting to leave their timescale as such discussed above. Recruits who do not express an intention to leave before the 6 month point will become legally obliged to remain until they are 22 years of age. Thus monumental decisions on the part of the recruit must be made during this potentiality overwhelming and hectic period of a 16-18 year olds life. Adding to the confusion is the notion that training itself is heavily programmed leaving little opportunity to reflect on the termination timetable, or for that one's feelings towards the career proposed during the recruitment period. Few will comprehend what will follow basic training, most will be polarised, too absorbed in their daily activities to meaningfully consider their option to leave. Others will have quickly accustomed themselves to the routine and remain content, considering the rewards to be conducive with their aspiration to be.

Since many recruits will have experienced a degree of social deprivation prior to enlistment, were unable to access paid work of any significance. Wealth alone therefore when viewed as a condition compounded by their age and disengagement from education, most as civilians an indicator of social status would signify that beyond their own friendship groups they lacked any marketable social status at all. Pre-enlistment status as such or the lack of it places the Army at a distinct advantage. Basic training as suggested by Felices-Luna (2011, pg. 3) has a mortification effect on the self anyway, therein stripping away previous notions of identity and assumed status in order to establish a new sense of self, *soldier-self*. The apparatus and procedures inherent in the military institution create a set of conditions where the recruits become physically, socially and emotionally isolated from mainstream culture. Living 'behind the wire' therein ensures that a state dependency on the institution evolves, with the specific aim of creating an equally specific and dependant self.

The primary goal of the training establishment is to create the conditions where an assumed identity can be fashioned, one that places a fixed set of expectations on the recruit and one that dictates all aspects of daily life. The military institution unlike that of the prison or asylum is occupied by compliant volunteers, who are taught to wash, dress, speak, stand and operate in a manor specific to the institutional ideal (Weber 1904; 1949, pg. 90). For those who cannot comply with the 'norms' of the institution or refuse to engage with the training program, their right to leave is made deliberately complicated or obstructive, enabling what

the Armed Forces describe as a cooling-off period to take effect. Soldier-*self* in no short time will emerge through compliance to this complex triangulation of conditions involving the manipulation of physical space, explicit social interaction and institutional arrangements (Weil, 2011. pgs. 25-32). Since the Weberian notion of status relates accordingly to life-style category or wealth on the one hand and the collective system of esteem and honour on the other; those recruit's who manage the transition competently will have logically aspired to assume the identity of a soldier, viewing the financial and symbolic rewards offered as entirely credible, their new identities in a sense an enhancement of their previous selves.

The military institution is nevertheless a 'greedy institution' since as Coser (1974, pg. 4) states, like all greedy institutions,

'...they seek exclusive and undivided loyalty and they attempt to reduce the claims of competing roles and status positions on those they wish to encompass within their boundaries. The demands on the person are omnivorous.'

(Coser, 1974. pg. 4)

The Greedy [military] institution seeks to 'break' existing social bonds, whilst preventing any new undesirable attachments from taking shape. It achieves this aim as suggested through control of structural conditions. Firstly it segregates the recruit from mainstream society and then presents them with an idealised image of the soldier, encouraging recruits to earn their place in the battalion and elite status via a rite of passage, *vis a vis* basic training. Elaborated rituals lie at the heart of the military training system creating a form of reliance, one that is dependent on the symbolic customs embodied in Regimental Lore. Throughout the course of their training the recruit's sense of individuality thus far rooted in citizen-*self* will be eroded leaving soldier-*self* in its wake. The latter model a more compliant self, one geared to serve the needs of the collective, a departure from the more hedonistic citizen-*selves* that they leave at the guardroom.

Those who elect to 'soldier on', yet choose to leave on completion of their initial contracts, (4 years Adult Entrant - 6 years Junior Entrant) will on discharge become Short Service Leavers (SSL) and placed immediately on the Reserve List for a further 6 years. During which time they may be recalled to Army service or training. Should the recruit or soldier go 'Absent Without Leave' (AWOL) prior to completing his service, he will liable for punishment and detention<sup>34</sup>. The length of time spent AWOL may then be added to his release date after the soldiers 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday. Further time restraints may also be added after one's 22<sup>nd</sup> birthday in the case of soldiers undertaking specialised courses, which carry further time penalties or



‘Trade Blocks’. Of the veterans interviewed only one was aware of his contractual obligations, most viewing the signing of their contracts as a milestone a mark of distinction and confirmation that they had indeed earned their place in the Army.

<sup>34</sup>. Manual of Military Law (MML: 304 s.38)

**Dez:** 19 April 2010

578 Dez: I just signed the bit of paper, never thought ‘bout it  
579 really, an I adden done all the fucking training to cop  
580 then, wouldn’t ‘ave bin much fucking point in ‘at.

**Ken:** 18 February 2010

443 Ken: I got the nod just after my 18<sup>th</sup> I knew what it was about  
444 there were a ton of us like, in a way it was great I think  
445 our money went up.  
446 B: Did you know exactly what you were signing for?  
447 Ken: Are you having a laugh, did you? I mean by that point you  
448 was in the fucking club weren’t you, they could have put a  
449 blank bit-u paper in front of me and I’d uh signed it.

**Mac:** 10 October 2009

187 Mac: ‘s-like death by fucking paperwork this, fucking over  
188 complicated. Weren’t like this to sign on were it, shit  
189 that were just like sign here chum and that were that, in  
190 it just fucking typical uv the Army though.

In most cases awareness of contractual obligations only came to light as a consequence of their decisions extend their service, only then when signing their new contracts some 4 to 6 years later, had they either the time, inclination or maturity to realize the meaning of the document. Those who were married also had the support of their spouses to help make sense of military jargon and conditions of service.

#### **4.2.4 The Incentives**

People join the Armed Forces for patriotic reasons, for Crown and Country as their forebears had. Others hail as suggested from economically impoverished regions and thus conclude that better opportunities exist in one or another of the Armed Services than elsewhere in their communities. In the case of those who grew up in dysfunctional families the army may well have been viewed as a surrogate for the friendships and family relationships absent in childhood. There are also those who lack formal qualifications who enlist to avoid a life of minimum wages resulting from unskilled often mundane jobs, whilst others simply aspire.

Within this cohort the majority entered service as adolescents, or young men, their ages ranging from 15¼ to 23 year of age, their reasons for joining encompassing all of the above. Twelve enlisted as Junior Entrants starting their careers at 15½-16 whilst eight joined as Adults, four of whom were 18 two 19, one 20, one 21 and as stated one was 23 years of age.

For those with no formal links to the military, or experience of one or another of the Cadet Force's, enlistment meant either an increase in wealth, a means of accessing sport or in many cases a last resort. The Army spends millions of pounds each year advertising the benefits of a career in uniform, offering many incentives designed to attract a predominantly youth audience. Self-development in the form of educational opportunities being a central component of all Army recruiting drives. The opportunity to revisit basic skills particularly those of literacy and numeracy, whilst on the surface positive incentives, appear in practice to be little more than stratagems devised to encourage recruitment. The inclusion of educational incentives discussed throughout the recruiting literature more likely to promote parental consent or government oversight, than engage often school weary children. At the Army Foundation College (AFC) Harrogate, educational courses pursued by recruits centre on a syllabus of Level 1 Functional Skills in English and Maths and a Level 2 Diploma for IT Users<sup>35</sup>.

Over the 50 weeks of training undertaken at the AFC, candidates spend an average of five and a half hours a week, a little over 1hour and 25 minutes per subject, studying for these qualifications; whilst recruiters emphasise the notion that serving soldiers can participate in courses of education leading to civilian qualifications at the Army's expense. Education and training courses they insist, that lead to qualifications relevant to contemporary civil labour markets, claims which in practice are at best ambiguous at worst outright falsehoods. The Wolf Report (2010) unambiguously concluded that vocational qualifications were no substitute for GCSEs at grades A\* to C, one of the Report's main concluding recommendations was that,

“Students who are under 19 and do not have GCSE A\*—C in English and/or Maths should be required...to pursue a course which either leads directly to these qualifications, or which provide significant progress towards GCSE entry and success [...] Key Skills should not be considered a suitable qualification in this context”.

(The Wolf Report. 2010, pg. 15)

In spite of such recommendations the current recruiting brochure for the Infantry continues to describes the educational opportunities available to recruits in upbeat and encouraging terms stating that,

“The Infantry spends millions making sure its Soldiers are well-rounded people equipped with skills and qualifications valid in the civilian world—and the journey begins on day one. You’ll receive a basic education in things like maths, IT and literacy—courses designed to help finish off your school or college

35. House of Commons Debate, 18 July 2011, c578 W.

education. Why did you join the Infantry? [Testimonial pg. 18] I left school at 16 without many GCSEs, my mates at the time were either getting into drugs or doing boring jobs. ...I spent my first six months at Army College, where I got A grades in maths and IT. The Army basically helped me finish off my schooling.”

(Army Life, Your guide to the Infantry: 2016, pg. 18-19)

If self development in relation to education pertains to the delivery of knowledge pertinent to a contemporary knowledge based economy, then the meagre offering presented here fall someway short. Indeed most of the cohort interviewed recall lessons in basic skills as being broadly viewed as a time wasting exercise, the contrast in tempo between military training and classroom based activities more often than not inducing sleep.

**Dez:** 9 October 2009

388 Dez: Nine times out of ten we caught up on a bit of kip.

392 B: What during lessons?

393 Dez: I done a winter course, it was fucking Baltic, them classrooms

394 were like toast, boring as fuck ‘n-all, I was right shit in school

395 that’s why I joined up in the first place, to fucking avoid the like

396 classroom.

397 B: So you didn’t like education then.

398 Dez: No did I fuck as like, should have, but no.

The attitudes of many of the training staff also failed to inspire adherence, or for that motivation with regard to education, or perhaps they themselves lacked formal qualification and conceded to promote notions that they hadn’t suffered unduly as a consequence.

**Hal:** 4 December 2009

249 B: Were they encouraging when you had education?

250 Hal: Training Staff, like fuck, most of ‘em was good lads some

251 wankers, few thought they was lot better than they was.

252 But no, passed a few like fancied ‘emselves like, clever

253 bastards, an like thick as shit really. Ours were a pretty

254 good bunch, worked with most of ‘em, after like. But I

255 a had mate from home in't Guards like, one-u theirs like  
256 big C\*\*t, if he thought you was clever-er than him he just  
257 used to beast 'em.

**Col:** 5 December 2009

249 B: How about education how did that work out for you?  
250 Col: Like I say I was no intellectual, an the NCOs well they  
251 kind-u made it clear, reckon they saw it like a skive, I  
252 had a lot of respect for them, so kind of agreed, saying  
253 that some of them was plane fucking retards.

Information pertaining to Infantry recruitment in particular raises the notions self-development repetitively; stressing the point that self-development is the foremost reward of an Infantry career. Notions of mental and physical fitness are summed up throughout in corporal language, emphasising development of mental and physical toughness or robustness. Themes of being 'stretched and challenged', having the opportunity to 'excel in sports' or being able to deal with 'any situation' in army and civilian life', are prevalent throughout the literature. A more candid interpretation might suggest that one of the overriding goals of basic training is to fashion a fit self-disciplined, and therein self-policing combatant who possesses an intrinsic catalogue of self-corrective ideals. The foundations of self-policing are laid during initial training where the familiar concept physical training is often used as a blueprint or aid, encouraging physical and mental robustness, whilst strengthening degrees of obedience.

Physical training as such, delivered via communal activities also facilitates an important first step towards martial self-discipline and loyalty and is thus in-keeping with the wider military training doctrine. Physical training far from delivering enhanced performances on the sports field alone is undertaken to enhance a soldier's performance on the battlefield. Team sports regardless of the event extend levels of cooperation within the 'team' whilst undeniably maintaining or developing degrees of physical endurance, stamina and robustness. In addition team sport is reliant upon rules, enabling the values of the institutional to be transferred discursively to yet another setting within the institution itself. The good sportsman model is in a sense a metaphor or characterization of a good soldier, since parallel values apply to each. Furthermore the sports field analogy can be applied both in action and discourse to the conduct and attitude desired of military trainees in all martial fields.

Whilst euphemistic, discourse centring on sports and fitness also enable recruiters and later training staff to circumvent the seemingly palpable notion that an Infantryman is foremost a

foot soldier, his equipment carried, his primary means of conveyance his feet. In military training like sport, criticism is regarded as a learning tool, conveyed with the aim of improving performance via the reiteration of rules and policies; it is also a means of further validating the preferred institutional model of self. The surveillance networks informing criticism are located ubiquitously throughout the institution, promoting an impression of subjugation whilst serving as a deterrent to nonstandard activities. Both the criticism and notions of surveillance become central to development of soldier-*self*, each reliant on the recruit's awareness of significant others (Woelfel. 1971, pg. 86-97). By viewing the roles others play, the recruit begins to view his own social position from different perspectives, therein connecting with the outlook of others and sharing meaning.

The self emerges ironically as a distant object, enabling a fusion of the perspectives of self and others, resulting in the adoption of uniform values and sense of belonging within the cohort with whom one interacts and perhaps more significantly with the institution itself. The process that enables the recruit and significant others to become as one in thought and outlook, centres on the shared meanings they ascribe to the objects and symbols they individually and collectively respond to during interaction. The common ground presented in ritualised activities soon become significant, their meaning whilst often tacit, in many cases forming the foundations of an institutionally cognisant self. Thornborrow and brown (2009, p. 358) cite Foucault (1977) when suggesting that “under the panoptic gaze an individual becomes the principle of his own subjection” (Foucault 1977, pp. 202-203).

Parallels in speech between sporting and military themes serve as suggested as an early means of enablement, utilising familiar language as metaphors to create both the conditions and discourse for recruits to produce themselves through ‘technologies of the self’ such as ‘examination’ (the constitution of the self as an object that can be measured) and ‘confession’ (the constitution of the self as a subject that can be verbalized, judged and ‘improved’). Technologies of the self,

‘permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.’

(Foucault. 1988, pg. 18)

Throughout the course of their training the recruits will adopt the values and belief strategies of the institution, a process reinforced by routine referral back to preferred unit specific rules,

which ultimately shape self. Therein notions of fidelity, transparency and altruism become embedded, yet as suggested there is method at play here, loyalty corresponds to obedience, transparency supports self-policing whilst altruism equates [for better or worse] to hegemony and the principle that all are equal within the bounds of their own rank.

The building blocks which begin with communally organised activities, through sport, foot drill and shared messing arrangements, lead rapidly to assault courses, weapons drill and eating and drinking routines in the field. The assumed benefits do not end with sport however, far from it; in supplementing such concepts of robustness brochures cite resourcefulness and self-reliance or the act of becoming responsible as fundamental; emphasising that such qualities embody the values of courage and integrity.

‘An Infantry career places you at the heart of front-line action, giving you the ultimate challenge in locations across the globe. And most jobs come with qualifications, putting you in a strong position if you ever decide to leave the Army’.p3. ‘...we will develop you into someone who can take their place alongside people for whom courage, honesty and integrity are all in a day’s work.’ pg.4 Specialist jobs also come with qualifications, and the Army helps you turn them into civilian accreditation if you leave.’ pg.5 ‘...you’ll learn combat skills and boost your physical and mental toughness.’ pg.4. ‘If you want to be an Olympic world record-beater, [Testimonial pg. 5] With the Army’s help, I’m aiming to compete in the London Olympics in 2012.”

(Army life: A guide to the Infantry. 2013, pg. 3).

Naturally the ability to work as a team player goes hand in hand with any occupation as overtly hazardous as soldiering, often necessitating mutual cooperation in order to achieve self-preservation. The discourse of recruitment like that of training also emphasize such notions in more poignant often emotively coercive terms, frequently referring to historical events centring on the human condition at its very best. Here concepts of loyalty and fidelity are relayed in terms of kinship or a sense of belonging, rather than a consequence of operational necessities; or notions of a collective engaged in activities more accurately described as life-threatening, wherein all of the above become paramount as a matter of survival rather than camaraderie.

**Fab:** 4 October 2009

191Fab: I was a sucker for the history, found Arnhem truly moving,  
192 the graveyard with the schoolchildren was a touch. But yes  
193 I knew what they meant by PARA, well I know what it is to  
194 be one, entirely commend the factory, it’s an awesome clan.

**Qui:** 6 October 2009

020 Qui: We wuz raised in 1633 ken, did nay fuck we uz till 2006.  
021 As a fucking Regiment Baz, got uz in ta scrapes as fer back  
022 as Tangier, Namur, Blenheim name it pal, been there. Some  
023 brave lads ken, aye no sure think we done Telic as, aye as  
024 before we wuz RRS.

**Jon:** 6 October 2009

233 Jon: Cover all that in training mind Reggie 'istory like, see I  
234 liked that, done it Cadets too as it goes. Certainly made  
235 you feel proud of the Regiment, its achievements like, I  
236 du-no I'd like to think we done our bit too. Reckon they  
237 might include us but? Naa probably not got unpopular see.

The language of training is equally elusive, recruits developing a mindset that is seemingly impervious to danger, one weighed down with bravado or invincibility loosely interpreted by training staff as *esprit de corps*. The enemy is always defeated in training due by and large to the superior application of martial knowledge, tactics and experience of hundreds of years of soldiering. Indeed only when battlefield first aid appears on the curriculum does it become apparent that life changing injuries or worse death can and indeed do occur in combat.

**Ern:** 11 November 2009

238 Ern: Well no, but when you gets to the point where you're  
239 not 'anging out your arse no more, an the sections all  
240 coming on sweet you feel like the dog's bollocks in-it,  
241 I mean you can hack a few days in the field like, an you  
242 got bags uv like confidences in how you do the job like.  
243 B: So how does that compare with the real thing?  
244 Ern: Well it don't, basic in-it, just got-uh do your job an 'ope  
246 for the best like simple as.

**Gaz:** 12 November 2009

298Gaz: Build ups same as all training aye horse-shit, they say like  
299 *oh this is realistic*, iz it fuck-az-like, you're in the bar by tea  
300 time. And it don't matter how you like dresses up the enemy  
301 force you knowz them's support company lads coz you took  
302 the piss out 'em at scan. What's the fucking point in-it?  
303B: How the fuck did you survive Catterick?  
304Gaz: What Training like [laughing], didn't know no better then mate,  
305 all seemed pretty real 'em days.

**Bob:** 11 November 2009

184 Bob: Brecon aye 'at's where you start to learn proper. Most  
185 times you either freezing your c\*\*t off or that de-hydrated  
186 you'd drink your own pish. Not that I have mind you,  
187 just saying. In ITC like you're fucking green you'll  
188 believe any-hing, think you're a wee Chuck Norris, think  
189 your kit'll do the job for you. Brecon's a wake-up call for  
190 sure, but even 'at's fuck all like a tour. Got no mammy

191 to wipe your arse when you're away.

However realistic the scenario even battlefield medicine (Abraham, 1982, pg. 18-27) and the accounts of training instructors well versed in the reality of war, fail to bring home the full truth and horror of armed conflict. As a consequence a false sense of security permeates down through the ranks to a degree where an attitude centring on either disregard or ambivalence prevails. It is important to remember that the young men undergoing training are highly susceptible to the attitudes of their instructors and profoundly affected by their own actions and the way they imagine how others see them. This mirroring effect extends far beyond an adherence to petty rules, but rather all concerns relating to their "appearance, manners, aims, deeds, character, friends, and so on" (Cooley. 1964, pg. 169). The power of the instructor to influence is vast and doubtless the primary resource in the shaping of soldier-*self*.

**Ian:** 11 November 2009

257 Ian: Who now? The training staff?  
258 B: Yes in Harrogate, you know you section corporals or whoever.  
259 Ian: Oh OK, well on the 'ole they was good, I mean they wouldn't  
260 'ave bin there if they weren't, some were like a bit keen, well  
261 bayonets<sup>†</sup> like, but I reckons they was excellent on the, we was  
262 only kids like so they had a fucker of a job to do, making Toms  
263 of us. No they done a sound job taught us the basics like, couldn't  
264 'ave been easy. [laughing] Didn't have much choice though did  
265 we, I mean them was like fucking gods.

**Pat:** 11 November 2009

241 Pat: Well you couldn't get away with jack; they had you by the balls,  
242 place was wrapped up that tight, an 'em all had it in for yuz.  
243 B: How do you mean?  
244 Pat: Staff like didn't matter them were yours or not like, they all  
245 barked at yuz.  
246 B: OK what about your platoon NCOs?  
247 Pat: Fucking sound, top lads aye model fucking soldiers on the whole.  
248 Most were like well proper good example t-uz, fit az fuck too  
249 nails man.

**Hal:** 11 November 2009

251Hal: I done Harrogate as a Lance Jack.  
252B: Fantastic, you must have been very well regarded.  
253Hal: I never went there so it was a bit of shock, the age like, but no  
254 it were right good.  
255B: So what sort of training NCO were you?  
256Hal: How'd you mean?  
257B: Well were you all spit-n-polish, or more for the fitness or the  
258 field, you know what was your area of interest.



†. **Bayonets:** Noun [Army slang] derogatory term meaning ‘prick’

259Hal: I were never one for the bullshit me, but they had to be on the  
260 ball with the phys like, well they’d never survive the battalion  
261 if they weren’t, an when we was on the ground I were a twat for  
262 weapon security. But they done whatever you told ‘em, anyways,  
263 so it weren’t exactly hard like, not once you got patter together.

Due to the character of the total institution and role of its primary actors the creative power of self becomes stifled, made compliant as a result of the ongoing and intensive nature of training. This leads ultimately to a saturation point where the reflexive self begins to associate all aspects of being within the context dictated by the perceived expectations of the institution. Consequently rather than focusing on a balanced self, as actor or object, recruit-self now acts relentlessly on the interplay between the same social process, namely military training. All other aspects of daily life being provided for, food, bedding, shops, and recreation *et cetera*. In this instance the ability to define and redefine self, in terms of personal skills, physical ability, and so forth becomes wholly dependent on feedback from specific significant others, primarily ones training NCOs in addition to Akkis, Small Arms and tactics Instructors and anyone further up the ladder than the recruit. The natural inclination to make objective judgments (I’m exhausted, it’s too early) being relegated since such thought falls outside of the institutionally approved model of self. As the recruit’s perception of self changes reassessment occurs, encompassing past, present and more importantly future self concepts.

Future or aspirational selves symbolized in thought, centre on notions of what they might become, what they would like to become, or what they might fail to become. ‘They correspond to hopes, fears, standards, goals, and threats’ (Cross & Madson, 1997, pp. 5-37). The function of aspirational self is to motivate future selves whilst providing a means of appraising or understanding the current environment. In a sense during training the institution blinkers the interplay between self as author of action and self as the object of action. A process deployed so adeptly that the institutional attitude permeates through all aspects of being, the specific other becoming enmeshed with the broader attitudes of the institution, recruits quickly viewing themselves as the generalized, institutional other, as soldiers. Whilst it would be disingenuous to suggest that the first rate training received by recruits or outstanding performance of the Defence Medical Service fails in its job of preserving life, or preparing young infantry soldiers for combat, training cannot holistically prepare the soldier for what lies ahead. Nothing can.

In simulation recruit identities are thus moulded ostensibly on the grounds of an assumed identity created and maintained by the institution. These lessons in life are nevertheless further diluted when notions of operations in distant and exotic locations enter the frame. And whilst soldiering is an unarguable antidote for boredom, the promise of such adrenalin packed excitement on some distant and exotic shore is somewhat difficult to envisage from a training base in North Yorkshire, in a sense further distancing the recruit from the realities inherent to his chosen occupation. Assurance of a fitter, healthier lifestyle inclusive of access to sport, adventurous training and activities that would normally fall well beyond the average purse, are reinforced with a promise that such activities will be played out and sponsored against a truly international backdrop.

“What other organisation pays you to play sport on a Wednesday afternoon? You can pursue 53 different sports at home and abroad, generally at no cost. Facilities are first rate and there is free top-level coaching in everything from Alpine skiing to windsurfing.” [...] Add to this the chance to take part in adventurous training in exotic locations, and to develop great friendships with the lads in your unit, and there’s a career worth fighting for in the Infantry.”

(MOD<sup>2</sup>, 2013, p. 5)

There also seem to an absence of any commentary regarding the more mundane pursuits; the guards, sentry duty’s, fire pickets and camp conservation routines. Indeed there will be very little time for boredom to set in *per se*, with operations, training and peacekeeping commitments on the rise and the numbers of armed forces personnel declining annually.

Notions of the copious opportunities allegedly afforded soldiers to pursue adventurous training and sports interests, or benefit of free international travel, were alien concepts to many in the study. Though they had indeed travelled, some to distinctly exotic locations, few had done so expressly for the either the purpose of sport, leisure or adventurous training. Moreover the opportunities as such were facilitated as a result of R&R a privilege rather than entitlement, awarded at the end of a military training scheme or operation. Even in these cases soldiers were expected to supplement such activity with their own funds, and often had very few options as to which activities they might like to undertake.

**Ian:** 18 February 2010

438 B: Did you get much adventurous training in?

439 Ian: What in training?

440 B: Whenever.

441 Ian: Done some in Harrogate, an a bit when we was in Kenya

442 hill walking like. If you had the money you could have

443 done other stuff, but as-per I was ball-bagged. Well it was  
 444 alright like, went to Mt. Kenya; saw a few animals like, that  
 445 was good. In training we done Scarfell Pike that was OK.  
 446 B: Anything else, go anywhere cool.  
 447 Ian: Um [...] no not really, only done climbing in Kenya 'cause  
 448 we was there. Build up for Afghan.

**Dez:** 11 December 2009

409 B: Nice, so where was the best place you've been then?  
 410 Dez: In what way like.  
 411 B: Well the most exotic.  
 412 Dez: What like nice, like an 'olliday nice or different like not like  
 413 where we usually goes.  
 414 B: We'll either.  
 415 Dez: Belize was like different; bits were good I quite liked the training,  
 416 the jungle stuff. Cracking exercise, 'ad a bit of leave, went diving,  
 417 cost me a fucking arm an a leg, I got some sound pictures though,  
 418 like fish an stuff

**Hal:** 11 December 2009

390 Hal: I never done any not when we was in Cyprus, I 'ad extras, in Kenya  
 391 we was confined to barracks an I never been to Belize. Been to  
 392 Afghan like, that was, pretty fucking, what you call it, [...] exotic.

Access to travel to any one of the aforementioned exotic locations far from being a perk or entitlement usually stemmed from one of two preconditions. The first centring on the notion that you're in that location already in order to fulfil a military training objective, and the second that such activities keep often large bodies of men away from local towns and cities post-scheme. An additional factor and one that lies close to the heart of military doctrine, is the notion that regardless of the activity, it detracts soldiers from less physical or docile forms of recreation, in favour of activities linked to their day to day roles as soldiers. The more desirable activities also incur a financial contribution from the individual to 'subsidise' the activity, many out of pocket expensive rendering the experience too expensive. In most cases the Senior Ranks and Officers will use such periods of R&R to visit local places of interest in small groups or individually, benefiting from the opportunity as one might expect of a tourist.

#### **4.2.5 External Interaction & Personal Self**

In relation to one's personal life and relationships beyond the camp gates, recruitment material unambiguously asserts that weekends belong to the individual. Stating that,

“Despite the demands made on soldiers, ‘there’s no danger of losing touch’ with friends and family. [...] weekends are free and there are

plenty of opportunities for the same kind of relaxation and social life that a civilian would enjoy”.

(MOD, 2006, p.36)

Whilst advances in digital technology have certainly brought soldiers closer to their families, the geographical location and operational commitment of units will invariably dictate how and when access to family might be facilitated in the flesh. The British Army is located on a

global rather than local map<sup>36</sup>, its Regiments not necessarily located in the region of recruitment. Indeed in relation to the individuals interviewed, coincidence rather than design invariably brought some closer to home. Ade for example initially joined the Light Infantry which amalgamated in 2007 to form The Rifles, thereafter 1 Rifles was accommodated in Beachley Barracks Chepstow, South Wales. Prior to the amalgamation Ade had on no occasion been posted so close to home, with the exception of courses undertaken at the Infantry Battle School, (INFBS) located in Sennybridge, Powys, mid Wales.

His local unit at the time of recruitment was the Royal Regiment of Wales now the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion the Royal Welsh who are based at Lucknow Barracks in Tidworth, Wiltshire. While many enlist for the express purpose of getting away from their home-towns, those in search of change and new experiences, the statement remains nonetheless misleading. The National Audit Office (2013) reported that most soldiers remain on the whole satisfied with their service conditions,

“...however, the perceived negative impact of Service life on family and/or personal life is the highest factor (58 per cent) associated with an intention to leave the Service; and those satisfied with Service life in general has decreased eight percentage points since 2012 to 49 per cent.”

(National Audit Office, 2013, pg. 19.)

Supplementary incentives refer to notions that individuals undertaking such a career will be doing so in an organisation that instils pride and a sense of Britishness in its personnel, a feeling that they are special, the best<sup>37</sup>. Stating that,

“...right from the start of training, pride is one of the most important things a soldier learns.

(MOD<sup>3</sup>, 2013)

<sup>36.</sup> See Appendix iii, iv, vii, & viii British Army unit locations

<sup>37.</sup> MOD 2013, publication: Meet The Army, A Guide Partners, Parents and Friends. p.25

Part of the training will indeed focus on personal pride, taught through the medium of health and hygiene, or washing and ironing and the general principles of good housekeeping. Clearly personal hygiene particularly when on operations enhances health and lessens the spread of infectious diseases. Notions of pride also extend to ones equipment embodied primarily in the upkeep and presentation of one's uniform, however with very few exceptions everything the soldier uses as part of his activities of daily life will be his to maintain, and since he will have signed for it he'll have a financial obligation to preserve it. Indeed all issued equipment will have to be preserved and kept in an operational state; in fact failure to do so may lead to financial penalties, possible restrictions of privilege and in the worst cases detention. The Army's disposition towards the upkeep of equipment is entirely pragmatic, thus damage to equipment including the body of the soldier [sunstroke is a punishable offence] is viewed dimly. Of the many items of equipment issued the most significant is the rifle, viewed not simply as an extension of self but moreover a component part.

The more public face of unit pride is moreover disseminated via subjective notions of unit pride and their own unique and glorious histories. In this aspect the British Army seeks to deploy a form of Membership Categorisation Device (Housley & Fitzgerald, 2002, pp.59-83; Silverman, 1998 p. 28; Sacks, 1972 pp. 280-293) in the figure of the hero, as an idealised type symbolically imbuing the qualities of character intrinsic to soldiering and therein worthy of aspiration. Pre-enlistment publications centring on the heroic are further entrenched during training, promulgating notions of gallantry and heroism, reinforced in formal lessons taught via individual Regimental histories. Here examples of the human condition at its most honourable, serve to standardise the qualities of selflessness, encouraging adolescents in a sense to accept their fate beforehand, safe in the knowledge that their sacrifice will be in keeping with the most sacred principles of honour enshrined in Regimental identity. This notion of faithfulness is further endorsed via "the Little Book of Character" issued to all recruits. The book contains 52 biblical quotes opening on page 3 with, John, 15:13;

"The greatest way to show love for friends is to die for them"

These texts and lessons capture some of the most incredible feats of human fortitude, yet fail to mention the often dreadful price paid by survivors in terms of their mental health or the impact on the families of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. The current (2013) brochure

for example details incidents of fighting in almost comic book terms, one heading reading “Infantry Medals for Bravery”, it continues,

“The Infantry win the lion’s share of medals because they drive most of the close-quarter fighting. And front-line action brings with it the chance to be honoured by your country.”

(MOD<sup>1</sup>, 2013; pg. 9)

The testimonial that followed the header centres on one experience of a young Guards officer who describes the bravery of one of his Guardsmen, the death of 30 Taliban fighters and catalogue of details referring to the number of rounds fired, grenade thrown and airstrikes called in.

“One of my platoon, Guardsman Alex Harrison, was then wounded at close range. But he showed the kind of bravery typical of Infantrymen. He refused medical attention until he had drawn a map of the enemy’s location in the sand. His heroism ultimately won us that day in Helmand Province, and he was decorated for bravery when he returned to the UK. During the four-hour fight, Sam’s platoon threw in excess of 100 grenades, fired 10,000 rounds of ammo, and gave orders for several air strikes. The mission that morning was a success, taking out more than 30 enemy fighters with Sam’s team sustaining four non-fatal injuries.

(MOD<sup>1</sup>, 2013; pg. 9)

When considering the age, non-politicalization and lack of worldliness of most young men reading this material, notions of glamorisation and indifference immediately spring to mind. And whilst such terms may certainly correspond to the attitudes of combat veterans, on the surface they appear inappropriate for purpose of recruitment. In particular the blasé terms used to cite numbers of enemy dead and use of what might be described as ‘PlayStation’ language in relation to the quantity of munitions expended. An almost sports evoking style also accentuates the statement regarding the non-fatal nature of injuries incurred by British troops versus that of enemy dead, whilst steering clear of any mention of the 42 British fatalities<sup>38</sup> sustained over the course of the operation in question, Op Herrick VI (MOD<sup>4</sup>). These devices reinforce perceptions of operational ambivalence presenting the impression that the ‘War on Terror’ is indeed a moral quest, one implemented in the case of this example, for the ‘greater good of the subjugated Afghanis’. The do-and-dare language underpinning such text begs the question of how such statements are interpreted by young people. The 2006 guide went further in declaring that,

<sup>38</sup>. **MOD:** Op Herrick casualty and fatality tables up to 30 September 2013:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/op-herrick-casualty-and-fatality-tables>.

‘The British army is always on the side of the good...’ ‘The British Army has a job to do all over the world from fighting terrorism, to protecting British citizens and helping other armies defend their own countries.’ ‘It safeguards democracy from terrorism and helps other countries to defend themselves.’

(MOD<sup>1a</sup>: 2006, pp. 18-19.)

Clearly in an attempt to moralise a career in arms, the Army strive to secrete notions of ‘right’ in their recruitment material, the prospect of taking the life of another human being, whilst a possible consequence of an infantry career is nonetheless an activity requiring care and sober forethought. The bravado based accounts presented in current material also fail to account for any notion of living with the act thereafter. As individuals, soldiers will have to deal with the consequences of their actions and will undoubtedly do so differently from man to man. Yet to posit an attitude of belligerence beforehand, moreover as an element of the pre-enlistment build up, seems simply gratuitous. A more astute account describing the activities and aftermath of combat, delivered to individual unaccustomed to war fighting, may perhaps be found in the words of Colonel Timothy Collins’ of the Royal Irish Regiment and his speech delivered on the eve of the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Collins having served as an officer in the Special Air Services, suggested in a later interview that,

"Our soldiers require their leaders to explain to them why they are going into conflict,"

(Collins, 2004)

In his speech this experienced and well respected battlefield commander commented on life taking in the following terms,

‘It is a big step to take another human life. It is not to be done lightly. I know of men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts, I can assure you they live with the Mark of Cain upon them.’

(Collins, 1990)

Clearly many areas of current recruitment doctrine remain either vague or simply present as Machiavellian in their approach to recruitment, the language and assumed candour as often as not projecting an equally skewed perspective of life in the armed forces. The notional apparatus available to recruiters being on the one hand undoubtedly attractive, where youthful perceptions of access to travel, sport and an arsenal of firepower are concerned; yet plainly less so when considering the practicalities of military training, lengthy periods of confinement and the doing of actual combat. Whilst some degree of flexibility will always exist, the recruiters are themselves soldiers, each a master at arms, yet not as such professional

recruitment consultants in their own right. They are also promoting careers they themselves chose and are unlikely to belittle their own Service, Regiment or lifestyle. One testimonial presented in the 2013 Guide to the Infantry, sums this notion up eloquently whilst expressing almost all of the Army's recruiting shortcomings in one concise statement,

"I joined the Army at 17, and have worked my way up from the lowest rank. I grew up on a council estate with eight brothers and sisters, and not much money. Like many kids, I was clever but not that excited by school and I didn't pass any exams. Kids at school can get treated badly if they come from poor backgrounds. You don't get that in the Army. Everyone is treated equally, regardless of social status. The Infantry recognised a spark in me. They gave me a basic education during initial training, and put me on a leadership course at 18. I came first in that class, and since then the Army has helped me get right to the top. In civilian jobs, you spend the whole time trying to get noticed. In the Army, if you're a good bloke who does the business and digs deep when required, your rank and pay moves steadily upwards. And they are good to those with young families, especially when it comes to giving you time off when you need it. The Infantry worked out for me. I am now the Infantry's Regimental Sergeant Major, the most senior Soldier in the Infantry. I've also got City & Guilds accreditation and a Masters degree in Leadership & Management – and I have never even stepped foot in a university or college!"

(MOD<sup>1a</sup> 2013, pg. 21)

In a sense the RSM's testimonial offers a life ring to many a dejected young person, the poor, socially excluded, the victim, NEET, and the unappreciated amongst them. Nevertheless some degree of balance needs to be struck between the prose, discourse and reality of a career in the Infantry. With better access to education, a broad system of benefits for the unemployed and comprehensive health care, UK recruiters face an increasingly difficult task. One that draws on having to convince young people that a career in the Armed Forces is normal and parallels any other career, that being an infantryman for instance is no different to being a fireman or chef, the only real variation being the uniform. And secondly that service symbolizes a notion of an elevated social status within British society, wherein soldiers enjoy a special status and are somehow more than ordinary citizens, viewed by society as heroes. Yet as Everett (2013) points out,

'Some of the best criticism of this recruitment messaging comes from within armed forces themselves.'

(Everett, 2013, pg. 26)

Exemplifying this point Everett (2013) continues by citing General Sir Michael Rose', comments regarding recruitment practice in the UK.

'...soldiering, insofar as it boils down to killing and possibly being killed, is nothing like other jobs. Indeed, it raises searching ethical questions; of



which perhaps the most fundamental is ‘Can killing be humane?’ Personally, I believe that the main challenge for activists is not to persuade young people of a specific view about the rights and wrongs of violence, but to help make sure that these questions are being asked when someone considers signing up. After all, a good choice is not merely a free and informed one, but a responsible one as well. As for the ubiquitous soldier-hero, this constructed figure is barely recognised by soldiers themselves. I know of no experienced soldier who thinks all soldiers are heroes. Rather, they tend to think this over-used epithet cheapens the genuinely heroic acts of those soldiers who have put themselves at mortal risk for the sake of their comrades.’

(Everett, 2013, pg. 26)

Rose, like Collins a former Special Forces Commander, contends that the image of the soldier-hero is a political ‘concoction’ as well as one actively promoted by the media. The role of the soldier-hero being twofold, on the one hand he serves as a sentimental decoy for British foreign policy, whilst lending credence to often dubious recruiting strategies on the other. This image dynamically redirects the public gaze from the politically generated carnage of the past 20 years, by promoting a more personable face of war. Therein it seeks to downplay UK foreign policy, viewed as an unavoidable and a legitimate consequence of the ‘War on Terror’ and promotes the soldier as guardian of the Realm.

A further development of this latter role may also be found in the recent growth of Armed Forces charities resulting from more contemporary editions of the Armed Forces Covenant. In this manifestation consecutive governments have used the image of the soldier-hero as a poster boy, to rally the general public into taking their share of responsibility for the mounting human and financial cost of dealing with the aftermath of the aforementioned war(s). Stating that,

“The first duty of Government is the defence of the realm. Our Armed Forces fulfil that responsibility on behalf of the Government, sacrificing some civilian freedoms, facing danger and, sometimes, suffering serious injury or death as a result of their duty.”

(MOD: Armed Forces Covenant, 2011. Pgs. 1)

It goes on to list 3 key points of social responsibility, asserting that “The Nation should”,

1. Honour the commitment and sacrifice of the Armed Forces Community.
2. Celebrate the work of those charitable and voluntary bodies which help to support that community.
3. Strive to keep close the links between the Armed Forces and the society they defend.

(MOD: Armed Forces Covenant, 2011. Pgs. 10)

A more honest interpretation might lead one to speculate that a form of hegemony is at play, wherein a conflict weary public is being rallied in to action in support of more protracted and unpopular wars. Support for the Armed forces in the interim has been resounding, successive heads of government delivering a series of poignant statements to that affect, David Cameron for one asserted,

‘I can expect incredible things from you. Dedication, bravery, courage, service. I want to say what you can expect from me...refreshed and renewed and written down in a new Military Covenant that we write into the law of our land so we show how we stand up for our armed services’.

(Cameron, 2010)

Similar messages of support are also cited in current recruitment literature and The Armed Forces Covenant, each of which purports to value its Service Personnel and strive to support them, yet notions of how in practice, are more difficult to locate. In principal when the government make statements referring to how the nation should reward the Armed Forces for their service, it may well appear that a career in one of the uniformed services will indeed raise ones social status.

“...In return, the whole nation has a moral obligation to the members of the Naval Service, the Army and the Royal Air Force, together with their families. They deserve our respect and support, and fair treatment.”

(MOD: Armed Forces Covenant, 2011. pg. 1)

Further endorsement of such a policy from the office of the Secretary of State for Defence, carries an addition layer of faith, promoting trust in the government and guidelines regarding a duty of care,

“I have considered their unique obligations and the sacrifices they make; the principle that it is desirable to remove disadvantages arising from membership, or former membership, of the Armed Forces; and the principle that special provision for Service people may be appropriate in some cases.”

(MOD: Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, 2012)

Each statement serves to reassure the would-be recruit and in many cases their parents, that military service will not disadvantage the individual and that any negative occupationally related outcomes will be fully supported. The recruiting literature goes further in plainly stating that service brings with it the chance to be venerated by a grateful nation, citing combat as the mode through which one might earn such an accolade.

It seems bad form and something of a contradiction to conclude that the support and services' offered by a grateful nation and their government, boil down to the same basic freedoms, rights and entitlement offered all subjects of the United Kingdom, regardless of military service.

“In accessing services, former members of the Armed Forces should expect the same level of support as any other citizen in society.”

(MOD: Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, 2012, p. 4)

As for any uncertainty as to the validity of any promises made in either Armed Forces Law, The Armed Forces Covenant or for that current recruiting material, there seems little doubt that most of the discourse imbued in either document remains vague. As Walters (2011) astutely points out,

“Although the Armed Forces Covenant has been welcomed as ‘an historic breakthrough’ which would benefit servicemen and their families ‘for generations to come’, it has drawn criticism that the Armed Forces Act. 2011 remains ambiguous, referring to ‘various broad and undefined categories of welfare’ and lacks any clear metrics. In presenting the Covenant to the House of Commons on 16 May 2011, the Defence Secretary outlined three complementing documents that brought the Covenant to maturity: The Armed Forces Covenant, The Armed Forces Covenant: Today and Tomorrow, The Government’s Response to the Report of the Task Force on the Military Covenant. Collectively these documents set-out the specific steps being taken. However, the exact measures lack any defined measurable and the legal nature of these obligations also remain ambiguous. Thus, despite the Prime Minister’s commitment to formally codifying the Covenant, it is not clear whether the imprecise terms of Armed Forces Act. 2011 will fulfil some of the expectations that preceded the law making.”

(Walters, 2011, p. 22)

And with an ever increasing threat of redundancies the future for anyone joining now becomes even less certain.

#### **4.2.6 You’re in the Army Now**

In a little under a year, 2 years in the case of a Junior Entrant, the fledgling soldier will find himself operating amongst hundreds of compliant highly professional individuals for whom service-life is regarded as both a meaningful and highly rewarding career. In so doing each will have successfully tackled a complex and rigorous programme of martial training that enabled an adolescent civilian-*self* to effect an extraordinary occupational transition, resulting in a new set of identities described here collectively as those of soldier-*self*. This transition compelled the young person to embark on a long and often bewildering journey in which the emergence of a new social position was accomplished via a rite of passage centring on

complete adherence to a new set of core skills, knowledge and values. This markedly personal journey brought with it the displacement of any former notions of self in the wake of new specific identities, facilitated during this distinct period of occupational transition.

Running parallel to the occupational shift described, a form of ongoing self reinvention was quite naturally in progress due to the age of candidates. Thus as the civilian became a soldier so too would the adolescent become an adult, a significant factor since maturation occurred within the bounds of a total institution. Consequently, the influences bearing on the individual were in a sense highly tailored and absolutely in keeping with the perspective of the institution. Each experience and activity by design deployed to create a type of self, one secured coercively, one engendering notions of fulfilment through duty, promising a raised sense of social status. Notions of social honour according to Keegan (2006, pgs. 337-453) lie at the heart of the soldier's manifesto, the principles of which have been well-documented, their historical underpinning being initially laid down in antiquity and more recently credited to Von Clausewitz (1833-4, Book 2), Fuller (1923, pgs 339-340) and contemporised by King (2011).

In training such principles are mediated via a collective process wherein social acts and conditions are socially defined, constructed, maintained, and experienced within the bounds of specific customs or culture, the principles of which are conveyed [to often contrasting degrees] in the work of Bourdieu, (1972) and others (Geertz, 1973; Gergen & Gergen, 1988; Giddens, 1984; Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1967; Moscovici, 1984; Schutz & Luckmann, 1974). Interpersonal communications in this instance playing a pivotal role, facilitated in a total institution where social situations and arrangements are steered uncompromisingly towards the construction of *soldier-self*. On a more practical level, Thornborrow & Brown, (2009) like King (2011, pgs 223-229) suggest that at the heart of military identity lie notions of an aspirant nature, personal identity being formed as a consequence of an individual's desire to be. In both cases such construction related to a genuine desire to be a member of the Parachute Regiment. Aspiration and social positioning more explicitly delivered in consort with a censoring agent, the consequences of non conformity or compliance resulting in punishment whenever the soldier fails to comply with the appropriate representation of self.

These notions appear frequently in the social actions and tacit manner by which recruits conduct themselves as potential men-at-arms in essence how *soldier-self* is operationalized, through surveillance and censure leading ultimately to the self-policing recruit. Training staff

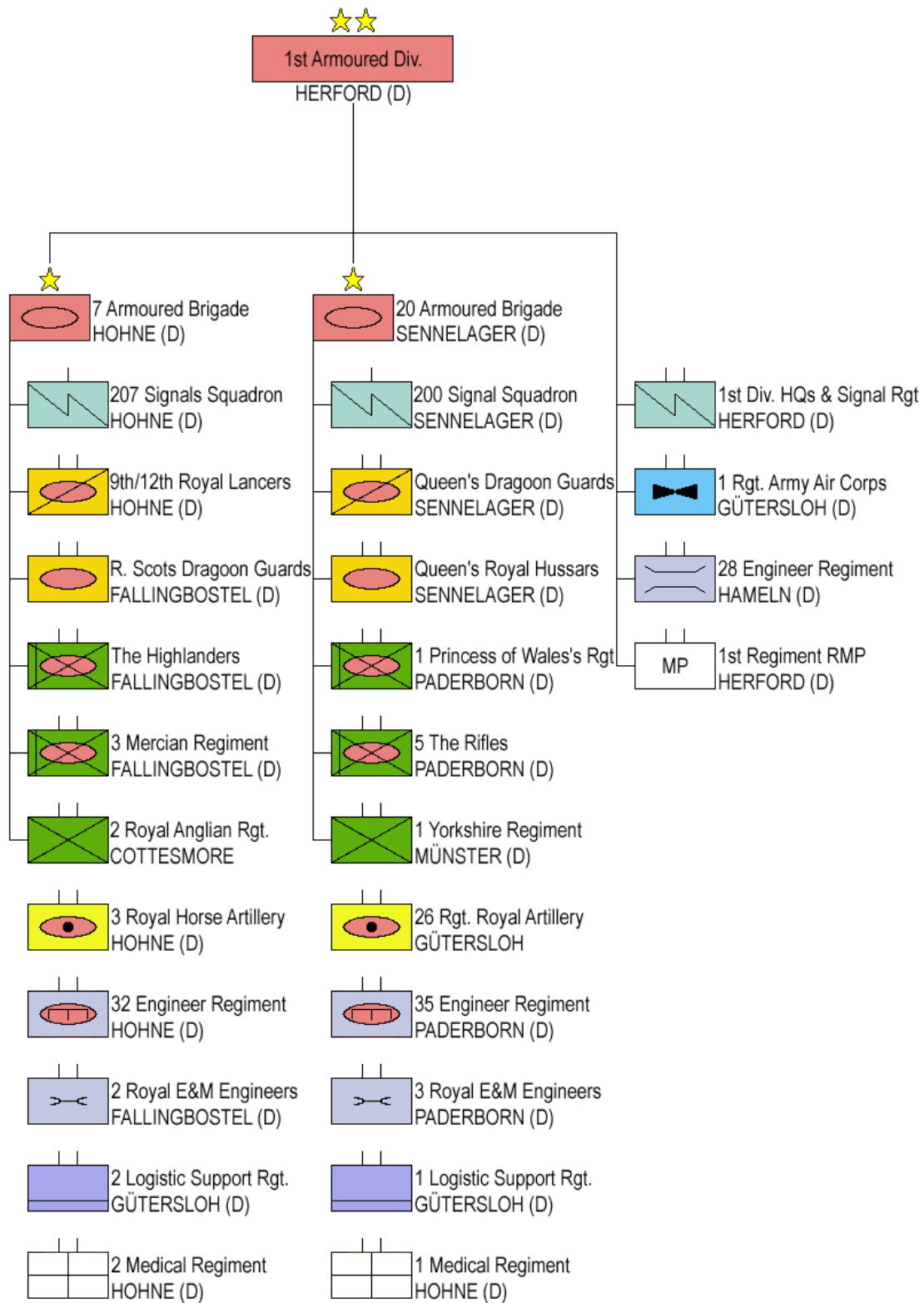
are instrumental in embedding the required regimental disposition and mode by which duties will to be carried out; this role extends to a practical outlook conveying perceptions of how each battalion conducts itself on and off the battlefield. Holmes (2006<sup>1</sup>, 2011<sup>2</sup>) like Forester (2012) suggests that the transition from recruit to trained soldier is achieved largely in the field. Referring to the parade square and other devices deployed during training as the proving ground of soldier-*self* and the location where a sense of regimentality takes hold. In this environment the developing recruit will soon comprehend the fullest range military ethics via the everyday social actions and tacit rituals, which rapidly become the norm. Rapid comprehension of the symbolic interaction engendered in the symbols and rituals underpinning martial life made possible as a result of total submersion.

As Elder et al (1991. p.215; Elder, 1986. p.233.) has suggested a life in the infantry, creates discontinuity in the lives of new soldiers since they are effectively removed from peer and age-ranked occupations and held in tightly regulated social environments, where symbolic interaction, rules and regulations provide an overt guide to how individuals must perform, dress, communicate and exist within that institution. Each of these activities leads to an occupational transition and therein a new identity, one that will sustain the trained soldier and prepare him for a life of often brutal hardship, the rewards for which whilst appearing sparse on the surface are highly symbolised, enmeshed in the rituals of their unit, their meanings tacit. Yet institutional values will quickly embed the recruit's daily activities of living soon becoming meaningful, each viewing their new sense of self and occupation as fulfilling, their role within broader society as unique. Each will have undergone a process of dynamic reinvention encompassing maturational and occupation change from citizen to soldier-*self*.



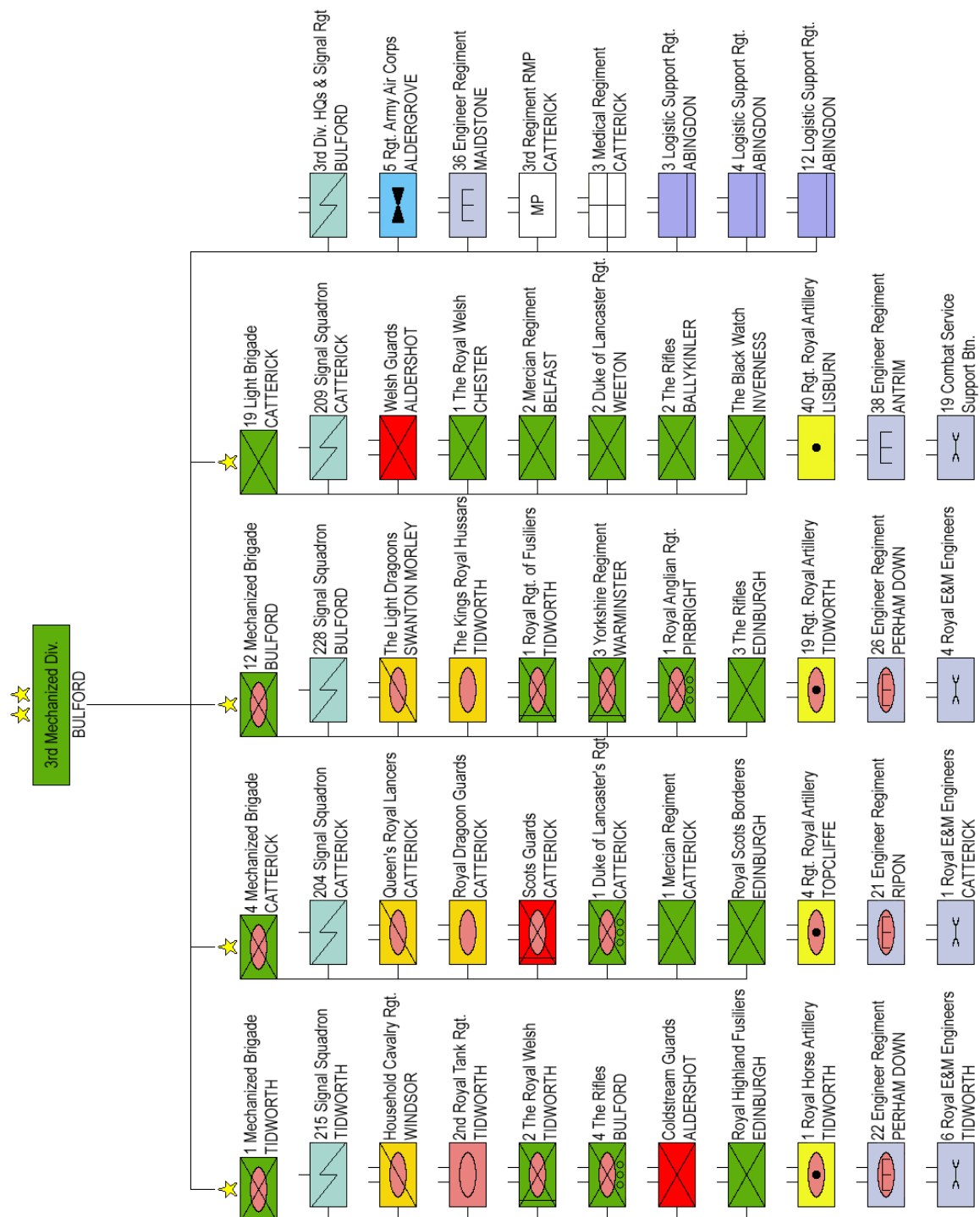
## Appendix iv.

### 1 (UK) Armoured Division Locations (2009, now in York)



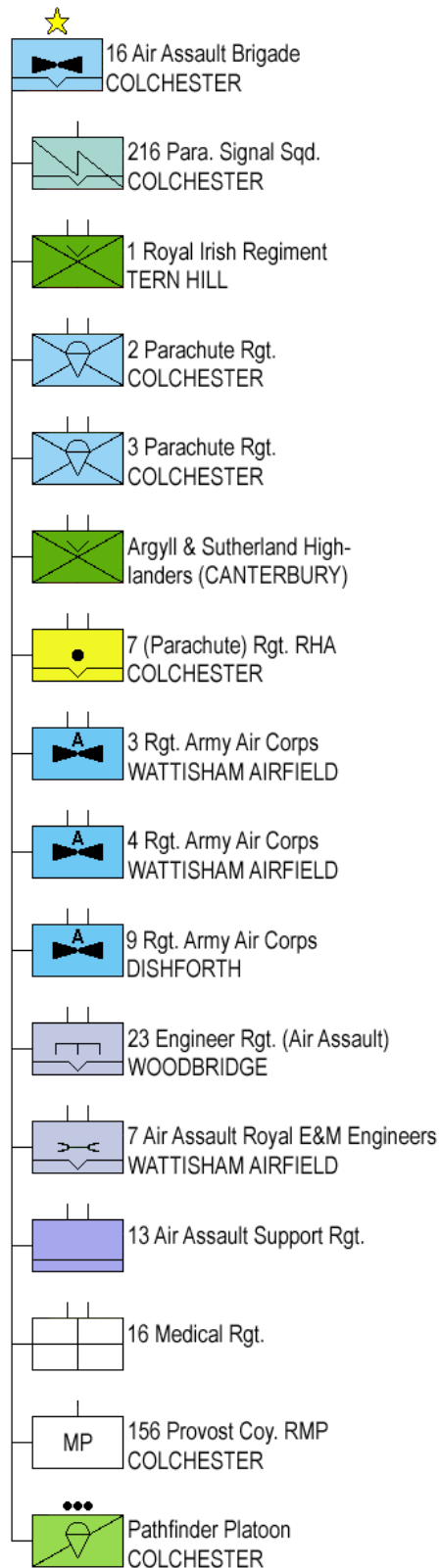
## Appendix v

### 3<sup>rd</sup> (UK) Mechanised Division Locations

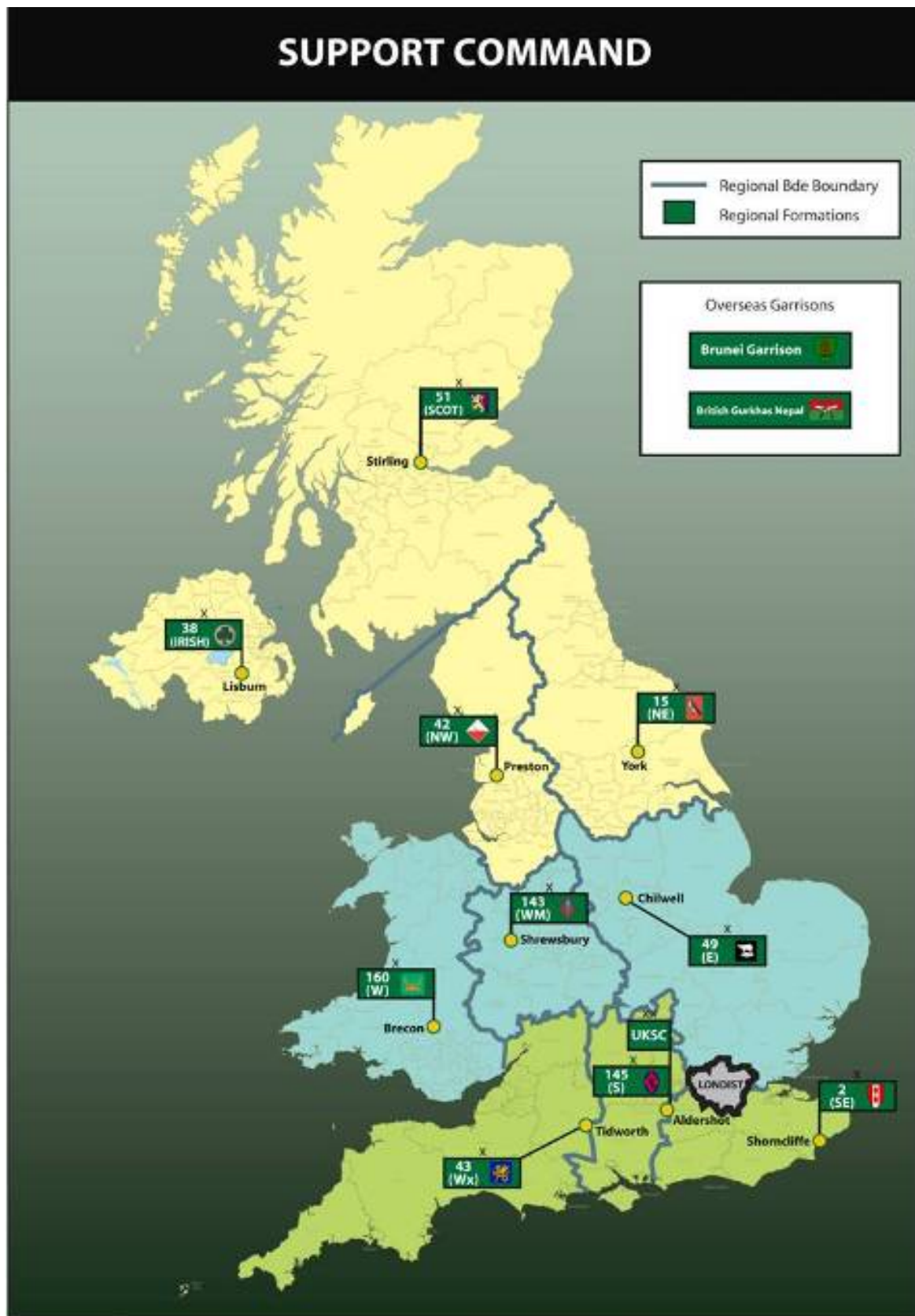




## Appendix vi. 16 Air Assault Brigade, Locations

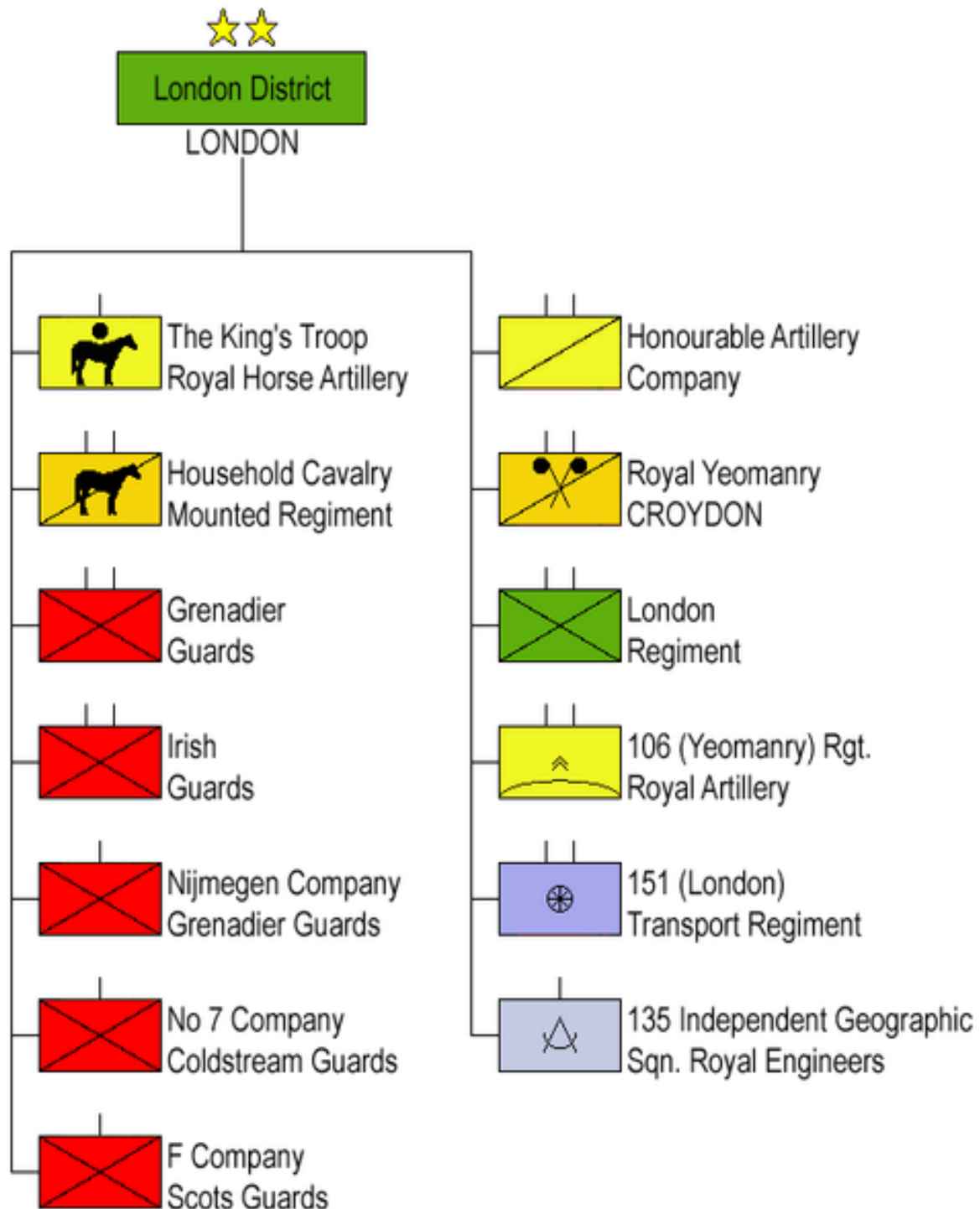


## Appendix vii. Support Command Locations



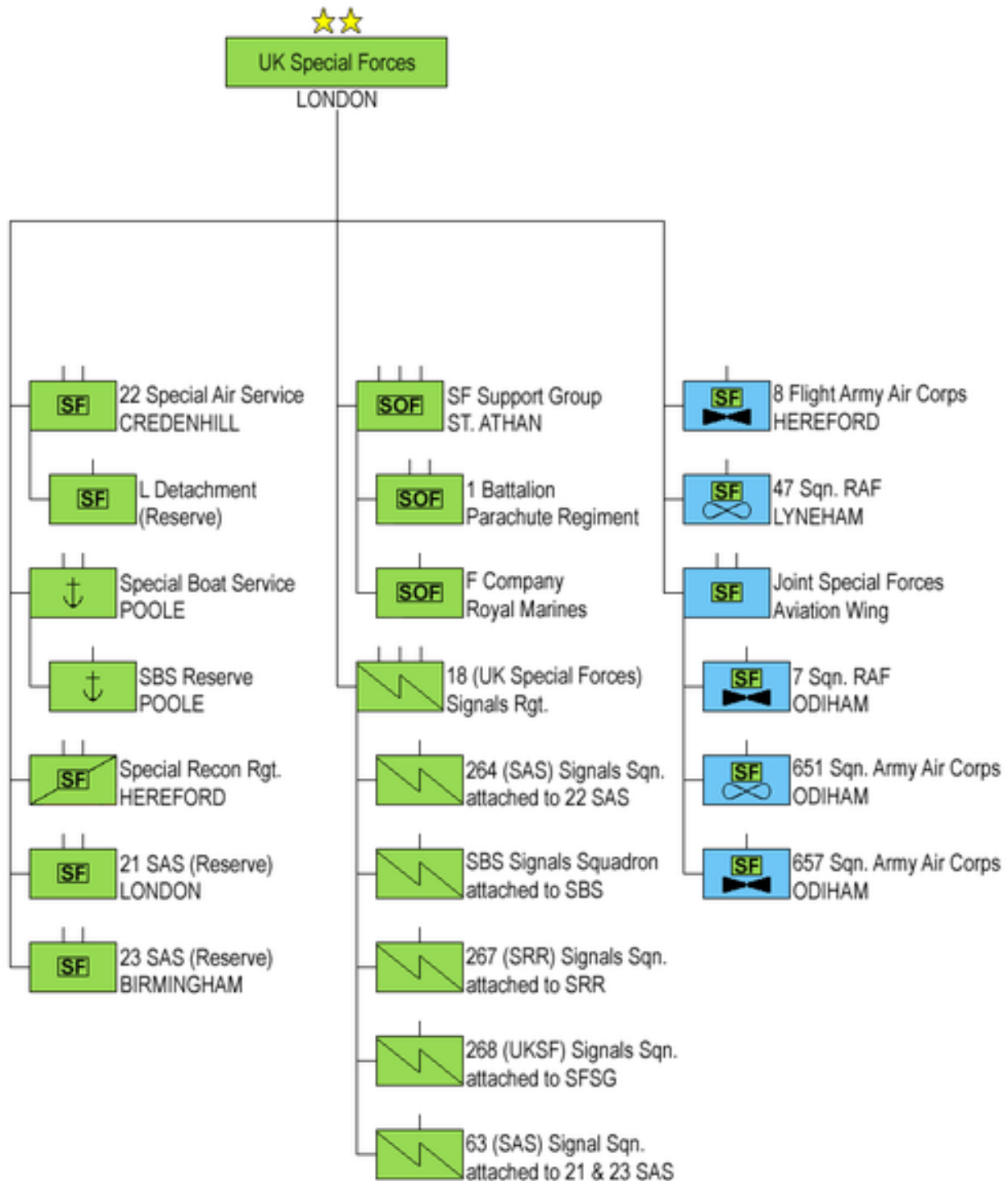
## Appendix viii

### London District Locations



## Appendix ix

### The Special Forces Support Group, Locations





## **CHAPTER V**

Analysis (Section i)

### **A pen-picture of a British Army Infantryman**

**Section 1** Fab's story, (the PARA)

## CHAPTER V

### Fab's story, the PARA

#### 5.1 Introduction

The analysis that follows seeks to further explore the organization of *soldier-self*; the narrative themes conveyed deriving from Fab's interpretation and realization of being a PARA in a working unit. Fab joined his battalion having completed both the CIC-PARA and Pre Parachute Selection, at the Infantry Training Centre Catterick, arriving as a 22 year old Adult Entrant (see fn. 15). Success in Yorkshire was followed by his Basic Parachute Course<sup>39</sup> at RAF Brize Norton and a posting to one of the three regular battalions of the Parachute Regiment. By this point in Fab's occupational life-cycle his identity as an aspirant air assault infantry soldier was fixed. The account whilst specific to Fab's personal biography is nevertheless generalisable enough carry a more generic story with which to familiarise the reader epistemologically with the Armed Forces Veteran and something of their experience of working units and armed conflict.

##### 5.1.1 A Pen Picture of a British Army Infantryman; the PARA

Fab 29 at the time of writing was brought up in Henley-on-Thames in the UK. He is the younger of two brothers; the elder 36 manages his own corporate events business between Calais and Shorncliff. Fab was brought up in the family home by his mother 53 who works as an advisor to an international charity and father 60 who works in the City of London. Fab graduated from an Oxbridge collage with a 2:1 degree in PPE, his A levels solid A\*s and A passes. Fab was a keen oarsman competing at Henley as a schoolboy and later for his college at university, an experienced sailor; he'd completed his Ocean Master deep-water qualification before his 18th birthday. He'd visited the European and Southern Alps, Lake Louise, and the Cairngorms and as a Youth represented Team GB in the 1997 Winter Olympic Festival. Fab's decision to join the Armed Forces had been met with sheer dismay at home, where it had been presumed he would either follow his father in to consultancy or join the Civil Service Fast Stream.

<sup>39</sup>. **Additional Training:** The CIC-PARA is conducted over 30 weeks, the additional 3 weeks [see fn. 15] allows infantrymen selected for service in Airborne Infantry Battalion's to complete Pegasus Company (P Coy). Followed by 2 weeks Parachute Training at the Army Parachute Administration Unit (APAU) based at RAF Brize Norton.

When eventually raised in conversation, some three weeks before Fab's departure to Catterick, his parents thought he was considering a commission and went along with it, he'd only recently graduated and they felt he needed time to find his way. It had therefore come as a shock to learn that their youngest had actually enlisted in the British Army as an infantryman in the Parachute Regiment. Worse still for his mother, by the time she'd come to realise it, it was too late; there was no time to influence change if indeed she could. With only a week left before the beginning of his Phase 1 training, they could do little but accept.

**Fab:** 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009

122 Fab: Ma was less than impressed, I think Pa [...] probably envied me,  
123 leastwise he got it, Mar though mmmm, not a happy mummy.

The motivation driving Fab's enlistment might fairly be described as a hybrid of hedonism, escapism and aspiration. The former shaped largely by a life of high jinks and privilege; the latter garnered from 3 years service with the CCF<sup>40</sup> and what to Fab felt was a genuine calling and aspiration to become an Air-assault Infantryman. Already disillusioned with PPE and the prospect of a career in finance, politics or corporate management, the notion of an uncomplicated life was thoroughly appealing. In a sense the army presented Fab with an escape an antidote no less potent than it had been for Ade, an uncomplicated interesting but more importantly for Fab, extreme future.

**Fab:** 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009

083 B: So what's the score with the PARAs then Fab, what happened there?  
084 Fab: Para Reg?  
085 B: Well generally, Army, Airborne, how'd you become a soldier, a  
086 PARA, you're not a typical Tom.  
087 Fab: I'd like to say it was for a dare or something vaguely exciting, [...] to  
088 be honest I was dick, bit of an attention seeker, thrill-monger, skied-  
089 sailed, extreme sports nonsense.

093 Fab: anyways [...] round my second year, I thought Jesus,  
094 abso-fucking-lutely nothing about this course appeals to me, as a career it  
095 floored me. I'd imagine that's where it began subconsciously.  
096 B: OK PPE, but no OTC.  
097 Fab: Yep, I wanted action; I didn't want to command it. Did a charity jump  
098 Easter time same year [...] yes [...] then it was just a matter of finding the balls to

<sup>40</sup> **CCF:** The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) is a uniformed youth organisation sponsored by the MOD. Units comprises of 3 sections 1 per Service offering military & civilian activities to Public School students [13-18years]. Service with the CCF is intended to feed into the UOTC [see fn: 41], University Air Squadron, University Royal Naval Unit or one of the 3 Royal Academies providing Training for Commissioned Officer. Felsted School and Eton College are amongst the oldest in the UK. NB: The Army Cadet Force (ACF) provides much the same function however, is community based and feeds into enlisted trajectories.



099 tell the folks. I'd done the Army Section at college, LI, so I knew the  
 100 score loosely speaking, bit of an undergrad crisis, blues poss.  
 101 B: So you joined the army as a soldier on the back of a parachute jump  
 102 and a stint with the Rifles at school.  
 103 Fab: No [laughing] far from it, I knew their role, selection, P Company, I'd  
 104 read a handful of biographies, DVDs and I was fit. Did a few Iron-Man  
 105 comps got placed OK; no it was Royals or PARAs for me matey.

Fab describes his 3 years at university as stifling, he'd enjoyed collegial life, particularly sports and networking and had worked hard to achieve his 2:1, but he'd loathed it. However painful the experience Fab graduated, encouraged by the notion that it was the right thing to do and would hopefully placate his parents.

**Fab:** 4<sup>th</sup> October 2009

106 Fab: I was raised thinking school ended after uni, there was no way I'd be  
 107 able skip midstream, god it was dry, gruelling really thought well, do  
 108 this, but I'm away when it's done.

Both parents and brother were graduates having read successfully for Economics, Mathematics & Philosophy and Juris prudence in the case of his sibling. Occupationally his family can be located on a number of elite trajectories, Senior Civil Servants, medical consultants, bankers & financiers amongst them. Fab's mum believed in the character building qualities of the right institution and that a young person needed to be properly educated before setting out in the world. Fab knew he'd have to finish his studies, at least then his mother would see him graduate, prior to him leaving for Catterick.

Fab had resolved to enlist in the Army on completion of his degree; having chosen not to join the UOTC<sup>41</sup> in the belief that this single act would be his last great adventure, before settling down to a serious albeit mundane career. Fab was an Adult Entrant; he'd completed his Phase 1 over six weeks, followed by the 30 week CIC-PARA. At the point where Ade, a newly qualified Combat Infantryman (Line Infantry) and Category B driver went on leave, his training completed; Fab's cohort on the CIC-PARA were set to undertake the biggest challenge they'd faced in 30 weeks, a worry since the 30 weeks preceding P Coy had proved to be an emotional and physically taxing affair in itself.

For Fab there was a sense of urgency to his training, realising that there were Soldiers

<sup>41</sup>. **UOTC:** University Officer Training Corps. A University based MOD/Army Training Corps. It provides Phase 1 Basic Training for undergraduate-Officer Cadets, leading to regular or reserve Commissions courses at the Royal Military Academy (RMA) Sandhurst. Source of most Professional Commissions, largely due to attractive grants and bursaries. [Also see fn. 19.]

on camp who were far younger yet more experienced, he was desperate to narrow the gap as soon as possible and move on to a working unit.

**Fab:** 4 October 2009

131 B: Were you conscious of time at all? You'd have been an old man.  
132 Fab: It was a drag true, but I'd finals and a dissertation to square so  
133 the processes was kind-of going on in the background. [...] I  
134 think I was trying to say I was rather hyper, but that was at  
135 Catterick I had no patience then, just wanted to get on with it.  
136 'Cause ignorance is bliss, one couldn't fail to notice the fresh  
137 faces wandering in from AFC, most of them looked like they'd  
138 nipped out for the paper, parents must have been worried sick.

32 weeks of a person's life may not sound a great deal of time, yet to Fab it was an eternity. To that end he was pleased to at least be at the thin end of the training wedge, with just P Coy left as the only real obstacle between him and the battalion.

### **5.1.2 The Maroon Machine<sup>42</sup> (From PPE to PPS<sup>43</sup>)**

Pegasus Company (P Coy) is staffed by regular serving members of the Parachute Regiment supported by other units from within 16 Air Assault Brigade notably their APTIs. P Coy organise both Pre-Para Selection (PPS) and P Coy proper, each mandatory components of a career in the Parachute Regiment. P Coy's mission is to assess the physical fitness, determination and mental robustness of candidates, under conditions of physical and emotional stress. Therein as the gatekeepers to Airborne Forces, a self selecting cadre, their role is to determine whether it deems you fit to serve in 16 Air Assault Brigade. If the CIC-PARA has done its job in preparing the SUTs physically and mentally then P Coy should be a relatively straight forward undertaking. Whilst all infantry training is tough, there was little doubt at either Harrogate or Catterick that the PARA training regimen was harsh, distinctive for an explicit devotion to self-policing and reinforcement of physical robustness as major components of self.

**Ade:** 16 Dec 2009

438 Ade: 'Spose there's always someone getting it worse than ew, Para Reg  
439 -CIC was like that, an like 32 weeks of it, some of the states you

<sup>42</sup> **Maroon Machine:** i. Maroon Beret,  
ii. **The Maroon Machine**, nickname for Airborne Forces or The Parachute Regiment.  
<sup>43</sup> **PPE-PPS:** From Philosophy Politics and Economics to Pre-Parachute selection

440 saw 'em boys in was a bit disturbing like. The PARAs were like that  
441 hard on their own crew, others like used to give 'em a bit of an easier  
442 time, I mean like it was proper...

Whilst Ade had witnessed the relentlessness of Airborne training, Fab was experiencing it, and whilst both were familiar with physical and mentally hardship, Ade concedes that in training at least Parachute Regiment SUTs worked very hard. There were some Jacks however, those who failed to work as hard as others in the collective, but most were good all-round characters. P Coy is one of the world's foremost Airborne qualifiers, earning a huge reputation across in the Armed Forces as a physically and mentally demanding course. Fab's cohort was somewhat fearful of this new unknown, and their ability to overcome it; can I do this? Fab believed from the onset that he could.

**Fab:** 16 Dec 2009

280 B: So then to P Company, how did that go?  
281 Fab: Good, had a really good course, no injuries that's the ticket  
282 solid going but no, an excellent course. [...] I sound some how  
283 flippant saying it like that, but it wasn't the seminal experience  
284 I'd expected, you hear all sorts of nonsense, most of it true  
285 [laughter], no it was a sound well managed cadre, one of the  
286 best short courses I've ever been invited on to.  
287 B: How you can say that with a straight face is beyond me.  
288 Fab: Of course it was hard; naturally I thought I'd died a few times  
289 but I remember it; well I remember thinking, hay that's another  
290 tick in the box. Biggest surprise was actually hacking it though.

As suggested, the fitness and robustness components of the CIC-PARA are the foundations on which P Coy builds. There are clear distinctions between Foot Guards, Line, and Air Assault Infantry, a PARAs notion of self built on an aspirant, belligerent, and robust model, one assumed during Training and maintained through an austere policy of energetic self-policing. The Parachute Regiment are indeed unique, highly-professional individuals whose identity is enmeshed in the application of violence and supreme fitness. The focus on fitness characterises the PARA who is generally fitter than most of his Foot Guard and Line Infantry peers. For Fab, an Adult Entrant previously accustomed to lectures, seminars and tutorials, the ongoing round of training had produced the sharpest of learning curves. Culturally this new and ostensibly closed community was exactly what Fab had been looking for, in a sense Fab wanted it to be hard, that was the whole point.

**Fab:** 16 Nov 2009

263 Fab: We were quite properly fragged from day 1; NCOs really want  
264 you to jack, if it wasn't personal then bell Fiesta, 'cause it felt

265       fucking intimate. All good fun though on the whole. [...] We  
266       have team-building workshops at D&P, leaves me numb, first  
267       rate people, bare-with, this'll sound crass; their [...] clueless, I  
268       suppose weak. Poor quality drills. I find myself thinking somewhat  
269       dewy eyed, Catterick was training this is dog shit, awfully expensive  
270       dog shit. If you want to belong to something, this is the point,  
271       it's got to hurt got to be earned. [...] Fuck I've only been out a month.

Fab undoubtedly got his way, the standards being incredibly high from the off, the CIC-PARA and later PPS set at a seemingly unattainable level. Fab soon learnt that the ethos and culture of the Regiment demanded no less, Airborne troops he was taught were soldiers who fight often in isolation of larger formations, requiring a different breed of soldier.

PPS was designed to weed out those considered unsuitable for club membership by offering a taste of the P Coy programme, taking Fab an already fit, trained soldier well out of his comfort zone to a place where physical and mental robustness were measured in extremes. Success on the PPS led quickly to P Coy, each candidate having a fortnight to prepare for Test Week and the 8 tests that make up the selection course. Whatever constructs of self existed before this point in terms of identity or the embryonic state of Fab's *soldier-self*; it was about to change, this being a conferring period, a time when *soldier-self* becomes type specify, a PARA. Following P Coy any previous selves will be consigned to a previous life, in this case a life before the Maroon Machine, but first it had to be earned. The pre course phase took a fortnight, runs every morning, followed by a strength and stamina session in the gymnasium, afternoons assigned to 'tabbing' (tactical advance to battle). All Tabbing or speed-marching was conducted in the by now familiar 'fighting order' carrying Bergen and rifle, each TAB covering no less than 10 miles, completion time 2 hours or less.

**Fab:** 16 Dec 2009

291B:   How long did you have to prep?  
292 Fab: 30 weeks really, P Company the fortnight really was superb, it was  
293       possibly the best time I had there, yes it was brutal, yes it painful but  
294       it was the only truly bullshit free courses I did in the Army. I'm cool  
295       with tabbing got the legs, and it doesn't matter how many times you  
296       race a leg it hurts.  
270 B:   Did you have any other duties?  
271 Fab: We were doing P Company, so no just personal admin, kit, few'd  
272       need medics, past that no.

By test week Bergens weighed 35lbs and were randomly checked, the penalty for being caught light was instant dismissal. Following a Test Week in which Fab had completed all manner of physical trials including a 20 mile TAB over severe terrain, log races, stretcher

runs, a steeplechase, Trainasium<sup>44</sup> and the Mill<sup>45</sup>, P Coy was over. Immediately after the Milling test and without ceremony the survivors were assembled in the gym for the results. The process was simple; each candidate had a number that was read out followed by a simple pass or fail. Fab, number 17 was a pass, it was over. The course had been emotional, but he and his mates had made it through and were rightly pleased to be going home on leave one step closer to their battalions.

Fab passed each of the tests self-assuredly it was doubtlessly the hardest corporal course he'd ever completed, yet he accrued no injuries past a black eye and swollen lip, each souvenirs of the spar he'd endured in the milling square. Fab's final memories of the day rest on the cheerless tones of the P Coy SNCO as he dismissed the course; far from being complimentary or even remotely cordial he simply told them to "fuck off"! Calling those who'd failed hats<sup>46</sup> telling them to get out of his sight sharpish.

**Fab:** 16 Dec 2009

302 Fab: Good one, that was Mr Charisma, in the field he was like your dad,  
303 being there sucked him off; we had more chance of firing a weapon  
304 than Chris or any of them, most were just marking time. I think he  
305 got lucky 'cause he joined us 2 months in, so he wasn't there long,  
306 probably brought him in as part of the hearts and minds effort. Had  
307 his off days 'cause, [...] but speak as you see...

P Coy Staff are handpicked operationally experienced soldiers who represent the best of the Brigade; they are after all the gatekeepers. To the Staff P Coy is little more than an administrative preamble, the job of a PARA being to fight, thus the fledgling PARA's were yet some way off becoming valued members of the Airborne Brotherhood. In terms of progression Fab had earned his Maroon Beret and was ready to go on to his Basic Parachute Course at the Army Parachute Administration Unit (APAU) based at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. At this point in his career, Ade had already settled into Battalion life, had carried out a few Regimental duties and formally represented the Army in a District Inter-Service Boxing tournament. For Ade's Battalion with a tour on the horizon, life had become absorbed with build-up training and a Master class in infanteering.

### 5.1.3 Operational Wings

Fab had parachuted at university as part of a fund raising effort for Help for Heroes and had enjoyed the experience reckoning he had an aptitude for 'skydiving'.

<sup>44</sup>. **Trainasium:** Aerial apparatus designed to assess candidate's ability to operate in hi-rise environment.

<sup>45</sup>. **Milling:** A boxing match where an individual gains points for taking rather than delivering blows.

<sup>46</sup>. **Hat:** A hat is a person who has not successfully completed P Coy & attended the APRU.

That was all about to change. There's an urgency to military parachuting that due to health and safety restrictions is absent from its sport counterpart. Airborne troops have to exit the aircraft quickly since time spent exiting corresponds directly to the ground activity which follows. Airborne troops need to arrive at the drop zone (DZ) in relatively tight groups for their own survival, since unlike downed fighter pilots; airborne infantry are not covered by the conventions of Geneva and may be shot on sight, usually whilst airborne. To that end their drills must be perfect, their focus complete. A PARA under silk is an incredibly vulnerable soldier. Military parachuting also incorporates night jumps and exits over water, both conditions most skydivers aim to avoid. Fab describes military parachuting as a mixture of sheer terror and adrenalin and as unlike sports parachuting as imaginable.

Unfazed by the unique nature and challenges of military parachuting Fab passed his course and was duly issued a pair of Operational Parachutist Wings, having completed seven descents from a C130 Hercules transport aircraft, two jumps carried out at night to familiarise the student with tactical drops (See: Appendix i.). All but one jump was designated "without equipment". A PARA might well be expected to jump with an additional 50lbs, the lighter men carrying more. Fab had long mastered these skills, knew how to stow everything he needed to live, fight and survive on the battlefield. In a sense Fab's presentation of self had long been geared towards notions of him having 'the right stuff' to be a PARA, which can be seen in his assured manner and self determination in seeking out adventure.

**Fab:** 16 Dec 2009

388 Fab: Jumps course was quality, smashing weather, time,  
389 and actually doing the thing you wanted to do in the  
390 first place, truly fucking special moment. Jumps I  
391 must confess kicked the crap out of anything I'd  
392 ever done before, it was worth all shit just for that.

Parachute training was a departure from the norm, requiring technical skills and competence rather than physical effort. It also took nerve a quality well tested during night jumps. More importantly the course defines the PARA occupationally and along with P Coy forms the nucleus of a PARA's identity. Three items of dress symbolically characterise the PARA marking them out from all other Corps and Arms within the Armed Forces, one is the maroon beret, the second the winged parachute and imperial crown of their cap-badge and the third a pair Operational Parachutist Wings. Fab had earned each and was keen to move on. In a

little under a year Fab had completed the occupational training component required of a career in the Parachute Regiment, and was at last on his way to his parent unit.

#### 5.1.4 The Tempering

With his Battalion on tour the camp resembled a ghost town, devoid of activity passed the RP Shift, Rear Party<sup>47</sup> and a few Service Leavers.<sup>48</sup> Fab would shortly join the Battalion in the field; following some lightweight preparations, mostly weapons and an IED cadre, both overshadowed by the trickle issue of new and exciting equipment for operations. His deployment unlike that of the main force, which had deployed en-mass in the March, had centred upon a party of around 30 individuals of different ranks and appointments. On the bright side, having arrived from the hustle-bustle of Catterick, the space and serenity offered at the all but abandoned Barracks was greeted with sheer delight.

**Fab:** Feb 4 2010

504 B: So you're all PARA'd up, mums sewn your wings on, machine  
505 shaped and ready to go, what was the battalion like?  
506 Fab: Lush.  
507 B: Lush, you're the first to put it quite like that man, go on.  
508 Fab: There's no bugger there, they were all on scheme, there were  
509 no more than a section, lads anyway, rests were a mixed bag from  
510 all over the Brigade. But that was only really for the flight, on  
511 camp there was only Minty Rose the Platoon Sergeant, and a  
512 Corporal called Tims, but light duties, the Q was in-charge with  
513 the 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>c</sub>, might have been Selwyn can't remember.  
514 B: What were the highlights?  
515 Fab: Fuck, where to start, just having normal duties and actually  
516 knocking off and being off was a thrill. No one bothered  
517 you, the whole tone of the place was well [...] mellow, I am  
518 comparing it with training though. Went straight into transit  
519 accommodation, pretty crap, but it was OK on the whole we  
520 were off within the month.

Whilst not perhaps his ideal start, Fab would have far preferred to have arrived earlier and participated in the full round of build-up training, but that was not to be. He wasn't alone on Camp either; friends from his intake had been posted with him, finding employment within one or another of the Company's. Three of his immediate circle were fortunate enough to be posted to the same Platoon and would shortly be flying out together. Their month or so in Barracks was spent mostly sleeping and eating, two activities that had been heavily regulated

<sup>47</sup>. **Rear-Party:** Skeleton or caretaker detachment: Guards, drivers, telephone operators, cooks...

<sup>48</sup>. **Service Leaver:** Individual leavening the Forces: [Types of Discharge] Time Served/Redundancy Medical/Administrational/Voluntary Redundancy/Purchase.

over the past year, freedom in relation time off centring on M<sup>c</sup>Donalds, Pizza Hut and a range of other high street vendors of precooked proteins and carbohydrate, by now food was fuel. The time also provided a further institutional and social education. Had the regiment been at home he would most certainly have never had the time to chat with older soldiers, those at the end of their careers and those recently promoted into positions of administrative or logistic responsibility. Each in a sense was in transit and more open to comment, with most presuming Fab had been posted in from another Company, extending him the respect and courtesy normally offered a senior soldier.

**Fab:** Feb 4 2010

521 B: How did you get on with the lads who were already there?  
 522 Fab: Weren't that many to get to know, Minty was a nice guy  
 523 thick as a Ghurkha's foreskin but kind. Tims was a c\*\*t  
 524 he'd done Training Reg, brought some of that love back to  
 525 the nest, really tried it on, they gave him his second and left  
 526 him in Blighty fearing the worst.  
 527 B: How about the lads?  
 528 Fab: All round happy bunnies, I mean we were prepping to go away  
 529 had loads of downtime; [...] we enjoyed the basics by then, take  
 530 away, we had wheels so we were well squared away.  
 531 B: Were you the oldest in your clique?  
 532 Fab: Most people thought I'd done a bit, when I told the shift I was  
 533 coming in from Catterick they thought I was an Akki or  
 534 something, very matey.  
 535 B: Did you play on that?  
 536 Abso-fucking-lutely!

Fab seems to have used this brief period of respite to gain weight, rest and prepare his equipment. Beyond the giggle caused by his assumed seniority and two conversations he'd had prior to deployment, Fab retains little or no actual remembrance of these early days. Of the conversations, he'd shared one with a 32-year-old Private soldier about to leave the army and a second with a SNCO regarding a Padre. The first conversation was generated around a works party<sup>49</sup>, Fab and four others having been volunteered to take down and store a marquee used the previous evening for a Command Ball. In the absence of an NCO a senior soldier called Macavoy had been placed in charge of the detail, with Fab and two other young troopers along as the labour. The very confident Macavoy was both charismatic and slightly intimidating; Fab had seen him at the NAAFI bar the night before with his trousers and underpants around his ankles casually chatting to his mates.

<sup>49</sup>. **Works Party:** Small group of soldiers detailed to carry out a manual task, sweeping-movement of stores general menial work.



When challenged by the Orderly Officer, a Lieutenant Stone, he claimed that he'd seen it on a Naval Submarine documentary; Macavoy maintained that he was demonstrating how at close quarters we fail to observe the minutia of proximal change. Minty the Orderly Sergeant was far less open minded and jailed him for the night, principally because he'd gone out of his way to embarrass Sharon an AGC Subaltern and the days Orderly Officer. As a consequence of the evening's high spirits, Macavoy with only days left in the Army had been released with orders to supervise the tent party. In their haste to leave the function in the early hours, the organisers had inadvertently left a considerable quantity of champagne behind which Macavoy fixed to liberate.

**Fab:** Feb 4 2010

575 Fab: Macavoy, the man was a genius, I got dicked to do a  
576 works part right, Macavoy at the helm, he'd been a  
577 corporal-several times [laughter], he looked like a bag  
578 of shit; they'd had to plead with him, can you imagine,  
579 to leave.  
580 B: Who was he?  
581 Fab: In his day he'd been Recce, flyer -the man that can,  
582 totally respected rank or none, very brave man, CO  
583 worshiped him, must have done something don't  
584 know what. When I met him I just thought fuck,  
585 what's Macavoy doing with us. The shift, the guardroom  
586 sent a runner-orders, tent down bla-de-bla, anyway right  
587 enough Macavoy spots the booze, lots and becomes, [...] it's  
588 hard to describe, illuminated whatever, on-one though.  
589 And we've only just arrived.  
590 B: When you say on-one do you mean he was drinking?  
591 Fab: He went from pissed to sober like that.  
592 B: What was he doing then?  
593 Fab: Fucking planning, must have been a two-three star do, it  
594 was boxed in crates 'bout eight. Henriot, Perrier-Jouët,  
595 quality fucking plonk. Long and short it was like Bilko  
596 you couldn't find enough men for the guard but he  
597 got that tent down and booze away in under an hour. It was  
598 without doubt one of the finest examples of leadership  
599 I've ever seen.  
600 B: Fantastic, what did you get out of it?  
601 Fab: All got 50 quid. And he bought us a beer, he was in there  
602 the previous evening with a woman I presumed it was his,  
603 Man [...] he was bollock naked.  
604 B: A learning experience?  
605 Fab: Saved my fucking life mate.

Fab's reserve on this occasion whilst driven by fear; had enabled him to enjoy the adventure and more crucially his part in it. He'd participated with fellow PARAs in an act of organised crime, men of the battalion a couple of NCOs and a SNCO, men with whom he'd

collaborated and was now connected. As a result of the Champaign episode he was now being greeted by NCOs and Toms as they went about their duties, addressing him by name<sup>50</sup> and sharing some ripping yarns. The SNCO, the boys called him Daisy, had also noticed Fab, and volunteered him to drive a detail to South Wales the following day. This was the first time Fab had spent more than 10 minutes in such close proximity to a SNCO and went through his drivers checks with extra diligence. Staff<sup>51</sup> Bloom turned out to be an interesting chap, he'd been promoted at the same time as Fab had passed out of parachute school, so was a little out of his depth not working as part of a Platoon. He told Fab he was on Rear Party because his wife was pregnant and since they'd been on IVF the Army spared him the tour.

They chatted over the course of the journey, Daisy briefing Fab on the Company's celebrities, and proposed time scale for Fab's departure. Daisy it transpired was finding his new job both difficult and isolating yet necessary for further promotion. On arrival at their destination he told Fab to park-up and find the Cookhouse. Fab had never seen so many PARAs; or so many different cap badges, the camp alive with activity projecting a notional glimpse of his own Battalion. At the back of the cookhouse a cluster of chairs had been organised, as he filed in for breakfast a number of soldiers began to occupy the chairs. The presentation was a Padre's deployment brief, which Fab overheard from his table. With the exception of births, deaths and marriages, Fab had seldom taken much interest in matters theological. In training they'd talked about death with the Padre, been asked by the welfare staff to write their 'letters from the grave' and prepare their wills, but none thought that theirs would ever be read.

**Fab:** 23 Feb 2010

635 Fab: Padre was a Yank, 101<sup>st†</sup> very flash, full-on-combats,  
 636 cammo crosses, Wayfarer Aviators, big lad [...],  
 637 B: So?  
 638 Fab: Um [...] prayers few readings, I tuned out, anyway got to  
 639 the combat bit Vietnam, Panama real soldier, then he says  
 640 '*boys when you go into combat, it aint about your Queen,*  
 641 *your Regiment your flag or nothing*' Fuck I'm glued, then  
 642 he says '*it's about you and your buddy sharing that foxhole*'.  
 643 At the time I thought, how very American.

†. **101<sup>st</sup>:** The 101st Airborne Division (Screaming Eagles) is a U.S. Army light infantry Division trained for Air-assault operations.

<sup>50</sup>. **Name:** Fab's nickname; Posh-Spice or Posh

<sup>51</sup>. **Staff Sergeant:** A Staff Sergeant (S/Sgt) is the senior most SNCO [see WO's], appointed to resources, transport or other technical, specialist, or management roles: In the infantry Colour Sergeants (C/Sgt) share the same status; however have additional Ceremonial duties within the battalion. The Company Quartermaster Sergeant (CQMS) is a typical S/Sgts role. Command roles: 2 1/2 Troop [Gunnery/Engineers...] (See fn. 13 for Q roles)

During the return journey Fab raised the episode with Daisy,

**Fab:** Feb 4 2010

658 Fab: Mentioned it to Daisy on the way back, interest you know,  
659 he was really insightful, says something like, '*Son just remember*  
660 *your drills, trust in the lads*' and '*watch the older men*'.  
661 Stuff like that. Blew me away a bit, I imagined he'd be all for  
662 the Colours, but he weren't.

Fab's thoughts in relation to this minor yet shaping episode left him thinking seriously and for the first time about the possibility of Life Changing Injuries, or worse. He'd recently completed a 2 day unit IED<sup>52</sup> Awareness Cadre and had found himself unconsciously thumbing the pages of his 'Little Book of Character'<sup>53</sup>, but he hadn't spoken to anyone fearing they'd interpret his thoughts as weakness. Fab had expected Daisy to respond with belligerence and was surprised when his inquiries were responded to with insight, maturity and thoughtfulness; he hadn't known the man for more than a couple of weeks but now regarded him as he might an uncle. The last time he saw of Macavoy was on a Saturday morning a few days before his departure. Fab, leaving the NAAFI shop, passed him on the way to the block, Macavoy loaded with kit on his way to a waiting Taxi.

**Fab:** Feb 4 2010

684 B: What happened to Macavoy?  
685 Fab: God knows, I ran into him on the way to the Guardroom, 'he' was  
686 going to the guardroom, he was out. Fuck he looked pathetic, two  
687 Bergen's wheelie case and bin bags I had a towel and tee shirt on,  
688 helped him over the guardroom, seemed very grateful took my hand  
689 and said '*Utrique Paratus* son' that was it, awful really I was gutted  
690 for him, none of his mates were there...

Fab and a small cohort of 30 Officers and Men of 16 Air Assault Brigade deployed three weeks later. He remembered Daisy's guidance and had modified his somewhat over eager, impatient attitude realising that these traits didn't actually fit his hitherto assumed model of soldier-*self*. On reflection Macavoy deserved better, he'd served his country for 17 years; lived, eaten and slept the Parachute Regiment way, only to end his career as it had begun, in isolation, yet *Utrique Paratus*<sup>54</sup> he pressed on. For Fab at the beginning of his career it had been an interesting time; he'd gained a rare glimpse of the battalion from a unique and

<sup>52.</sup> **IED:** Illegal or Improvised Explosive Device. Homemade bomb

<sup>53.</sup> **Little Book of Character:** All recruits are issued with this Christian booklet citing tailored examples of fellowship, loyalty & sacrifice from scripture.

privileged perspective, was fat, fit and as prepared he was ever going to be, it was time to go to work.

All journeys begin somewhere, Fab's first journey to war beginning in a Cambridgeshire Cookhouse at 06:30hrs on a warm June morning. His final preparations whilst unconventional had nevertheless come to a conclusion. Ade unlike Fab, at this moment in his career had benefited from a full Battle-Group build-up. Within a week of arriving at his Battalion HQ he'd been sent on a Regimental Signals Cadre, followed by the Infantry Battle School Wales and a stint in Kenya. Ade had left the UK as part of a Battle-Group, a thousand men and women deployed in one lift. Fab's party were the stragglers, the Battle Casualty Replacements (BCR), technical staff and soldiers returning to theatre. The Cookhouse was quiet, the folks were there with his brother, chatting uneasily with a small party of parents, spouses and children and a detail of boys from the Rear Party. Families hugged, cried and generally did their best to cope. War was big news in 2003, thousands of troops in theatre, thousands of families paying an additional nerve tax as sons, daughters, husbands and wives deployed.

### 5.1.5 Trial by Fire

The Movement Controllers of the Royal Logistics Corps and RAF had moved Fab from the car park of his Barracks to a compound in Mysan Province expertly. In spite of the heat filth and general unease, soldiers of the Royal Military Police (RMP) had died here only weeks earlier, Fab was elated. The Operating Base was larger than he'd imagined, his Platoon quartered in bivis<sup>55</sup> made up over cots (camp beds). Fab's bed space was allocated and his kit stowed, his chaperone a 20 year old from Scunthorpe called Jinxy then took him over to the platoon office. Fab and one other lad from his original intake had made it this far. They were now in the company of real soldiers operating in a foreign country at a time of war. Selwyn the C/Sgt was pretty much in charge of the day to day running of the base, there were officers present but they were occupied, busy planning patrols or out on the ground. Selwyn welcomed the boys asked a few questions then handed them over to their new section commander a Cpl called Coates.

<sup>54.</sup> **Utrinqe Paratus:** From the Latin; *Always Ready*, dictum of the Parachute Regiment.

<sup>55.</sup> **Bivis:** Groundsheet used as a ridge tent or lean-to.

**Fab:** April 6 2010

735 B: What did they have you doing when you got settled?  
736 Fab: Colour had a few jobs for us usual shit fetching and carrying he  
737 handed us over to Gaz; he'd been spammed to get rid of some  
738 rubbish. We went with him anyway. To sort the rubbish.  
739 B: Go on.  
740 Fab: That was it.

Fab spent his first few days in-theatre employed around the base with menial tasks. Rubbish had become an issue particularly the forest of empty plastic water bottles and ration pack boxes that had built up during to the Platoons occupation. Fab had been detailed with responsibility for the collection and disposal of refuse and had decided that by far the most expedient method of disposal would be fire. To that end Fab set about constructing paper and cardboard pyres having collected and recycled the plastics elsewhere. By day three Fab's method having been proved successful had cleared the glut of the problem leaving 2 or 3 pyres and the working fire.

Perhaps overcompensating from the success of the detail so far, Fab decided to double up on the load and therein halve the time. The Mysan Fire Service had probably been more efficient before the war, and whilst very helpful could do little to control the now raging fire threatening the Platoon office and POL<sup>56</sup> Point. It wasn't a big fire but it was a big enough to make the news and therein served to introduce Fab personally to the Battalion and local RMP Detachment. In a way, the fire had done him some good. It was an accident caused more by wind than self and at least the Battalion had been generous enough to mark the incident as entertaining rather than serious. The RMP section was quite naturally in a state of flux and being consumed with more pressing concerns left the episode to the Adjutant<sup>57</sup>. It didn't take long for Fab to be formally employed within his new section and whilst acceptant of the less attractive duties he was keen to be employed as an infantryman. Fab's sections were charged with responsibility for base security, they were a small detachment of mostly new-boys and a few SWEATs<sup>58</sup> with minor injuries. Fab's first act of professional soldiering involving live ammunition was to provide a 180° arc of covering fire extending out from an elevated Sanger<sup>59</sup> on the right hand side of the compounds entrance. It was gate guard and therein of

<sup>56.</sup> **POL:** Military acronym; Petrols Oils & Lubricants, POL Point; Area designated for Flammables.

<sup>57.</sup> **Adjutant:** In the British Army, an Adjutant (*adj*; informal) is usually a senior captain (sometimes a major). As the colonel's personal staff officer, he is in charge of the organisation, administration and discipline of a battalion. Adjutants are given field rank and therein the senior by appointment to all other captains, ranking directly behind the majors. As a rule the adjutant controls the battle whilst the CO commands it. As such, the adjutant is usually a person of significant influence.

no particular interest, but it was gate guard in a war zone as it had been with the fire in a war zone the previous day, and that pleased Fab no end.

**Fab:** 4 April 2010

- 756 B: What happened after you burnt down the FOB?  
757 Fab: Didn't burn fuck all down, that's one of them tales everyone  
758 adds a bit to.  
759 B: Embellishment.  
760 Fab: Swinging lanterns 'mean [...],  
761 B: Tic-toc.  
762 Fab: I went on the gun<sup>†</sup>, local security.  
763 B: And how did that go?  
764 Fab: Might think it wanky but it was fantastic, Gun, live ammo  
765 grenades, top of the world, that's what I'd been trained to do  
766 awesome responsibility the gun, guns 'spose, but hay when  
767 you're a sprog it's all real, vivid like. Don't remember much,  
768 not really the fire was different, fuck all happened anyway,  
769 boys used to go out, come in and go out again kind of thing.  
770 We weren't there much longer; I was just chuffed to be along,  
771 most thought it'd have been over, so just to be there was cool.  
772 B: Did you get to go out on a Patrol?  
773 Fab: Christ man there were times I'd wished I'd stayed up that  
774 fucking Sanger. But yes plenty of patrolling.

Mobiles Patrols dominated work, long and short wheelbase Land Rovers the workhorses facilitating mobility. Small patrols set out from the compound by the day and night their missions an often confusing mishmash of policing, humanitarian and security duties. Fab maintains that this was an odd introduction to war; he hadn't become involved in any classic Platoon fire fights or use that many of the operation skills he'd been taught at Catterick. Nevertheless he'd been to war with his battalion, he'd performed under the gaze of the Platoon and performed well, it had been an icebreaker and a learning experience, one that made a lasting impression on Fab's career. This was the time and place when Fab's awareness of the tacit nature of soldiering began to come to the fore, on a patrol to a Police Station Fab had noticed one of the older men a L/Cpl from Rochester called Big John unconsciously returning his gaze to the rooftop of the building above their position.

**Fab:** 4 April 2010

- 793 B: Right, when did you have your first contact then?  
794 Fab: Week or so in.  
795 B: What happened there?

<sup>58</sup>. **SWEAT:** Army slang; [acronym], Soldier With Experience And Training; a senior soldiers.

<sup>59</sup>. **Sanger:** Fortified building. [From the Hindi]; *Safe Place*

<sup>†</sup>. **Gun:** Machinegun. (see: fn. 63, Gympy)

796 Fab: Shed load of guns on the roof, 2i/c saw them, he'd been  
 797 twitching, been out there from the off, seen the Dicker  
 798 the civvies split an bang-bang. Couldn't have seen us  
 799 proper, setting up for the cop shop prob.  
 800 B: What happened then?  
 801 Fab: Turned the gun on them.  
 802 B: Everyone OK?  
 803 Fine [...] they were fucked though.

The short time he'd spent overseas on his first operational tour was one marked by overall contentment; he'd discharged his weapon legitimately and raised his status in the platoon as a cool hand on the GPMG<sup>60</sup>. Thankfully none of the Platoon had been hurt during Fab's element of the tour and within 4 months they were home. When quartered in Mysan, the activities of daily life soon became routine, the days patrolling the only real activity forming the main topic of conversation, each outing discussed freely amongst the Platoon. Storytelling in the PARAs is formulaic with each tale customarily linked to a character, an event, usually a battle and concluding frequently with an anticlimax. For his part Fab now had a tale, a story to share at Smokers and one centring on professional occupational competence, rather than deviance. For the first time Fab also registered caution when corresponding news of the event home to his mother, he found it difficult to convey much more than an outline, since he wasn't entirely sure how to explain it, it being his deployment of deadly force, executed against the surreal backdrop of this Ancient Biblical town. It was inexplicable.

It's clearly difficult to convey a sense of your occupational success in correspondence or discourse when the target audience is a mother, unlikely to take pleasure in reading of their child's or husband's combat belligerence or deployment of deadly force. To that end most devise editing strategies geared to keeping families in the picture by focusing on mundane or fabricated narratives. Soldiers who spend extended periods of time on operations live in part undetectable lives, far removed from family and the need to elucidate the fullest truth of their actions. Nevertheless they have to report something in their dispatches home, families expect no less.

**Fab:** Dec16 2009

402 Fab: I found it difficult from pretty much day one to get it right,  
 403 didn't really want to share too much, I mean the country was  
 404 in shit-state an we weren't helping, so no news there, Mar  
 405 probably had a better idea of what was going than NATO  
 406 so I kept it light.

<sup>60</sup>. **GPMG:** General Purpose Machine Gun; pronounced [d<sub>3</sub>Impi:] -Gympy. [Short form] The Gun.

Fab's first tour had come and gone without major incident, time-scale in the beginning had meant nothing, like basic training life was too focussed, exciting or frightening to warrant physically checking what time it was, passed confirming duty, parade or assembly start points. Only as the months rolled back and routines became familiar did any concept of world-time and the notion of future come back into focus. At first they dismissed notions of months too absorbed in the task of settling in, then as the weeks on their chuff chart's<sup>61</sup> elapsed, and specific dates and timings of their return to the UK emerged, as did notions of time as a sequential marker of existence, measured in events past, present, and future return.

### **5.1.6 Just another Job**

During his 8 years of combat operations, Fab worked in four theatres. He'd participated in Battalion and Battle-Group scale actions and on several occasions had had to fight for his life. Initially a Gunner, later an Anti-Tank (AT) specialist, his opening deployment with the GPMG proved to be a moderate prelude; future tours particularly those in the Middle-East producing far stiffer opposition and much harder fighting. There are many roles within the Infantry platoon and Gunner not always a popular choice. In training he'd been advised by a former TA soldier to drop his scores on the machinegun tests, when he asked why, the man told him that the best shoots got chosen as section Gunners. Fab still didn't get it; the man was inferring that the GPMG weighing 13.85 Kg weighed 8.85 Kg more than the SA80. Fab didn't care and carried the gun throughout most of his training, and all of his time in the section; he had a relationship an understanding with the weapon as Fab suggests, 'she made me feel safe' (Fab: 4 April 2010: Lines 813-816). Like the ships of the Royal Navy the gendering of 'tools' is common, soldiers sleep with, eat with and exist with their rifles.

The relationship that develops between a soldiers and their rifles being quite deliberately nurtured by the institution. As a young PARA he'd seen death at close quarters and lost friends, absorbing the experience and accepting it as an unavoidable consequence of being a soldier. Whilst often difficult to convey notions of loss to family and friends at home, by contrast the men of the Platoon were candid, pragmatic souls who discussed everything openly. Indeed the troops are encouraged to reflect on personal loss or traumatic event as

<sup>61</sup>. **Chuff-chart:** A crude grid numbering down the days of a tour.



soon as is reasonably possible, a mission debriefing formalising the process enabling the section to talk a dilemma through.

**Fab:** April 4 2010

968 B: Is it difficult to wind-down after?  
969 Fab: After a contact?  
970 B: Yes.  
971 Fab: mmmm, you're hi for a bit, but not for long. If you've  
972 been lucky had a close one you're just relieved-hearts  
973 banging whatever, you're [...], nothing's going through  
974 your head, know what I mean, 'spose your trying to take  
975 it in. Long as everyone's cool, there's a rush though, no  
976 I know.  
977 B: What about when everyone isn't cool?  
978 Fab: Shit happens mate, you just crack on, see it that much it  
979 becomes a joke, there's anyway. You desensitise most.  
980 B: In what ways, I can understand how you'd get used to seeing  
981 corpses, but how else are you desensitised, 'part from that.  
982 Fab: Big fucking questions mate.  
983 B: You're an \*\*\*\*\* graduate man, come on how else.  
984 Fab: Like I said largely by exposure, aye that an the fact that  
985 you fucking hate them. I say that from a professional perspective.  
986 B: Do you get to talk about stuff, you and the boys, bad days?  
987 Fab: All the time, depends a bit if it's a mate, close mate, you just  
988 give them time. Zweikopft's mate Roger got zapped, he was  
989 inconsolable, they'd been through training together. I think he  
990 was shagging his sister, not being funny but [...] and the boys are  
991 there for you, it's just personal, got to work it out for yourself.

Where narratives of death centre on an unknown adult male, a pragmatic undertone dominates the telling. Where narratives describe a mate fewer words are forthcoming discourse choked, immediacy and focus initially shielding soldiers from the killing, long enough for the collective to reorganize, assess and support. Long gone were the days where a phone call home to friends or family might cushion the blow, the problems too complex and not of their world. That may come later but it's difficult. When women, children and the old stray into the killing zone their loss or injury brings about an entirely different response.

**Fab:** April 4 2010

1013 B: Did you come across many civi casualties?  
1014 Fab: Not all the time just not like that, accidents more than anything,  
1015 fucking difficult mind what do you mean by civvies?  
1016 B: I think I meant women and children.  
1017 Fab: Oh [...] what was the question?  
1018 B: Were the locals, woman and kids getting in harm's way?  
1019 Fab: Some, I mean let's be clear it's Cuckoo, a fucking war zone,  
1020 they live there and there aint the resources to move so [...]  
1021 B: So?

1022 Fab: We all see awful stuff [...], last tour little girl got run over nothing  
1023 to do with us, medic got stuck in, then some c\*\*t says leave her. Not  
1024 very noble. I told you about Shane he was head shot, filthy job.

Fab's note on the nobility of war relays a stark reminder of the operating environment and conditions in which our troops must function. To fight is one thing to fight around frightened men, women and children quite another. With the regular fire fights, ground littered with Un-Exploded Ordnance (UXO) and bombed-out buildings it wasn't the safest of places for soldiers let alone children. Of the many threats open to troops and locals alike, these physically competent men were highly aware of the threat posed by the Roadside Bomb and IED. They could fight their way out of an ambush but these devices took you without a fight, dirty devices born of desperation and opportunity, the IEDs found the PARAs half respecting their enemy's ingenuity half despising them for their callousness. The IED like the sniper of the First World War, arrived on the battlefield as much as a psychological weapon as any, posing an immense threat to these physically capable men, for whom notions of immobility are unthinkable.

**Fab:** October 4 2009

054 B: Do a Search Course?  
055 Fab: No did an Awareness Cadre.  
056 B: Use any kit?  
057 Fab: No, no Counter IED stuff, thought of doing it, was on Orders  
058 thought naaaa, 'sides I was up for my Cadre, AT, moving over  
059 to Malan. All had a play though with the metal detector,  
060 certain kind a bloke though.  
061 B: Were they a problem for you?  
062 Fab: Dyer, 'slike all the time is-it aint-it slows you up brilliant in a  
064 field. Standard [...], c\*\*\*s put 'em in walls, paths you got a kid with a kid,  
065 handful of old men. And the punishment is [...] spiteful, frag mostly and  
066 the shit they pick up on the way. Fucks you off large, there's enough going  
067 on, seen lads get smegged not much to say really plucky, fuckers just to  
068 crack on; [...] don't bare thinking of.

Having witnessed a good deal of destruction of both people and property, Fab had also caused his fair share. A GPMG can bear on a target some 1,800 meters away, reigning down an overwhelming 750 rounds a minute. Working in teams the guns create killing grounds, large swaths of land on which nothing moves unseen by the gunners. They can block an advance are flexible enough to be carried and seldom breakdown. When used in the Sustained Firepower<sup>62</sup> (SF) role the bullets fall so far away from the gun that binoculars are required to check their fall. In the light role however they're used up close and personal.

<sup>62</sup>. **Sustained Firepower:** A tripod mounted machinegun, increases stability, range, rate of fire and accuracy.

**Fab:** June 5 2010

1120 B: Did you ever get caught out?  
1121 Fab: Plenty [...].  
1122 B: Anytime.  
1123 Fab: Not easy, just coming up with stuff, did I tell you  
1124 about the guy with the red shirt? [...] umm, 'to  
1125 say, buried the flash eliminator<sup>†</sup> in a ditch, fucking  
1126 stinking, trip out was piss, wanked I lost it.  
1127 B: What?  
1128 Fab: Been out all day, coming in I went over into the  
1130 ditch, let go of the Gun. The flash eliminator it  
1131 was all stopped up with shit.  
1132 B: OK.  
1133 Fab: Started taking rounds nothing close mostly to our  
1134 front. The gun was fucked and the boss wanted  
1135 the gun, I got up and flushed two in front of me,  
1136 this close. [5 meters]  
1137 B: What did you do?  
1138 Fab: Used the gun.  
1139 B: What happened?  
1140 Fab: What'd you think happened? Guy nearest me blew up. He  
1141 was the guy in the red shirt.

### 5.1.7 Journeys end, (Never if, but when)

With the same balance of belligerence and reserve Fab continued to ply his trade throughout the Middle East and closer to home in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Cyprus, and, Kenya. Working from vehicles and on foot he'd mastered the patrol and his role in it. He'd been promoted and had completed specialist training as an Anti-Tank Detachment Commander; moreover he was coming to the end of his service contract. He'd served five year less a year in time-off and privileged<sup>63</sup> leave. He thoroughly enjoyed his job, the company of men and the notion that he existed outside of the mainstream, he'd survived the gauntlet and come out the other end a more rounded, gentle yet assertive human being. With regard to his future; Fab had also begun to develop an interest in Law. He'd read his brothers text books and articles on tour and felt he had an aptitude for it. It was difficult for him though; he'd never had to think outside the box before, especially when thought was directed to post service occupations. He knew he could quite feasibly enrol on a Law walk-over and at 25 was young enough to reassume a professional trajectory.

<sup>†</sup>. **Flash Eliminator:** A flash suppressor, also known as a flash guard or flash eliminator, is a device attached to the muzzle of a weapon that reduces its visible signature while fired.

<sup>63</sup>. **Privileged leave:** In the Armed Forces leave is a privilege rather than an entitlement. Types: Annual Leave 7 weeks / Compassionate / Embarkation / Sick / Resettlement.

Fab's Parents were also aware of the time and offered him all manner of support and encouragement, as had his brother and the broader family. He was engaged too, his fiancé of the opinion that she was quite happy with arrangements as they stood, couldn't imagine Fab in any other occupation. It was certainly a dilemma. In the background Battalion build-up training had begun, in a matter of months they'd deploy once again and with that deployment Fab's uninterrupted association with the Regiment would be broken, life would never be the same again. Fab signed on for another 4 years, telling his father he wanted a Professional Commission and an in-house LLB through the Army Legal Service, his mother that he was sorry, and his fiancé that he was leaving her. Fab's reasons for reenlisting were not complicated.

**Fab:** June 5 2010

1253 B: Had you intended to extend?  
1254 Fab: First hitch went so quick, I'm not sure where the time went.  
1255 Got to the 4 year point and cacked, first real decision I'd had  
1256 to make in years. I don't know part of me hadn't had enough  
1257 I knew I wasn't interested in a career though, but it's got quite  
1258 a pull, I thought it'll be three years all in.  
1259 B: What did your mother think?  
1260 Fab: We're getting there-therapy you know [laughter] hard to get your  
1261 head round, Del Boy'd given me his books Adam & Brownsword  
1262 an all that. But you know, know why I went for it, [laughing]  
1263 it was easy.  
1264 B: Go on.  
1266 Fab: It was the easiest thing to do. More of the same, same was good  
1267 just forgot about it then.

Fab was clearly happy with the routine and knew his place in the battalion, where he was considered a valued member of the club. He also sensed that he had now arrived at a different place occupationally, when signing-on for his second term of service the SNCOs and Officers administering the episode seemed to treat him differently, with more familiarity or warmth. As if in a sense by reenlisting, as they'd done, he'd somehow verified his commitment and fidelity to the Regiment, or perhaps they'd simply began to identify with him as one of their own. Certainly his tacit comprehension of the agencies underpinning daily life in the Battalion and broader Army were by now embedded; he looked, spoke and fought like a PARA, carrying himself with the belligerence and conviction of an individual who clearly self-policed with gusto.

In a sense when you serve out your first term you do so blind; it's a frightening and exhilarating time, one of new experiences good and bad, life moving at a rate of knots that

seldom permits time to fully appreciate what's going on around you. A second engagement is however undertaken with eyes wide open, the soldier possessing the fullest knowledge of the job warts and all. Accordingly the statement made when re-enlisting is a loud one, one that resonates across the Company carrying an implicit weight, cutting you out from the herd as a professional soldier. It's also a time of great soul searching and a huge decision, which naturally results in some deciding to leave. Those who exit at this first opportunity are categorized by the MOD as Short Service Leavers (SSL), men who'd served out their contractual engagement of 4 years in addition for many of up to 2 years spent in training.

Fab suggests that as a consequence of time served and the ongoing round of technical training that he'd eventually arrived at a point in his career where he accepted that he was indeed a PARA. It had taken 5 years. During his second engagement serving as a NCO he'd also assumed responsibility for a section of 12 men, their welfare and conduct on camp and in the field. Now giving the orders his life had taken on a whole new direction, he'd not initially wanted command but had seemingly matured into the role. Being more accustomed to taking orders than giving them it took a while for him to assume the role proper, yet being a popular man within the Company he was supported through this period of occupational transition. In relation to the act of killing, most convey notions of occupational necessity, or as Ade had audaciously informed his Recruiter, believed it 'was [simply] what soldiers do'. In relation to this project all informants agreed that the act of killing was far easier than the act of living with it. Another important message to emerge in relation to operations centred on notions of contentment and job satisfaction, wherein all informants suggested that time spent on operations was indeed the time of their lives,

**Fab:** 24 February 2012

5163 no, what I'm saying is that tours are what it's all about [...] mean  
5164 life on camp is basic chyte, build ups just seems like training an  
5165 well tours are what you join for, no one slag's-out their time away

**Ian:** 22 April 2013

7214 'slike everything you imagine an more [...] no bull, just soldiering  
7215 truth be known the drinking like [...] when we wuz home wuz well  
7216 bad all round, pissed mattresses know what I'm saying, that's not the  
7217 beer talking there [...] what I'm saying is a massive amount of them  
7218 boy's wuz ill. Like mental health ill you get me, the drinking was like  
7219 coz they was fucked up in the head, an bored, an had tour money to  
7220 burn. Aye but on tour no booze them same boys was 100% on game  
7221 [...] see weren't the booze-not at all, being home was the problem.

**Ade:** 23 June 2014

9223 I binned it 'coz I wanted a change, I done my time loved it like an I do  
9224 still now miss it, well bits like, but the bits I miss was when we was  
9225 away quality times but. True [...] time of our lives mun...

## Appendix. x.

### Pegasus Company Test Week

#### Week 31

##### **10 Mile March** (Wednesday morning)

- The 10-mile march is conducted as a squad, over undulating terrain.
- Each candidate carrying a Bergen weighing 35 lbs, plus water and personal weapon.
- The march must be completed in 1 hour and 50 minutes.

##### **Trainasium** (Wednesday afternoon)

The Trainasium is an aerial confidence course which is unique to P Coy. In order to assess his suitability for military parachuting, the Trainasium tests a candidate's ability to overcome fear and carry out simple activities and instructions at a height of up to 30 meters above ground level. The event carries a straight pass or fail.

##### **Log Race** (Thursday morning)

A team event with 8 individuals carrying a 60kg log over a distance of 1.9 miles' undulating terrain.

##### **Steeplechase** (Thursday afternoon)

- An individual test with candidates running against the clock over a 1.8 mile cross country course.
- The course features a number of 'water obstacles' and, having completed the cross country element, candidates must negotiate an assault course to complete the test.
- The march must be completed in 19 minutes or under to score 10 points.

##### **2 Mile March** (Friday morning)

- The 2 mile march is conducted over undulating terrain.
- Each candidate carries a Bergen weighing 35lbs.
- Plus water, personal weapon, helmet and combat jacket.
- The march must be completed in 18 minutes or under.

##### **Endurance March** (Monday)

- A squaded march conducted over 20 miles of severe terrain.
- Each individual carries a bergen weighing 35lbs, in addition to food, water and personal weapon.

- The march must be completed in under 4 ½ hours.

**Stretcher Race** (Tuesday morning)

- Teams of 16 men carry a 175lbs stretcher over a distance of 5 miles.
- No more than 4 men carry the stretcher at any given time.
- Students wear webbing and carry a weapon.

**Milling** (Tuesday afternoon)

The final event of Test Week is a boxing match where points are gained for sustaining rather than giving one's opponent a beating; therein a 60 second bout of 'controlled physical aggression' against an opponent of similar height and weight.



## Appendices xi.

### The Basic Parachute Course (BPC)

The BPC takes place at No1 Parachute Training School, RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. Students have all completed the All Arms Pre-Parachute Selection course, or associated service equivalent.

The course has varied in content over the years, but today lasts for up to four weeks. Reservists arrive at the school partially-trained and, therefore, their course lasts for only two.

PTS students are taught all the basic skills required of a military parachutist. These include aircraft and descent drills, drawing and fitting 'chutes and associated equipment (CSPEP) and harness release & drag drills - for both dry and wet landings. Week 1 is intensive and requires maximum effort & concentration from all students. Those reaching the required standard could make their first descent as early as Day 4 of Week 1.

Seven descents from a C130 Hercules transport aircraft are required to qualify as a military parachutist at varying altitudes. Two jumps are carried out at night to familiarise the student with tactical drops. The parachute utilised is the GQ LLP Mk1 rig. This is the standard 'chute for non-specialist drops and it replaced the long-serving Irvin PX1 Mk4 in 1993.

#### **Descents are as follows:**

- |                                    |               |                 |
|------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| • 1000 ft exit. Single stick.      | No container. | Day             |
| • 1000 ft exit. Single stick.      | Container.    | Day             |
| • 800 ft exit. Single stick.       | Container.    | Day             |
| • 800 ft exit. Single stick.       | Container.    | Night           |
| • 800 ft exit. Simultaneous stick. | Container.    | Day             |
| • 700 ft exit. Simultaneous stick. | Container.    | Night           |
| • 600 ft exit. Simultaneous stick. | Container.    | Day (Qualifier) |

Successful students receive the Green Light Warning Order (refusal to jump at the door), and are awarded their wings. They are thus accepted in to the airborne brotherhood.

## Week 31 / 33

The Regular Forces BPC lasts for 3 weeks.

### Week 31

- In the first week the basic skills of a parachutist are taught.
- Aircraft safety drills enabling students to exit the C130 Hercules aircraft.
- Landing and emergency drills for all situations that may arise during a descent.
- Those who reach the required standard could find themselves making their first descent by the fourth day of the first week.

### Week 32 / 33

- During the next 2 weeks, students are taught all the additional skills required to become operational parachutists.
- These include equipment packing, emplaning and Drop Zone drills.
- 

To qualify for the Military Parachute Wings, students have to complete a number of parachute descents. Each descent is a progression from the last, starting from 1000ft with equipment to a final descent from 600ft with full equipment, at night. Students who fail to reach the required standard during each phase will have to repeat that descent.

- 1000 ft    single stick formation
- 1000 ft    single stick formation                      (with equipment)
- 800 ft    single stick formation                      (with equipment)
- 800 ft    single stick formation                      (with equipment) at night
- 800 ft    simultaneous stick formation              (with equipment)
- 700 ft    simultaneous stick formation              (with equipment) at night
- 600 ft    simultaneous stick formation              (with equipment)



## **CHAPTER V**

### *Analysis (Section ii)*

**Theme**      Biographical Disruption

## CHAPTER V

### Being Soldier-*self*

#### 5.2 Introduction

This section of the analysis courses along the martial time-line from the point where the successful Soldier Under Training has Passed-Out as a Combat Infantryman and is about to progress to Pegasus Company and parachute training prior to joining his parent unit. Having completed his right to passage, he can expect a career of garrison, public and operational duties. In terms of transition the chapter leads to a period in which professional occupational competencies, previously measured in conditions of relative safety (<sup>1</sup>Knapik, *et al*, 2001. pgs. 946-954), must now be realised in conditions of active service. Accordingly the transition from becoming to being begins. Military training, regardless of its complexity can never fully prepare a combat infantryman for combat, nor does it set out to. The real test takes place on the 'front line', where occupational knowledge must be applied to real conditions offering no immediate protection beyond one's wit, personal weapon and platoon peers. For many this will be a return journey yet each will need to accustom or re-accustom themselves with the ground rules (politic situation), their unit's operational doctrine and the tacit rules of the road observed by all British infantry regiments.

The chapter also considers the arrival of Soldier-*self* at the working unit, where numerous challenges will greet the newcomers, not least having to create new social networks, since he's spent the best part of two years in the company of the same people and predominantly men. His ongoing development will initially focus on an induction where occupational competence specific to the unit will be addressed; in no short time the opening days of his first operational tour will arrive and ultimately test the quality of the man. Adjustment in this sense comes twofold; the first condition relates to the physicality of actors, centring far less on the immediacies of combat and more on mastery of self in an unmistakably alien and physically testing environment (<sup>2</sup>Knapik *et al*, 2001. pgs. 946-954; <sup>1</sup>Clausewitz, 1834/1984, pg. 35-40; Tzu, 1993. Pgs. 83-100). Whilst initially overwhelming, adjustment to the challenges posed by topography, climate or culture will soon be made and with relative composure. Soldiers and particularly infantrymen are adept in adaptation. Their exaptational qualities marked by their ability to cope in conditions of often atrocious physical and mental privation (Holmes. 2006, pgs. 98-102; Keegan. 1986, pgs. 37-53). Time wise, an Infantry tour lasts 6 months with a fortnight's R&R about half way through, where operational commitments permit.

Leave may be cut or deferred however, thus some soldiers may find their tours last anywhere between 1 day to 3 years depending on role, injury or sickness. As suggested Battalion deployments generally last 6 months, an ostensibly long period of social disconnection; however the soldier is by no means alone on this journey and will be supported throughout by platoon peers in the Platoon House<sup>64</sup>. In this noticeably tribal locale the older men, 22+ (years of age), focus the new hands on learning the real meaning of soldiering, offering life skills ranging from the tips that make field conditions a little more bearable, to the awareness raisers and life savers that keep people alive. For many, the first weeks of the tour speed by, it's an edgy time, yet as confidence grows muscles harden and soon body and mind begin to settle, ...a little (Williams. 2005, pgs. 254–259; Orasanu & Backer. 1996, pgs. 89–125; <sup>2</sup>Knapia et al. 1993, pg. 62). Having considered albeit briefly factors of occupational competence and physicality, the foremost aspect to be discussed here, will focus on narrative modification via self, the filter through which all thought or internal narrative flows (Crystal. 2002, pg. 14).

The self that captures the essence and truth conveyed in all experience, past and existing, near and far. Self as an aspect of being that rises from both “I” and “Me” (Mead, 1964), by realizing and conveying knowledge of the word through highly personalised narrative that posit self interchangeably, as author, accomplice or subject of action.

“The construction and reconstruction of one’s life story narrative (or “personal myth”), integrating ones perceived past, present and anticipated future, is the process through which modern adults imbue their lives with unity, purpose and meaning.”  
(Crewe & Maruna, 2006 pg. 109)

For soldier-*self* to achieve some modicum of understanding, from which to draw meaning, he must transform “experience-near” into “experience-distant”, with narrative being the channel through which such transformation takes place. Far from being creations of happenstance, these narrative constructs are drawn together with purpose, as Geertz (1973) suggests they are accounts formed on the basis of,

“...careful interpretation of intersubjective symbolic forms, thus it becomes a matter of unravelling the web’s of meaning,”  
(Geertz. 1973, pg. 57).

<sup>64</sup>. Platoon House: A Parachute Regiment - Forward Operating Base (FOB)

The internal subjectivity that shapes such narrative possessing the power to affect both correspondent and recipient, shaping either's sense of self, their character, locale and proximal uniqueness to one another (Haggard *et al*, 2002, pp. 382-385).

The chapter therefore sets out to examine how soldiers convey their knowledge of being through narrative, with an emphasis on how they exercise self-censorship in the telling of their own uniquely interrupted biographies. Specific interest here rests in the soldier's capacity to create complex often fraudulent templates of self as author, actor or subject of action, for presentation to others who reside outside the experience. The selves discussed here also seek to understand their World during the tour, an episode viewed as a powerfully exhilarating, yet risk laden episode of their lives, their ongoing construction of social reality being regularly tested from one tension-filled moment to the next (Duncanson, 2009, pp. 64-78). Conveying a gist of the situation on the ground is no clear-cut task placing an immense editorial responsibility on self as author of narrative so often characterised by its addressee sensitive and insightful nature (Sites, 2013; Hoge, *et al* 2004, pp. 13-22; Litz, *et al* 1997, pp. 1001-1010).

In short, soldiers explain their world differently to different people, depending on how they seek to project themselves in the worlds of those people. Thus they deploy amended narrative accounts by way of an explanation for their absence in the biographies of significant others (Fodor, 1975 pgs. 18-35; Wolfe, 1991, pgs. 1073-96), plastering over any biographical fissures with audience specific narrative, (Bell, 1984, pgs. 145-204) coded to mother, brother, girlfriend, colleague, researcher and so on. Countless alterations will be assigned to such narrative beginning with the temporal reflexivity that confronts immediate action head on. This binary activity generates a knee-jerk narrative stripped of complimentary aspect, honing-in on the naked truth as it unfolds in zulu<sup>65</sup> time. As suggested, ground conditions seldom produce material suitable for immediate dispatch; therefore self as a filter existing at the centre and periphery of all experience; advocates, moderates and shapes conveyable narrative layer by layer.

By re-visiting the experience the soldier begins to internally process his first uncensored anecdotal draft. These are the vivid, blow by blow accounts of unfolding action that routinely demand amendment if they are to find their way into more universally acceptable

<sup>65</sup>. Zulu time: Military time zone = GMT, local (e.g. Afghan) time = Delta\* time or Zulu + 4hrs 30min.

forms of discourse. It's also a learning curve for the younger souls writing or calling home for the first tentative time. Each will learn quickly how a presentation of self deployed in one setting plays out in another, not to mention become aware of the limits to which narrative

modification might be stretched or compressed. Narrative presents its own set of unique challenges, placing the author thousands of miles from his perspective audience. The often delayed yet potentially direct access to family so regularly taken for granted when garrisoned in the UK now being realised large. By contrast the geographical distance and clandestine nature of soldiering also presents the author with an abundance of material limited only by the soldier's imagination and sense of proportion. In this sense due to the cloak-and-dagger nature of soldiering, little or none of the context may be authenticated anyway.

Whilst the MOD spends Millions each year on welfare based communication, internet, telephone, and so forth, by far the most common messaging device used by British infantrymen remains the time-honoured Bluey<sup>66</sup>. Letters from the front are by nature belated, facilitating the often necessary creation of abridged accounts of operational life. In relation to accounts reported here, our focus is less concerned with accuracy or factual nature of discourse and more its treatment. Therein how soldier-*self* audits internal narrative, from the earliest drafts to the final copy. How the actor consciously transforms that narrative into more generalised forms, accounts characterized by their creative structure, since as Knights & Willmott (1985) remind us;

‘what is present to consciousness’ is ‘more an imaginative construct than a direct communication from the nerve terminal organs’.  
(Knights & Willmott, 1985. pg. 202)

Interest here lies in the constructs of a moderately atypical self, assembled often altruistically in an attempt to consistently posit the ‘spirit’ of self (Hagel, 1890) into the lives and memories of significant others (Woelfel & Haller, 1971). These are accounts of self validation that will inevitably shape future selves, mould future presentation of self and through one's own labours redefine one's social positioning. For infanters combat is the catalyst that makes verification of being possible. From the point when the civilian took his Oath, completed training or arrived in theatre, his very existence has hinged on one simple truth, that truth being that it was all leading to “this”. Life and every test or assimilation

<sup>66</sup>. **Bluey**: British Forces Post Office (BFPO) gratis Airmail letter



every round fired before this moment was predictable, in this sense the truest test is survival, indeed,

“Survival is the only glory in war”.  
(Fuller, 1980)

If successful here, the soldier will have legitimately earned full membership to the Regimental family, not to mention raised his status measurably across the broader armed forces community and in so doing change the perceptions held by peers and family members unconditionally. The reinvention to be pulled off is dependent on a soldier's ability to make sense of his world; a world overshadowed by his voluntary participation in an occupation that promotes acts of tremendous violence and extrajudicial killing (Kretzmer, 2005). The global perception of soldier-*self* is indeed a work in progress, one enabled through the creation of fresh narrative accounts that validate existing perceptions. The process results from the self's capacity to communicate dispositions that compliment the already embedded narratives present in the personal biographies of significant-others.

The meanings people will attribute to such narratives are intentionally specific, indeed contrived their structure layered, deliberate and fundamental to a desired outcome. Post combat reinvention will clearly demand thought, even the shared narratives of the Platoon House will need to be coded before retelling, transforming specific remembrances' realized in uniquely personal knowledge into generalised yet highly specific and self conferring narrative. Notions of emotional labour (Ashforth *et al* 1993; Hochschild, 1979) seep into most off-duty narrative. Indeed Hochschild (1979) proposes that 'common expectations exist concerning the appropriate emotional reactions of individuals involved in service transactions'. As discussed this is a component of an ongoing narrative strategy, based on the individual's ability to filter experience. Through which the self will emerge. Reinvention as such employs the same narrative filter to shape knowledge, however applies that knowledge purposely to the apparatus of biographical disruption.

Far from simply being the result of an extraordinary and often isolating lifestyle, the certainty of biographical disruption in fact facilitates forward planning and time to locate tailored narrative supplements of self into the personal biographies of significant others. Biographical disruption might therefore be viewed as both a coping strategy and foundation for future presentations of self. By adhering to a set of recognizable modals of self, (Giddens 1988, pg. 259) familiar to the intended audience, the soldier attempts to retain a sense of the norm by

projecting variations of the norm (Lizette & Lehren, 2011). In this sense by embedding a facsimile of self into the social reality of significant others, the soldier creates a catalyst for discourse that parallels but never fully reveals the true nature of an episode or character of the author.

By editing the context and content of their internal narratives, soldiers are able to manage often unpalatable truths; the occupational reinvention of soldier-*self* is built on such episodes, where an opportunity presents itself to regulate truth via well crafted narratives, facilitated by the tour. Evidencing biographic disruption in this cohort is to evidence a complex coping mechanism, that whilst conceived ad-hoc in the field, can have enormous consequences at home. The analysis that follows opens with a brief depiction of the activities that ensnare daily living in an operational theatre, whilst forming the backdrop on to which the narrative is played out. The activities observed in this section produced frequently restricted dialogue, the nature of discourse material often challenging in content and inelegant in translation. The chapter seeks to investigate two categories of narrative characterized plainly here as those of self, and those of others.

In the first category discussion falls on the undisclosed internal narratives that seldom reach an audience. Here the justification for narrative amendment is considered, with particular interest placed on the rationale that guides the selection of narrative inclusion as opposed to its exclusion. In the second, discussion will target the significant other, those with whom the soldier will communicate recurrently over the course of a lifetime. Each category will be explored using transcript evidence that centres on the three most universal questions asked of soldiers, and those requiring most frequent adjustment;

- Have you killed anyone?
- What are combat conditions like?
- What does death look like?

The overarching aim of the chapter is to examine narrative modification as a component of biographical disruption, therein highlighting the relationship between actual and modified accounts of being. In this instance adjustment has become habituation (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, pg. 13); the agency of biographical disruption is therefore viewed as a

narrative device used to inform future presentations of self in a variety of domains. Composition of soldier-*self* is in this sense reliant on such activity, the telling of occupationally explicit stories being used frequently as a central component in the construction of soldier identities. Soldiers use these adjusted narrative accounts to reinforce notions of their preferred selves, their complexity and recipient specific nature often deployed as explanations of the inexplicable.

### **5.2.1 Mind Fields**

Fab's first operational tour had centred on an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Iraq, a settling of the region after offensive operations [the Gulf war] had ceased. After years of operations in Iraq his unit had returned to Afghanistan in 2006 only to find an entirely different situation had unfolded on the ground (Byers, 2003, pgs. 171-190; Etzioni, 2002, pgs. 9-30). The new order of business post 2001, was in hindsight based on a shamefully naïve 3 year reconstruction mission, conceived at a time when neither Britain nor her Allies had the faintest idea as to the extent or potential threat that was posed by insurgents (Rogers, 2009; Rashid, 2008; Grubbs, 2009; Ferguson, 2005, pg. 151; Paret, 1986; Clausewitz 1832, pg. 21). Indeed Former Foreign Office minister Kim Howells described NATO's strategy as 'completely bonkers'. On reflexion, however, little had changed in relation to platoon life, tours still revolved around the Forward Operating Base (FOB), a defended compound providing security and refuge to 27 men and their officer. In appearance the patrol base remained aesthetically similar to the Alamo of Davey Crockett distinction, complete with adobe walls and uninterrupted vistas of extended wasteland or neighbours compound located euphemistically in the Green-Zone.

Fab and his peers made up the occupying force, a self governing entity organised as one might expect along hierarchical lines the day's tasks or duties being allocated as they had for centuries according to rank, skill or status. Activities of daily living pertinent to infantrymen may in the most cases be divided roughly into two universally familiar activities, those of 'guard-duty' and the more proactive patrol. In the case of the former a small detachment of soldiers is assigned with the duty of protecting the perimeter of their compound (the FOB or Platoon House), or harbour area, acting as the eyes and ears of the unit at work or rest. The expression "staging-on" is a slang term used in the British Army referring to the actual time the sentry spends guarding as opposed to cleaning weapons, eating or resting. Sentry duty,

whilst of vital importance to the safety and security of the unit is in practice a mind numbingly boring activity. The average stag lasts between 2-3 hours in which time one can only observe and absorb so much of the ground to one's immediate front.

**Gaz:** February 04 2010

570 Gaz: Well you makes home out of wherever you ends  
571 up like, even though most of them places they put  
572 us is proper shit-holes, monotonous too sounds daft  
573 but time don't 'alf drag, plenty uh staging-on like.

**Ian:** December 11 2009

315 Ian: Look anything's got to be better than staging-on in  
316 a minging shit-tip or getting spammed to do all sorts  
317 frankly ridiculous tasking. No mate if I wanted the  
318 wild west I'd 'av joined the fucking cowboys.

**Hal:** October 09 2009

194 Hal: Well I've like shedloads of experience in staging-on,  
195 aye a truly international portfolio uh guard duties, un  
196 well I can say 'halt' in like 5 different languages. I  
197 reckons if you got a job that involves getting bored  
198 shitless, one that requires a person to sleep standing  
199 in all weathers then I'd be in.

Informants suggest that soon enough the mind begins to numb, abeyance only staved off as a consequence of the now deeply embedded policies of self-policing, the infantryman observing all space, regardless of its precise geographical location, with the same state of awareness and consideration. In a sense wherever the section or platoon goes the attention to detail and diligently practiced drills follow. The battalion is to this end a wholly embodied and therein fluid entity rather than a collection of static buildings or geographically located camp, as Goffman suggests of all institutions the scope of institutional control is extensive (Goffman, 1961). The Regiment in this sense is people, its structure portable and strength based in the collective's ability to function wherever deployed with uniform diligence and degrees of professionalism. If this abstract notion were absent operations would be impossible, the confidence it imbues alone forms the mortar that binds the unit, inspiring notions of universal collaboration, fidelity and infallibility.

In an environment prone to spontaneity, social reality is constructed along these two occupationally determined lines. The activities of daily living in the case of guard duty placing the soldier on stag, viewing local subsistence through the lens of his SUSAT (Sight Unit Small Arms Trilux), an often monotonous task requiring the utmost self discipline and

focus to simply remain awake and vigilant. At night the guard is doubled permitting muted exchanges between sentries that cushion the monotony to a degree, and provide a brief moment in time for fledgling soldier-*self* to verify his developing occupational persona. Interaction between soldiers of different ages and service experience is fundamental, it enables a new soldier to learn by example and ask questions-however ridiculous without fear of reproach. These informal coaching sessions also relay symbolically embedded cues; and whilst remaining tacit confirm reflexively the raised status of the knowledge giver and acknowledgment of soldierly progress via low level recipient feedback.

Such activity makes the process of finding one's place in the platoon an easy task, for new soldiers anyway, since the bottom is a relatively easy place to find. In the case of the latter patrolling, the activity centres on advancing to contact<sup>67</sup>, and surviving any ensuing fire-fight. Soldiers and particularly Infantrymen will weather many patrols during their time in-country, the patrol takes time, the ground often laden with IED's<sup>68</sup> and signs of the imperceptible Taliban everywhere. Their presence indicated only by the displacement of local Ishaqzai's as they abandon agrarian projects and make for safety, followed by a hail of incoming small arms, machinegun and RPG<sup>69</sup> fire. The slow tense patrols like sentry duty can absorb days without contact. Then without warning the intensity of battle ensues, as adrenalin and training kick-in in tandem, every man knowing his place and responsibility within and to the section, ensuring a degree of mutual security for soldiers caught typically in the open fields and alleyways of the district.

On these shaky foundations discourse quickly consolidates becoming broader in content, humour and language opening-up to discussions of more private or personal themes. Whilst their social world and therein social realities close in, narrowing for 6 months to activities occurring within and directly outside of the FOB, whilst thought retains its global setting. Throughout the long days and cold nights spent in observation and listening posts, gun pits, and sangars, or whilst out on the ground undertaking the slow messy patrols, the mind continues to question, reflect and assess everything it experiences. Even the occasions when thoughts flit between task and ground, to loved ones, that last embrace or unresolved disagreement; it's about killing time productively and setting out ones stall, a time and place

<sup>67</sup>. **Advance** to contact: An offensive process designed to gain or re-establish contact with the enemy. Renamed "*Administration*" in 2006

<sup>68</sup>. **IED**: Improvised or Illegal Explosive Device

<sup>69</sup>. **RPG**: Rocket Propelled Grenade

to devise future selves based on the experience of strife as a definitive component of soldier-*self*. Of the countless thoughts coursing through Fab's mind in the opening days and nights of his first tour, the question of how he might explain his time on operations to his family remained amongst the most pressing. Whilst a broader description of the environment and characters of the platoon would be a cinch, discussion of the actual doing of soldiering was proving to be an altogether different affair.

In a sense, Fab was new to war and initially failed to possess a vocabulary capable of describing the sights, smells and carnage of combat, or a strategy capable of translating the raw experience into a palatable dispatch (Mills, C. Wright, 1940, pp. 904-913). In this instance Fab simply lacked the self-confidence to report this new found knowledge centring on the real meaning of life and death. He lacked the narrative subjectivity or self-assurance to deploy his own form of narrative adjustment during this period of biographical disruption. He was also part scared, part aspirational and part human, on the one hand striving dutifully to posit himself as an Airborne warrior in the company of stalwart combat veterans whilst a content, safe and happy son or friend on the other.

### 5.2.2. **Swinging the Lantern**<sup>†</sup>

“A true war story is never moral. It does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behaviour, nor restrain men from doing the things men have always done. If a story seems moral, do not believe it.  
(O'Brien, 1991, pg. 65)

#### **How to tell a war story**

An infantry soldier's social reality is built on the meanings he assigns to his operational surroundings, he's taught to assess risk and degrees of danger that soldiering may impose on self, yet for all of that it's not easy to posit oneself dead or injured or for that in real combat. In training some thought and instruction will be given by way of a verbal inoculation, hinting at what it might be like; nevertheless the experience is beyond description, discourse rarely relocating anything like the existential experience that will actually play out.

“Usually before we have learned what danger really is we form an idea of it which is rather attractive than repulsive.”  
(Clausewitz, 1834, pg. 46)

<sup>†</sup>. **Swinging the Lantern:** Usually proceeded by an invitation to “pull up a sandbag”, meaning to take a seat and listen to someone telling a story.

Without a doubt as Clausewitz suggests most preconceptions of combat are romanticised, to a degree misconstrue from the moment the recruit begins to engage with recruiting material, itself by design ambiguous. Similarly notions embedded during training are too often promulgated based on ignorance, belligerence or the acceptance of instructors that combat is an inevitable ingredient of the soldier's rite of passage. Yet despite the consequences the soldier must learn to communicate a sense of his lot to those who retain a genuine interest in his welfare. These are the accounts that as suggested will require some form of treatment prior to dissemination to a home audience.

Indeed the situation unfolding on the ground in front of the soldier has to be organised or worked out on an individual and internal basis first. Soldiers have to process their social actions and work through their social realities in order to resolve their participation in some frankly disturbing activities often perpetrated over days. This is a reflexive task since not all activities or operations result in either credible or for that honourable outcomes, many are fragmented, operationally unresolved or simply fail to meet the outcome speculated in their original mission statement. Plans often go wrong, situations on the ground changing beyond practical amendment. In these situations successful outcomes are reliant on self control, and faith in the ability of one's leaders to re-write the plan instantaneously using all available resources to affect the best possible outcome. Clearly life on the battlefield is unpredictable, no end of preparation can guarantee an outcome, since in this environment almost anything can and likely will happen. Absorbing the facts, embracing the circumstances, or gauging the truth of an episode becomes a very real challenge for participants.

In time the self will act on the day's activities appraising moments of interest as internal narrative, facilitating the individuals need to assess their own public actions. Initially however there is no time for a deep or meaningful analysis to be undertaken, this process will occur later during the guard duties and rest periods. In the interim all strength mustered in body and mind is directed to the immediate action playing out on the ground. There simply isn't time to think beyond the acquisition of a target, the location of enemy and positions of cover. Only when the location of the threat has been identified and enemy fire suppressed can the section or platoon leap-frog forward, fire and manoeuvre<sup>70</sup> enabling them to move

<sup>70</sup>. **Fire and manoeuvre;** or fire and manoeuvre is a military tactic that uses suppressive fire to decrease the enemy's ability to return fire, organise, apply unit cohesion, or maintain morale. At section level, the "movement" part of the action consists of a ½ section moving forward whilst the other (½ section) suppresses enemy fire.

with some degree of safety to a point where they might close on the threat in close combat. Only after the final assault and confirmation of enemy dead, one's own casualties and status of ammunition has been established will the mind begin to absorb what just happened. Initial reflection is also limited to a hurried assessment of one's own physical condition and equipment, followed swiftly by an equally localised appraisal of how colleagues have fared through the crisis and where the next threat might arise. All eyes and ears are then focused on the commander, who, by this point, will be in receipt of myriad reports from his men, signaller, interpreter and local guides. The next critical move will see the patrol either laying up waiting for its casualties to be evacuated or awaiting orders before the patrols up and moves off. Then the whole process kicks off again, beginning with the advance to contact and slow uneasy move towards the next threat. Making sense of the immediacies of life in the field is undoubtedly challenging, and will have to wait until the section has either returned to the FOB or established a defensive harbour area in the field. Only then after weapons have been cleaned and food and water taken will a sufficiently long enough lull in the fighting permit an analysis.

When time eventually permits the individual may reflect on the activities of the day, a day often loaded with paradox, one minute sights set on killing the next on the preservation of life. As suggested, in this environment thought of one's actions, one's extrajudicial performance or humanity will at some point need to be discussed, either internally as thought or between the men of the section. These private moments spent in subjective reflexion will determine how the individual will present any given occurrence from that moment on. The internal narratives may well be edited later, further screened in the company of platoon peers, their reactions seminal in determining how the tale is likely to be recounted to broader audiences', family and friends. The truth of the situation may well not pass further than the peer review, deletion being made at this point as a matter of character preservation.

Far from being an obligation, the act of writing or phoning home will by now be a well established one, for many home may well be hundreds of miles away from Battalion Headquarters in the UK, subsequently most become proficient communicators, routinely relaying bursts of catch up discourse where the exploits of a week are compressed into a ten minutes précis. Many exploits discharged in the line of duty principally acts of violence, may well fall beyond the grasp of significant others, particularly those fortunate enough to lack experience of armed conflict. A delicate balance must therein be struck, since most



relationships connecting the soldier to the significant others will have been forged in assumption rather than an informed knowledge of what soldiers actually do occupationally. Rarely are the finer points of conflict relations fully understood, moreover they are assumed, skewed or romanticised to a point where the public perception of what soldiers do, and what soldiers actually do are frequently distant relatives. In this sense the activity and distance from home combine, biographical disruption facilitating the creation of identities assumed in narrative, replacing truth with palatable anecdotes often paralleling reality at some distance. In the following account an explanation for the deployment of amended narrative focuses on one rational underpinning inclusion.

**Fab:** February 14 2010

392 Fab: Well the lads tell different stories to promote one  
393 or another of their numerous charms. The younger  
394 boys, men with new and impressionable lady friends  
395 tend to lay on the combat, the older men who don't  
396 want to worry their families keep things very simple  
397 and no one goes out of their way to upset parents.

In this extract Fab paints a clear picture of a rationale that might promote a given account of life on the front line, suggesting that the younger men often use narrative accounts of their imposed detachment to the front, to support notions of duty, sacrifice and masculinity, particularly in the minds of awaiting partners. For the 18 year olds in the platoon, the best part of the previous year had been spent in training, where promises of loyal service had been made from the relative safety of Catterick Garrison. For many their absence from civilian-peer related activity (Elder et al, 2007 pgs. 215-23) is met with resentment and jealousy, particularly where un-chaperoned partners continue to enjoy the weekly night out. Theirs are the omnipotent narratives of youth with an edge; they seek to either explicitly or tacitly control the recipient with accounts that motivate notions as diverse as compassion or sympathy, guilt or spite; narrative prone to by-lines that use words like sacrifice and duty to invoke notions of culpability or passion as a means of achieving control or compliance.

**Ade:** April 17 2010

676 Ade: I have to say as a bit of ladies man I occasionally  
677 bent the truth a little, an only for affect, well the  
678 promise of a shag or whatever. Point is if they're  
679 attracted to soldiers, then you kind of feed them the  
680 dream. When we deployed to Sierra Leone, we did  
681 nothing but stag-on an a few patrols. It weren't that  
682 long after the hostages<sup>†</sup> and it was like exciting, but  
683 all in all nothing happened, well nothing to report

684 home to some bird gagging for news of her bloke in  
 685 the thick of it like. I told her a load of old bollocks,  
 686 said how dangerous it was, played it really cool and  
 687 fair play she was on me like a rash. I ended up  
 688 telling her I'd been posted to Ireland, she was bit  
 689 like intense like, an I was only a boy.

Ade's lack of care in reporting the truth regarding Operations in Sierra Leone whilst to a degree deviant, might also serve as examples of Ade's unfettered and opportunistic outlook on life, and rightly so in a sense he was barely 18. Ade's account also lacks the more aggressive undertones that frequently attend the narratives of already broken relationships, where the author as suggested thousands of miles from home, is powerless to prevent change, rendered sterile by duty and distance, unable to perused or force the hand of another. Under these circumstances frustration often grows to anger and on to hatred with relative speed, the individuals waking movements consumed by one's own often absurd reluctance to accept change.

**Tam:** December 16 2009

166 Tam: I ken the man but don't really know  
 167 him, 'as uh guy on a Shift aye.  
 168 B: Yes the lance jack, bad skin.  
 169 Tam: Arseholes everywhere Taff, ken the \*\*\*\*  
 170 there's a fucking bully, shitout we the  
 171 lads like, but nails we the women. Aye  
 172 his wifey fucked off when we's away,  
 173 thank fuck he was nay we us, bleated an  
 174 whinged all tour 'bout the poor woman  
 175 an what he's gunna do like when he gets  
 176 hem. 'At would uh driven us nuts man,  
 177 an a fucking stand-up lass too. The  
 178 Padre caught 'em at it, na fighting you twat,  
 179 ken uh Padre knocks the door, Rocky  
 180 fucking Marciano opens et an takes a  
 181 pop at the man, Padre shud-uh mashed  
 182 him, anyhow's they was together for time  
 183 like, why they fuck she put up we it. Telling  
 184 you Taff, if I tried that on my wifey, she'd  
 185 wait till I was like sleeping, and seriously  
 186 fuck my life up.  
 187 B: You do make me laugh, but back to the point,  
 188 Tam: 'At iz the fucking point man, em blokes 'at treat  
 189 'eir women like chyte wuz always like 'at,

†. **Hostages:** Royal Irish Regiment personnel in Sierra Leone were taken hostage by a rebel militia group known as the West Side Boys on 2/8/2000. The British Government approved a rescue mission known as Operation BARRAS.

190       fucking uniform, tour all 'at chyte just makes  
191       it like take longer for the lass to get that.

The origin of this discourse centred on a recent incident that had occurred on Camp, where a domestic assault had been committed by a member of the Regimental Police Shift. Tam's disapproval and knowledge of other instances of domestic violence, betrays a darker side to married life in the forces, as Ogden & Wakeman (2013, pg. 104) and others, (Williamson, 2011, pgs. 1371-1387; McGarry & Walklate. 2011, pgs. 900-917), have reported in their recent works. There are many uses one can put to narrative, not all of them originating within a humanist framework.

Some, like Ade's, whilst acts of moderate deviance, were designed to elevate his status as an adolescent, his method informed by his own notions of masculinity and maturity (Higate, 2012; Turner, 2011; Featherstone *et al*, 1991,). Whilst the narratives of others, perhaps the characters described above, fall into an entirely different category. In relation to Ade's flights of fancy, amendment came in the wake of actual combat, "grown-up" relationships and loss.

**Ade:** June 16 2010

772 Ade: No like Iraq was bad 'cause like no one knew  
773       what the other elements were supposed to be  
774       doing, an by the end the threat from IED's and  
775       them fucking roadside bombs, was ridiculous.  
776       But it weren't nothing like Afghan. I have to, I  
777       have to say coming away from our first Herrick  
778       was a close run thing. I'd just never experienced  
779       that weight of fire. Funny thing was like I'd met  
780       my girl by then and just really didn't want to upset  
781       her with any war-ie stuff. Which was odd like I'd  
782       gone years swinging the lantern and when I had  
783       some real waries to tell I didn't just didn't want  
784       too. Loosing Lenard was a kick in the c\*\*t mind,  
785       I weren't really the same boy after that, well I was  
786       a man like, an it weren't a game no more.

Whilst tragic, it was a coming of age for Ade and the point in his personal biography when his perceptions of significant others changed irreversibly, change for Ade being driven by the loss of a close friend from within his own Platoon House. A fellow Harrogate trainee and companion through Catterick, a man who'd been whipped during driver training, knew exactly what Ade did in Sierra Leone and the FOB's of Iraq and Afghanistan, where he fell in a town called Sangin. Ade's narratives of soldiering after this point whilst remaining

engaging and bold on the surface lose a degree of *élan* in the telling, airing on the side of his jinx or tales of his children on R&R rather than those conveying his gritty, nail biting, hand-to-hand combat themes.

And whilst his discourse retains a sense of great Regimental pride, it seems thereafter to be underpinned by notions of a loss of innocence and the transfer of emotional energy into his new family. Reinvention for Ade demanded significant thought and time to come to terms with the duality that exists between elation and grief, a familiar dilemma for survivors often struggling themselves to come to terms with their own mortality, whilst loitering in thought at the scene of the catastrophe for month possibly years after the event. Nonetheless each must weigh up the possibility of life altering injury [the military euphemism used to describe multiple amputations] or their own mortality to one degree or another. Some approaching impairment with a nonchalant outlook others with grave reservation, these are foot soldiers after all, their identities set indelibly in notions of physical robustness, independence and mobility.

Death on the other hand, when discussed between peers, is more often approached with a combination of grave reverence [when discussing the loss of significant others] and self-deprivation [when addressing the longevity and mortality of self]. Soldier narratives commonly concede to notions of death, but their submission comes with a caveat, firstly it must be on their terms, secondly it must be a component of some final act of martial compliance, and finally it must serve a higher purpose. Fab goes on to report that older men [usually meaning men with families] write cautiously centring their narratives on their children and partners, but rarely on the job at hand, their narrative efforts centring on serialised accounts or stories that find their centre in the family project. Naturally there are exceptions, as Ian points out,

This next account centres on one of the Territorial Army soldiers attached to Ian's unit, whose tales from the front were elaborated to a degree that his narrative exceeded an acceptable level of exaggeration.

**Ian:** January 15 2010

298       ...no like I was saying the guy was a bit of  
299       a tool, he used to phone his misses and  
300       tell her we were taking fire, or that I duno



friends body parts from one's own kit, or simply watching helplessly as a friend life slips away in front of them.

How does one explain raw experience to a mourning parent, spouse, partner or child without amendment? To prevent further suffering a coordinated yet tacit effort conspires to draw the particulars of the event into a concise whole; inclusions of relevance uniformly vetted across the Platoon prior to any dispatch. The story of 19-year-old Private Chris Gray 1Royal Anglicans, stands as an example of how unrestrained discourse however well intended, may cause problems. In this case a Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Bjorn Rose, took the brave and dutiful steep of writing to Gray's mother, concluding that,

"after Chris was killed, while still on tour, I decided to write to Chris' mum, Helen. While my training had not covered the writing of 'death letters', I felt it my duty to do so."

(Rose, 2011)

Unfortunately the official MOD account sent to Gray's parents and that of Lieutenant Rose's differed in some aspects, causing an uneasy stand-off between the family and the MOD. Thus inclusions are of central importance any given line of discourse having the potential to devastate. In a sense, this tinder-box narrative needs to be delivered in person, the narrator's hexis (Bourdieu, 1988. pg. 123) alone telling parts of the story that words could never convey. By contrast, Ade's early communication with home was moreover lacking in discretion; in a sense, Ade, only just 18 on deployment, initially viewed the tour as a Boy Scout might view an international Jamboree. He regularly and quite deliberately twisted the mundane into more appealing accounts of his part in conflict, usually for the benefit of girls he'd met on leave.

His routine narrative style changed however when reality set in the day he lost a valued friend. There are no easy ways to lose friends or indeed a family member, in most cases death comes hopefully sometime past one's middle-age. And whilst tragic the loss of a child in the UK is rare (Liu *et al*, 2012), adolescents fare worse due in large too overindulgence and the risky nature of pubescent life (Pattern *et al*. 2012). The loss of a boy-soldier even in these cynical times, seems to be held in the national psyche as both a heroic and tragic end; heroic in as much as it was a death befitting a fighting man, yet tragic when considering the age of the youth. In a sense Horace (*Odes*, III.2.13) and later Owen (1917) summed up this sentiment well in the words *Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori*, the modern recruiter and associate literature replacing the teacher in this instance. Be it necessity or futility 456 such

incidents have been reported back to families all over the UK and broader Commonwealth, in relation to operations in Afghanistan alone.

When teenagers are lost a shockwave passes through the FOB, where as if by losing a youth the platoon has failed to safeguard one of its own, the men's anguish unambiguous, their grief whilst tacit focused pragmatically on searching questions of performance or avoidance as they attempt to balance their own survival with notions of remorse. In these conditions the heroic vision of death promulgated in recruitment literature are rendered perverse the reality of loss being far from glorious. And whilst regimentally tailored accounts of valour and ultimate sacrifice continue to be taught and deferentially deployed in the belief that such tales will convey notions of value or shape unit pride, the political manipulation of such sacrifice is considered abhorrent.

**Tam:** December 11 2009

302 Tam: See after a while your' hinking, nearly there in  
303 one piece all good see, 'en some unimaginable  
304 chyte happens yu ken et's a nice enough day  
305 or right, but et takes nu-hing to turn 'at upside  
306 doon. You're standing there one minute waiting  
307 tay cross a track or whatever 'en you're on your  
308 arse, aye yu look right and the lad you just like  
309 seconds ken before, shared a tab we, is sitting  
310 upright diffi a fucking leg an half his guts on  
311 the right side. It's fucking emotional Taff. And  
312 get me right 'em lads know 'eir fucked, all youz  
313 can do is tell 'em it'll be alright-till their aways.  
314 Then walk away, we out a fucking scratch, does  
315 nay good 'hinking 'bout it hay.

Tams account of an incident involving an IED is typical of thousands of similar and equally harrowing experience. This is however, a tale that Tam has rarely told, nor does he openly discuss the meeting he had with the lad's mother. This is truly a privileged and humbling account, presented in response to a question set seeking information about a soldier's best and worst experiences of service.

Colin's accounts of a similar event focused on a single day resulting in several multiple amputations, and the loss of 2 soldiers and a Marine serving with their unit.

**Col:** Jan 18 2010

297 Col: There were days right enough when youz got

298 to thinking you know things aren't so bad, [...]  
 299 then something so fucking, well horrible just  
 230 fucking beyond belief happens. And the outrage  
 231 you feel and the vulnerability, like the Provo's,  
 232 just stinking fucking methods. We all of us had  
 233 them bad days, remember Sparrow and Fay, like  
 234 that, they was beautiful boys, no fucking need.

302 B: Did you go home with them?  
 303 Col: Na Dave his boys and the Colour, that was fine  
 304 though I was in full-on fucking kill mode for  
 305 fucking weeks, didn't shoot a fucking thing, typical,  
 306 got a lot less angry though I suppose. There was bit's  
 307 of them in the trees, the birds was eating them.

321 B: Did you talk about it to anyone?  
 322 Col: Some with the boys aye, I spoke to my wife later in  
 323 the evening, she said you sound dane, I said well  
 324 I'm a little tired long day an that; aye she says that'd  
 325 be right sitting on that fat arse of yours all day, I said  
 326 darling it takes a big hammer to knock in a big nail,  
 327 she laughed, I wasn't upset at all though more angry  
 328 then I think, and fucking scared, in a good way.

Each of these accounts captures one degree or another of the reserve soldier's display when communicating notions of often unthinkable experiences to significant others. Soldiers faced with the incredibly complex task of translating raw experience into palatable discourse have a tendency to protect those who exist outside the experience, by deploying a range of narrative displacement strategies. For the older men this approach will be familiar, they'll have likely been there before, however for the younger boys still bound to the succour of mothers, fathers and siblings the distress, fear and isolation engendered in such experiences requires a degree of maturity uncommon in most young people.

Many of the future selves symbolized in thought (Cross & Madson, 1997, pgs. 5-37) during basic training will have now become the well embedded identities of soldier-*self*, routinely evidenced in their robust often belligerent outlook and ability to endure emotional as well as physical hardship. Discourse illustrating notions of subtlety in narrative can be evidenced throughout the transcripts, its prescience calculated rather than candid. Indeed they possess a structure and are deployed strategically, as part of a broader audience specifically scheme, much thought being applied to subject matter and the likely reaction a given line might provoke. Fab explains this approach well,



**Fab:** February 23 2010

394 Fab: As far as topics of conversation are concerned there's a  
395 tendency to ponder large on how one might sensitively  
396 convey something of the place, or what you're actually  
397 up to here.  
398 B: How do you decide what goes in and what you self-censor  
399 out?  
400 Fab: I think you've just got to remain centred, remember the folks  
401 won't be able to comprehend the place; lord knows it takes  
402 a lot of comprehending [...] try to feed them a diet of humour  
403 and cultivate in their minds some idea that you're OK. Deciding  
404 what tales to tell also presents a problem because, well it depends  
405 who's writing to who and why, you know their agendas.

In this extract, discussion of content is described in the broadest terms, Fab advising a companionate yet self-centric approach to discourse in general, offering narratives that relate a sense of relative calm and wellbeing. He also acknowledges the notion that narrative is audience-centric and prone to agenda laden under themes, where self as author has the power to manipulate the script for good or gain. Two distinct forms of strictly internal narrative exist here, the first relates to the raw knee-jerk descriptions which seek out and redefine immediate action, whilst the second processes the experiential narrative by applying an editorial filter which leads to the elaboration of audience specific anecdotes. In each instance the tale has yet to leave the authors domain, it resides in the mind of the teller as a work in progress, yet to be deployed or withheld.

The following account describes an experience that remained an internal, un-told narrative for months, as the teller, Fab worked his way through the event.

**Fab:** January 23 2010

406 Fab: On one of my first stags, boilers night 'bout 4 am, got  
407 a bit heady and tripped off for a few minutes, anyway  
408 when I came too, I became immediately aware of small  
409 shape crawling towards the compound wall say about the  
410 20 meter point. Anyway I squared the GPMG on the  
411 shape half white half blue moving ever closer to the wall,  
412 I remember hearing myself call the stand to, and as the  
413 compound exploded with activity behind me, I got even  
414 more concerned and opened fire on the target I believed at  
415 the time posed a threat, adrenalin was pumping order restored,  
416 the Platoon Sergeant called for me, well he called for the posh  
417 twat actually, but there we go.  
418 B: So  
419 Fab: Oh it was a plastic bag, like an empty fertiliser sack, had some  
420 string in it. Funny thing was on the way out I thought I heard

421 one of the blokes say it's a girl, fuck the three seconds it took  
 422 me to get to the 10 meter point were amongst the longest in my  
 423 life. It was Longman; he was calling me a girl. Now you might  
 424 not want to share that with a chum in the marines or the next Mrs  
 425 X, but family might find a version a reassuringly human anecdote.  
 426 The lads took the piss out of me relentlessly for hods after. Good  
 427 thing too meant they laid off me a tad and looked elsewhere for  
 428 fun, not that I minded. The bit about the little girl, the idea that  
 429 that might have been the outcome also remained in my thoughts  
 430 for moths after, and certainly acted as a wakeup call regarding  
 431 engagements and contact drills. But it's not always like that, Shane  
 432 in the other platoon had to clean out a compound after we'd mortared  
 433 it, there were bits of kids everywhere, no one talked about it at all  
 434 Sandy only mentioned it pissed on leave, when he'd punch out his  
 435 girlfriend and phoned me sobbing, we were in training together mmm,  
 436 yeh well you don't share everything.

Fab's account of withholding narratives centres in this example on discourse destined for circulation within the Platoon House only, these accounts receive very little amendment passed moderate adjustment and structuring of opinions. Occupational narratives are shared in this environment on the understanding that members will honour the principles of the axiom "what happens in the mess, stays in the mess". There is a clear distinction being drawn here centring on how operational occurrences are rationalised then reconstructed for presentation to in-house and outside audiences. Few of the stories shared exclusively in-house being presented elsewhere. As a measure of the internal effect of self as filter, Fab's account of the shooting incident, whilst humorous, impacted markedly on his confidence for some time after the event, long after it had been forgotten by peers; he'd had a fright, the residue of the incident and moreover the meaning it carried for Fab, remaining locked in thought for months.

Fab withheld his occupational doubts from peers until he'd regained a sense of operational confidence, until soldier-*self* had been fully reaffirmed; choosing for reasons of professional and deeply personal insecurities to deal with the problem himself. The conflict of interest Fab had to consolidate, whilst built on the fleeting notion that he killed a child, was indeed an identity-crisis, wherein he'd unlocked broader thought on killing *per se*, an unimaginably difficult crises for an Airborne infantryman on operations to have to console. The comic version of 'Fab and the bag' like the 'Great fire of Amārah' became well embellished in time; different narrators adding new twists and spurious details, to the degree that when the accounts made it home it bore very few similarities to the actual event. A combination of embarrassment and occupational anxiety led Fab to question his ability to function as an

infantryman, his assumed identity being tested in an operational and therein treacherous environment.

Ironically, tales of Fab's courage under fire later in the tour, never made it home directly either; bravery in this sense might translate to a mother, wife or child as an unforgivable act of unnecessary risk taking or bravado. Many of the accounts recorded for this study relate to a similar plastering over of the cracks, or telling of 'white lies'. Lies crafted after much soul searching, truth often being masked by fantasy where truth telling might be construed as a self deprecating act, or destroy a given persona years in the making. There are undoubtedly many reasons why an account might be altered some residing in more principled locale than others. As discussed adjustment might seek to preserve an assumed identity, or cushion loss, redirect or assuage anxiety, whilst more still are deployed to embellish or prevent deprecation. The agencies of combat produce complex social phenomenon, the operationalisation of biographical disruption must therefore be equally adaptable, possessing flexibility to accommodate the breadth of need.

#### **5.2.4 What's the point?**

Many soldiers have struggled to come to terms with their place in the War on Terror and have each at some point toiled long and hard to relay positive news back to the home front. Yet even the act of sending boring accounts of operational life home also has its purpose, often legitimately reinforcing notions of the tedious nature of service and therein sacrifices made by service personnel. On a darker note Ian for one pondered long and hard attempting to rationalise the bigger picture,

**Ian:** March 2010

223 Ian: I mean what's the point; we got all this gear tanks,  
224 planes the works, but we can't do Terry, you'd need  
225 all the men we got in Afghan in Sangin alone to even  
226 scratch the surface. I used to sit there looking at them  
227 filthy kids living in squalor and thinking fuck none of  
228 the money we're spending here will make a toss of  
229 difference to her. We're so light on the ground that  
230 we're hardly going to make a difference to anyone.  
231 And when you actually do get into a firefight your  
232 mindful of nought else but the lads, fuck everyone  
233 else, they batter us from all sides and you well think,  
234 who the fuck can you trust. And then how do you  
235 explain that, the twats they just pop up wherever,

236 always well together, an dickers<sup>†</sup> everywhere, that's  
 237 what I mean who can you trust, every c\*\*\*s got a mobile.  
 238 Then when the shit hits the fan proper an one of the  
 239 boys gets hit or worse, you hate them more, an the fucking  
 240 coppers well that's a love hate job if ever there was.

Ian's account is initially rooted in the poverty and lack of recourses or opportunity the Afghans face on a day to day basis. His internal narrative haunted by the notion that of the millions of pounds spent on the war effort, little or no practical assistance was finding its way down to the neediest. Ian suggests that this crisis of mind changed him as a man, leading him away from a career as an accomplished company sniper to one of unit medic. His daily activities shifting from one of a lone killer of prescribed targets to that of a life saver. The experience of being a sniper far from dulling his resolve to soldier; moreover it shaped it and also impacted, his later presentation of self as a far humbler individual possibly in search of redemption. During his career, Ian had served as rifleman, sniper and medic three distinctly different trades within the infantry branch, yet maintained contact with his family over seven years of operational deployments without explicit mention of either job beyond the fact he was an infantry soldier who'd served in many different often interesting countries.

Ian's decision to change roles was made on the grounds that he'd stopped caring about the War on Terror and instead became absorbed with more practical notions of soldiering. To Ian the effort one put in to taking a life became less meaningful, his centre of self shifting in light of the broader futility he'd witnessed, too Ian it simply made more sense to save a life than take one, particularly if it was the life of an ally or one of his own. Ian's narrative, in common with Ade's later efforts, reflects a more mature 23 to 25-year-old, men who having been sufficiently moved by the experience redefined their presentation of self, both within and outside of the occupational sphere. The experience clearly moved many to review their stance, not so much of their occupation as soldiers and proud members of the Regimental family but, moreover, the work their political masters were setting them.

**Ian:** August 27 2010

1108 Ian: It's got embarrassing in-it, I mean it don't  
 1109 take no genius to work out we was there  
 1110 for the poppy, an telling you mate, when  
 1111 we leaves we'll leave it a worse state than  
 1112 we found it. Like we done in Iraq, we was  
 1113 only there for the oil like, but left them up  
 1114 shit creek. Be the same here, where's the

<sup>†</sup> Dickers: Army slang [origin Northern Ireland]: Local civilians working with enemy forces

1115        honour in at? 'as not no Pegasus Bridge.

**Gaz:** February 18 2010

578 Gaz: Shouldn't 'av never been there nor Iraq, we  
579        done nothing for 'em an made a fucking mess.  
580        What a balls up, I love this Regiment an don't  
581        mind saying it, it's true, but some c\*\*t in like  
582        government needs shooting, should never fuck  
583        your loyal uns around like that, bad all round  
584        if you ask me.

To be away from home for months on end serving a lost cause takes an enormous amount of conviction, in many cases the pointlessness of the campaign in Afghanistan caused a crisis of conscious, leading many to find alternative employment within the battalion or to leave. Questions relating to misplaced loyalties and ongoing support for flawed government policy soon became strained, as insiders each viewed the ineffectiveness of their efforts as disingenuous. True to the values each had groomed since training, the inequity that resulted from such operations led many like Ian and Ade into support roles, their resolve to soldier on impinged not so much by the agencies of soldiering but the futility of operations that lacked any notions of a rationale or moral value. Fab notes this point well when discussing the robustness of army wives and their families.

**Fab:** April 4 2010

1005 Fab: It really never ceases to amaze me how some  
1006        of the families held it together, face it we were  
1007        away for half a year, year in year out, you have  
1008        to be pretty robust, resilient as a couple to weather  
1009        that.  
1010 B:    Do you think they just get used to it?  
1011 Fab:   Well to a degree I suppose so, but there's got to be  
1010        more to it than that. Takes a special lady me thinks,  
1011        the Toms'll weather anything but cack on the home  
1012        front and their bollockesed...

Nevertheless men like these managed to use the separation from family proactively and continued throughout their careers to build relationships long distance, the disruption an enabler, creating time to rearticulate relationships, reinforce commitment, display fidelity and through the narrative of joint-sacrifice project a collective vision of a secure future. Whether avoidance of truth or inclusions of meaning in subtext, each centres their own story on what they determine to be of importance, experiences near or far. Many similarities exist between the knowledge and treatment of narrative discussed here, and Genette's (1980, 1972; Edmiston, 1989) description of "zero focalisation":

“The term zero focalization corresponds to the narrator knowing more than the character, or more exactly, *says* more than any of the characters know. The narrator may present all or some knowledge... (Genette 1972, 1980: 194–98)

In practice Ian explains how due to the distance the home audience is blind to the going-ons of life on tour, thus he controls the breadth and depth of the narrative. His motives have also been discussed thus his management of discourse and proximity to narrative in terms of focalisation, led to the following.

**Ian:** May 2010

532 I used to invent things to talk to the kids about,  
 533 like I'd see the local kids robbing pens off the  
 534 lads, and if we got caught up in an area where  
 535 the families hadn't been cleared in time, we'd  
 536 hold cover an play with the kids till we were  
 537 clear to move. Well when the girls were like 7  
 538 and 9, I used to tell about the kids I'd met and  
 539 their homes and you know try to remain like bit  
 540 objective. It was rock though that's not life it's  
 541 refusing to give a shit. But I never wanted them  
 542 to know what I done, work wise I'd never be  
 543 able to look at 'em straight again [...], don't get  
 544 me wrong I've thoroughly enjoyed my time in  
 545 the Regiment and to be honest got a massive  
 546 kick out of being a sniper, it's the job all the boys  
 547 looking for Recce and Pathfinders want. Having  
 548 said that coming back into the platoon as medic  
 549 was good for my head too, I'd spent the best part  
 550 of two tours on my jack<sup>†2</sup>. That was easier though  
 551 'case they get Casualty and Holby City and all the  
 552 soaps. Easier than explaining the highs and lows  
 553 of a stalk anyway.

Ian's concerns for his own children led to narrative adjustment being made in an effort to preserve their sense of childhood, at the centre of which was a kind and brave man they called Daddy. And whilst he had killed and taken great pride in his work, he recognised the need to establish clear channels of communication denoting parent-self plainly. Ian also struggled with the isolation and the often lengthy detachments from the platoon all snipers endure. And whilst working in pairs many miss the pack mentality engendered in the larger collective. Even during the lows, discourse with his wife remained sensitive, focusing on domestic or pastoral observations or the invisibility of women beyond childhood in the villages. Clearly Ian had developed a knack for keeping work and home life separate, but, as

<sup>†</sup>. **Jack<sup>2</sup>:** In this context Jack refers to the Cockney Rhyming Slang 'Jack-Jones' meaning 'alone'.

noted, fought hard editorially to first make sense of the situation himself, before transmitting a semblance of his world home. He was dismayed by many things, the age of mothers, many barley teens, complete disregard for women *per se*, poverty and corruption to name but a few.

**Ian:** May 2010

460 I mean fuck what do you tell your misses, passed  
461 the fact they treat their animals like shit and their  
462 women worse. No mate I used to tell her about  
463 some random stuff, like a pair of curtains I'd seen  
464 at a Shura<sup>†</sup>, only mentioned 'em 'cause they looked  
465 the spit of pair her Mother had, the fact that they were  
466 in a shit-hole just made it funny in a cheeky way. Or  
467 the fact I was missing her and the kids and planning  
468 something nice for me leave, that were hard going, but  
469 always keeping it up-beat trying to find something in  
470 the day I thought she might chuckle at, but no she never  
471 asked what it were really like and I was always happy  
472 with that.

Clearly Ian and Fab have distinct notions of family, which they preserve by presenting themselves firmly in-role, therein Ian a farther presents as such sharing narrative symbolic of family life from the perspective of a husband and father, as does Fab the son. With little or no appetite for spreading alarm amongst their loved ones, reports specifically centred on occupational activities are stripped to the barest detail, content in this case packed out with descriptions of the geographical aspect or indigenous nature of the Afghani people; these alternate themes enabling the narrative to flow seemingly without interruption. In thought the soldier sees and therein processes all and frequently has to consol himself with the reality and therein truth of his existence. Each soldier will possess an elaborated impression of who he is and where in life he believes he's going and, to that end his narrative in relation to social positioning is pre-determined thus soldier narrative becomes a garment, its purpose to dress the thoughts of others according to the corresponding impression.

#### **5.2.5. Till Death do us Part**

From apprentice to journeyman, the soldier has now arrived at a point of occupational actualisation, now possessing the experience, knowledge and skills that constituent the professional foundations soldier-*self*. In so doing he has also developed a means of

<sup>†</sup>. **Shura:** Afghanistan; Tajik & Dari dialect; meaning council. Usually a meeting with Tribal elders

presenting and expressing his personal identities (Christiansen, 2004, pp.121-139; 1999, pp.547-558), deriving meaning from his daily activities and, having learned to interpret his life over time, possesses a framework for goal-setting and motivation based on competence in the performance of everyday tasks. These foundations enable future selves to take shape and whilst linked to past experiences and the common threads that bind the soldier to a distinctly homogeneous version of self, are indelibly linked to the agencies communicated through their occupations. In this instance, performance outside of the workplace is directly related to the self as an 'employee', a transaction made possible as a consequence of the interchangeable and adaptable nature of self, the ontological self or self in action. The self being composed of many parts, like a jigsaw puzzle of countless pieces is likewise composed of different experiences of being and epistemological knowledge and the skills acquire through practice.

As a consequence of this transaction the more astute soldiers, those who quickly grasp the underline meanings of tacit communication, its canon and symbolic significance are likely to be the first within the new intake to be selected for promotion. This is occupational transition in action; success in this setting however also requires survival. When viewed holistically *Soldier-self* comprises of three significant components, the first relates to the doing of soldering, where occupational experience and the second aspect knowledge, are key; whilst the third stems from the appearance of the soldier, which in itself carries an assumed knowledge, confidence and in a sense Bourdieu's (1985, pp. 11–24) concept of body *hexis*. The term body *hexis* is used here to describe how a soldier moves, carries himself, or positions his body in the 'lived world' (Thorpe & Murphy, 2002, p. 4). Soldiers 'learn' how to perform all manner of elaborated body movements, from drill where as individuals or as groups they perform highly choreographed martial ballets, to the field signals which like Makaton enable clear yet silent communication on the ground.

Each of these factors like the gestures<sup>71</sup> that underpin regimental customs, the swagger of the guardsman or arrogant slouch of a Para, symbolically characterise the type of soldier they imbue (Krais, 1993, p. 74). These components of *soldier-self* are further complemented by the operational awareness or exposure to combat that enables theory to be operationalized into practice. From the very beginnings, *soldier-self* will have learned to identify with these

<sup>71</sup>. Soldiers are taught hand signals for silent communication in the field, a form of Makaton.



measures of self, he will understand the tacit meanings imbued in the shared rituals and symbols that he and his Regimental brethren consider meaningful, whilst throughout devising communication strategies conveying a sense of the existence of self to the outside world. The truth of narrative symbolized in often self-serving accounts of understated or moderately exaggeration discourse, like those masking injury from significant others, are often exposed through the most informal networks.

A given truth may take decades to be unearthed, or be found-out before the end of a tour and safe return of troops to their UK Garrisons. Far from being the work of elaborate investigation, the most common route to exposure lies in the network of wives and girlfriends who share information dutifully within their own Regimental covens. It takes little more than an in-theatre comment passed to a partner to set the ball rolling, rendering a carefully crafted narrative null and void. In most cases repair is relatively simple, occasioning an apology, stern rebuke and likely rewarded with a measure of tacit adulation from partners admiring of the lack of candour underpinning the deception, but moreover the reason why.

Failing to report injuries to significant others is met more often with incredulity; censure and angst on the part of significant other, likely to centre on notions of fidelity, openness or trust within the family unit.

**Tam:** August 27 2010

1362 Tam: I'd uh said et wuz nu-hing, I had some splinters.  
1363 B: You're very modest Boy,  
1364 Tam: Aye et was sore, but et looked worse than et wuz  
1365 ken, I 'hink coz et wuz like in my face et looked  
1366 bad but fuck et, did nay stop uz doing my job.  
1367 As I say looked good like, war-ie uz fuck lots uh  
1368 blood, but telling yuz Taff et wuz just stingy.  
1369 B: What did your wife say?  
1370 Tam: Oh fuck she was nay happy we Tam, see I thought  
1371 like I said, I'd be a few days in Bastion, an 'at ud  
1372 be that, I was in like 7 days, they wuz more worried  
1373 'bout me eyes 'an else. I did nay say fuck all to  
1374 Peg, ken I did nay what her flapping, an like 'cause  
1375 I did nay think much uv et. Aye fucking Renton told  
1376 his wifie, got a welfare call, she say hi hen you OK  
1377 I just knew Taff; I knew, she was being like too nice,  
1378 no Tam was about to get et like, an by fuck he deed.  
1379 Says Jen tells us her Andy said you wuz in hospital,  
1380 was 'at about 'en hen. Right enough I says splinters  
1381 like, says oh why did you no tell us 'en. It's nu-hing  
1382 hen I says like, and ken I'm panicking, 'en she says

1383        like, oh nu-hing right enough so how come you bin  
1384        in the fucking hospital for a week! ‘En she teld us how  
1385        thoughtless I wuz and how I’d no respect for her un  
1386        the wee uns, Taff it was worse than the fucking splinties  
1387        mate.

Tam had absorbed a partial blast to the face from an IED set in a wall; he’d been rendered unconscious, awoken and re-established command of his Platoon immediately. He’d then successfully controlled the firefight that ensued, before organising the evacuation of his wounded. He’d refused to leave the field until his men were established in a fortified defensive position, and command for the Platoon was restored to his Platoon commander; who’d been cut off from the main group during the ambush that followed the IED. His wounds sustained that morning required surgery, and due to the concussion and lacerations to his eyes, he was kept in hospital for observations. Tam played the incident down, and failed to report it to his wife fearing that she’d be quite naturally upset. The bush telegraph had seen to it that the incident was reported home informally, Renton one of the section commanders reporting Tam’s actions out of regard rather than gossip to his wife not knowing that Tam had failed to report the incident himself.

Tam’s efforts were rewarded with a Medal and severe reprimand from his wife who’d failed to understand why he’d withheld the incident and how it could have happened in the first place, since Tam had told her that he’d been working in battalion Headquarters. In general, when a soldier requests that peers do not reveal the precise details of an occurrence to family, and where the request is considered legitimate, the account will remain secured. Additionally, many of the more intimate accounts will fall beyond peer review centring on discourse pertaining to the relationships assumed between the soldier and significant other. To that end inclusions are private, seldom shared, much like Ian’s dispatches to his children, or Fab’s letters home to his parents. As such the substance of these personal communications are seldom raised thereafter, unless per chance an account is revealed unintentionally to a third party with knowledge of the Platoon House, someone who might be positioned to verify or challenge a claim or statement.

### **3.2.6. Conclusion**

As discussed throughout the majority of biographical adjustment is conceived with an aim to reduce anxiety, raise a personal profile or prevent uncomfortable question being raised later,

in a sense to protect future-*selves*. Whilst discussion of motive has quite deliberately been presented against the backdrop of the tour the same opportunities to create and recreate self also exist at home when garrisoned in the relative safety of the UK. Moreover, the distance engendered in the operational tour presents a definitive and occupationally unambiguous set of conditions, which enable the process to be studied with some degree of rigor, since the phenomenon occurs in isolation of the distraction which accompanies life in the home world.

Yet, this is the location in which his identity as a soldier will actualise, this is where he will occupationally come of age. Ironically, the process must be repeated throughout one's career since firstly as a soldier, then Section Commander, then Platoon Sergeant and so forth he will in each case need to confirm and reconfirm his quite specific and changeable identities consequentially. Certainly, an infantryman's occupational rites of passage in either role could be earned in no other environment. From the chaos that underpins daily life he must also assemble some modicum of truth, confirm his assumed selves and learn to manage fear and uncertainty within a framework that rarely offers second chances or stability in relation to his social reality. As an operational infanteer he must also consider how he communicates his progress with those who exist outside the experience. Those significant others with whom he shares a common history, the foundations of which are set in the shared social realities of a life established within the context of a civilian world.

Discourse in this chapter has centred on the many difficulties he faces in conveying a sense of his occupational existence and the apparatus he applies to the raw experience played out around him. Discussion has also described the use soldiers put to the disruption faced as a consequence of being, and how soldier-*self* might deploy any one of these facets to his advantage. In relying notions of an amended self, it has been argued that soldiers have the power to posit elaborated version of self into the biographies of significant others. A point illustrated with examples of amended narrative and reasons why amendment might occur. In the company of soldiers, peers experience hardly any problems communicating their lives, and having been proven resilient in maintaining long distance relationships demonstrate an aptitude for maintaining relations with significant others. For many however reinvention beyond this realm of being is impracticable, the stance taking entity at the roots of soldier-*self* now entrenched so deeply as to prevent or at best hinder future-selves from becoming actualised. (Goffman, 1961, pg. 27)

As a consequence of routinely conveying the narratives of self via the strategies outlined above, notions of social detachment are further exacerbated, creating an often-inflexible version of self. Under these conditions any notions of positing the self occupationally or otherwise beyond the martial realm appear unworkable. To move symbolically into a social setting where the Maroon beret, operational wings and unit motto have no meaning, possess limited cultural collateral and are more often met with caution [at that point where agency and audience collide]. This after years of existing in an environment where these very symbols have defined ones identities, simply renders soldier-*self* destitute. In realizing some of the editorial strategies soldiers put to everyday narrative, we grow closer to understanding how and why soldiers may experience difficulty in their post-service lives, principally why they might face setbacks when called upon to posit themselves as civilians. Not necessarily because of any trauma caused by combat, combat is the catalyst that confirms the infantryman's occupational identity and is more often viewed positively as an occupational prerequisite. Moreover that tension is caused because of the now embedded personal biographies and historic representations of self that the soldier has projected into the minds of significant others, which at the point of exit, form both the foundations of any future selves and the template by which he must now exist as a veteran.



**Chapter VI**  
**Analysis (Section i)**

**A pen picture  
of a  
British Army Infantryman**

**Section i.** Tam's story, (the Highlander)

## Chapter VI Analysis

### Tam's story, the Highlander

#### 6.1.0. Introduction

Of the twenty men interviewed, Tam immediately stood out as a consummate model infanteer; his entire life having been governed by Queens Regulations<sup>72</sup> and the Armed Forces Act<sup>73</sup>. His upbringing, including his education, being one lived out on or around the Patch<sup>74</sup>. Tams story therefore spans a lifetime of association with the Armed Forces, a relationship which began with his father's service leading directly to his own. In this section of the analysis the focus shifts to the period where the soldier, having completed training and confirmed his occupational identity in combat, decides to quit soldiering. Discourse in this part therefore centres on the Pre-Exit period, a time of monumental change, uncertainty and sober decision making. The discourse conveyed in this section will therefore centre on Tam's narratives of careers-end, conveying Tam's experience of this often-problematic occupational terminus. Broadly speaking the section also seeks to familiarise the reader epistemologically with Armed Forces Veterans and something of their experience of the Pre-Exit period.

#### 6:1:1. A pen picture of a British Army Infantrymen; the Highlander

Tam 29 at the time of writing was born in Northern Ireland, his father at that point an infantry NCO serving out the end of a 2-year accompanied tour of Ballykelly. Tam has two brothers and a sister the elder brother 35 is a serving Colour Sergeant in The Black Watch, (3 SCOTS) his younger brother 25 a former Black Watch soldier is now a Constable serving with Strathclyde Police. His sister, 33, works as a Home Carer in the Hazelton Gardens area of Glasgow. Tam was brought up in a variety of Married Quarter by his mother now 62, who works for her Local Authority Social Services Department as a Home Care Coordinator and father now 65, who as suggested was a Regular soldier serving with the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment). Tam was an average student having attended several Armed Forces School's in Germany and Cyprus; he was a good attendee, securing four Cs and four Ds at

<sup>72</sup>. **Queens Regulations 1975:** A collection of orders and regulations in force in the Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force, forming guidance for officers of these Armed Services in all matters of discipline and personal conduct.

<sup>73</sup>. **The Armed Forces Act. 2006:** The system of military Law under which the British Armed Forces operate.

<sup>74</sup>. **The Patch:** Army slang; Married quarters, a military residential housing estate.

GCSE. Tam had played sport at school enjoying football above the others, and represented his last school as a goalie; he also took up Judo when his dad's Battalion returned to Scotland, competing successfully in the Judo Scotland Youth League. Tam enjoyed the opportunity to travel with both his family, to Spain, Tenerife, and Florida as well as Belgium, France, Germany and Hong Kong with the Army Cadet Force. As Tam approached school leaving age his parents had encouraged him to follow his own path and decide for himself what he wanted to do after school. Regardless of the breadth of careers suggested by parents and careers teacher alike, Tam had one serious career ambition and whilst it was to a degree predictable, Tam suggests that he was a volunteer and a willing one at that.

**Tam:** 10 October 2009

057 B: Were you interested in anything else before you joined up.

058 Tam: No really, thought 'bout the fire brigade but I wuz too young,  
059 when I left school.

189 B: I get that, but did you ever want to do something different.

190 Tam: Like what?

191 B: That's what I'm asking

192 Tam: No really 'slike I said, fancied myself a Fireman or maybes a  
193 astronaut kids stuff ken, Army's what us wanted though 'as  
194 where I wanted to be.

195 B: You always wanted to be a soldier then, good.

196 Tam: Aye, infantry soldier.

School's Careers advice as such was something of a waste of time for Tam who'd decided quite early on in life that he'd be following in his father and indeed older brother's footsteps into the Army.

Tam's dad had been a Regular soldier serving with the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment) for 26 years, having enlisting in 1965 as a 16 year old Junior Leader<sup>75</sup>. He went on to serve until 1991 as a regular soldier and Ranker, prior to transferring to the Territorial Army. He then served with the Royal Army Medical Corps until he retired 2001, accumulating a total of 36 years Regular and Reserve service. Tam's Dad had 5 brothers, 4 of whom served with the Black Watch whilst a 5<sup>th</sup> completed his National Service badged to The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Heavy Cavalry), his father, grandfather, great-grandfather as well as uncles were nevertheless all Black Watch. It's fair to suggest here that Tam was

<sup>75</sup>. **Junior** Leader: Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion (IJLB). Forerunner of Harrogate, specific to the Corps of Infantry.



born into a “Black Watch family”, for whom past and present generations had and continue to take the ‘shilling’ in order to secure at least initial employment within a specific battalion. This hereditary pattern of occupational adherence, far from being a result of military conscription or the manpower demands of the World Wars or for that the National Service period saw most of his father’s and grandfathers generation entering service as volunteers.

Tam’s Great Grandfather Auld-Willie had served as far back the Colonial and Imperial Service days; initially as a Territorial he viewed the Army as a source of adventure, an opportunity to travel and a break from the monotony of life in rural Victorian Scotland. Therein the battalion seems to have facilitated the family, each generation using the battalion as a preliminary career option enabling access to skills and qualifications such as driving, administration or field engineering; professions which during the pre-war and post war years translated directly into civil labour markets. The Armed Forces also facilitated a second opportunity to access instruction in literacy and numeracy and other forms of technical competence such as fluency in Morse-Code, the email of its day. Some left the Army to become nurses or ambulance drivers having worked as stretcher bearers or orderlies in the Regimental Medical Centre.

In many cases the skills driving success in each of these civilian occupations was initially achieved during military service. Those who’d worked on the MT<sup>76</sup> found employment in transport or logistics; whilst others former Provosts went on to secure successful careers in the Police Force. Moreover, service in the Armed Forces in this bygone age enabled social mobility. Ex-servicemen often gaining rewarding skilled civilian employment post service, at a time when skills training and education were unregulated advantaged opportunities being habitually guarded or nepotistically deployed. As Tannock *et al* (2013) have reported; in this sense, the Armed Forces provided a break from this culture, enabling egalitarian opportunities for social mobility and advancement to take place. Many of Tam’s relatives seem to have benefited from this relationship; on leaving the Army they found skilled work whilst several, as with Tam’s Dad supplemented their post Regular service incomes with Territorial Service.

Tam had been brought up in a military family, one that had historically identified with a specific Regiment, in which several family members had and continue to this day to serve

<sup>76</sup>. **MT**: Military Transport, battalion drivers (cat B, C and E) work exclusively in transport related trades.

simultaneously. Familiarity with the Regiment and its customs placed Tam in a unique position, he'd grow up around soldiers who'd experienced active and peacetime service, men who by the time he enlisted held senior positions within a specific regimental family. Thus for Tam the Battalion embodied notions of a familiar, attainable and enabling institution. Tam suggests albeit light-heartedly, that he was indeed "issued to his parents", rather than born into the family.

**Tam:** 10 October 2009

200 B: What did the folks think?

201 Tam: Nu-'hing really.

202 B: Nothing at all?

203 Tam: I wuz issued to 'em in the province.

204 [...] 'at's the joke ken, I wuz nay born

205 like I wuz issued. Me Mar wuz happy she

206 knew me brother wud look out for uz,

208 an 'at me Da knew everyone so I could

209 nay fart we-out him knowing.

210 B: You do make me laugh.

211 Tam: Iz's true, in the beginning like when uz first

212 got here the Battalion ken, I'd be asking him

213 what we wuz up to and he wuz nay even in

214 the Battalion, just knew everyone...

Tam's disposition to the Army was further bolstered when he joined the Army Cadet Force aged 12. By the time he was 16 he'd risen through the ranks and was a Cadet Staff Sergeant he'd also earned a Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award, was an Advanced (St John's) First Aider, Bisley Marksman<sup>77</sup>, and 4 Star Cadet (Senior Cadet Proficiency Qualification). He'd also received training as a Platoon Signaller and Cadet Physical Training Instructor. Travel opportunities with the Cadets had also enabled him visited the Black Watch in Fallingbommel Germany, the War Cemetery at Ypres in Belgium, and the Beaches of Normandy in France. The highlight however and somewhat further afield was his selection to be part of a small cadre of Scots Cadets visiting the Regiment for the handover ceremony in Hong Kong. This was the backdrop to Tam's enlistment; thus with notions of advancement in mind Tam escorted by proud father, travelled to Glasgow and called in at the ACRO on Queens Street.

Tam's decision to enlist had long been accepted at home the notion that Tam aspired to join the regimental family being enthusiastically accepted, not one of his immediate family

<sup>77</sup>. **Bisley marksman:** Inter Service Cadet Rifle Meeting Bisley. Cadets fire at targets at distances of up to 1000 Metres

questioned his choice, they simply wished him well. There was urgency in Tam's recruitment, as had been the case for both Ade and Fab, although for entirely different reasons. In Tam's case he'd learnt of others of his own age both at school and in the Army Cadets, who had already been given dates to attend Selection Centre. This bothered him since he was awfully keen to join the next training intake. At home his disposition towards the Armed Forces had been fuelled by the men of the family; he'd grown up with his dad and older brother in uniform and took great pleasure listen to the tales of his uncles and grandparents who were almost to a man Black Watch soldiers. From a very young age he'd witnessed the spectacle of the men of the family forming up for Remembrance Sunday. Attired uniformly in Highland Ghillie Brogues, Black Watch kilts, two Uncles the exception wearing the Royal Stewart, they'd been Regimental Pipe Majors.

The rest of their garments were nonetheless uniform, from the heather socks and sgian-dubh, to the scarlet flashes and red hackled Tam O' Shanter similar in every detail. An interesting observation since technically they were in civvies (civilian clothes). He distinctly remembered the annual journey up to Perth, his farther and uncles smoking and sipping heavily, wearing identical black Ghillie jackets, embroidered Regimental Blazer badges stitched on breast pockets, mantled by ranks of vividly coloured ribbon supporting glimmering medals. Uniform had always been a part of Tam's life, not just the uniforms of remembrance, but also symbolic distinctions between different dresses and therein the implication that dress might carry for the owner in relation to employment and deployment. Tam had observed over time how the deep greens, black and browns of the British Armies European camouflage DPM<sup>78</sup>, once a standard in the washing basket, had slowly been overtaken by the lighter shades of deserts and dry placed as the theatre of war moved on.

At first it had been exciting to see the new kit his brother had brought home, less so however when his father's TA unit mobilised for Kuwait and he had his kit issued. Tam, at 16, was now keen to start his career as Junior Soldier and live out a few adventures of his own, thus he believed that any time wasted might affect which intake he joined and therein he might face missing out on the start of his training for a further 6 months. Even his "Auld-man" had done a tour of Iraq and according to Tam; he was a "dinosaur".

<sup>78</sup>. **DPM:** Disruptive Pattern Material, forerunner of the current Multi Terrain Camouflage.

**Tam:** 10 October 2009

254 Tam: Aye I wuz no so much impatient just wanted tay be aways we  
255 me mates, even the Auld-man an uz brother had got a tour in an  
256 I just wanting some of that. No being funny but the Auld-man  
257 wuz a fucking dinosaur, time I left hem he'd done two.

On the recruitment front, Tam was a little trepidant of the BART tests; he'd attempted a few online, producing mixed results, and, knowing that this was the real deal, needed to concentrate to get with a good grade. Tam was quietly confident though; he came from a military family had a brother in the Watch and possessed the distinct advantage of being a 4 star cadet with a Gold DofE, given his background, Tam had reason to be quietly confident.

He knew this mattered, and that to one degree or another, he'd be measured differently to a young person who'd walked in off the street with similar GCSE qualifications but no previous connection to the Armed Forces. In a sense Tam was one of the Cadets Ade had encountered during his testing period at the ACRO in Cardiff. An additional measure of confidence was gleaned from the behaviour of the recruiting WO, a Highlander, who took Tam and his father to his office, ordered in tea on the telephone, called his dad Sir, and was at pains to accommodate the former Highlander and his son. Tam had grown up on stories of Army life and seen the money a life in the service could bring in, but, truth be told, he'd never wanted to do anything else and had tolerated school, waiting for the first opportunity to join up. Tam flew through his selection and, like Ade, was offered a place at Harrogate.

### **6:1:2 Harrogate un all 'at**

Harrogate, like the CIC, that followed was for Tam a natural progression from the Cadets. Much of his kit had been brought down with him from home, his boots worn-in and uniform fitting comfortably. He'd memorised his Army number before he'd got off the bus and attracted no extra attention from the training NCO's during those early days. His weapon handling much like his foot drill, was sharp and he knew most of the training NCO's from the 'Watch', who had been briefed by his older brother to beast his sibling remorselessly into shape. Tam however, was a contented young man thriving on the activity and opportunity to hone his martial skills further. He was also able to acquire new skills, notably in the use of weapons and tactics that fell beyond the Cadet training manual. Tam thoroughly enjoyed it all. Again benefiting from a solid foundation he was able to shine as a recruit and later SUT, passing out of Harrogate as the Best Recruit in his Company and runner up on the CIC-Line

Infantry. Tam was clearly having the time of his life and, like Ade before him had established a cadre of enduring friends.

**Tam:** 18 December 2009

- 260 B: OK then tell me a little about training.  
261 Tam: Basic like.  
262 B: Whatever, Juniors, CIC that kind of thing.  
263 Tam: No much to say Taff, gud times like, gud  
264 fun, solid now'n again but gud.  
265 B: How did you find it though?  
266 Tam: Piece uh pish be honest, ken I'd nay one  
267 guard or fire pickets till I'z at the battalion.  
268 I'z a Junior NCO like weeks en, had us own  
269 room, easy days. Did Duty Company NCO  
270 few times but fuck all really.  
271 B: Physically?  
272 Tam: Much the same I wuz fit uz fuck 'en, ken I'd  
273 run we the Auld-man since I'z like 10, pished  
274 a BFT uz about it. I liked it liked the training  
275 it wuz like a proper well organised summer  
276 Camp. Aye they beasted uz all fe time -u-time,  
277 but be honest it wuz fucking hysterical, saying  
278 'at some, some of they lads suffered fucking  
279 terrible, but ken when you're 'at age iz slike  
280 you're a wee bit harsh and don't really ge a  
281 fuck about the slacker's ken you're thinking  
282 aye fuck off you lazy bashtard. Saying 'at mind  
283 as-no tay say you leave your mates hanging, all  
284 'ems wuz just needing to get fitter got all the help  
285 they needed. It wuz the lazy chytes 'at got the  
286 brick<sup>†</sup> into trouble they got fuck all.  
287 B: What were highlights?  
288 Tam: Getting the fuck outy there an on tay here, saying  
289 'at went like a dose uh the chytes, near two years  
290 bang-bang hello real world.

The real world to Tam was the Battalion he'd grow up around and therein the members of his extended family, who were keen to welcome him back into the fold as a now-trained soldier. The notion that he was, in a sense, home, when quartered with the battalion was however a double-edged blade. In the first instance he was a competent and able young soldier who was clearly an asset to the Platoon; reliable, professional, fearless. The latter aided by the notion that the two most dutiful men in the regiment the RSM and Provost were each family, whilst his brother was a Recce Platoon section commander. The other side of the blade centred on

<sup>†</sup> **Brick:** (Army term; origin Northern Ireland) Sub-section of troops usually between 4 & 6 soldiers

jealously, reprisal and notions of nepotism.

**Tam:** 18 December 2009

- 448 B: Was it good to be in the Battalion, as a Tom you know?  
449 Tam: Fucking grand aye.  
450 B: Where did they put you?  
451 Tam: 'A' Company like uz Auld-man, Stevie ken, he wuz over in  
452 Recce an so I'z gud tay go. Got loads uh chyte 'na the  
453 first bit but 'at was ken, uh be expected.  
454 B: How did you manage that?  
455 Tam: Well if it wuz a sprog like me ken, I kind uv beat the fuck  
456 out 'em. More senior lads I let them have a pop, ken then  
457 if they went too far, Stevie wud have a word. Only like when  
458 the much older lads tried it on. Only dud it once ken, fuck he's  
459 a raw arsed hard bashtard our Stevie, 'as my big brother.

Whilst inter-Platoon politics between the lads were settled in the time honoured fashion, dealing with SNCO's and Officers with chips on their shoulders, was an altogether different matter. On occasion Tam was pulled up for his candour or for making the right decision, and being complimented by the OC<sup>79</sup>, only to be chastised by his own Officers for making them look stupid.

Whilst respecting the rank they wore Tam found it difficult accept that individuals who his father had disciplined years before, saw fit to take it out on him. This was a factor that plagued Tam's career; his brother had been more fortunate, finding employment in the company of men who had either not served with Tam's dad or were well acquainted and respectful of the man. As time pressed on, Tam gained promotion and became far less of a target, he had indeed earned his place in the Battalion fairly, albeit the hard way.

### **6:1:3 Action Tam**

On his first operational tour Tam was rifleman in a light infantry role Battalion, his first large scale operation was the American led Invasion of Iraq. As a testament to their professionalism [and luck], the Black Watch fighting around Basra bore one fatality only and whilst that was tragedy enough for at least one family, it proved to be an essential wakeup call for many young Highlanders, Tam amongst them. The following year the Black Watch was back in Iraq this time as part of 4 Armoured Brigade. This was clearly a new type of warfare for the Highlanders, however operations in Iraq would soon become the norm.

<sup>79</sup>. **OC:** Officer Commanding; the Company Commander, a Major with command of a Company.

**Tam:** 18 December 2009

541 B: After the Invasion how long was it before the next tour?  
542 Tam: Uh,  
543 B: You served in Iraq during the invasion, how long till you  
544 went back TELIC II.  
545 Tam: 'Bout a year.  
546 B: Was it different, I mean the roadside bombs an IEDs would  
547 have made it a different (...) you know experience.  
548 Tam: Aye second wuz scary, no just the getting shot at but uz you  
549 say. First was ken a bastard too  
550 B: Go on then.  
551 Tam: Emm, well juss like exposed, tour wuz OK on uh whole ken 'spose  
552 we wuz still learning, Yanks picked us out for hard tasking first  
553 time out, made a reputation for the Black-Jocks ken. So the second we  
554 had a reputation to keep; most of the lads were shit hot though, no  
555 idiots ken, looking back it wuz all different, did nay really ken what  
556 we'z up to, big picture like. 'As coz the head-sheds did nay have a  
557 clue, no criticising wuz all new, ken always the same having to learn  
558 the hard way, got a few bloody noses uz like, but slike the Auld-man  
559 says: The measure of a man is no how he goes down, but how he gets  
560 up.

Tam was decorated for gallantry during his second tour and promoted to the rank of L/Cpl on completion of his Junior NCOs Cadre, which he completed in his third year of regular service. On the citation accompanying the award Tams cool head under fire was noted along with the recognition that he'd singularly turned around a desperate situation saving the lives of several of his colleagues. It wouldn't be the last time he'd be decorated for heroism. Aside from the medal, Tam's popularity in the Battalion grew, again providing a double edged blade. Since his promotion was linked to his action in Iraq rather than through the usual channels via his Platoon Commanders recommendation. This had caused problems. The Platoon Commander, a Captain who had been held over for promotion to a more lucrative post, and had performed poorly during the tour. Not a bad man suggests Tam, just a 'wee-man', and, to a degree, petty in his dealings with the men he commanded. This was by no means a general condition, as Tam comments.

**Tam:** 18<sup>th</sup> Dec 2009

595 B: So would you say you had good leadership,  
596 the Officers and Senior Ranks you know.  
597 Tam: [laughter] Aye the Rupert's were sound  
598 enough, keen fit and loyal [...] even for English,  
599 Seniors wuz nails knew what they wuz up  
600 to. 'K you'd a few arseholes, did nay fit in  
601 to their own messes ken let alone we uz.

602 Teld you 'bout Dickey, proper tit, could  
 603 nay lead a jazz band. Fucked all sort up,  
 604 an ken 'at wuz OK when we'z hem, but  
 605 no aways. Man was just dangerous, see  
 606 now they Ruperts love ta volunteer the  
 607 lads, 'ats coz they plumb the kudos when  
 608 things go right, but we some of 'em it just  
 609 does nay work out. Dickey wuz un of 'em, a  
 610 dangerous man, aye a killer.  
 611B: How do you mean dangerous?  
 612Tam: Out 'n about like fucking usual, go take a  
 613 look at such-an-such 'en he'd overstretch  
 614 the Platoon, too strung out and you'd have  
 615 contact an he just could nay control us, heard  
 616 the Op-O<sup>48</sup> teld him to get his chyte together  
 617 once, an he's all yes Sir no Sir, ken when the  
 618 Op-O thinned oot he was like a complete c\*\*t.  
 619 Knew we'd all heard it, 'en it started. It wuz  
 620 like he had to make some points up so he  
 621 started doing stupid, well risky shit. He got  
 622 replaced by a Sprog, Jamie, knew fucking nu  
 623 -hing, tell yuz what though Taff, he wuz a real  
 624 leader, intuition on that lad wuz second tu none.  
 625 And they lads adored him.

Clearly there are different degrees of occupational competence in all walks of life, yet one of the distinguishing features of working as an infantryman centres on elevated levels of risk and, as such leadership from the bottom up is chief. Good leaders save lives; instilling a sense of collective security in the Platoon and safeguard their men against uncertainty and unnecessary risk taking.

Tam suggests most of the officers and Senior NCOs he'd worked with were superb leaders, Junior Officers who led from the front and Senior NCOs whose guidance and knowledge saved time and lives in equal measure. Of the former group those who were never really cut out to be in any position of command were men like Dickey, a well educated man who found himself promoted to a level of fundamental incompetence. Men who did very well on exercises or during training who, however, failed miserably when it came to the real thing. These were the petty minded men who before being dispatched elsewhere, damaged fledgling careers with asinine and disparaging remarks on annual reports. In fairness, Tam accepted the criticism however unfair and moved on. His Dads maxim regarding soldiering-on regardless,

<sup>80</sup>. **Op-O**: Operations Officer, usually a Junior Captain.



had served him well for 10 years, however when it came to his penultimate tour of Afghanistan and the disappointment that followed his return to the UK, he decided once and for all that he'd had enough.

Tam had spent the tour acting-up as the Platoon Sergeant; he was on the cards for promotion, and had satisfied the criteria in excess. His success as a battlefield commander had earned him decorations for gallantry, leadership and a mention in dispatches for organising the emergency evacuation of civilians, which his platoon commander another Dickey, had overlooked. His education for promotion was all up to date and he was looking forward to returning home and having his rank made substantive. The Officer who'd made a catalogue of operational errors had been kept out of any serious trouble as a result of the trust the men placed in Tam, they knew that regardless of who was in command on paper, Tam would be there for them when the going got tough. The regimental system, however, like all bureaucracies has its flaws and Tam's post-tour Confidential Report failed to recommend him for immediate promotion. Tam was devastated.

**Tam:** 5 June 2010

892 B: You paint a fantastic picture of the  
893 battalion the lads and such I still  
894 don't quite understand why you  
895 left. Why didn't you just wait for  
896 the next board?  
897 Tam: Fuck 'em.  
898 B: Fuck who?  
899 Tam: When it's time to be on your way  
900 it time ken. I'z always looking to  
901 Stevie az like uz career guide, when  
902 uz kept getting kicked in uh balls by  
903 c\*\*\*s who just had it in for uz, I just  
904 though iss iz nay happening for uz,  
905 I'm no the Auld-man nor for 'at Stevie.  
906 B: You must know you've an awesome  
907 reputation in the Battalion.  
908 Tam: Aye and what fucking gud de that do  
909 uz. Ken it was always 'come on Tam  
910 it'll all work oot, you'll be next' an all  
911 'at, if tha's so, how in the fuck did them  
912 little wankers manage to fuck uz up in  
913 the first place. Ken I've a thick skin Taff  
914 but I'm no thick. No mate two complete  
915 twats fucked me over, the Army may ha  
916 given us a medal but ass the cost as it iz

917       uh making a c\*\*t oot-e a c\*\*t. I done it fe the  
918       lad's coz they fucking moron's wuz gunna get  
919       'em killed. And the CO doon knew it. 'At  
920       said CO nor none of 'em made a difference,  
921       did fuck all tay change 'hings. So I thought  
922       fuck me, me family got tay come first now.

### **6:1:4 A Rough Passage Home**

When Tam got back from post deployment leave he was met by something of a shock. He had anticipated being picked up on the next promotion board and assume the post of Platoon Sergeant, as discussed he had acted-up on his last tour and done well. He had also been unofficially assured that he would gain this next promotion and that his status as an acting Sergeant would now be adjusted and therein made substantive. When this didn't happen Tam was livid. The cause of his failure to pick-up, being due to a poor annual report, which contradicted his actions during the actual tour. As a form of consolation he'd been offered a few reasonably choice courses, yet felt that the system he had grown to love and respect had failed him badly. He was also aware that the intensity of tours was picking up and that he was missing out of many of the key events in his own children's lives. The Army had changed. Long gone were the days of British Army Of the Rhine (BAOR), a time when operations meant Northern Ireland and the year was conveniently broken up with short trips to Cyprus or Canada for peacekeeping or training; a time when the closest thing to combat was a downtown encounter with another regiment. Indeed the lifestyle had shifted so dramatically that even his Father was encouraging him to leave.

His Brother had been luckier. In the gap between Tam and Stevie's service, his brother had enjoyed promotion and the opportunity to complete all the courses he needed to set himself up in the Battalion as a Sniper and later Recce troop Staff Sergeant. The Balkans had been his proving ground, he'd come out of the campaign in the former Yugoslavia with promotion and a reputation as a man who got things done. Stevie had also enjoyed the German Summers and Exercise Snow Queens<sup>81</sup>, spending months of the winter instructing groups of young soldiers in the art of downhill and Nordic Skiing. Operations, on the other hand, had dominated Tam's career from the point where he'd arrived at the battalion. For Tam it was an altogether different Army. Tam joined at a time where the Balkans gave way to Kuwait, to Iraq and Afghanistan, a time where any notions of the adventitious training and sports

<sup>81</sup>. **Snow Queen:** Annual BAOR Sport Skiing Trip to Kempton area of Bavaria

enjoyed by both brother and father had been replaced by a round of build-up training and deployments. It was clearly a very different experience for each of them, Tam seemingly getting the lesser experience, insomuch as operations [whilst fundamental in the shaping of soldier-*self*], totally overshadowed any unrelated activities, the ‘perks’. With this in mind he decided to sign off, Tam’s account of this penultimate chapter in his career being far from complimentary of a system that allegedly prepares an individual for life as a civilian.

**Tam:** 1 October 2009

008 B: Did you do much by way of resettlement training,  
009 advice, anything.  
010 Tam: Aye interview wee a Rupert and 2 minutes wee the  
011 Sarnt Major. Ken what he tells us, ‘is-iz after 10  
012 years, says tuz Tam, keep your fitness up son.  
013 ‘At was it.  
014 B: Did that piss you off?  
015 Tam: Fucking right it dud, as uh ‘hanks you get.  
016 B: OK then all things being equal and in light of the  
017 fact that I’ve sat through similarly feeble farewells,  
018 let me ask you; what did you think before hand, what  
019 did you think the visit to the Sergeant Major would be  
020 about you know a goodbye, a brief on Civi Street, a  
021 thank you?  
022 Tam: Well I’d been across tay see the Sarnt Major a few,  
021 wee things an tu be frank good time uh-fore nows, so  
022 when I like ‘hink ‘bout Battalion Head-quarters iz like  
023 the Polis ken, iz like you du-nay want tu be there in  
024 the first place. And we’re no civvies yet so iz all a bit  
025 plastic ken, but doing a turn round the senior ranks iz  
026 chyte an a waste uh time. It’s like you ken their no  
027 interested in you, less you worked we ‘em, an ‘en  
028 only a platoon commander the Company 2 ice-crème  
029 maybes, an as only if he’s like doing sports or suh-hing  
030 wee the boys. But, when I go over there I generally just  
031 ‘hink uh the objective, an get uz in and oot at the soonest  
032 convenience. Fuck I cannot remember a fucking word uh  
033 what the OC had ta say past, a Cadre an like the promise  
034 of another tape in like due course, the rest was just a blur  
035 uh words, as coz none of us Toms are used to being round  
036 the OC, less orders. But on baeth trips I was just wanting  
037 in an oot we me. Thought that fucking lard arse would uh  
038 put in a few words like, I was hez fucking driver once, an  
039 alls he can say iz watch your phyzz. Whatever though ay,  
040 like a jump, ken ground speed, I’m coming in heavy and  
041 fast I’m ready as I’ll ever be. Anyhows, fuck all good  
042 their advice ud be anyhows, what they fuck do two blokes  
043 who’ve spent the last 20 years in the Army know about  
044 leaving et, you’d be better off taking ta a civi doon the

045 stores, least az you'd ken how to sign on. Tell you another  
046 you nip doon to the education centre, I'm supposed to rely  
047 on these guys for training needs, what the fuck do a retired  
048 Major ken about education, clearly fuck all in uh case uv  
049 ours, and its miles away and it's pish. It's frankly uninspiring  
050 Taff.

051 B: So that's resettlement covered...

The process, whilst far more comprehensive and involved, seemed to have failed Tam, a career soldier, who, post training, had never been placed in a position where he had had to decide upon much at all. He didn't really know what he was going to do employment wise just that it was time to move on. Part of the problem for infantrymen stems from the notion that they spend their very specialised careers working in occupationally restricted fields. There are no occupational comparisons, no parallel trades, or for that after 10 years infanteering many employment opportunities passed security work or for a lucky few work in the uniformed public services. There simply isn't much call for a sniper in Glasgow or mortar man in Skegness, even their language is occupationally specific, at least a Sapper speaks the language of construction, the same applies to the REME Craftsman or AGC Clerk, but not the infanteer.

**Tam:** 1 October 2009

042 B: So job hunting; you've had a good time to think  
043 about what you might want to do when you leave  
044 I'm wondering what sorts of things you're thinking  
045 about. Jobs, retraining, college.  
046 Tam: Keeping us options open Taff, nose to the ground like,  
047 see an opportunity, an see where it leads. There's the  
048 twist aye, you should do your resettlement, the leaving  
049 bit whilst you're in ken, would nae be shitting it 'en  
050 rent and chyte in the beginning.

It's fair to say that the Pre-Exit period, far from preparing these relatively young men for a new and exciting start in life, actually serves to strip away notions of identity and self they possess prior to leaving in one fell swoop. The institution in which the soldier makes his home turns its back on the leaver, presenting, at best, an affable yet blasé outlook on the future of the individual who is no longer viewed as an operational asset. The lack of any genuine engagement on the part of Officers employed to provide resettlement guidance is partly due to the fact that in many cases, and as Tam has pointed out himself, that they themselves have very little knowledge of the workings of civil street. Therefore they go through the process with little understanding of the impact they make upon the life of that

individual, a disposition often sparingly cloaked and too often betraying their own notions of why the individual has chosen to leave. For the leaver about to depart his home, friends and livelihood, the regiment takes on a new face, one where camaraderie is replaced with disregard, careers end often marked by apathy and notions of indifference.

**Bob:** October 1 2009

091 Frankly if I wasn't leaving I might give  
092 give a fuck, but there's no point in like  
093 saying or daying anything 'cause no  
094 fuckers listening to you anyhow. Your  
095 kind of done here you can see it in their  
096 eyes, it's just a job.

**Len:** October 2 2009

206 Just a bunch of jack bastards they are,  
207 they know you're going and like what  
208 would the chances be of you making  
209 a fuss ay. It's a crock of shit though,  
210 bit fucking tight too when think 'bout  
211 it, we done our time fair and square,  
212 I'd have thought they'd have 'ad bit  
213 more respect like. Well fuck 'em I'm  
214 off and they can shove it...

**Mac:** October 1 2009

167 B: So do you feel ready?  
168 Mac:For what like, civi street, [...] well  
169 as ready as I'll ever be not too 'appy  
170 with the resettlement though, it's like  
171 90% down to you, what you do like,  
172 which is a bit fucking retarded like  
173 'cause I never really bin a civi, not  
174 as an adult anyway. So what the fuck  
175 do I know about it. I reckon they know  
176 most of us'll end up on Job Seekers  
177 and just go through the motions, like  
178 as if they knew what they was doing.  
179 But they don't.

A sentiment carried through most of the early interviews confirms an impression that the Army have little knowledge of civil labour markets, but then why would they, they're the Army. Moreover dissatisfaction seems to centre on notion that the officers in charge of resettlement at unit level at least, have been drawn somewhat unwilling to these posts. Many not possessing the knowledge required to make a significant difference to the leaver group.

This wounded Tam. The regiment he'd grown up with seemed to have changed, the bonds he'd developed over a lifetime of patronage seem to mean very little whilst the attitude of the officers serving over him equated at best to a form of aloofness. The Regiment had an operation to prepare for, which he understood; he on the other hand was supposed to be preparing for the rest of his life. For all the disappointment all servicemen experience much the same, to the storeman taking in the kit that had been a second skin for so long it was just another day at the office.

The same applied to each of the departments Tam had to visit before the day arrived when he was actually out. Tam suggests that his family saw him through; made sure he had a fond farewell in the mess and did their level best to cushion the blow. For Tam the final stripping of his soldier-*self* occurred when he handed in his identity card, the agency of which was both multifaceted and symbolically unique to him and his career. For Tam, then it was over, some twelve years after signing on with notions of an adventure filled career he was left flat, unaware of what he might do next yet knowing he'd need to work it out and very soon. Tam's greatest assets throughout this low-point were his wife and family; his partner having grown up in the forces, [her father having served in the RAF] knew the system perfectly well, well enough to refocus Tam, reassuring him on the merits of his choice, their future and a life free from the disappointment, pettiness and class indifference which had led him to this point in the first place.



## **CHAPTER VI**

Analysis (Section ii)

### **The Pre-Exit Period**

**Theme:** Betrayal



## CHAPTER VI

### Betrayal

#### 6.2. Introduction

In this section of the analysis discussion falls on the period of one's military career where soldier-*self* resolves to relinquish his ties with soldiering. The section encompasses the cycle of activity referred to by the MoD as the Pre Exit period, with particular interest drawn from the MoD's 'Termination Timeline' and discourse centring on the closing nine months of an individual's military service. The Civilian that emerges from this period will do so on the basis of the Service Leavers capacity to identify which components of his occupational passed and broader knowledge of the world are immediately relevant and transferable. Therein soldier-*self* is again reinvented. The Individual must also justify his decision to leave the battalion, grieve for his losses, and accept his inevitable and imminent departure. In the year of writing (2013) Outflow<sup>82</sup> from UK Regular Forces reached 23,520<sup>83</sup>. Tens of thousands of individuals caught up in what for many was an abrupt exodus, requiring an earnest assessment of self, thought and discourse focussed large on the prospect of their Resettlement<sup>84</sup> as preparations for any one of a number of possible futures began.

Soldier-*self* is now confronted with the task of assembling an adaptable model of an assumed-self, a provisional, portable-self capable of riding out the transition he now faces in order to secure a moderately positive future, a future located in a new and unfamiliar social reality. As part of this process he will undertake a programme of Resettlement centring on a previously unknown set of conditions, freedoms and challenges, presented in language (Jolly 1996, pg. 114) that often makes little or no sense, since it is anchored in another, at this point, unfamiliar world (Hughes1958, pg. 126). In the broadest terms, Outflow is driven by a number of factors (Hartley 2011, pg. 48), domestic and foreign policy drive funding to the MoD, the UK's defence position being summed up in the nation's Strategic Defence & Security review, which steers personnel numbers and equipment procurement for the Armed Forces. Where funding is short operational overstretch<sup>85</sup> places an immense strain on OpTempo<sup>86</sup>, rendering many soldiers physically incapacitated or mentally exhausted resulting

82. Outflow: Measure of UK Armed Forces Personnel leaving the Armed Forces.

83. Source: UK Armed Forces Quarterly Manning Report, updated October 2013. UK: DASA

84. Resettlement: Process undertaken by all Armed Forces Personnel leaving the Armed Forces

85. Overstretch: Manpower shortages in light of overseas operations, home service, UN peacekeeping...

86. OpTempo: Point at which equipment including manpower, reaches the end of its operational effectiveness

in raised levels of medical and voluntary Outflow. Additional governmental influence can also be seen in a more recent wave of risky initiatives centring on redundancy, 11,870 of the 18,570 individuals who left in the same year as our cohort, exited as a direct result of redundancy. Of the remaining 6,400 leavers, all but 1,430± exited at the end of their full service contracts (22 years), with the remaining 5,000 leaving between their 4<sup>th</sup> and 22 year point or as Medical or Administratively Discharges. Redundancy in relation to the Armed Forces career presents as something of a contradictory concept. The MoD assuring a state unwavering support for ‘its people’ (JSP. 534 pg. 1) on the grounds of their ‘Selfless Commitment’, a concept enshrined in many of the MoD’s own texts, from the Armed Forces Act and Covenant, (MoD, 2011. Pgs. 10) to the Army’s ‘Values and Standards’ document (2008). The basis on which this support is given is relatively straightforward,

“The British Army is structured and trained for operations, not for the convenience of administration in barracks. On joining the Army soldiers accept a commitment to serve whenever and wherever they are needed, whatever the difficulties or dangers may be. Such commitment imposes certain limitations on individual freedom, and requires a degree of self-sacrifice. Ultimately it may require soldiers to lay down their lives.”

(Ministry of Defence. 2008, pg. 5)

### **6.2.1 Outflow, risk and need**

The soldiers at the heart of this study each satisfied their terms of enlistment, accepting ‘self-sacrifice’ and physical hardship as a condition of service, before deciding to leave the army of their own volition some 10 to 12 years into their respective careers. The discourse conveyed in this chapter describes a period in time when each soldier held a Regimental appointment within a Regular Army Infantry Battalion. Collectively they have avoided compulsory redundancy, escaped injury and Administrational Discharges and, on making the decision to go, remained stoic throughout this final phase. Theirs has been an uninterrupted relationship with militarism that has shaped their identity and formed the core of their existence since they were in their mid to late teens. Their mutual decisions to go were not made under duress, nor were they coerced or invited to go, nevertheless at this seemingly crowning point in their careers they each decided to leave.

An analysis of their narratives of this period revealed two notable concerns; the first point centred upon the resettlement process in relation to its relevance and appropriateness to the

infantry cohort. It explores the thoughts and discourse of soldiers striving to make meaning of their packages of resettlement and asks whether such provisions are either tailored to meet individual need or capable of supporting the broader transition beyond the bureaucratic requirements of the military discharge. The second area of interest centres upon notions of future and the source of any modes of future-selves; given that most of the cohort came of age in uniform (Kelty *et al* 2010, pg. 181) it seems reasonable to assume that their knowledge of the world is incomplete, reserved to periods of leave only. Whilst 11 had already served as regular soldiers albeit as Juniors Entrants for two years prior to this age related milestone, for these soldiers their identity has from childhood been built on a military model of self. One that has sustained them both occupationally and privately for a decade, to that end their construction of self has never been questioned, nor have notions of adapting their existing selves been broached.

Any one of them might fairly be described in the popular imagination as a quintessential soldier, each possessing both occupational knowledge and experience of armed strife across a global backdrop. Occupationally they epitomize the broader Armed Forces employee having specialised in mastery of arms alone (Mannitz 2012, p. 45). Only a fraction of the broader Armed Forces can legitimately lay claim to such an unfettered connection to militarism and structured violence. Indeed most of the Corps' and Arms of the Armed Forces, as Ade (Chapter 4) asserted are tradesmen in uniform. And whilst the trade and professional roles are vital to the effectiveness of any military enterprise, very little of their time is spent war-fighting; combat for the tradesman soldier more often than not occurring as a consequence of ill fortune rather than planning.

In most cases an infantryman's decision to leave will not have been steered by prior occupational knowledge, experience of the civilian world, or desire to return to more lucrative civilian labour markets on the basis of trade advancement or immediately transferable skill. Nor in the case of this cohort were exits predetermined by health, or disciplinary impediment, far from being compelled to leave many were offered choice courses and promotions to remain. Self-awareness led many in this cohort to conclude that in the absence of work-related links to civilian labour markets, or meaningful experiences of society as a whole, that the task of assembling a future-self was meaningless. If this is the case then how do these individuals who possess very little experience of life beyond the wire,

posit themselves civilians, and on what basis do they eventually construct their futures and future-selves?

### **6.2.2 Loss of honour**

Prior to exploring the specific nature of Resettlement applied to this cohort some consideration must be given to the other components of Outflow, those who complete their Full Colour Service, the wounded, redundant, deviant or ESL. With regard to the former group of men in their forties, retirement brings closure and a natural predetermined end to their careers after 22+ year's service; for this group this is a definitive status resting point (Glaser and Strauss, 1971). They retire with service pension, management qualifications and years of experience, each of which are readily transferable into civil labour markets. In essence their careers changed the moment they attained their Warrants and began to assume TriService, Army or Regimental rather than Section, Platoon or Company appointments, a world away from the FOB and fighting elements of the army.

These trajectories move swiftly to a point where most no longer rely upon their skills as battlefield commanders, since as WOs they are more likely to be deployed in logistic, administrative, training or resources based roles. For most, life thereafter centres on the RQMS and other Q roles, followed for some by the much sort-after CSM and RSM appointments or coveted Late Entry Commissions. When a Regimental Sergeant Major leaves the Army, he does so with the satisfaction of knowing he has completed his Full Colour Service and has occupied the most Senior Non Commissioned Officer appointment in his battalion. As suggested in his early to mid forties he has likely paid off the larger portion his mortgage and if he has children they will feasibly be in FE, HE or approaching independence. As McDermott (2007) suggests, in the title of his thesis "Old soldiers never die: they adapt their military skills and become successful civilians".

The WOs experience of this time is an entirely different affair to each of the other groups, with the exception of the cohort selected for this study, each of the other exit-groups has been in a sense 'forced out of the fold' (Ministry of Defence. 2012, pg. 5; Glaser & Strauss, 1971 pgs. 175-193), if not through life-changing injury, compulsory redundancy, or end of service, then as a result of voluntary redundancy or an Administrative Discharge. In the case of this cohort each has served for a proven period, acquiring reputations as highly valued, professional soldiers and battlefield commanders in their own right. As suggested the study

cohort, are volunteers, their thoughts and construction of social reality at this point unimpeded by impediment or obligation, in almost all cases the soldiers discussed here could legitimately remain in service for another 10 years. Consequently their observations and thoughts of this period represent a new and to a degree refreshing overview of how transitional-self copes with this period of elected rather than enforced reinvention.

By preselecting this group it was anticipated that discourse would rest more authentically on the transition and reinvention in effect. Without inference or nostalgia for corporeal practices one might expect from the 22 year man, likewise the bitterness of the offender, distress of redundancy or the overwhelming sense of trepidation that might accompany Resettlement with a life-changing injury. For the purpose of this study, each of these exit conditions is viewed as over laden with ulterior agenda, each state influenced by a set of circumstances that distorts discourse, distancing it from the essence of the experience. Additionally each will receive different degrees of support organised into equally different resettlement packages presented in context with the nature and length of their service.

Under these conditions, the transition of self from consummate professional to neophyte job-seeker and reinvention of accomplished men-at-arms to private citizens will have to be initially tackled in the abstract, prior to leaving the Army formally. In part, this chapter seeks to question how soldiers posit their social positioning in relation to their as-yet unexplored, unpractised citizen-*selves*. It attempts to shed light on the basis by which future citizen-selves will be established or realised and questions where these imagined identities originate, if at all. The occupational transition discussed has seen the school child become a soldier, and that soldier develop into a combat veteran. In turn re-inventive self has journeyed from youth to adult and in many cases on to spouse and farther, each in the wake of a 10 to 12 year relationship with violence (Caforio 2006. pg. 16), a relationship which is about to come to an abrupt end.

With choice comes culpability, in taking the risk to leave the soldier must now learn to live with that decision and plan ahead. An additional layer of risk confronts the married men, particularly when choice rather than edict guides their way back to Civi Street minus the soldiers salary long relied upon to feed, clothe and accommodate ones family (AFF, 2013; Walker 2012 pg. 3). Confounding the situation further is the notion that choice and autonomy are often foreign concepts to soldiers, thus a potentially chaotic period of

adjustment and monumental change lies ahead. The end of a military career is indeed a challenging time, problematic enough to prompt the MoD into providing a range of provisions intended to deal with this penultimate transition. Far from offering their support as an act of charity or good will, the MoD does so out of absolute necessity or “need” (Dandeker 2002, pg. 117-119).

A well managed resettlement links familiar past to unfamiliar future, resettlement enabling at least initial success in securing life’s basic essentials. This is an atypical instance for *soldier-self* with one foot firmly rooted in the battalion the other dangling precariously in the vacuum which is resettlement, right up to the point where he physically leaves the Army, a truly liminal time given that he is neither soldier nor civilian. In theory, veterans can use this period to access employment and housing, whilst benefiting from a pause in regimental life to begin the task of assuming the characteristics of a *citizen-self*. However, quite unlike the conditions in which *soldier-self* was conceived, there will be no elaborated rituals, no guiding doctrine or definitive model to aspire towards. Likewise, the feedback of significant others or familiar symbolic customs characterised in Regimental Lore will also be absent. Indeed any notions of camaraderie are spent. As Tam himself suggested it’s every man for himself.

When viewed through a Weberian lens, this period of a serviceman’s life is possibly the most subordinating. Any notions of Social Honour achieved within or outside the battalion will soon be lost, diminishing as the weeks to one’s exit date draw ever closer. Even relationships with other soldiers appear to change from the moment careers end is in sight. The act of leaving viewed by many of those who remain as an act of betrayal their regard for hitherto established characters from within the Platoon House somehow shifting from esteem to indifference. Reproof at this point from the perspective of the hypersensitive leaver appears universal, each informant suggesting disquiet and notions of a Battalion closing ranks on its own. The familiarity that has held *soldier-self* in a state of equilibrium for a decade now ruptured. Since training *soldier-self* has relied on feedback from a network significant others as a component of self-verification, his polished and assured self dressage (Foucault, 1984, p. 105) having served him well within in the institution.

Yet now his status has changed irreversibly the mirror cracked, feedback somehow transformed from established cordiality to bureaucratic routine, as Garfinkel suggests,

“The work of the denunciation effects the recasting of the perceived other: The other becomes in the eyes of his condemners literally a different and new person.

(Garfinkel, 1956, pg. 421)

Power in the Army, at least in the ranks, has a limited range of deployment anyway, limited in the sense that rank is localised (RUSI, 1934/2009, pg. 83). Corporals have direct responsibility and therein influence over 12 men only, regardless of the fact that they outrank countless others across the Armed Forces. In broader society, only the Field and General Officers are permitted to retain their titles, thus Majors, Colonels and so forth may be addressed post service by rank, whilst NCOs, SNCOs and WOs the Corporals, Sergeant Majors and the like may not. This creates an assumption in society based on rank as a measure of achievement, wherein the careers of those who retain their titles are presumed to be somehow more significant or successful, than those who do not. It also causes something of an identity crisis for those who have for decades been addressed by rank.

This facet alone will have become a fundamental and hard-earned component of soldier-*self's* identity (Milowe 1964, pg. 101; Harris, 2013), its absence perceived as a loss in status and relative power. Likewise wealth beyond his teens or the opportunity to save as a consequence of operational bounties is also limited. Rates of pay for even the most senior WOs are relatively low considering their length of service and degrees of responsibility, opening at<sup>87</sup> £40,343 for a WOI rising to £48,565; whilst a Major, a Commissioned Officer with comparable service can expect a remuneration of between £49,918 and £59,793 for his toil. Wealth for the soldier remains an uninspiring condition, and one unlikely to encourage notions of continued service. A young soldier at the beginning of his career may well be content with £14,784 a year less food, accommodation and stoppages, yet soldiers soon realise that their income does not reflect civilian labour markets when considering the risk, physical demands and hours worked.

Whilst rising to £18,306 after training and his 18<sup>th</sup> Birthday, the salary still falls some way short of his Platoon Commander [a lieutenant] who's starting salary on appointment rests at £30,923. And more-so when considering the latter wage can be legitimately accessed on as few as two A Levels. Status earned through occupational achievement, length of service, meritorious or courageous action or for that aptitude, possesses limited collateral post service.

<sup>87</sup>. **Rates** of pay- April 2016: (source) The basic average gross annual rates of pay for Officers, Servicemen & Women: [www.army.MoD.uk/jobs](http://www.army.MoD.uk/jobs)

Authentic knowledge of the circumstance surrounding the award of an honour or promotion will naturally be limited to those who witness an 'act' or work in close proximity to those honoured or promoted. Few, however, will recognize the significance of the award (Burke & Cooper, 2013 pg. 344; McMillan & Rachman, 1987 pgs. 375-383; 1988, pgs 373-378) or comprehend the occupational or human realities that largely credited its investiture. Moreover in both military and social space such conditions will be assumed. Veterans more often use medals in civilian space to instigate discourse with others wearing similar decorations, particularly campaign medals which have the distinction of symbolically conveying notions of a specific period in time.

The appearance of bemedaled veterans in Non-military space invokes different reactions in different people, their agency wholly dependent on the spectator's relationship to the Armed Forces. And whilst many citizens have little idea of what one or another medal represents most acknowledge broadly that some form of service has been rewarded. Unlike many Iraq or Afghan Veterans the World War II Veteran in the UK is instantly recognisable; their age alone reinforcing notions of personal endurance, their medals not only confirming their participation in armed conflict but also an assumption of occupational competence and courage. Scepticism on the part of an apathetic general public might fairly be levelled at the current image of the fresh faced soldier-hero recurrently lauded by government (Everett, 2013, pg. 26) and media alike. An image that for many has come to provoke a diluted outlook often based in distraction by association.

Distraction locates the soldier-hero in the public gaze as if to relocate the public's attention from often dubious and in hindsight disastrous foreign policies. Whilst association via valour is all too often deployed as a political PR stunt, courage and fidelity the Membership Categorisation Devices (Housley & Fitzgerald 2002 pg. 62) that spin-doctors seek to align to. With regard to 'Honours & Appointments' the MBE, OBE and CBE have long been regarded dimly in the ranks, their repute grounded in the efforts of others, thus soldiers articulate them as 'My Boys Efforts' and 'Other Boys Efforts'. They are also geared to status and conventionally bestowed on the WOs and Officers, MBEs for the WOs, OBEs for the Officers. Moreover, as awards overseen by the Cabinet Office Honours and Appointments Secretariat they are considered cautiously and too often as wholly political devices. In civilian space, military awards are rarely understood rendering their collateral narrow, more



often responded to with misplaced sentiment or apathy, encouraged by attitudes ascribed by the all too often fickle images transmitted by the media and government alike.

Yet images of Gallantry regardless of their potency, seldom promote employment and rarely translate into criterion on a job application forms. An OBE like rank carried post service is also an award geared to an exclusive elite, one's post rather than conduct the criteria for eligibility. Gallantry and conduct awards are indeed subjective devices, and whilst telling of the recipient's character in-house, they remain in the UK at least, largely hidden occupational or socially relevant markers. This is not, however, a universal phenomenon. In Russia, for instance, post-war conscription has kept the military in the public eye; decorations being recognized and to a degree respected by the general public. Martial occupations including infanteering are in this case accounted for post service, service being rewarded customarily with acts of social courtesy and in policies centring on post service employment and housing opportunity (Westman, et al. 2004, pgs. 769-779). To a degree, the symbolic capital held by an award corresponds directly to tacit forms of communication imbued quite deliberately in all forms of dress (Bourdieu, 1984) including military uniforms.

Nevertheless more appropriate degrees of approval or opportunities to realize any transferable capital, remain slim; their meaning more often legitimised only when the recipient is in the company of other soldiers. The British Government has attempted to redress this point over the past 30 years, creating evermore opportunities for recipients to wear their awards openly in public. In particular, Armed Forces Day launched in 2009, might be described as the flagship event, and most recent national initiative devised to raise the profile of Veterans. Indeed, an industry in regimental regalia has emerged since the Blair Government took the UK to war in Iraq in 2003, an industry that has continued to grow as if a symbolic substitute for more practical forms Armed Forces pay or welfare reform<sup>88</sup>. Status is also linked to longevity, its cessation resulting incrementally from the state of disconnection the leaver experiences as the 'Termination Timeline' draws to its conclusion.

An individual's status in working-units is as such wholly dependent on living memory, discourse centring on those who no longer reside in the Platoon House being entirely reliant on the determination of those who remain. The retelling of core narratives focusing on

<sup>88</sup>. 2016 Armed Forces Pay Review awarded a 1% pay rise.

occupational achievement like acts of individual gallantry require narrators, thus with the exception of a selection of the most notable accounts few survive, moral narratives retold formally during basic training being the exception.

In civilian space, status is more often preserved through discourse conveying notions of achievement realised and assumed. The doing of soldiering, however, is often so specific and loaded with explicitly restricted language and themes that few opportunities to retell stories exist. Equally notions of biographical disruption and the very private nature of soldier narrative (discussed in Chapter iv) lead many accounts particularly the narratives that originate in the FOB, to require the like of a Regimental reunion for their substance to be aired. This is a grave time for soldier-*self*. Countless aspects of past including past glories will soon to become irrelevant, status and power lost, and for a while at least wealth regardless of how limited it may have been during service, will also become a serious concern.

Accordingly as a consequence of the past thirty years of overseas war-fighting, many civilians have become indifferent to the value of military service and therein those who serve. Today public opinion centred on Britain's Armed Forces and their role in the Global War on Terror has become divided. The holistic recognition afforded the military during the Second World War or later National Service period has now elapsed. The 'total' connection with militarism that once brought a nation of uniformed Britons together (Moskos, 2000), has shifted significantly, recent campaigns having provoked disquiet. Many Britons viewing the post 9:11 campaigns do so dimly, conceiving more recent operations to be little more than resource dominating enterprises, fixed thus far on the exploitation of oil and opium, thinly disguised as humanitarian or antiterrorist endeavours. Whilst at the other end of the spectrum a culture of illogical and naive soldier-worship serves only to mask the revulsion many feel towards the human cost of what amount to wars of occupation and exploitation.

The ostensibly manufactured hero offers a screening effect, lionising the military to a point where war-crimes resulting from breaches in our own operational doctrine (ADP Land Operations, 2010) and adherence to the Geneva Conventions can somehow be tolerated<sup>89-90</sup>.

<sup>89</sup>. **December** 2013: A Royal Marine has been convicted of murdering a wounded Afghan in his custody. Two Marines were acquitted. Various media companies launch "Free Marine A" campaign.

<sup>90</sup>. **September** 2016: Philip Hammond announces proposed legal changes centring on protection from prosecution for Armed Forces Personnel.

In this climate soldier-*self* must now make his home, become civilianised in the company of the apathetic or distinctly self-centric other, often suffering the indifference of free-speech and potential hostility of those who view the soldier rather than his political masters as the source of the problem. To the soldier war is a subjective affair, the broader political objective often as much a mystery to him as any, his view of conflict equally personal centring on the agency of loss, rituals assumed in shared hardship and a life spent in the company of men. In a sense he's lived an anonymous life where notions of unit pride and admiration for peers far surpassed personal rights and entitlements, wealth or his conditions of service.

### **6.2.3 Tri-Service Resettlement Policy**

In catering for the point when individuals decide to leave the Armed Forces, the MoD have devised a series of policies and guidelines designed to deal with the diversity of conditions and distinct circumstance that affect each of the leaver groups discussed above. Each of these policies whilst published in their own right can be found collectively in Joint Service Publication 534 (JSP). Entitled "The Joint Service Resettlement Manual", last issued 10<sup>th</sup> March 2015. The forward credited to Vice Admiral P J Wilkinson Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Personnel) sets the tone of the document thus,

"A robust and effective system of resettlement provision is recognised as a fundamental pillar of personnel support and a tangible manifestation of the Armed Forces' commitment to be an employer of first choice. It allows our people to serve secure in the knowledge that they will receive ample assistance to prepare them for life and future employment when they finally leave the Services".

(JSP. 534 pg. 1)

It is anticipated that the Resettlement process will carry the Service Leaver into work and accommodation post service, its administration initially falling to the battalion, who are responsible for '1st Line resettlement support'. Within the battalion the Unit Resettlement Officer (URO) is selected by the CO, and thus as members of the Regiment s/he is appointed in much the same way as an Admin Officer might be appointed to a Company, therein it is a Regimental Duty rather than a career option. In this role they are charged with the responsibility of guiding NSLs through their entitlement to Career Transition Partnership (CTP) support. 1st Line resettlement is, however, limited in that it provides information and administrative support only.

In addition to Military Staff and their roles as advisors, the broader system is administered via The Careers Transition Partnership (CTP), an organisation established in 1998 that comprises of a military and civilian partnership. Therein the MoD and Right Management Inc, form the hub of this coalition conceived to ensure that a modern, flexible system of resettlement is provided in the most cost effective manner. Right Management's function is located between each of the three Services and their in-house responsibilities for resettlement via the dissemination of information pertaining to process. Right Management is therefore, the gatekeeper to additional support services provided through a number of advice giving and training organisations. They offer Service Leavers a demand-led transition programme, and boast a well established record of resettlement success. In so doing they refer throughout their own literature to 'recognition' detailed in the National Audit Office (NAO) Report 'Leaving the Services 2007'. The report suggests,

“that in comparison to other comparable countries, the UK is 'at the forefront of offering tailored, professional help to military personnel as they leave'.”

(NAO, 2007. pg. 7)

The NAO Report (2007) now some ten years old, portrays a somewhat optimistic outlook with regard to support offered, and whilst drawing its conclusions for the year 2007 remains the most recent report of its type to reflect the circumstances faced by the study cohort in 2009. Nevertheless, it does not rate the services offered on an individual Corps basis and is thus limited in that it draws no specific conclusions regarding the merits of the scheme with regard to the Corps of Infantry in isolation. When considering the £115,000,000 cost of the provision (NAO 2007 figures), some thought to the different roles performed during service, might enabled a researcher to determine who exactly was benefiting from the CTP and how.

In a sense, the tradesman needs only to relocate his trade qualifications to new labour markets and should logically benefit from any introductory vehicle enabling him to transfer already established technical competences' (Wolpert, 2000). Regardless of whether the individual is a qualified nurse, fitter, or any one of dozens of immediately transferable roles, theirs will be entirely different experiences to those of the Infanteer. 2<sup>nd</sup> Line support consists of an interview with Individual Education & Resettlement Officer (IERO), whose role centres on the primary task of providing advice and guidance regarding the specific resettlement package that will best suit the NSL. It differs from the 1<sup>st</sup> line support offered in that it

centres exclusively on personnel entitled to CTP support, and will therein be available to soldiers who have served in excess of four years or the those Medically Discharged only.

Work undertaken during this phase centres on a one-to-one interview, which may lead depending on demand to a referral being made to a CTP consultant; or at the request of the NSL enrolment on to a Career Transition Workshop (CTW), either of which will require the NSL to be registered for CTP services. As suggested, the support offered is demand-led, thus having some idea of what services or support might best complement your future at this point will in all cases yield best results. It seems clear that for those who have spent their service undertaking duties linked to a trade or profession that the way forward is both familiar and inherently linked to the services offered by the CTP. Thus, an RAF aeronautical engineer will likely know exactly which course best compliment their professional development, and possess a raised awareness as to where current vacancies exist within this highly specialised field.

If soldiers are engaged on operational tours and unable to access the civil arm of the CTP in the UK, 2<sup>nd</sup> Line resettlement advice may be delivered by an IERO or Adjutant Generals Corps (AGC), Education & Training Service (ETS) Officer, located at the Theatre Education Centre (TEC). AGC (ETS) Officers may also deliver 2<sup>nd</sup> line services occasionally, when the IERO is unavailable. 3rd Line support breaks away from the individual Service model and is delivered as a Tri-Service resettlement affair. The provision conveyed exclusively by the civilian element of the CTP, operating from 10 Regional Resettlement Centres<sup>91</sup> (RRCs) and the Resettlement Training Centre (RTC) in Aldershot. The CTP provides employment consultancy workshops, resettlement training advice, seminars, and some in-house resettlement training for entitled NSLs, commencing [potentially] some 2 years prior to discharge.

As demonstrated thus far, considering the nature of employment specific to the infantry, it is difficult to fathom how and when any of the cohort might have taken advantage of CTP services 2 years prior their exit. Most of the individuals interviewed were engaged in Regimental duties right up to the point of their discharge. Most had only given notice to leave the previous year; likewise, most had been involved in a circle of activity centring on operational build ups and tours. Whilst it is quite conceivable that individuals serving in static

<sup>91</sup>. See appendix xii

Service Support roles<sup>92</sup> may have taken advantage of the service at length, it remains wholly inconceivable that soldiers working in the teeth arms would or, more pointedly, could engage 2 years prior to their exits. Their association with the Battalion is altogether different from those serving in the Corps, where trickle<sup>93</sup> rather than *en masse* Regimental postings create a far more autonomous relationship. Infantry soldiers consequently find it far more difficult and morally challenging to remove themselves from their regimental obligations; and, being fixed in employments orientated to the often unpredictable and rapidly changing face of conflict are unlikely to view a period so distant from their exits to necessitate immediate action.

With little idea as to what they might do post-service they are more inclined to continue with their careers until obliged to engage with their resettlement activities. To those serving in-trade the opportunity to plan ahead and develop relationships with civilian employers are far more feasible. Again, differences marked by trade or long service, in the case of those about to complete their Full Colour Service will invariably lead to an uptake in support. This latter group will also possess enhanced knowledge of how the scheme operates and be keen to make the most of all opportunities presented. For many in the infantry cohort, even the job finding service available 6 months prior to discharge went largely unexploited and whilst accessible for up to 2 year's post discharge, was not used by anyone in this cohort after they'd left. In a sense the transition was difficult enough thus retaining links with the military via the RRC, or Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA) was not viewed as a desirable option.

Any analysis of the success or failure of the CTP in delivering resettlement support is, as suggested, difficult to locate. In the absence of detailed information, the highly selective commentary presented in documents like the NAO (2007) Report, or expedient material produced by the CTP, CTP-rightjob, Right Management Inc., or MoD's Quest magazine *per se*, cannot be relied upon to fairly determine how successful the system really is. In relation to their own material, the CTP quarterly statistics used to determine the UK 'Regular Service Personnel Employment Outcomes' for 2009 used a sample of some 1,696 leavers of which 1 in 5 were measured; some 340 outcomes in a year where 18,570 exited the services. Additional information in the form testimonials citing the success of the scheme in the words

<sup>92</sup> E.g. RAF Ground Crew, Army Dental Corps Nurses or AGC Administrators serving in the UK

<sup>93</sup> **Trickle** Posting: The infantry battalion moves *en mass*, soldiers in the Corps are posted individually.

of those who participated is also highly subjective. Whilst making for compelling reading each of the 47 testimonials provided centre upon the careers of Officers, WO and SNCO, most of whom with the notable exception of one Infantry Colour Sergeant and a Royal Marines Sergeant, had each served beyond the 22-year point. These examples also focused on careers in administration roles, technical trades and professions as diverse as Electrical Aviation Engineering, Military Policing and Marine Surveillance. There is however no representation in testimonial form of the experience of the rank and file of the Infantry. Thus in the absence of any acknowledgement or distinctions between soldiers in the “fighting Arms” and remainder of the Armed Forces, it is difficult to locate the Infantryman beyond the SNCOs, WOs and Officers who as suggested by McDermott (2007) make generally successful transitions. Indeed statements like,

‘we will work hard to continually raise the profile and ensure a seamless transition for Service personnel from recruitment back to civilian life secure in the knowledge that qualifications and skills gained through a Service career will prove readily identifiable and valuable to future employers.’

(JSP. 534 pg. 1)

...seem to be directed almost exclusively at those with long service history’s (Strachan, 2003 pg. 62-63). Yet they remain duplicitous when considering either the ESL or those who have served beyond the 4 year point however been unsuccessful in securing early promotion to the rank of Sergeant before the 10 year point, after which most SNCO appointments in the infantry are awarded.

In the case of the former duplicity boarders neglect where no provisions of value are deployed in support of the enlisted ESLs many of whom joined up as adolescents their service itself the agency responsible for their disconnection from civil society or lack of life experience as adult private citizens (Kelty *et al* 2010; Jolly, 1996; Becker, 1964, pgs. 40-53). The nature of their highly-specialised occupation further exacerbates this notion, soldiering alone with no trade cushion presenting its own unique challenges post service. Such conditions often yield devastating results for many SLs, an undeserved state of affairs when considering the uniquely hazardous nature of their former role; a role located within the closest proximity to potentially life changing injuries, and one engendering additional hardship and stressors beyond those found in the workshop, dental centre or kitchen.

To one degree or another, the current make-up of resettlement support is predictable, the single largest SL group to exit concurrently comprising of the long service cohort (1,430 [2009]), followed very closely by the ESLs (1,370 [2009]). These numbers are, however, overshadowed by the tens of thousands who trickle from service each year between the points of first opportunity usually at age 22 and that of full service at around 40. Once again recognition of the length of one's service rather than type of service is given. The analysis presented herein clearly establishes a case for the Infantry as a type of service that, due to the risk and general conditions inherent in combat occupations, ought to be accounted for over and above measures of duration. Any assessment of the CTP presented without occupational details will in most cases skew impressions of its uptake and achievement. Moreover, programs described in reports and surveys continue to fall short, presenting a blurred impression of their success since they have tendency to describe artificer, graduate and senior rank participation only.

At the heart of the problem lie notions of a one size fits-all mentality, placing those leaving the Infantry at a distinct disadvantage since the provision is presented *en masse*. Failure to make allowance for the specific nature of infanteering and lack of directly transferable occupational competence inherent in this role, further exacerbate any notion of securing a successful future via the CTP. In effect current practice handicaps the infanteer whose role whilst in service is both unique and absolutely central to the broader Armed Forces. In essence the system of support offered is tailored to those with ongoing careers in trades, skills, or professional occupations that are relevant and readily transferable into civilian labour markets. And whilst all Service Leavers are entitled to access one form of assistance or another, support determined by the length of one's military service only, rather than occupation, seems both unreasonable and disingenuous.

To place a Warrant Officer in the Royal Logistics Corps with 22 years trade experience<sup>†</sup> (see: appendix xvi), and transferable qualifications acquired free of charge, at a distinct advantage to an infantry soldier with 12 years experience predominated by war-fighting (Higate 2003, pg. 30) simply appears nonsensical. The system fails to make fair adjustment for those who have served within the Battalion and in so doing relegates those with perhaps the most intense service histories to the task of career hunting with no relevant or formally transferable skills or qualifications to initiate a credible hunt. And whilst Policy determines that the rank of the SL is not accounted for, it stands to reason that those who have the longest service will



by default have gained the highest rank and have attained the highest qualifications. To summarise, for those Service Leavers with an entitlement to full Resettlement Support, the resettlement assistance consists of the following elements:

- Support & advice on resettlement from serving staff, appointed from within the Regiment/Battalion
- Coaching in CV writing and job interview techniques
- Support from a career consultant before discharge & for two years subsequently
- Access to internal & external vocational and management training & a contribution of up to £534 towards its costs, plus the cost of associated travel and accommodation.
- Up to 35 working days of Graduated Resettlement Time to undertake training or other preparation for their return to civilian life
- Briefings on housing & financial awareness.

Once again the services offered appear superficially robust and constructive, yet this is a user-led service and as such reliant on user input. To that end those who possess professional experience and qualifications, often utilise the period and services of the CTP to engage in superfluous activities. Interest rather than definitive career or employment based activity supplemented by those of leisure or interest. Indeed, many tradesmen, Officers and Senior Ranks use the service provided to access fly fishing, PADI Sports Diving or sailing courses thus gaining a range of surplus qualifications. Having reached the apex of their trade bands they already possess the highest qualification [NVQ Level 5-6] in trade, management or instruction with which to carry themselves smoothly into skilled civil labour markets. A notion confirmed by the House of Commons Committee for Public Accounts, debating ‘Leaving the Services’,

"The leavers with the longest service histories in most cases cope with life after the forces with ease."

(HOC: Leigh, 37<sup>th</sup> Report; Season 2007-08)

Accordingly they have the time and more importantly the funding to enjoy the resettlement period and may engage in activities that fall as suggested into a somewhat different category; using CTP Preferred Suppliers and their Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme<sup>94</sup> funding to gain recreational and sports qualification. And whilst in a sense these courses fall some distance from the spirit of the scheme, a catalogue of 450 courses may be accessed. In accounting for the success of resettlement provision the NAO (2007) suggest, that those eligible for the full resettlement package were generally satisfied with the provision detailed above. In particular

<sup>94</sup>. **Enhanced** Learning Credit Scheme. Upon registration soldiers may be funded for courses of education and training. Service duration or Medical Discharge dictates how much funding is made available.

86% valued the support given in writing CVs (NAO 2007, pg. 5), whilst others commented positively on tuition in interview techniques. In addition to this low level feedback somewhat striking claims were also conveyed, the Report finding that 94% of Service Leavers, who worked closely with the Career Transition Partnership Resettlement Services, were employed within six months of leaving the Forces (NAO 2007, pg. 7).

In the period the cohort exited service a total of 19,310 people moved on, yet only 1,950 worked closely with the CTP, of which 94% (1,133) found employment. Nevertheless since no reference is made to their specific military occupations, neither NAO nor CTP publications for 2009 offer a great deal of insight, the success or failure of the scheme on the merits of these figures alone cannot therefore be gauged. Considering the many other factors governing job hunting post service the link to CTP involvement alone seems a little speculative. The 2015-16 figures are equally discouraging, with low take-up levels and use of heavily rounded data producing a skewed impression of the SL in transition. In the period captured (2006-07), the NAO survey stresses that only 6% (1,476) of all Service Leavers remained unemployed after the 6 month point had elapsed. Yet in the same year the Royal British Legion (2006, pg. 36) published its report 'Profiles and Needs'; revealing an altogether different picture in relation to the employment of soldiers post service, with particularly concerns focused on the plight of those who had enlisted as Junior Entrants.

“...concerns about young recruits’ prospects for successful transfer to civilian life are borne out by an investigation by the Royal British Legion in 2006 which found that the unemployment rate of 18–49 year old ex-service personnel was double the national unemployment rate for civilians in the same age group. Significantly, the study found that “lack of training, qualifications or skills is also more of a problem among this age group”.

(HC Defence Committee. 2013, Ev pg. 39)

Any figures relating to unemployment will not include the Early Service Leavers, who since April 2004 (JSP 575, 2010 pg.4) have no entitlement to the support beyond a Unit level resettlement brief and will consequently not appear in CTP or MoD data. The purpose of the unit briefing is to signpost assistance available from ex-services welfare organisations, charities, to the DHSS, Job Centre, Local Authority housing department and so forth. Part of this opening procedure involves a mandatory one-to-one interview during which in addition to signposting welfare organisations the individual’s vulnerability to social exclusion will be assessed. The interview is conducted by an Officer who will quite reasonably be inexperienced in the workings of statutory welfare provision. Yet the officer will carry out

what Social Workers might rightly describe as a complex assessment of need. Therein a commander, perhaps more appropriately placed in a rifle platoon, will then design a plan of action based on their assessment of presented need.

The interviewing officer will determine whether the ESL/NSL is vulnerable and if so recommend that further help or possible referral be offered. The lack of support accessible to the ESL has not been directly linked to poor outcomes by the MoD, any notions that these young people might suffer unduly as a consequence of their Short Service going largely ignored (Wessely, *et al.* 2011 pp. 662-675). In the NAO (2007) report, the concept was indeed met with surprise,

“Surprisingly, it was those who had served a shorter time who found the transition most difficult. A small minority of Service Leavers do experience more severe difficulties such as homelessness.”

(NAO 2007, pg. 5)

Dandeker, *et al* 2005 and others (Glasgow Homelessness Partnership, 2006; Higate. 2000; Gunner & Knott. 1997) have for many years painted an entirely different picture in relation to Veterans and homelessness, whilst Fear (2009) and others (van Staden 2007 p. 382; Winfield, 1997; Abraham 1982 p. 18-27; Bellino, 1970. pp. 580-583) describe the mental health consequences of military service on young veterans, noting the raised incidence of suicide in transparent terms. In addition much research relating to outcomes was conducted prior to the NAO’s work conducted in 2006; indeed Dandeker’s research was published the previous year in 2005. Ironically ESLs still receive no CTP support, yet as Fear suggests,

“Early Service leavers are more likely to have adverse outcomes (e.g. suicide, mental health problems) and risk taking behaviours (e.g. heavy alcohol consumption, suicidal thoughts) than longer serving veterans.”

(Fear *et al.* 2009, pg. iv)

Deciding to leave the Armed Forces is huge decision for all SLs regardless of their length of service; the longer serving personnel being older, qualified and possessing more life experience naturally find the transition to differing degrees easier than the younger men.

In the case of those in their 40s life within the services has come full circle, they have proved themselves as successful professionals, have gained qualifications and as discussed attained a status within the regimental family that places them in the key positions of command and control. Thiers’s have been by and large successful careers leading to successful or at worst

secure futures, futures underpinned by the knowledge that the attained that which the aspired to. And in so doing are generally confident and content human beings who have survived disparate degrees of risk and depending on their employment and experience equally different degrees of hardship. In relation to the current Policy it seems clear that some individuals benefit far more than others, the system presently guiding provision being geared to reward long service, rather than service *per se*. It also fails to recognise or compensate for occupational difference or intensity of service, and whilst claiming to be a fundamentally egalitarian system-is not.

One of the main areas of concern for the study cohort centred on the principle that the service is user-led. Therein many who opt-out of the support offered do so because they simply fail to make a connection between their careers and the services offered. In most cases leave of up to 35 days is taken in lieu of courses. In relation to this cohort many scathing criticisms were made of the service, some duly noted by the NAO,

“Service Leavers reported that some aspects could be improved, in particular, the bureaucracy. Some 9% of entitled Service Leavers do not exploit the use of the Career Transition Partnership resettlement package. Many did so from choice either in exchange for a reduced notice period or because they did not feel it relevant to their needs.”

(NAO 2007, pg. 6)

Whilst more recent criticism<sup>95</sup> falls outside of the time period affecting this cohort, the like of Dandeker, *et al* (2005) and the Royal British Legion Research (2006) does not. The lack of connection or establishment of clear pathways to relevant and meaningful employment or time to retrain in earnest simply compels many to find employment within the most palpably similar yet often additionally dangerous employment fields. Private Military Security Companies (PMSCs) being an obvious choice or to a far lesser degree they seek employment as personal fitness trainers, ground workers or doormen. Many who showed no interest in the workings of the Regimental Gym during service find themselves enticed into careers as physical fitness trainers, basing this career move on little more than the familiar experience of a lifetimes self-policing. Others as suggested are attracted to companies offering work in

<sup>95</sup>. The Armed Forces Covenant in Action? Part 4 Education of Service Personnel 2013-14. Describes the current transfer value of an enlisted mans qualifications, with specific relevance placed on former Junior infantry recruits and their outcomes.

close protection, installation security or a range of equally hazardous employments centring on elevated levels of risk.

The notion that the CTP, Enhanced Learning Credit Scheme and organisations in the vein of Bulldog Publishing Ltd, [who manage the Courses4Forsers website], promote, fund and therein support training in Close Protection, covert surveillance and firearms courses seems in a sense perverse. Whilst courses offered in Personal Training, particularly those designed for non Akki or RAPTC trained soldiers, reinforces a notion that beyond further employment centred in security, these men perceive themselves occupationally through a very narrow lens. Many will have decided to pursue such trajectories prior to leaving, reckoning that better pay for a similar days work seems feasible enough. Others who leave with little or no idea as to what they might do post service are often drawn to Privateering as a last resort, a sense of familiarity and presumed knowledge of the security industry a key driver. Men drawn to the PMSCs are however not working as once they might have for the common good of the platoon, or as Fab's Padre suggested for one another, the motivation here is wealth.

“Rather than being allied to a ‘noble’ cause underscored by the links between citizenship and service employment as a (private) soldier tends to turn on individualised financial gain.”

(Higate, 2009. p. 6)

There also seems to be a self-determining aspect to either of these somewhat predictable employment outcomes. Linking occupation, identity and in a sense potential work-related naivety or lack of confidence on the part of leavers to invest in new forms of employment. Harris (2013) suggested more pointedly in his study of former Special Forces personnel that,

“Some participants felt their career options were limited by their Army-based skill set and moved into the security and fitness industries which they considered most resembled their military environment.”

(Harris 2013, p. 105)

Whilst many government and CTP generated statistics continue to play down the numbers of those who do not engage, many who fall into this category will do so at least initially, as a consequence of their participation in ongoing operations. Their resettlement as such being conveyed initially by the IERO and AGC (ETS) Officers, located in the TECs. Their 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> line services’ conducted around the operational tour, whilst access to 3rd Line TriService

resettlement and support offered exclusively by the civilian arm of CTP, will have been suspended until their return to UK or Germany based Garrisons.

Even on return to their Depots, they face the possibility of being pressured into playing an over active role in battalion life, particularly where post tour leave will render the regiment short staffed. In this climate NSLs are often employed in the more mundane duties, as if to offer those who choose to soldier-on some form of respite. Each of the above conditions were noted blandly by the NAO in the following evasive terms, relating to Policy criticism delivered by those who failed to engage,

“Others did so because of pressure of work or lack of awareness. The number of Service Leavers who stated that they were denied resettlement by pressure of work and operations is very small but it can have a very marked impact on the individual. In addition, other Service Leavers can have their resettlement disrupted by pressure of work.”

(NAO 2007, p. 6).

Regardless of the reason underpinning poor outcomes, it seems fair to conclude that the current provision lacks flexibility and fails to offer soldiers without relevant qualifications the time to re-train in choice and rewarding professions. For many soldiers their careers will have been spent working in directly relevant occupations that reflect those found in civil labour markets. Many clearly will not. Those who find themselves working in close protection, for instance, are by and large drawn from the infantry or other ‘teeth arms’ followed by individuals from the combat support and service branches (Kinsey 2006, pg. 155). In many cases these are soldiers whose personal biographies lack the narratives of soldiering, knowledge and rituals of the patrol or customs of the Platoon House. Many as yet unfulfilled tradesmen-soldiers seek work in fields that they believe will remedy their own limited occupational biographies are dawn to Privateering often as a last resort, seeking to cash-in on their generic titles as soldiers.

They are not, however, the consummate professionals who started their journey into soldiering via Catterick and the CIC, their martial identities written small in personal biographies that for them remain incomplete, choosing to trade their often-meagre experience of combat for a second, less regulated, attempt to get rich as men-at-arms. Armed Forces Resettlement Policy clearly supports some through this final transition, which if utilised

affectively can make a considerable difference to one's future. Resettlement can be used to build on previous occupational knowledge and experience to generate opportunity via the appropriate transfer of existing competence. Where either rank and therein managerial knowledge or transferable occupational experience is absent however, the system falls. And whilst employment with PMSCs will always attract a certain type, its choice for many exposes an endemic failure in current policy.

Failure in this instance to offer realistic career choice and guidance at this critical junction results in the decision of often vulnerable servicemen to opt to engage with private military's as mercenaries. This poses a particular problem for infantryman many of whom as Gee and Goodman noted entered service as minors.

“...the Infantry is the largest [component], accounting for a quarter of the Army but containing one third of all its enlisted minors.”  
(Gee & Goodman 2013, p. 2)

The basis on which the MoD continues to recruit minors lies in the notion that Junior Entrants serve longer, as indeed was the case for this cohort.

“Of those Army personnel leaving in 2009–10, 2010–11 and 2011–12, the average length of Service for those who joined at less than 18 years of age was some ten years, and, for those over 18 years, the average length was some seven years.”  
(Arbuthnot. 2013, p. 16)

If the MoD are to continue to recruit young people into occupations which offer no directly transferable skill base beyond Privateering or unskilled labour, or provide their soldiers with an education capable of being used as a foundation for future occupational development, then they as employers are failing ‘their people’. Therein current Resettlement provision fails in its primary goal, since it does not as Admiral Wilkinson suggests,

“...allow(s) our people to serve secure in the knowledge that they will receive ample assistance to prepare them for life and future employment when they finally leave the Services”.  
(JSP. 534 p. 1)

#### **6.2.4 The Termination Timeline**

The Termination Timeline starts anywhere between 9 and 6 months prior to the end of one's service. The Timeline details those events that must be completed in order to satisfy the

administration component of one's discharge. As the months close, the activity becomes more engaging (Baert, 1992, pg. 162) and the reality that one is indeed on one's way begins to set in. Tam's Termination Timeline started in Afghanistan, with preliminary arrangements being made in-theatre for his final medical and dental examinations. His first interview with the IERO conducted at the TEC in Camp Bastion. Of more concern for Tam at this time, was the notion that arrangements were now being made in the UK for his family to move out of their Married Quarter. Even though some months would pass until the actual move, by which time he'd be back in the UK, the notion that he was hundreds of miles away from home nevertheless troubled him.

He was bothered by the fact that his wife would bear the brunt of the activity, and whilst like most Army wives she was expert in the practice of Marching-Out<sup>96</sup> the notion that she would face the initial paperwork alone unsettled him. He was also quite rightly distracted by the tour and found it difficult to give his full attention to both operations and his impending departure from the Army, his attention resting with the platoon. Tam had volunteered for the tour believing that the operational bounty would come in handy in the opening months of his resettlement. Tam's motives to participate were also guided by notions of fidelity and the relationship he'd developed with the men of his platoon. He was clearly unable to engage with his resettlement however, or divide his time realistically between the reality of the tour and as yet unreality of his impending departure.

**Tam:** 10 October 2009

- 165 B: Right where did you have your first interview then?  
 166 Tam: Afghan, wuz nay much uv an interview was all right like  
 167 B: Who did it?  
 168 Tam: Some fellar nice enough bloke, teld us aboot iz an 'at,  
 169 Fuck I'z no really in the mood, boss teld uz I wuz to get  
 170 on uh wagon and make uz way, be honest I no wanted  
 171 tay go. Sounds daft like but Iz 'hinking I need tay be  
 172 here, we'z all shagged oot [...] and I did nay feel like et.  
 173 B: Well at least they gave you the opportunity to go.  
 174 Tam: Aye 'slike two fee tha price uh one ken, had uz doing  
 175 other stuff up there. Phoned hem too, felt like a right  
 176 c\*\*t after, should nay uh bothered.

Termination Timelines vary from person to person depending on their location, where they

<sup>96</sup>. **Marching Out:** Military term relating to the act of formally handing over a Married Quarter.



are posted and their employment at the time. For Tam the first part of his resettlement would be conducted whilst on operations, thus the full Medical and Dental examination required before discharge was organised ahead of schedule to be conducted a month before his last day of his service. Failure to attend the Release Medical before starting his Terminal Leave he'd been informed ran a risk of delaying his termination date. The explicit forms of communication and language of control through which he would have once simply been ordered to attend the medical were slowly giving way to more tacit mechanisms. These and other adjustments or 'status degradation ceremonies' (Garfinkel 1959, p. 420) were becoming the norm. The closer Tam approached his terminus the less regard seemed to be paid to his rank and status within the battalion. He found this odd; in a sense the Army were already reliving themselves of the hitherto direct responsibility they had once applied to their asset.

The language of resettlement was indeed quite alien to him, requests such as "if you should wish to have a final dental check-up you should arrange an appointment at a Defence Dental Services (DDS) dental centre", had never been presented as an option before, he'd simply have attended as ordered for a check up. There were also the external factors, arrangements that had never crossed his mind, he'd never registered with a GP or dentist and whilst he knew his families GP he didn't know whether he could automatically register, it had simply never been necessary. Then there were the forms he'd need to complete, Form GMS 1 to register with GP surgery, AFPS Form Pen 1 his pension application form and his P45. For a man who'd spent the past twelve years of his life in uniform, recommendations rather than orders to check and update aspects of his personal details by accessing his online JPA Self Service record and clicking on the various categories give the impression of being both impersonal or bureaucratic.

Only months before he'd have walked through the process with a member of the AGC, now it was down to him and his wife to go through his records online, further divorcing him from the institutional support he'd grown accustomed too. To that end he was beginning to experience a sense the loss, something all service leavers' go through as a state mourning slowly kicks in, mourning for the primary facets of his past that would soon be gone. In a sense by going through his records he was revisiting his past section by section. Detail including;

- Personal information - including the permanent home address (found under JPA Self Service - Employee)
- Honours and Awards (found under the Extra Information Types)

- Bank Account Information (found under Payroll Information)
- Education & Qualifications (found under Professional Details)
- Competencies (found under Professional Details)
- Post Discharge Contact Details (found under Resettlement)
- Pension Application (Pen 1) (found under JPA Self Service - Employee)

...were met with an overwhelming sense of alarm, as he began to question once again whether or not he was making the right decision. Those service and support agencies which on the surface had for years sustained the infantryman, the well organised routines, the drivers and cooks of the RLC, pay clerks of the AGC, even the spiritual support of Padres were now about to be removed from Tam's realm of existence. Thus the established and familiar organising effect of the military institution had in practice, when removed, created disorganization and initial panic. Or as Goffman puts it;

“While the privilege system provides the chief framework within which reassembly of the self takes place, other factors characteristically lead by different routes in the same general direction. Relief from economic and social responsibilities-much touted as part of the therapy in mental hospitals-is one, although in many cases it would seem that the disorganizing effect of this moratorium is more significant than its organizing effect. More important as a reorganizing influence is the fraternalization process, namely, the process through which socially distant persons find themselves developing mutual support and common counter-mores in opposition to a system that has forced them into intimacy and into a single, equalitarian community of fate.”

(Goffman, 1961, p 17)

Tam had opted out of most of the support offered during the 2<sup>nd</sup> line interview, and whilst he'd attended both 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> line interviews, he did so because he'd been ordered to, and whilst finding the first interview helpful, it was in all senses untimely. The second was simply overpowering, seemingly irrelevant and bureaucratic to the point where he'd switched off. Tam had become an adult in the institution, he'd acquired skills and an identity based on the core values of the institution, initially positing himself and his imagined future selves within the tolerances of the Regimental norm. His sense of selves to this point had been guided and shaped by the reflexive feedback he'd received from significant others within the same environment. Now that the time had come for him to consider what next, he found it extremely difficult to posit himself in any other social reality, his apathy his defence,

“No doubt the availability of secondary adjustments helps to account for this, as do the presence of counter-mores and the tendency for inmates to combine all strategies and "play it cool." ...re-establishing relationships with the whole lost world and assuaging withdrawal symptoms from it and from one's lost self”

(Goffman 1961, p. 9)

**Tam:** 10 October 2009

212 Tam: Well I'd nay a fucking clue what I wanted tay do  
213 Me younger brothers a bizzzy, but I don't want 'at,  
214 Mentioned Close Protection to me wifey an she  
215 threatened to leave so 'as 'oot, ends up like I'll  
216 probably doo a security managers course, aye sounds  
217 fucking chyte but it's a start and the Auld-ma says it's  
218 a gud course. So 'as what I'll like end up doing I  
219 'hink.

He'd been a married man for four years and thought himself quite independent, yet having to move one's family from military to civil space was to say the least a phenomenal task. Tam was slowly becoming conscious of the degree of holistic support the Army had afforded both his family and himself and felt uncomfortable with the new and confusing term Veteran that appeared on much of the documentation. He was to a degree living out the closing days of a 10 year relationship with a total and greedy institution; this was the point in his adult life when he was not simply being given back his personal identity equipment, that which he'd willingly submitted on his first day at Harrogate, but moreover what was being returned was his personal identity itself. A reversal in a sense of the mortification process,

“The stripping processes through which mortification of the self occurs are fairly standard in our total institutions. Personal identity equipment is removed, as well as other possessions with which the inmate may have identified himself, there typically being a system of nonaccessible storage from which the inmate can only reobtain his effects should he leave the institution.”

(Goffman 1961, p. 12)

With his service now all but complete his identity, his civilian-*self* was being returned too, in one overwhelming episode after the next, and whilst for many a liberating experience, his former identity was built on the experience of being a 16-year-old youth who'd been born and bred in the Battalion.

As mature social beings, we are seldom asked to decide what we would like to become beyond childhood and school careers counselling in our senior years. Yet in a sense that is exactly what is being asked of these 27-33 years-olds. If at first, as they are encouraged to do as part of their resettlement package, they probe labours market for occupations offering career progression within a familiar occupational sphere; all they were faced with were dozens of private security companies who proactively recruit leavers for employment overseas. When Tam set out on his resettlement he hadn't the faintest clue as to what he wanted to be and was, moreover, consumed by the indifference which was slowly replacing

the fellowship he'd once relied upon for guidance and support in the Battalion. The notion that he could be dismissed before he'd physically departed was a crushing blow, compounded by the fact that he was being used for regimental duties above his quota.

The whole experience left him with more questions than answers, in relation to his health and wellbeing he'd pondered hard over the notion of why he might be entitled to priority access to NHS care for conditions which may be related to his service. He didn't know whether he'd receive a war disablement pension or Armed Forces Compensation Scheme payment for injuries to his eyes and, having been warned that any treatment would be subject to his clinical needs, was simply told that he was to make sure his GP knew he was a Veteran. With little broader explanation as to why he was being informed of the above he was left to question his decision to exit once again, concluding in light of the information given that his future might not be so bright. These were however the social realities that confronted Tam. Yet, far more pressing than his future medical needs or issues of CV writing and interview techniques', was the immediacy of his discharge and attitudes of his contemporaries,

Tam: September 11 2009

- 001 Tam: It's well hectic 'is end bit.
- 002 B: Busy defiantly, what's the time frame?
- 003 Tam: As my point there's no enough time.
- 004 B: How long have you had.
- 005 Tam: Real time boot 3 weeks,
- 006 B: Have you done everything?
- 007 Tam: Just uz kit to-go.

Certainly the structure of resettlement policy as it appears on paper, and its effective delivery lie poles apart (Burton & Carien, 1979 pg. 35), their success entirely dependent on the skill of often inappropriately appointed individuals and their interpretation and operation of policy. In relation to the broader procedure as suggested its reliance on user input makes no account for the SLs state of self-esteem, fears or sense of humiliation when undertaking the process. Each of which need to be tackled before any notion of future employment could be addressed in earnest, Tam described it as predetermined, undignified and heavily bureaucratic,

**Tam:** 11 September 2009

- 222 Tam:S'like I'm on a fucking escalator, twat mean
- 223 conveyor belt, fucking same anyhow, Taff
- 224 s'like we're just ken going through the numbers,
- 225 iz s'no like I care like, but [...] well no one really
- 226 geez a fuck, youz just another Tom, az how it iz,

Whilst the MoD suggests the current approach facilitates a flexible system of cost effective resettlement, the broader strategy is also geared to support selective retention. However when encouragement to remain is mismanaged and expressed in provocative terms centring on antagonistic or officious discourse few are likely to remain. Similarly, attempts to dispel notions of age as a valid reason to leave are often veiled; leavers are more than aware of their age and civilian employability as “neophytes” and in most cases anxious in view of the reality that they would have to compete for entry level jobs with individuals far younger than themselves. For each of the individuals interviewed the question was never ‘will I leave’, but moreover when (Giffen & McNeil, 1967 pgs. 848-854), their decisions governed largely by age, economics and attrition.

‘Effective and high profile resettlement support, underpinned by the chain of command, should alleviate NSL fears concerning post-discharge employment. Consequently, it should discourage early notice to leave the Armed Forces, which might otherwise be submitted, for instance, to gain additional qualifications or for fear of becoming “too old” to start a second career. Resettlement should be viewed as a retention and recruitment positive tool and everything possible done, at unit level, to publicise the resettlement services available and to enable individual NSL to derive the maximum benefit from services to which they are entitled.’

(JSP 534, 2010. p. 14)

The departure themes expressed here centred on family commitments, age in relation to physical and mental wellbeing, and age in relation to career prospects (Kleykamp & Montgomery, 2014, pgs. 193-218). In all cases the informants sought to articulate their motives for leaving particularly to peers, in terms that put some considerable distance between their actual grounds for exit and notions of desertion or any form of personal weakness. Thus many referred to kinship and their families as their key reason for calling time on their careers, since the demands of this essentially a ‘greedy institution’ (Coser 1974, pg. 4) require little explanation. In Colin’s case, age and career stagnation were exactly why he wanted to leave. He felt he was simply passed his prime and, at 32, viewed the rigorous nature of infantry soldiering to be untenable. The sustainability of one’s physical self and, body’s capacity to keep up with the embodied model of soldier-*self*, most certainly have their limits. As Bynum reminds us, the body “has a history” it performs differently at different historical moments (1989, pg. 171).

For Colin, the image and all important self-policing model embraced willingly during his early twenties during basic training had become impossible to sustain. In Tam's case, age relating to sustainability was not an issue and whilst family was an important factor (Segal & Segal, 2004 pgs. 10-17) he was leaving because he'd been passed over for promotion. Tam considered his age and notions of failing to remain in the fast-stream as a fundamental stalling point, whilst some-notably the Adult Entrants like Colin-were candid enough to face up to the fact that it was the lifestyle itself that was in the long run untenable, others, those involved in more fragile or fledgling relationships, also claimed to be leaving for their partners. Their actions, however, whilst on the surface symptomatic of steadfast devotion [to men and women who they barely knew] were clearly used to conceal more profound or in cases honest reasons for exiting. Soldiers who made such claims were perhaps unable to articulate the truth, using the appearance of career sacrifice to somehow bolster instability or emotionally ensnare.

Whilst Pre-Exit Policy reads well practice and the actual experience is telling of an entirely different story, few in this cohort had been offered the time, information or consideration to structure an effective leaving strategy.

**Ned:** October 11 2009

001 B: So end of the week, are you done all sorted?  
 002 Ned: As much as really, I could 'ave done with a bit  
 003 more time to sort stuff like, you only twig later  
 004 what they're on about.  
 005 B: Who now?  
 006 Ned: Well all of 'em like, I never thought it'd be like this,  
 007 I mean [...] I got a job to go to, with my older brother  
 008 Nev like, doing 'ouse clearances, an I'll live me, me  
 009 sisters right for a bit, an [...] I'm glad well I need to go,  
 010 I'm getting too old for this shit now, well [...] not old  
 011 like but it don't get no easier do it. Lance Jack though,  
 012 fuck (laughter) what the fuck went wrong.

Ade was leaving as a result of the first condition [family]; he had missed the birth of his daughter and had found it difficult to concentrate on both job and family. He also wanted, indeed needed to be with his family and was emotionally intelligent enough to acknowledge the affect his career was having on them.

**Ade:** October 9 2009

120 Ade: Well like you said there are a lot leaving,  
 121 most of my intake, have gone, a few don't  
 122 like, well we have lost a few an it's so

123       fucking random like, an when you got fuck  
 124       all to lose you can afford to be a bit more  
 125       Airborne-warrior like, you know gun-ho,  
 126       I'm not saying like unprofessionally dare do,  
 127       but you are a bit like more likely to take  
 128       risks, when she had, well when we had the,  
 129       Katy, I was in theatre and I was gutted that I  
 130       weren't there but I done all right, then when  
 131       I got home was like a huge distraction, an  
 132       she was fine because her mum and her sisters  
 133       looked after her, so if anything I was like a  
 134       bit of a spare end and that was good like  
 135       because I knew that she would be OK.  
 136       What I mean is that she was being well  
 137       looked after, then when we went away again  
 138       I felt a bit like, well I wanted to look after  
 139       them, an I started to resent the army for  
 140       making me go, and I don't mean that in a  
 141       bad way, just thought well fuck we're doing  
 142       like six on six off here, where's the rest of  
 143       the fucking army. Stupid thoughts, but when  
 144       you away you have a lot of time to think, an  
 145       you usually think too much. You do tend to  
 146       over think things. 'As why I'm off.

Ian: October 8 2009

057 B:   So what motivated you to leave then?  
 058 Ian:  Umm well I knew I never wanted the full 22  
 059       like 6 in, I was a JL, I think I just got bored. I  
 060       mean same shit different day stuff, getting  
 061       spammed all the time for shit details, work  
 062       I dunno just lost interest. Been a long a long  
 063       time coming, you sees the young lads and think  
 064       what you still doing here, thought of the real  
 065       world and like, well you 'ave to just get on with  
 066       with it or it'll be too late. To start over like.  
 067 B:   So you've just had enough?  
 068 Ian:  I know it sounds like fuck all but I just don't see  
 069       meself in the green no more, I've like out grown it,  
 070       I do want more out of life, for me misses too.

Ade, like Tam and 11 other informants in this sample was engaged on operations at a point when Colin was progressively working through his Pre-Exit. In Colin's case he'd remained in the UK during the Battalions most recent tour, initially in hospital then on sick leave followed by light duties to the point of his termination leave. He had decided not to engage with the CTP or services they offered, partly because he'd been in traction and partly because he'd notionally identified a course he was considering for when he'd left, having downplayed the extent of his injuries in the hope that they wouldn't affect his discharge date. He was also caught up in the personal circumstances surrounding his decision to leave and to a degree

distracted by his most recent injury. Clearly there is no level playing field or typical exit scenario the individual package seemingly based on providence and one's own circumstances.

Operational tempo and battalion commitments seem to override any notions of equality, these men regardless of the fact that they would soon be leaving were still highly trained infantrymen and would continue to be deployed as and when required up to the last possible moment. Far from being rare these conditions were common, as the NAO suggested in 2007,

“The Department should identify the scale of disruption to individual resettlement preparation arising from the high operational tempo, including those Service Leavers unable to attend resettlement activities or those forced to do so late in the process. Whilst recognising the priority Units necessarily give to current workload and operations, the Department should investigate whether an appropriate balance between that work and individual Service Leavers' entitlement to resettlement is being achieved. This should provide a better service to Service Leavers and reduce any adverse impact on the reputation of the Department and on recruitment and retention.”

(NAO, 2007 pg. 7)

Some like Colin were indeed more fortunate; the injury he sustained during his battalions build up phase guaranteeing that he would be spared.

**Colin:** 11 October 2009

001 Col: No I was on the rear party, had a head start aye.  
002 B: I hadn't thought of that, wicked, how many  
003 blokes leaving were on the rear party?  
004 Col: Most of 'em specially the pads, doing any pads?  
005 B: As it goes Mr T, I am, moving on swiftly.  
006 What have you been up to regarding leaving preparations?  
007 You look lost, have you sussed a job where will you be  
008 settling that sort of thing.  
009 Col: Well I've done all the admin.  
010 B: And.  
011 Col: Well I done all the admin, just my personal kit to hand in  
012 end of the week drinks an ta-ra.  
013 B: Job.  
014 Col: Umm, not as such, feelers out.  
015 B: What like an octopus, an I meant *job* as in you've done a  
016 good job with your time.  
017 Col: Got the dole an housing sorted too.  
018 B: Did you do any resettlement training.  
019 Col: No.  
020 B: Nothing, no courses, suggestions of how to use  
021 your resettlement money.  
022 Col: It's all bollocks mate. Reckon it'd be handy for a spanner<sup>†</sup>,

<sup>†</sup>. **Spanner:** [Slang term army], a tradesman e.g. REME Craftsman.



- 023 but they got fuck all for us. I feel like I just left school mate.  
 024 But I've got a plan like a course in mind, do it after though.  
 025 B: How long have you served?  
 026 Col: Coming up to the 13 year point.

Colin's lack of interest in resettlement was, as suggested, a common trait amongst the cohort; with none of the original 20 interviewees describing any benefits they'd enjoyed from the experience apart from what they viewed as an additional period of leave. Most remained either ambivalent or scathing of the process and service offered. Only 7 of the 20 informants registered with the CTP, of which 3 continued to work closely with the Partnership, the rest taking leave rather than resettlement training, workshops or seminars. Regardless of the reason why few seem have used this brief period of adjustment to any affect most as suggested were caught up in a state panic or were simply too overwhelmed or uninformed to make use of or affectively recognize the purpose of any of the provisions on offer. In the Armed Forces leave and, therein, time off during service is possibly the most significant aspect of life, yet clearly many of the retirees failed to differentiate between leave for the purpose of R&R and leave for the purpose of resettlement.

Ade's Pre-Exit was managed reasonably well, largely because he was resettling locally having spent the past three years posted close enough to his home town to make the most of his own friendship networks and local ex-army community. Being based near to one's home town clearly gives the individual an opportunity to revise knowledge of local labour markets and location of helping agencies, such as the DHSS and Local Authority housing department.

**Ade:** 1 October 2009

- 187 Ade: I've got eight years worth of ELC's an 'ave been thinking  
 188 of plumbing, she done tourism at Barry Coll and I know  
 189 they do trade courses there, I thought I'd take a look, have  
 190 a bit time off first like feel my feet then this time next  
 191 year get into a course. I'll keep an eye out for work now like  
 192 but we only been home a month an it's all a bit of a rush job.  
 193 All my boys been in work since school, fair play most of  
 194 'em have been with the same employers too, one's a copper,  
 195 I don't want to be a copper but I have thought of the fire brigade,  
 196 no really I quite like the thought of the fire service and  
 197 I reckon being an ex-reg will go my way on, on that one.

- 205 Ade: Like that's one of the good things about being here, you get the  
 206 gem through your mates, because they been through the process  
 207 they let you know how it works, Adam he works in the Car Phone  
 208 Warehouse, he's the manager, he says I can have a job there if I  
 209 want. And John me uncle he does car hire now runs Eurocar, he  
 210 been offering me work for years, picking up and dropping off like,

Local recourses and knowledge of labour markets aside, none of the informants seems to have engaged holistically or meaningfully with the MoD provision to the Pre-Exit period, not necessarily because of the type of the provisions offered, more-so its structure, deployment and timing. Each whilst enthusiastic to leave right up to the point of departure failed to secure any concrete offers of employment or meaningfully comprehend the many changes they were about to face. Indeed for those with families accommodation was the most pressing factor, employment at this point coming a long way second.

### **6.2.5 No man's land**

The final act detailed on the Termination Timeline is perhaps one of the most symbolically poignant and distinctly demoralizing aspects of this phase of the soldiers lifecycle, since the last thing the soldier must do is hand in his identity card. From the point where the MoD Form 90 is submitted soldier-*self* will no longer officially be a regular soldier and in complying with this last obligation is handing over not simply a piece of plastic the size of a bank card, but moreover the past 10 years of his life. Notions of freedom or escape from the mundane aspects of military life pale in to insignificance at this junction thought moreover fixed on the immediate removal of the occupational safety net that has kept the individual in employment since leaving school. It's a complicated time, membership to the club so hard earned [both occupationally in training then practically in combat] must now been consigned to the past.

### **6.2.6 Not knowing what to know**

In many respects soldier-*self* has no desire to become a civilian (Atherton, 2009 pg. 821-836), the loss of all things meaningful being cushioned only moderately by his resolve to preserve his identity; notions of becoming a civilian or for that a Veteran, being displaced by his aspiration to assume the role of an Ex-Serviceman. Soldier-*self* possessed an unambiguous identity his habitus and hexis (Bourdieu, 1990. Pg. 53), so ingrained as an infantryman that his social representations and presumed selves betray his passed existence absolutely. These aspects of self cannot be easily erased or in the interim suppressed. Their loss in most cases is mourned for, thoughts of becoming a 'civi' often resented. Indeed, the term 'civi' will have for many years been regarded as a derogative term, exemplifying a lazy, whinging, unappreciated and often disloyal character. An unwillingness to change one's ideals or moral code can result in a divorced outlook, arguably the retention of the constituents that made up

soldier-*self* can often hinder progress. Language and attitudes that might be the norm in barracks do not always fit in with the viewpoints of a progressive, politically correct, society.

For these Veterans, whose resettlement is about to begin, their lack of engagement during the pre-exist period will, in most cases, impede their initial progress, yet for these enthusiastic, bright, fit young men it wasn't necessarily a case of them not wanting to know, more a case of them not really knowing what to know. The experience of 10-years social exclusion and the nature of their excessively specialised occupational skill set and homocentric lifestyle has contributed poorly to their chances of achieving any immediately positive outcomes in the opening weeks and months of their resettlement. Life beyond soldier-*self* is obscured by the demands imposed on soldiers by this greedy institution. A reality that contradicts the key principles the MoD claim underpins the support they extended to those engaged in service careers.

#### **6.2.7 Dependant dependence**

The disposition of relationships shared between espousal couples [married or otherwise] has been evidenced and discussed in each section of this analysis; discourse found in these narratives frequently corroborating Kleykamp & Montgomery's (2014) assertion that marriage is associated with higher degrees of success when making the transition. Regan (1999), demonstrates how service-partner engagement in 'unit' life impacts on the partner's resettlement experience. Those who choose to engage socially or utilize garrison resources [the Wives and Girlfriends or parent and children's clubs] and share unit narratives tending to find the transition as difficult as their uniformed partners. That said Veterans in relationships and particularly those with children, outperform single leavers usually securing independent accommodation (Higate & Cameron, 2004) and as suggested by Kleykamp & Montgomery (2014) enter into employment more quickly than do their single peers.

The role of the service spouse runs deeper, however; their knowledge of the social world being in most cases broader than their partners. Their role in managing the daily expenditure, of finances like their organisation of house moving, mastered as a consequence of tour separation, their ability to plan ahead often far exceeding that of their partners. In the majority of cases at the point of exit, Veterans turn to their spouses for practical guidance and emotional support. Their resolve to leave cushioned by partners undertaking a very similar journey, this often presents as a departure from established family roles where for years the

regiment has viewed the family as an extension of the soldier. On leaving the Forces it is often the spouse who guides the way ahead, organising schools, dentists and doctors and facilitating the transition and reinvention of the Veteran. In reality the family unit couldn't survive without the good will and consideration of service partners, a point well illustrated in the final section of this analysis.

#### **6.2.8 Timescale and planning**

Each of the interviewees talked about a lack of time resulting in unpreparedness, this is clearly an ongoing problem for service personnel, a contemporary example being found in the September 2016 edition of *Soldier Magazine*<sup>98</sup>; where a former Amy Dental Corps Nurse described the year of Pre-Exit activity she enjoyed to be too little and stressed the need to plan well ahead. Hindsight is a powerful yet ineffective tool in coping with the stressors of the here and now; if resettlement is difficult for a trained Dental Nurse who's Pre-Exit lasted a year, then one can only imagine the complexities faced by an infantry soldier having to bridge the same gap in a matter of months. Once again marked differences in the relationships shared between teeth arm soldiers and their battalions and those of soldiers working in more often static service support roles, needs to be acknowledged and addressed, so too does the notion of delivering ongoing packages of education and training in transferable skills for those lacking a formal education. Once again what the MoD purport to do for their people and what they actually do are poles apart, the sense of betrayal Tam and others in the cohort express simply correspond to the failings of this one size fits all, demand led service.

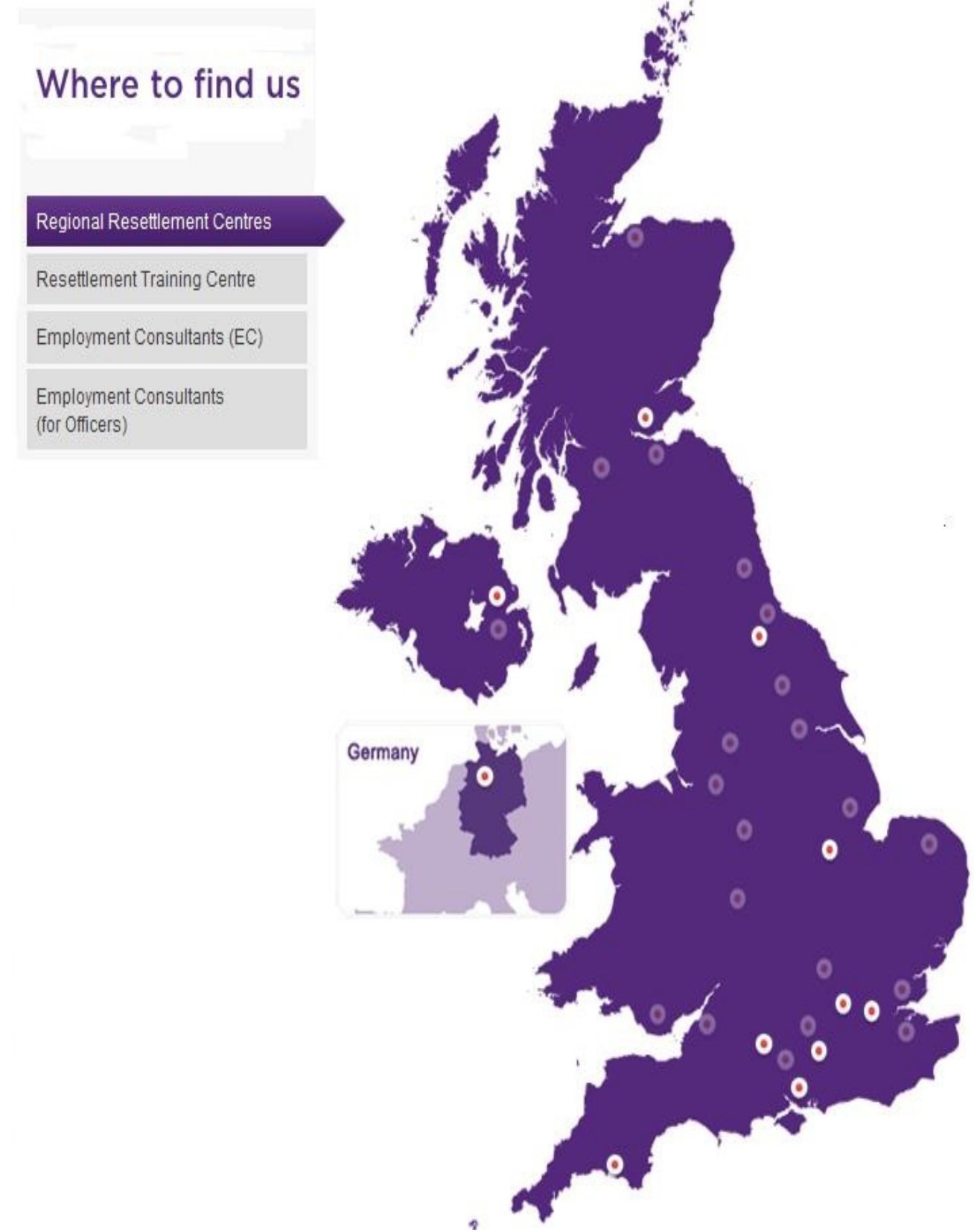
<sup>98</sup>.

*Soldier Magazine* is the British Army's official periodical



## Appendix xii

### Location Map



## Appendix xiii

### **CTP Publications** (CTP is a part of Right Management Inc.)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Approaching the Job Market, (Career Transition)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Associations & Professional Bodies

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Benefits

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Business Start UP

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Charities

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Employment (Career Transition)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Finance

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Health & Education

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Housing

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Interviewing and Negotiating (Career Transition)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Linked-In (professional networking site)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Living & Working in Germany (Career Transition)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Managing Your Career (Career Transition)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Professional Networking & Social Media (Career Transition)

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Pensions

MoD & Right Management. 2011, Transition

## Appendix xiv

### Section 1 – Introduction Tri-Service Resettlement Policy

**0101.** Tri-Service Resettlement Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- a. To provide all Armed Forces personnel with access to timely and accurate resettlement information and advice.
- b. To provide Service leavers (NSL) with access to resettlement provision based on best practice, which meets individual needs.
- c. To provide resettlement assistance on a graduated basis, both in terms of provision and time available, according to length of service.
- d. To provide contracted resettlement services, which include advice, workshops, training and job finding, which are flexible, responsive and effective so that they meet the individual needs of Service personnel, both in terms of accessibility and content. Where these meet the appropriate training outcomes, these should be considered as courses of first choice.
- e. To provide resettlement assistance to all NSL.
- f. To make available appropriate resettlement allowances to assist NSL.
- g. To ensure that resettlement training, as long as it meets the appropriate training outcomes, is undertaken local to NSL home base or available Service accommodation in order to reduce expenditure on T&S budgets. Non-local or overseas training should only be agreed as an exception and to meet training outcomes not available locally in the UK.

**0102.** Tolerable Variation has only been applied where such variation is deemed essential to the maintenance of single Service operational effectiveness or where single Service recruitment or retention is a significant factor.



## Appendix xv

### **Glossary of Acronyms** Specific to resettlement

#### AEC

AGC

AHdR

AML

BPG

DHRS

CBIC

CTP

CTW

CWA

DCDS(Pers & Trg)

DACOS(T&A)

DACOS Trg Plans

DER

DEOT

DETS(A)

DGSP Pol

DHE

DIN

DMT

ELC

ERO

ESL

ESP

ETS

FAR

FRP

FTRS

GRT

IERO

IRP

IRTC

IVC

**Army Education Centre**

Adjutant General's Corps

Assistant Head, Resettlement (of  
TESRR)

Additional Maternity Leave

Business Process Guide(s)

Defence Hotel Reservation Service

Course Information and Booking  
Centre

Career Transition Partnership

Career Transition Workshop

Civilian Work Attachment

Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff  
(Personnel and Training)

Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff  
(Training & Assurance)

Deputy Assistant Chief of Staff  
Training Plans

Directed Early Retirement

Defence Employment and  
Opportunities Team

Director(ate) of Educational and  
Training Services (Army)

Director(ate) General Service  
Personnel Policy

Defence Housing Executive

Defence Instructions and Notices

Defence Management Training

Enhanced Learning Credits

Education and Resettlement Officer

Early Service Leaver(s)

Employment Support Programme

Educational and Training Services

Financial Aspects of Resettlement

Full Resettlement Programme

Full Time Reserve Service

Graduated Resettlement Time

Individual Education and  
Resettlement Officer

Individual Resettlement Preparation

Individual Resettlement Training  
Costs

Information and Vacancy Co-

JPA	ordinator
JSHAO	Joint Personnel Administration
JSP	Joint Service Housing Advice Office
MD	Joint Service Publication
MDB	Medical Discharge
MPGS	Medical Discharge Board
NHS	Military Provost Guard Service
NRIO	National Health Service
	Naval Resettlement Information Officer
NRPS	Non Regular Permanent Staff
OA	Officers' Association
OGD	Other Government Department(s)
OFW	Options for the Future Workshop
OR	Other Rank(s)
ORT	Overseas Resettlement Training
PRP	Personal Resettlement Plan
PSL	Preferred Suppliers List
PSO	Personnel Selection Officer
RAB	Resettlement Advisory Brief
RAO	Regimental Administrative Office(r)
RCS	Recovery Career Services
REC	Resettlement and Education Co-ordinator
RETM	Regional Employment and Training Manager
RFEA	Regular Forces' Employment Association
RIS	Resettlement Information Staff
RML	Right Management Limited
RRA	Regional Resettlement Adviser
RRC	Regional Resettlement Centre
RTC	Resettlement Training Centre
RWG	Resettlement Working Group
SDE	Service Director(s) of Education
NSL	Service Leaver(s)
SLC	Standard Learning Credit
SPACES	Single Persons Accommodation Centre for the Ex Services
SRA	Service Resettlement Adviser
T&S	Travel and Subsistence
TESRR	Training, Education, Skills, Recruiting and Resettlement, Division of DCDS (Pers & Trg)
TSRM	Tri-Service Resettlement Manual
UBO	Unit Briefing Officer
UIO	Unit Interviewing Officer
URC	Unit Resettlement Clerk
URB	Unit Resettlement Brief
URI	Unit Resettlement Interview
URO	Unit Resettlement Officer
WIS	Wounded, Injured and Sick

## **Appendix xvi**

Royal Logistics Corps

### **TRADES**

#### **DRIVER**

Fuel, water, people and ammunition.

#### **DRIVER COMMUNICATION SPECIALIST**

You work closely with Officers and setup communications systems on operations.

#### **CHEF**

Produce nutritious meals in static kitchens or on the move in the field.

#### **PETROLEUM OPERATOR**

Store, handle and deliver petroleum products to where they are needed, wherever they are needed.

#### **POSTAL AND COURIER OPERATOR** (Postal Worker/Manager)

Ensure the secure delivery of mail for all three services.

#### **MARINE ENGINEER**

Maintain, repair and keep all the moving parts of marine vessels working.

#### **MARINER**

Navigate sea-going craft used for transporting troops and supplies.

#### **PORT OPERATOR** (Stevedore)

Provide the tactical, safe and effective loading and discharging of military vessels around the world.

#### **LOGISTIC SPECIALIST-SUPPLY** (Warehouse person)

Responsible for the issue, storage and receipt of all army supplies.

#### **MOVEMENT CONTROLLER** (Travel agent)

Ensure the safe and efficient movement of troops, vehicles and supplies around the world.

#### **AMMUNITION TECHNICIAN**

Trained to test ammunition and explosives from source [factory], storage, movement and disposal of ammunition. Also deal with IEDs during peacetime.

#### **DRIVER AIR DESPATCHER** (Aircraft Cargo loader)

You drop provisions, equipment and vehicles by plane in to combat zones.

#### **SYSTEMS ANALYST**

Travel all over the world, managing and maintaining IT systems that aid logistics, fix problems with network infrastructures and operating systems.

#### **PHOTOGRAPHERS** (Land, Sea and Air)

Photograph anything from combat zones overseas, to regimental parades to daily life back in the UK.

#### **VEHICLE SUPPORT SPECIALISTS** (Breakdown and Recovery)

You're trained to maintain service and drive all army vehicles in many different types of conditions.

#### **TANK TRANSPORTERS** (HGV I Low loader Articulated)

You drive the world's most powerful heavy equipment transporter; you load everything from battle tanks to bridging equipment and drive it to the right location.



## **CHAPTER VII**

### **Analysis (Section i)**

#### **A Pen-picture of an HM Forces Veterans**

##### **Section i. Colin's Story, (the ex-Guardsman)**

### **7.1.0 Introduction**

Each section of the analysis has opened with a pen picture of an infantryman. As discussed, Ade's account centred on beginnings, Fab on the doing of soldiering, and Tam on careers end. In this section, the topic or focus of discussion centres on Colin, whose story, takes us through to the final stage of the analysis, where the activity turns to the point where the soldier has physically left the Regular Army and embarks in earnest on the task of social reintegration. Therein this section conveys a sense of resettlement proper and the lives of Veterans rather than serving soldiers. It opens at their point of discharge in 2010 and follows four of the cohort up to 2015; this longitudinal approach has been adopted in order to fully appreciate the impact on a career in the military on the long term prospects of Armed Forces Veterans. The purpose of these interviews being to convey a impression of outcome, to assess how individuals cope during the intervening years and gauge a sense of their own opinions and experience of the period. To that end Colin's narrative focuses on the process of resettlement proper and the task of becoming a civilian, finding work, accommodation and the host of other activities associated with becoming and being civilians. As has also been the aim throughout, the section attempts broadly to familiarise the reader epistemologically with Armed Forces Veterans and something of their experience of re-entering society as civilians.

#### **7.1.1 A pen picture of a British Army Infantry Veteran (The ex-Guardsman)**

Colin 31 at the time of writing was born in the Newry district of Northern Ireland in the UK. He has a brother and sister, he entered the care system as a toddler remaining in foster care until he was formally adopted at aged 11 in 1989. Having retained no contact with his siblings, or sort to find either of his biological Parents, Colin choose to identify with his adopted parents and their family as his own. After the adoption Colin was brought up in a family home by his stepmother Jeanie 57, who at that time worked for Belfast City Council as a recreation manager and Dave 60 a former Coldstream Guardsman (COLDM GDS). Dave met and married Jeanie, when his Battalion was engaged on an Operation Banner Tour, Jeanie at that point was a Physical Training Instructor (PTI) with the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR). Educationally Colin had spent the large part of his primary education in a

range of Special Education Needs provisions, having displayed a range of emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.

By age 10 and after being repeatedly expelled and excluded from school, Colin had exhausted yet another set of Foster Parents and faced a residential placement in a Catholic Residential Care Provision. He was, however, fostered once again on this occasion by Dave and Genie. The final straw at the previous foster placement had come in the form of an arson attack on their lean-to kitchen which had threatened the house. Whilst the broader damage was thankfully limited to smoke, the kitchen required rebuilding and the family had had enough. Neither Dave nor Genie had children of their own; Dave 50 at the time had transferred from The COLDM GDS to the UDR in 1982 and was about to retire from the Armed Forces as a C/Sgt having served for 21 years. Now having time on his hands Dave [and Genie] had entertained the notion of fostering to supplement his income, whilst Genie continued to work in the leisure industry.

Clearly the early days were tough on the new carers yet both seemed to see something in Colin that others had missed. Colin had been described by his Social Worker as feral which whilst an accurate description failed to express the bigger problem, that being his more recent involvement in sectarianism. Things initially went from bad to worse, when Colin stole a family heirloom, a brooch belonging to Genie's Grandmother. Initially Colin denied all knowledge of the incident however money was found in his room which he could not account for. Genie was upset, which in turn upset Dave, then backed into a corner Colin lashed out striking Dave in the face and whilst exiting the room knocked Genie to the ground.

**Colin:** December 5 2009

- 185 B: How did you end up in the Coldstreams?  
186 Col: Long story.  
187 B: Go on just the highlights then.  
188 Col: Got adopted by a Lilywhite an a Greenfinch<sup>†</sup> [laughter].  
189 B: OK, go on.  
190 Col: I was a bad lad. [...] Fucking scum actually, no I was, well no  
191 respect for nothing. Just got lucky, my parents, best of  
192 people, how the fuck they didn't kill us was a mystery.  
193 B: OK so your adoptive dad was Guards and your mum, UDR?  
194 Col: Aye both UDR too, one point.  
195 B: Right so you went to live with them and,  
196 Col: And what?

<sup>†</sup>. **Greenfinch:** Radio call sign; Female Soldier Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), female Commanders Goldfinch. Term remains in use today for women serving with the Royal Irish Regiment.

197 B: Well what, did you get interested in the Army and follow  
 198 your dad.  
 199 Col: Aye  
 200 B: You're making this hard work, I'm wondering how a lad from [...],  
 201 Col: Newry,  
 202 B: Newry, ended up in a non Irish infantry unit.  
 203 Col: Dave was Coldstream.  
 204 B: I get that so, OK what was it like your childhood now.  
 205 Col: Like I said I was an asshole.  
 206 B: Clearly that changed.  
 207 Col: Are you taking the piss, [smiles] [...] Took a wee bit but Aye.  
 208 B: So how did they help you then, you know bring you on.  
 209 Col: Just patient, never hit us, fuck I'd have deserved it, I was  
 210 stupid really, I did all sort of shit to piss them off, they  
 211 just never bit.  
 212 B: How so, can you give me an example, what happened with the broach?  
 213 Col: I robbed a gold thing off of my mam; I knew it was important, personal,  
 214 wrong, but I took it. All got heated I smacked Dave he got a bloody  
 215 nose, said t-us "son, you get one crack and that was it". It was just  
 216 the way he said it, I shit myself he was like a brick shit-house, could  
 217 have swatted me, but just sat there. Then me mam was crying and I,  
 218 fuck this was years ago, I just felt shit. I'd never felt guilty before.

After a period of adjustment Colin settled down with Dave and Genie and for the first time started to attend a mainstream school. His mates from the past, particularly older boys who were involved in the Republican movement continued to call on Colin in an attempt to enlist his breaking and entering skills. They knew Genie was ex-UDR yet had the gall to presume that since she was a Catholic that she'd be somehow partisan. Naturally they were wrong, Dave also a Catholic was viewed with caution in the community however, he presented as an intimidating man and was more than capable of handling himself, however both Dave and Genie were concerned for Colin and the unhealthy pull of his mates. This situation resolve itself when Colin At age 13 and his family relocated to Putney in the South West London, on account of the loss of Dave's Dad and need for one of the three brothers to attend his octogenarian mother.

### 7.1.2 *Nulli Secundus*<sup>98</sup>

Though Colin continued to attend a mainstream school in Putney and found many pals from within the Irish Catholic community, particularly from nearby Hammersmith, he nevertheless

<sup>98</sup>. *Nulli Secundus*: Motto COLDM GDS [Latin] 'Second to none'. The Coldstream Guards were formed before The Grenadier Guards, yet the regiment is ranked after the Grenadiers in seniority, having been a regiment of the New Model Army. Therein the Coldstreams have served the Crown for four years fewer than the Grenadiers (the Grenadiers having formed as a Royalist regiment in exile in 1656), the Coldstream having sworn their allegiance to the Crown upon the Restoration in 1660)



left school with no GCSEs. Colin nevertheless found employment in the local area working for a small family run building firm until 1996 when he joined the Army. Dave had not overtly encouraged Colin to join the forces but was pleased to see him following what he and Genie believed was a sound career trajectory.

**Colin:** 15 October 2009

294 Col: I got myself down the TA centre, the recruiting office, aye  
295 told the guy there I wanted to join the Army, told him I was  
296 wanting to join the Guards. Says t'us Mick Guards then, I  
297 says like are you being racist. Guy shits himself, I ends up  
298 with a WOII tradesman type, REME like, says what's the  
299 problem son. I says I aint got no problem Sir, dead respectful  
300 like. He says OK then; bit like puzzled says t'us, what regiment  
301 you interested in son, I says the Coldstream Guards please Sir;  
302 he says any like particular reason; I says aye my daddy was a  
303 Coldstreamer, an UDR, fair fucking play he says and that was that.  
304 I reckon he thought I was a fucking Provo<sup>†</sup>.

Colin's Basic training was, like Fab's, both extended and that of an Adult Entrant. In Colin's case, however, the extension was due to the fact the he was undertaking the CIC-Foot Guards and would have to complete public duties training centring on ceremonial drill. In this instance their extended training is principally required since the Foot Guards Regiments of the Household Division serve as 'guards' for Her Majesty the Queen. Number 7 Company of the Coldstreams based in Wellington Barracks, London also provide guards for St James's and Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Tower of London, and share other ceremonial tasks and parades such as Trooping the Colour, the changing of the Guard and provide Guards of Honour for visiting heads of state. When engaged in ceremonial duties the Foot Guards wear their distinctive Bearskin hats and red tunics, or Greatcoats in the winter.

The Coldstreams can be distinguished from the other regiment of Foot Guards since they wear a scarlet Hackle in their Bearskins, and sport buttons grouped in twos.

**Colin:** 15 October 2009

327 B: So tell me was it cool the ceremonial stuff?  
328 Col: Are you trying to be funny.  
329 B: No mate, come on tell me about Buck House or something.  
330 Col: It was grand; the first time you do it it's a bit daunting  
331 all those people looking at youz, but passed that it was OK.  
332 B: What are the perks then?  
333 Col: You're guarding the Queen, what perks?

<sup>†</sup> **Provo:** [Short derogative form], Provisional Irish Republican Army.

334 B: Well for one you only lived round the corner and then I  
 335 bet Dave was proud as punch to see you in kit like.  
 336 Col: Aye all of that, best bits the girls though, they do some  
 337 wicked things to get youz to balls it up. An like they  
 338 put their numbers in your tunic, aye London it's grand.  
 339 B: Moving on then, what about the big parades bit?  
 340 Col: Fantastic, specially the piss up afterwards.  
 341 B: So you liked the socialising bit then.  
 342 Col: You join the Guards to do that, if you had no interest  
 343 you'd go to another Regiment or Corps like. I liked it.

The Coldstream Guards are billed as an elite light role infantry regiment; in this function Colin had served at home in Northern Ireland, worked as part of the NATO force in the Balkans, and coalition in Iraq and Afghanistan. Operationally his experiences were not dissimilar from those of any of the other respondents and whilst each units operating doctrine would have been slightly different depending on which Battle-Group they were working with, the actual doing of infantry work remained very similar. He'd also been to Kenya, Canada and Belize on exercise, Cyprus with the UN and participated in a couple of adventitious training expeditions, one to South America and another in Norway. For Colin the time had come when for a number of reasons he'd elected to leave, not an easy decision yet one supported by his parents and then fiancée. He'd thoroughly enjoyed his service, however like Tam was concerned that he had not gained rank parallel to his age and as a Lance Sergeant<sup>99</sup> in his early thirties decided to call it a day. Additionally he had sustained numerous injuries over the years and was beginning to find the going tough.

### 7.1.3 Leaving the Colours<sup>100</sup>.

None of the informants interviewed for this study report finding either the experience of the Pre-Exit or resettlement provision to be particularly helpful. As suggested in the previous

<sup>99</sup>. **Lance Sergeant:** A Corporal in the Foot Guards: Queen Victoria changed the rank and insignia of her Foot Guards JNCO's. Thus Guards Lance Corporals wear two stripes and Corporals (Lance Sergeants) wear three. Lance Sergeants wear white chevrons however, a full Sergeant wears gold. Whilst both have full Sergeants Mess privileges the Lance Sergeant functions as a Corporal and is thus regimentally appointed.

<sup>100</sup>. **The Colours/Stand:** Infantry Battalions have 2 **Colours**, collectively called a **Stand**. These are large flags, 36x45", mounted on a pike; the King's/Queen's Colour is usually a Union Jack with gold trim and Regimental insignia at the centre. The Regimental Colour is of a single colour, with the Regiment's insignia at the centre. The Regimental Colour also bares its battle honours; awarded by the sovereign they cite the names of a battles or operation. Historically the Colour Sergeants protected the Ensigns [most junior Officers] who are responsible for carrying their battalions' Colours. Exceptions exist: The Royal Artillery Colours are their Guns; the camp Flag of the Royal Engineers bears the Corps Badge whilst its blue ensign bears the Ordnance Board arms

chapter there are many reasons underpinning their opinions; most notable amongst them a common belief that they simply lacked knowledge of either occupations or the broader workings of civil Street to benefit from the service. Colin for instance in spite of having the advantage of being on rear party during the Battalion's most recent operational tour of Afghanistan, still failed to utilise the time productively. It is also important to remember that each of the cohort having served in excess of 4 years was entitled to the Full Resettlement Program<sup>101</sup> (FRP); including a Graduated Resettlement Time (GRT), time off to seek work, housing, advice through the Career Transition Partnership (CTC), or access to the Regional Resettlement Centre (RRC). Indeed even with the additional time Colin still struggled to organise anything like a realistic resettlement strategy, passed identifying a course he thought he might like to do when he'd physically departed.

Colin's lack of interest in resettlement was certainly a common trait, most remained either ambivalent or scathing of the process and service offered. In 75% (15/20 informants) of cases, leave was taken rather than valid resettlement activities, under the guise of a job hunting or accommodation finding mission, which was actually utilised as a break. Regardless of the reason why few seem have used this brief period of adjustment to any affect, most as suggested were caught up in a state of panic or simply too overwhelmed to exploit the opportunities or understand the purpose of the services offered. For many like Tam, the activity occasioned resentment, he viewed the process as tokenistic, commenting that, like most, his thinly constrained lack of concern was driven by a sense of impending loss. Whilst seemingly petty, Tam was caught up with the ambivalence of Officers with whom only weeks earlier he'd shared a far more meaningful, respectful and professional rapport.

Ade whilst receiving similar treatment in-house was at least resettling locally after spending his last three years posted close enough to his home to make the most of extended friendship networks and thus possessed a degree of local knowledge. In retrospect the general impact of leaving and lack of preparation would affect each though to different degrees, depending largely on their knowledge of the area they wished to settle and awareness of local labour markets. In the case of the latter, where friends and family living in the area of intended resettlement were in employment, accessing work opportunities occurred by word of mouth

<sup>101</sup>. See Appendix iv. for broader explanation of acronyms.

or personal invitation. Indeed with the exception of those who had signed up with Private Military Security Contractors none walked into employment as a consequence of the activities generated via their Personal Resettlement Plan (PRP).

#### **7.1.4 Civi Street.**

No amount of preparation can aptly prepare the Service Leaver (SL) for the point when they actually leave. The process far from being straight forward centres on notions of a complex recalibration of self regarding all aspects and activities of daily living. A process requiring ex-service personnel to organise accommodation, employment or education, health provisions and a myriad of other hidden aspects of life which are both new and hitherto unexplored by many leavers. The benefits system, for example, is an alien concept to countless SL's, many of whom have never been unemployed or for that experienced life as adults outside the uniform services. Each, nevertheless, would now have to navigate their way through a new and unfamiliar set of laws and policies in an unsupported environment. One free from familiar support networks, friendship groups, discounted food and accommodation rates and wages that had sustained all aspects of their personal lives' for years.

**Colin:** 22 February 2010

515 Col: It's hard to explain, it's a fucking culture shock for-sure.  
516 I'm like saying aye I understand, to fucking questions I  
517 don't get [...] just to get us out the way.  
518 B: How do you mean, JSA?  
519 Col: I've just had a tit full of the process, s'like I just want it  
520 to be gone now, my fucking head's spinning with all the  
521 bullshit. I reckon it'll all settle down when I'm like settled  
522 proper, now it's just a bit much, like fucking information  
523 overload. Just too much do you get me? How in the fuck  
524 are we, like really supposed to get us heads round all this  
525 shit. On fucking paper it looks basic enough but by fuck  
526 in reality it's a head fuck. Unless you like did this, you  
527 know like we done training then you never going to get it.

Colin raises the point that had resettlement been devised with the same regard, attention to detail and effort the Armed Forces had invested in basic training, that the process might have been useful on the grounds that its purpose would have been understood. When discussing the process of sorting out his benefits Colin was clearly unsettled. He had expected to find work in the security industry sooner and was dismayed at the attitude of staff at the benefits

office. He felt that he had been spoken too as if at best a child and treated poorly. Ade's experience whilst similar was additionally incredulous since the member of staff dealing with his claim seemed to view a return to the Army as a reservist to be the answer to Ade's impending employment problems.

**Ade:** 18 Feb 2010

524       ...The woman down the dole said to me last week, well  
525 whenever, she said why don't you join the TA the Royal  
526 Welsh are recruiting and you might find it interesting. Fuck  
527 off, I told her I weren't qualified, how's that she said you  
528 been in the Army, I said like yes but I'm not 'Hat' trained,  
529 what that then she said, I told her like there are different sorts  
530 of soldiers and being a Hat was one of the jobs I wasn't trained  
531 to do. They have lots of interesting jobs she said, I thought fuck  
532 me love, you need to get your fat arse down the recruiting office,  
533 better still join the fucking Royal Welsh, aye, as a fucking Akki.  
534 Better still; get her in the battalion, well yeah third battalion, mortars;  
530 she'd go down a storm.

Considering the effort it had taken for him to attend the Job Centre in the first place, and the notion that he was to a degree entitled, it seemed a little curt or presumptuous of the advisor to presume that a man who'd left the Regular Army might want to join the reserves.

**Ade:** November 11 2009

316 Ade: True, but I do worry, an I know deep down like that I've  
317 like made the right choice. I do like being here but I feel  
318 sometimes that life on the other side of the fence is shit,  
319 it's just a bit unreal, an there are some class pricks in and  
320 abouts who I just didn't notice before. Fucking pond life  
321 Baz, we live down the bottom end of Topton Road, Riddick  
322 Street, the job centre's on the corner, well the Post Office  
323 actually but turn right and you got the job centre. I walk  
324 passed sometimes and the fucking creatures you see coming  
325 out of there are frankly, well they need euthanising. Like I  
326 say mate, fucking pond life, an I do see them as being different,  
327 well-fucking-different as it goes. Her mam wants me to sign-on,  
328 see an I, well it's a fucking hard a choice mate, I know I'm  
329 entitled to benefits but, an I know it would come in handy,  
330 but being even on the same planet as them c\*\*\*s, well it don't  
331 inspire me none.

Tam's family, indeed his own farther had joined the TA when he left the regular Army, however he was a Captain at that point and knew very little else. He had also retired and was in receipt of a pension and other benefits resulting from the length of his service. Additional factors supporting his resettlement were the notions that all his children were living

independently, his home had been paid for and his wife was in a reasonably well paid and secure job. Ade a younger man sort to change his life completely, and since he had left the forces to spend more time with his family resented the comments he received from his Job Centre coach. Ade concluded that the worker had presumed the TA to be a panacea to his immediate problems, but what Ade had asked for was help getting into the Fire Service.

### 7.1.5 Marching Out

Housing also presented problems. The cost of unsubsidised rents and having little or no experience of private sector housing markets was met with shock. At the point where Colin left the Army his family had moved into a small flat costing £500 a month, at first the move represented a temporary arrangement; however as the months of unemployment continued he became rightly worried.

**Colin:** 22 February 2010

569 Col: I really don't want to hassle my Dad for money  
570 and since she wants to stay down this way close to  
571 her people I'm fucked. The rent on this shithole is  
572 fucking nuts, I mean we just got the Housing Benefit  
573 sorted. Fuck I feel like a right wanker Benefits an  
574 the like aye, tell you it's an ugly place to be and I  
575 know fuck all about this shit. Saying that she's the  
576 one with the brains, place looks grand and there's  
577 food and shit but I feel like a c\*\*t.

Colin had long been the main bread winner, earning around £30,000 a year, with his wife also working part time as classroom assistant, thus between the two of them they lived well. Leaving the Army whilst necessary for Colin and a relief for his partner, nonetheless made an enormous difference to the dynamics of the family particularly its finances affecting Colin's sense of self beyond doubt. Losing the larger wage presented them not simply with a change in lifestyle, but in a sense brought disparagement, Colin's new circumstances rendered his perspective of self to be one of a failure, since he was now unable to support his family as he once had.

Ade had been living off camp for some time prior to leaving the Army; he and his partner had moved in with her mother when his first daughter had arrived.

**Ade:** 9<sup>th</sup> October 2009

088 Ade: Well I do now because I got kiddies, me misses is from Barry,

089       so we're living with her mam.  
089 B:   You wed?  
090 Ade: Fuck no, don't be putting them thoughts into hers or mine, an I didn't  
091       want my kids growing up on the patch neither. No we were planning  
092       to get married, when I got out, I actually do love her, so we waited,  
093       like I say the Army's no place to bring kids up. An we're happy the  
093       way things are. She still gets to knock about with her mates and her  
094       an my mam and her mam get on brilliant, so no thanks we'll do it later.

Ade's circumstances clearly promoted his chances of making a swift and successful transition, the presence of well established and local family and friendship groups placing him at a distinct advantage. Tam's resettlement was aided largely by the notion that he'd found employment relatively quickly as a result of knowing someone in the security firm he joined. He'd also managed to secure accommodation via his partner whose parents rented them a house at a very affordable rate and were happy to maintain it. With accommodation and employment secured Tam's prospects like Ade's were good, having partners from the local area also meant that their children were already settled at school and had long been registered at the local doctors and dentists.

The resettlement preparations they had been afforded by the Army had been notional in relation to housing and for that employment; yet as Ade suggested of the CIC, it is clearly one thing to learn about a thing and a completely different endeavour to actually do it. The point is, securing something as fundamental as accommodation needs to be concrete rather than notional. In these terms the resettlement process fails many in a sense because it places responsibility for the development of resettlement goals and pursuit of employment and housing on individuals who have little or no practical knowledge or any experience of civilian employment or housing markets. Additionally they are tasked with the development of a Personal Resettlement Plan (PRP) and organisation of resettlement activities. Help as it stands comes in the form of information, advice, guidance, support and some resettlement training as appropriate and in accordance with individual entitlement.

Each of the above [information, advice, guidance and support] can be found in Civi Street, indeed local welfare and recruitment organisations offer far more relevant and up to date information relating to exclusively local labour and housing markets, rather than presenting a notionally generalised view of these essential aspects from within a military environment. Local organisations also enable soldiers to access these aspect of resettlement without delay and as suggested being located in the home areas, might have enabled the leaves to develop a far more useful picture of housing and employment markets far earlier. Most of the

informants proposed that the information given to service leaver passed as little more than a how-to guide, but was so disconnected from their own circumstances that they failed to make any meaningful connections between the information and their situation.

Notions of vulnerability relating to a leavers future accommodation had been broached, yet enquiries were made during a period when each was still in uniform and at a point when they were caught up in the Pre-Exit period a time when dozens of other arrangements were being made. The welfare check was also conducted by a Junior Officer during their leaving interview, the interview itself being somewhat ambiguous since it doesn't actually confirm whether an individual has somewhere to live, passed the asking of the question. Nor did it raise the issue of vulnerability to social exclusion appropriately. Most informants Colin and Tam amongst them viewed the process as tokenistic at best since they were asked questions of future that had never entered their minds. Ade for example was affected months after he'd left, his mental health at the time of the interview seemingly in good shape, yet in no short time he'd began exhibit the symptoms of depression.

Ade: 16 June 2010

894 Ade: Yeah anyway not a good month all round, I  
895 don't get the suicide thing mind, I bet he  
895 was like well head shot before, I just don't  
895 get it, though I don't always feel like tippidy-  
896 top, but shit mun what a terrible thing, all the  
897 shit he'd of gone through, not a young bloke  
898 like, he was in his thirties. You'd have thought  
899 his misses would have seen it coming. I seen a  
900 few with the thousand-yard stare mind, not a  
901 pretty site. Shit takes the wind out of you mun.  
902 I lived in the same block like, didn't really know  
903 him but shit close to home like. I wonder what  
904 was going on in his head, drastic like to do that.  
905 B: Where was he from?  
906 Ade: Jock mun.  
907 B: Oh he wasn't local then.  
908 Ade: No, he was Jock he was in Scotland.  
909 B: Now you say that as if I asked a daft question, yet  
910 you told me a lot of the Scots lads settled local. So  
905 it wasn't, that stupid a question.  
906 Ade: Whatever mun still food for like thought.  
907 B: Who told you?  
908 Ade: One of the boys, he was down town Wednesday.  
909 B: Still in?  
910 Ade: Yeah.  
911 B: You OK?  
912 Ade: Aye just like bit well you know, it's like a bit of a  
913 wake up, people from your time topping 'emselves,



914 he ain't been out two minutes.  
 914 B: You just never know what goes on in another bloke's  
 915 mind, you never really get the full story, and no one  
 916 really, well knows where they are, mental health wise.  
 917 You sure your OK?  
 918 Ade: What my head like?  
 919 B: Well if you like, not necessarily, mental health wise  
 920 but generally, you seem a bit shocked.  
 920 Ade: I am course I am.  
 921 B: Do you want to talk about it?  
 922 Ade: No.

Whilst Ade was rightly shocked at the news of the loss of a comrade, Fab's comments on the broader period confirmed a general theme evidenced in the comments of most of the cohort.

**Fab:** February 16 2010

892 B: So what's your take on the process?  
 893 Fab: Death by acronym you mean. I should  
 894 knock out a translation, like an idiots guide.  
 895 B: Go on.  
 896 Fab: Well they couldn't have made it more complicated  
 897 the guys are sharp enough, but this is all AGC stuff  
 898 none of the lads ever had much time for admin before,  
 899 not that keen on the shiny arse<sup>†</sup> side follow, then bash,  
 900 it's all FRP, GRT, IRP or IRTC and CTP. These guys  
 901 like I say are far from stupid, but just well a bit lost.  
 903 B: You said intense. But what's the problem.  
 904 Fab: Problems really, most of the lads have been in green  
 905 kit since they left home. They left home yes an came  
 906 here, so they have nothing, nothing to compare, no experience.  
 907 So you can bang on all you like about CV's and house  
 908 prices and bless they nod out their acknowledgement of  
 909 what you're saying but two minutes later it's gone. Most  
 910 of the package the FRP, is like a paperwork exercise.  
 911 Facts and figures they give you help with CV for instance  
 912 and it all looks kosher on paper but, but they really don't  
 913 see themselves like that; don't recognise the bloke on the  
 914 on the CV. It's a fabrication if you follow. Can't sell it.  
 921 B: Do you think it's an Infantry thing?  
 922 Fab: Well I imagine it the same all over, Gunners and Tankies  
 923 I guess face the same problems, and to a lesser degree  
 924 anyone who hasn't had a taste of rank or served a while.

As Ade and Fab has suggested, the process was to a degree inadequate, unspecific or impersonal, in the sense that it's designed as a one size-fits all exercise, resulting in a lack of specific, lucid or tailored support, presented en mass and often tokenistic in its delivery.

<sup>†</sup>. **Shiny arse.** Slang term Army: Clerk, administrator, office worker; Adjutant Generals Corps.

These issues allied with a sense of loss and the overall confusion of the period spelt disaster for many, who were simply overwhelmed, inexperienced or simply lacked knowledge of the wider world and what might come next. These factors made the task of organising a realistic future impracticable, the task of generating one's own Resettlement Plan ridiculous. Additionally pride in relation to not wanting to appear unintelligent also creates a problem, much of the information presented as if common knowledge simply fell beyond their reach. However it's far from common knowledge for men who've never been called upon to engage with themes of housing provision, or labour markets; particularly men who have been carried through their service, and quite deliberately distanced from themes civilian as a consequence of being highly specialised soldiers.

#### **7.1.6 An Ordinary life**

Within a month of leaving Colin had begun to realise the scale of the task he now faced in relation to becoming a civilian, the first priority was to settle his family which had in part been achieved prior to leaving. On Marching Out his family had taken on the tenancy of a small two bedroom flat in the Vale of Glamorgan, within easy reach of the children's school, local doctors and shopping centre. His wife for the first time in their relationship was now very much the head of the household and primary bread-winner, working locally part time and in easy reach of her parents. Initially finances were manageable, cushioned moderately by his final month's pay and resettlement money. However after the bond on the flat had been paid plus a month's rent, and decoration costs accounted for, the initial distraction of the move had left very little in the bank. Colin had also come to realise that employment offering anything like the responsibility and degrees of status he'd enjoyed previously were not exactly plentiful.

He was also aware of his age and recent injury which, whilst not serious enough to warrant a Medical Discharge never the less required a period of convalescence, which once again affected his ability to entertain more physical demanding forms of employment. Colin also became conscious of his lack of formal qualifications and as the weeks went by he became more and more anxious, disgruntled by the specialised nature of his previous occupation, and therein the restricted nature of its transferability beyond security or manual work requiring a degree of physical robustness. Since the former was now in question he faced a very narrow

choice of what to do next. He also presented a degree stubbornness and a refusal, at least initially, to entertain retraining, since his highest qualification was a level 2.

**Col:** February 18 2010

602 Col: Kind of think I wasted loads of time when  
603 I could have been doing stuff.  
604 B: So what would you have done differently?  
605 Col: Easy looking back say, and I feel it now but  
606 I don't really know, I mean I know now but  
607 even then like I hadn't a Scooby. Fuck I get  
608 gets up in the morning and square the kids  
609 then the house is just empty, I look online  
610 an see like jobs, but fuck, a call centre what  
611 the fuck am I's gunna do in a fucking call  
612 centre. My backs fucked so I can't even get  
613 a pick and shovel job an if I can't do that then  
614 I'm hardly likely to take Phil's offer of a bit  
615 of private work am I.

From the onset, Colin's chances of gaining immediate employment were very slim and whilst being aware of the situation regarding his employability, notions of how he might achieve a reasonable days pay were nonetheless beginning to frustrate. He had visited the job Centre and been somewhat shocked to discover that he was amongst thousands looking for the same, as it transpired, relatively low paid unskilled work. He was also older than most looking for careers centring on security, construction or agricultural labouring. Colin had been convinced that the labour market would be full of jobs offering an attractive wage and was somewhat depressed to find that this was not the case. He was not alone however: Ade had found accommodation the least of his problems, residing with his partner at her mother's house and had been advised by a friend to claim unemployment benefit from a friend's house so's not affect his partners benefits. As a result he claimed both Job Seekers Allowance and Housing benefit, whilst remaining with his family.

Whilst deviant Ade clearly benefited from the advantage of having well developed local support networks, civilians who were keen to help him and his family in all manner of aspects relating to the benefits' system, housing and employment. He was also familiar with the area having grown up in the region and serving within 20 minutes of their now well established family home for the previous 3 years. Not all had remained in South Wales as expected. Indeed Jon who came from Swansea, had emigrated within two months of leaving, relocating his family to Canada, where his partners brother worked in Law Enforcement.

Fab, to the relief of his parents, had returned initially to Henley before moving up to Oxford to complete a Law conversion course (GDL) and five others had either relocated in order to secure employment with PMSC's, whilst two had re-enlisted, Pat within a month of leaving and Ern in February 2010.

For the remainder of informants, accommodation was a concern. Tam had moved into rented accommodation as had Dez and Gaz, whilst Ern had bought a house some five years previously with his partner who at the time was an assistant Bank manager. Some had moved in with family or girlfriends as a stop gap, with the intention of moving on as soon as they'd settled, found work or organised benefits'. Six others moved in with family within 6 months unable to cope with living alone. Each was overwhelmed at the expense, and having resided in military accommodation for the previous 10 years, few had truly grasped how monthly rents, community tax, utility bills and food shopping would impact on predominantly low wages. Those on benefits' becoming increasingly aware of the amount they would need to earn in order to maintain a home. The single men in particular those used to living in barracks were also shocked by the price of gas, electricity, water and Community Tax. None of which had previously been a concern since they had never been required to pay utility bills.

Each of the above conditions brought about their own challenges, housing as suggested was a new condition conveying hidden expenses that all civilians would have become accustomed to from the point that they left home. Even the most mundane domestic chores such as daily cooking were new experiences, and due to limited incomes the once copious take aways were now a thing of the past. Most who had taken the regimental cookhouse for granted whilst in service, now had to learn how to budget for, prepare and cook the most basic foods. Cleaning was thankfully not a problem they had all become adept in tasks centring on washing, ironing and maintaining their environments. Shopping was however, an issue. Those who had moved in with partners learned quickly, those who were single however went for months spending their Job Seekers Allowance on fortnightly drinking binges only to starve during the intervening weeks.

These basic life skills, many of which had been taken for granted were now having to be learnt for the first time by men in their mid to late twenties and early thirties, because in a sense, they continued to present well, their personal hygiene and turnout in-keeping with notions of a well organised life, any signals that they were struggling in other aspects went unseen. The stress was too much for many. Pat, having found the adjustment

very difficult decided to return to the Battalion within 3 weeks of leaving. As a stop gap within a month Qui and Oly decided to re-enlist however as reservists, joining the TA Battalion of their County Regiment [Qui 7 SCOTS, Oly 6 Rifles] rather than their own Regiments to carry on where he had left off albeit on part time basis, as a consolation each were paid a rejoinders' bounty.

**Qui:** November 2 2009

232 Qui: Fuck et, I thought like anything's got to be  
233 better 'an 'iz, I mean like skint all uh time  
234 there aint no work, I dunno I just feel a bit  
235 better now. Don't 'hink I want tay go Reg  
236 again and I know loads of the lads like. I'll  
237 have me tape back in the New Year too so  
238 like I say fuck et I don't care if I'm a STAB  
239 I just need tay be doing some-'hing till some  
240 -'hing a bit more bloody realistic comes up.  
241 I'm still on a brew technically, PSI's<sup>†</sup> uh top  
242 bloke aye a fucking star.

Oly was sadly killed in 2011, whilst on operations; he died of wounds sustained from an IED explosion. Equally tragic was the loss of Gaz in March 2010, clearly struggling with the transition and isolation he faced on leaving, and no doubt haunted by his own personal biography, Gaz took his own life. His funeral was attended by dozens of his former colleagues and family alike. He'd been a popular man, his loss coming as a shock since none were conscious that he was suffering with mental health problems or finding the going so hard. Ern remained a civilian for 4 months before following Pat, rejoining his Battalion and returning to normal duties as a regular soldier.

Bob, Sid and Ron each joined a PMSC within weeks of leaving, and are currently working in Iraq and Sardinia. Whilst Mac, Len and Ken remain in therapy with their local Community Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Service for PTSD and have not worked since leaving the Army. As discussed, Jon emigrated to Canada and quickly found employment with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, having worked on the RP Shift for the final 8 months he'd spent with his Battalion. His break with the RCMP, however, had come via his brother-in-law an Inspector based in Calgary and Farther-in-Law a Superintendent in Edmonton. Ned started his own business and is now based in Staines Berkshire, operating a high-rise window

<sup>†</sup>. **PSI:** Permanent Staff Instructor. A regular SNCO or WO embedded in a TA unit

cleaning and servicing firm. Ade took a year out before starting an access course, whilst Fab enrolled on a Law walkover. Colin qualified in IT security and is currently a Security manager covering a chain of retail stores in South Wales. Like Tam, he used his ELCs to retrain in this role some 8 months after leaving. Tam retrained in Security Survey, specialising in the installation of monitoring equipment and alarms, and is currently a Survey Manager, finding his niche again through an ex-forces contact. He works with another ex-serviceman whose Father, had served in the same Regiment and is the company MD. Ian works for Royal British Legion Security Plc as a deputy manager covering the regional team providing static and mobile support to Retail Parks, while Dez found work with Social Services as a Residential Care Worker for the elderly. Hal lost touch with both the cohort and study within a month of leaving.

All but two accessed traditional professions Ade finding his way to University, reading a BA Primarily Education and Fab to the Bar. As discussed in the previous chapter none of the above engaged formally with the process of Resettlement, those who work in security, used their ELCs months after they'd left to buy the training they required to set up in their chosen fields. Bob and Sid used their ECL's to qualify in Close Protection (CP), whilst Ron who had not enrolled on the ECL scheme had worked in Nando's and saved to pay for his CP Training. Ade spent a year on a Local Education Authority Further Education Access to HE course, in order to access teaching, the primary course being free the HE course in Ade's case, being funded. Some five years after leaving 6 of the cohort work in security, 1 is a self-employed, 4 reenlisted, 1 teaches, 1 practises law, 3 are unemployed due to their state of Mental Health, one disengaged from the study, and tragically 2 have died.



## **CHAPTER VII**

### **ANALYSIS (SECTION ii)**

# **The HM Forces Veteran**

**Theme**

**Disdain**



## CHAPTER VII

### Disdain

#### 7.2.0 Introduction

The final section brings the analysis to a conclusion, the life cycle of the serviceman having drawn full circle, to a point where the civilian having served for a proven period as an Infantryman, has now returned to public space as a private citizen. Whilst a lengthy analysis the telling of the whole story is viewed as fundamental, in order to fully appreciate the position that the fledgling citizen-*self* now occupies. Essential in the sense that to comprehend how he might cope with the challenges he now faces some knowledge of his past must be acquired beforehand. His current construction of self and social reality was formed on the basis of an accumulation of knowledge drawn from his unique past and in part dependant on the life experience and personal biography that will now inform his perception of the social world. It has been an extraordinary journey that brings him to this point, a period in which the individual must now learn new skills in order to traverse a hitherto uncharted social landscape as an adult.

He has proven himself a robust and adaptable character not to mention a survivor, thus it might be assumed that this next stage of the journey will present as a relatively straightforward chapter in an otherwise convoluted and often hazardous life. The story captures the period from which each has physically left the army and lived as civilians for five years. Discourse will centre on the themes of greatest interest to the cohort, their worries, opinions, needs and the challenges they faced in intervening years, conveying their experience of becoming and being civilians. It is no coincidence that many of their concerns convey a similar message to those located in the Government's 2015 Report on the progress of the Armed Forces Covenant. Indeed notions of vulnerability and disadvantage were discussed against a backdrop of long unfulfilled promises to create special provisions for Veterans in accordance with need and principles of the Armed Forces Act 2011.

Of particular concern is the need to make provision for War Pensions Committees established under section 25 of the Social Security Act 1989, proposed in a Bill in March 2016 with reference to the Armed Forces Act 2016 c21. The Report expresses the effects of membership to the Armed Forces in terms of outcomes relating to education, healthcare, housing, war pensions and the Armed Forces compensation scheme. Whilst the most pressing issues articulated by the cohort centred on employment and housing followed at

some distance by education, ironically none and particularly Colin, realised that support in the form of a War Pension for physical and mental health impairment was available. Healthcare needs were discussed briefly on the occasion of Gaz's suicide and when three of the cohort self-referred to the Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Service. The themes of employment and housing were discussed at length however, and whilst issues of healthcare and education were broached they were out shadowed by concerns relating to the former, and notions of finding work and a place to live. For a decade the cohort have conformed to the rigors of a unique and extraordinary occupation situated on the fringes of society, now they must learn to live at its core, as ordinary citizens and tackle the day-to-day challenges faced by all civilians. What follows is an analysis of that transition and the reinvention of self from soldier to private citizen.

### **7.2.1 Post Service Employability**

The theme of employment is naturally a significant issue and one that will have to be tackled as soon as is feasibly possible. Unfortunately the skills acquired by the infantryman during service offer all but the most basic or immediately transferable proficiencies. Likewise to date the career described has produced no readily transferable qualifications, beyond a driving licence. Thus in order to attain any form of meaningful employment, with the exception of roles found in the uniformed Public Services or unskilled manual occupations, the soldier will be required to undertake an initial period of retraining. As Tannock (2013) observes many areas across the South Wales Valley's are populated by ex-service personnel who have found roles in the uniformed Public Services (Tannock, *et al.* 2013, pg.10). Such notions reinforce the principle that such roles present as an attractive first choice for many Veterans, since they offer job security, occupational continuity, linked pensions and enhanced rates of pay.

In spite of the notion that time in the Armed Services might equip a person with many relevant skills as well as the qualities of pragmatism, level headedness in stressful situations and embedded notions of duty; there are no established recruitment pathways linking the UK's ex-service community to the Uniformed Public Services. By contrast in the United States there are numerous opportunities and well established in-roads to law-enforcement,

“Former military personnel hold a special place in the heart of police department recruiters across the U.S. The qualities of a great police officer are virtually identical to those of a great soldier: Both have a desire to serve their country and community and protect people and

their rights. A career as a law-enforcement professional may appeal to those with military service because there are a variety of departments and specialties to pursue, not unlike the military.”

(USMilitary.com 2013)

Indeed in the UK there are no straightforward transfer processes enabling migration from military to Public Service, unless the candidate is a Commissioned Officer or graduate.

**Col:** August 18 2012

1730 B: Thought you'd have looked at the Police Col.  
1731 Col: Did mate, after I'd been on the doors a wee whiles  
1732 met a few like, specially town aye a Gunner, few  
1733 WG types, they just put uz off, I looked well I  
1734 phoned Bridgend, not recruiting said, twice like,  
1735 thought fine, then I got on the IT with Hazel an his  
1736 boy Lance, good crack that. So I never bothered  
1737 after that. Tae years of noz like got the message.

Further barriers to Public Service occupations may also be found in the notion that such occupations are currently highly sought after. Thus as suggested in the absence of an established transfer route instituted on the grounds of service experience and transferability of skills characterized in the soldierly occupations, Service Leavers find themselves in competition with broader general public. In principle the task of accessing a career in policing for example should be relatively uncomplicated. At least on the grounds of education, Policing, like Fire & Rescue, and the Prison Service, set a relatively low entry point, conventionally accessed [like the Armed Forces] with a Standard Entrance Test (SET).<sup>102</sup> However current levels of unemployment in the UK have enhanced the appeal of Public Service occupations (Green, 2013) thus many who might not traditionally viewed careers in policing, Fire and Rescue or Prison Service as occupations of first choice now do.

Furthermore the introduction of mandatory Pre-join courses in 2012, notably the Level 2-3 qualification; the 'Certificate in Knowledge of Policing' (CKP) costing of up to £1,300, places an additional financial hurdle in the path of ex-service personnel. The present economic climate must therefore be recognised for its part in promoting the higher volumes of interest and applications currently directed at policing and occupation with historically low levels of early outflow. Public Service employers retain their staff over a longer period, compulsory retirement for police officers below the rank of Chief Inspector being between 55 and 60<sup>103</sup> thus outflow is proportionately smaller. As a consequence many occupations

<sup>102</sup> **Police** Selection: example Strathclyde Police; <http://www.scotland.police.uk/recruitment/police-officers/selection-process/>

traditionally viewed as those accessible and relevant to individuals with an Armed Forces background are now somewhat more difficult to access. The Police Service has also in recent years attempted to raise its academic profile in order to expand its 'talent pool'. And has actively sought to attract students and former Army Officers into its ranks from the current glut of graduates and retired Officers who in the case of the former have been unsuccessful in gaining employment within more traditional graduate labour markets. Indeed the 2013 Police Minister Damian Green suggested that the police would benefit from a wider 'talent pool' comprising of graduates, Army Officers and other successful professionals (Green, 2013).

The Knowledge Based Economy has indeed promoted the movement of graduates into countless occupations previously not considered graduate destinations. To that end the Police Service can now afford to recruit across a far more diverse, gender sensitive, multi-cultural and educationally representative cross section of society than in previous years. This in turn creates fewer opportunities for experienced candidates with Armed Forces backgrounds as a consequence of greater competition (Wright, 2011, pg. 19). Occupationally the scope of employment for Infantrymen beyond these roles is clearly narrow unless supported by additional qualifications necessitating time and further training. Particularly where occupations offering transfer relevance, are usurped by other groups in society who have veered off their traditionally occupational trajectories.

The soldier is also restrained by his own social outlook and inability to legitimately posit himself in new livelihoods, however feasible they may be in practical terms. Throughout his career social class has influenced his occupational outlook, those occupying many of the professional roles within the Armed Forces being viewed as largely middle class. Status, in these terms, has been determined along the indelible lines of the Officers and the Men. Since the Infanteer falls unambiguously into the latter group, he is not an Infantry Officer; he will have spent the previous 10 years acknowledging those with Commissions<sup>104</sup> as those who occupy the professional and senior management roles, their status reinforced by his obligation to salute them and addresses them as Sir!

<sup>103.</sup> **The Police Pension Scheme (1987)**

<sup>104.</sup> These include the Platoon Commander (2<sup>nd</sup>Lieutenant →Capt), Officer Commanding (Company Commander a Major), or Commanding Officer (Lieutenant Colonel), and those with Professional Commissions, the Medical Officer (Captain→Colonel), Catering Officer (2<sup>nd</sup>Lieutenant→Major), or Welfare Officer (2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant → Captain) and so forth.

**Ade:** August 8 2012

1598 B: Where's the placement?  
1599 Ade: Coed Glas, Coed Glas Primarily.  
1600 B: Many blokes?  
1601 Ade: Aye three or four, older lads, well one younger.  
1602 B: Do you ever wish you'd just gone straight into  
1603 teaching, after school like?  
1604 Ade: Naa I thoroughly enjoyed the Army, looking  
1605 back like. It's different though, I spose with  
1606 Uni like I feel that well like I've 'ad the best of  
1607 both, do that make sense?  
1608 B: Yeh you've sort of been successful in both.  
1609 You know you could get a commission now  
1610 if you wanted, AGC [laughter].  
1611 Ade: Fucking hell can you imagine. AGC, no never  
1612 wanted to be a Rodney, too professional me, 'sides  
1613 I'd be wanting to play to with the lads', not sure if I  
1614 saw myself as a teacher then like, I was more basic.

**Dez:** 11 August 2010

1612 Dez: When I look back I just think where the fuck did  
1613 that inferiority complex come from, had a gob on  
1614 me when I was in, fight any fucker me. But I never  
1615 when I left like, had a clue what I could be, good  
1616 scrapper so I thought bouncers like, but never this  
1617 and like I was never thinking when I left I was gunna  
1618 walk into a proper big money job like 2i/c might.  
1619 B: What's an officer's job? You said 2i/c.  
1620 Dez: Uh, you know senior copper like, manager's job that  
1621 kind uh thing, never went to uni see.  
1622 B: You're the fucking care manager what do that make  
1623 you?  
1624 Dez: A fucking soft-touch, no bastard wants to work nights  
1625 an I'm the only bloke so it makes sense.

**Ian:** 11 August 2012

1683 Ian: Well you don't know Jacky really less it goes  
1684 bang or's green. I just drifted for bit shit jobs  
1685 all security like, then Tommy said he had a job  
1686 with the Legion, I said I aint got the fitness no  
1687 more for none of that shit. He said what you on  
1688 about you twat the fucking British Legion.  
1689 Baz: Did you ever think about doing something out of  
1690 box, you know not security.  
1691 Ian: Like what?  
1692 Baz: Well that's what I'm asking. Teaching or something.  
1693 Ian: No mate know you place in the word I say, work  
1694 up through the ranks like, know where you are then.

As the extracts suggest when it comes time for soldier to posit himself a civilian, many occupations that he might, with the support of Enhanced Learning Credit funding and

training, have aspired to attain, simply do not appear on his occupational radar. And whilst much has been made of schemes like Troops-to-Teachers<sup>105</sup>, designed to enable access into the professions; even this CTP 2 year fast track into teaching requires an educational starting point of 120 CAT<sup>106</sup> Points, which amounts to a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 5 qualifications simply to access the scheme. This ostensibly egalitarian access pathway into teaching is actually fixed, restricted to graduates or those with backgrounds in technical trades or management qualifications.

The upshot in the case of this trajectory into teaching is consequently limited, in that only the Officer, Senior NCOs and technical tradesmen, are likely to possess Degree or Level 5 qualifications. Yet it remains unlikely that in his 10 years of infantry service, that the soldier will have completed a Level 5 course or in many cases possess the prerequisite GCSE Grade C in maths.

**Ian:** 11 August 2012

1708 B: Did you do many courses?  
1709 Ian: Loads mate weapons cadres mostly but other stuff like  
1710 ammo storeman an the RP course were there too, I  
1711 done the Reggi barbers course some First Aid. I was  
1719 lined up for CO's driver but I lost my licence, so they  
1720 put me on a Cadre instead; straighten me out like, it  
1721 was murders mate.

**Ade:** August 8 2012

1550 Ade: Dozens mun.  
1551 B: Like what?  
1552 Ade: Driving, Gym, Small Arms, Sports Coaching, NCO's  
1553 Cadre, Rat Catcher, First Aid Instructor, I duno loads.

The courses detailed here whilst interesting, do not carry an NVQ grade above Level 2. A more likely pathway into teaching will resemble Ade's trajectory via the Local Education Authorities' Access to Higher Education route, which in a year will equip the individual with the A Level standard qualifications required to engage in Initial Teacher Training in Higher Education. However this trajectory will entail a return to education taking between 4 and 5 years. Three years longer than the Officer, or appropriately qualified tradesman. If the soldier was 30 on completion of his second engagement this trajectory will see him in his mid

<sup>105</sup> **Troops to Teachers:** Department of Education accelerated access route to Mainstream Teaching. Presented Via CTP; <http://www.education.gov.uk/get-into-teaching/troops-to-teachers>

<sup>106</sup> **CAT Points:** Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme

thirties before he might re-enter the work place with a professional qualification. Had he achieved a level 5 qualification during his service he could expect to be in paid work as a teacher in one. Many individuals joined as Junior Entrants in the first instance to escape school, thus their relationship and outlook on education is downbeat, the thought of being in education for 5 years a seriously off-putting prospect, particularly for those with young families.

This notion is further debilitated where an embedded outlook renders jobs such as teaching as a traditionally middle class, and therein an Officers occupation. Combined, these factors hardly promote such a trajectory. Individuals, who as suggested in the previous chapter possess qualifications, benefit not simply from the knowledge those qualifications imbue but moreover possess an evolved disposition to both education and occupation alike. They appreciate the relationship and transferability of their education and seek as a rule to make the most of their academic profiles when determining their futures. Aspects of being an Infantryman simply fail to enable soldier-*self* to posit anything like the same degree of clarity, flexibility or confidence. Further confirming the perception that certain occupations reside within a specific class bracket is the notion that the regimental role-model the WOI RSM aged around 40, an individual who has worked his way diligently through the ranks, addresses the Commissioned Officer as Sir, pays his respects via a salute and is subordinate to the most Junior Officer regardless of age.

**Fab:** August 5 2012

- 1721B: So why do you think that most of the boys go for security work,  
1722 I mean with their ELCs they could do whatever.  
1723 Fab: Low regard for one self probably, one thing to be highly regarded  
1724 for being a quality Tom, but what does that mean, it's patronising,  
1725 it's all a bluff the Rupert's love being rank protected, saluted an  
1726 all that, I mean they can afford to be complimentary. Just think  
1727 if you get lorded over all the time, you become less aspirational  
1728 bigger picture wise.  
1729 B: Do you think the [...] do you think the boys get stuck in character  
1730 and then don't aspire to get into the professions?  
1731 Fab: Well plenty do but most see what's in front of them, fact that the  
1732 system keeps them in their place probably doesn't help. Most of  
1733 the 'them and us' bollocks puts a chap in a tricky spot. I just think  
1734 the blokes become occupationally blinkered and *them* invariably  
1735 got the cushiest jobs.

After a decade of observing and participating in these rituals of homage and subordination the soldiers social reality has become somewhat skewed, aspiration now stagnant, soldier-*self* viewing his occupational potential through a very narrow field of vision. Years of

subordination built on the mortification of an adolescent self, seems to leave the once aspirate soldier-*self* in a fixed state of occupational inferiority; his identity not simply confirming his place in the regiment, but moreover his place in society; therein affecting his lack of occupational aspiration and confidence post service (Horton, *et al.* 2012, pp. 408-417). The differentiation in status that for 10 years has guaranteed a swift unquestioning reaction to orders, assume a detrimental quality, relegating the Veteran to a limited outlook and lack of occupational aspiration beyond the most fundamental forms of employment.

In this environment, the Veteran soon concedes that in the absence of combat or roles geared to security that his elite status is impossible to maintain, few roles enabling him to realise his operational knowledge or further develop his skills and undeniable professionalism. Ade's 'tradesman in uniform' analogy, whilst conceived to reinforce the elite status of serving infantryman, has now come full circle, to the point where Infantry service, regardless of its elite status within the Army, will in most cases relegate the leaver occupationally to the position of neophyte. The tradesmen will always be a tradesman with or without the uniform, the trade transferable and occupationally relevant in any setting. The same cannot be applied to the infantryman however as he moves into social space his trade as a professional soldier being somewhat less attractive or immediately transferable. The gradual stripping of his identity (Goffman 1961, pg. 12) far from creating an opportunity to definitively relocate his skills moreover creates an occupational vacuum.

Naturally there are countless roles within broader society that ex-servicemen can and historically have gone on to, perform successfully. Yet the task of finding an occupational start point, one that offers a sense of progression building on passed experiences, is no easy feat. As discussed in the previous chapter many former infantrymen seek self-employment as personal trainers, yet few wish to engage in careers as either Leisure Centre fitness instructors or teach PE in mainstream schools. In the case of the latter the notion of taking between 4 and 5 years to retrain in any form of teaching is in itself one of the key reasons why so few Infanteers retrain as teachers.

**Ade:** August 21 2012

1631 Ade: Saw Clegg and Barley Tuesday, pair of wanker's mun.  
1632 Clegg used to be blowing out is arse doing a BFT<sup>†</sup> now  
1633 Simon tells me he's a personal trainer. Never worked

<sup>†</sup> **BFT:** Basic Fitness Test; 1½ mile squaded run 15 minutes, followed by 1½ miles best effort second part timed pass, dependant on age and role.



1634 in the Gym like, fuck I'd have liked to have seen 'im do  
1635 Central Gym. Clueless mate, tosser.

As for public or private sector occupations centring on Physical Education, only those like Ade who have already gained experience and qualifications as Akki's seem to transfer their skills into the roles of PE teachers or Leisure Centre Instructors readily; in transitions that generally lead swiftly to successful careers centring on early management appointments. Those who base their futures on their personal physical fitness alone seem to be ensconced in a stubborn belief that self-employment somehow promotes notions of their own success. Many view the act of having to start at the bottom of the career ladder inappropriate, doggedly refusing to accept restarting their careers as leisure centre assistants, on the grounds of the status loss (Wolpert, 2000) inherent in beginnings. Few of the above become successful personal trainers, their preparation and training courses as such [accessed via the CTP] lead often naive candidates with no business acumen or professional experience, into highly competitive markets dominated by graduates and accomplished sportspersons.

**Dez:** 11 August 2010

1633 Dez: I heard their both personal trainers, you got uh laugh  
1634 ain't you, I mean who the fuck are that pair of Muppets  
1635 gunna train? Each-other [laughter] I can see 'em now  
1636 beasting some poor fat bird, jokers the pair of 'em  
1637 they wanna be careful their both signing. Both as  
1637 thick as a Ghurkha's foreskin, true, like a pair uh tarts.

For many their inability to cope with even the idea of working as a new employee and refusal to engage with established private sector or Local Authority provisions offering a professional start point implies a degree of naivety. To posit oneself in a management role located in a previously unexplored discipline with all but the most elementary training, further confirms notions of an almost adolescent and certainly unrealistic outlook. Yet as Goffman (1961, pg. 30) proposes of the individual leaving the Asylum those whose identities have been retained and later returned, in this case the self surrendered in basic training was one of an adolescent. Accordingly in the absence of more practicable knowledge of the social world it should come as no surprise. Not all forms of self-employment offer immediate progression or automatically demonstrate willingness on the part of the individual to adjust; or assume an initial period of subordination in order to progress in the same way as the PMSCs for example.

PMSC employees appear prepared to assume subordinate roles largely due to the financial rewards implicit in Privateering. The same being the case for the Public Sector and policing roles, each being viewed as financially and occupationally progressive, roles offering a raised status and an opportunity to build on existing skills and status. And whilst encouraged by the CTP, Heropreneurs<sup>107</sup> and Federation of Small Business (Hyslop & Morris, 2011) to undertake courses designed to enable self-employment, most Heropreneurs simply lack the basic knowledge required to compete in well established markets.

Positing oneself for a decade through audience specific narrative has also created a problem, in a sense the historical perception held by [particularly] significant others will have been drawn from a self presented in isolation, far beyond the gaze of those who now witness the performance on a daily basis. As discussed in Chapter V the social construction of self so routinely facilitated by biographical disruption and opportunity to present a specific often fabricated account of self, is now spent, soldier-*self* has lost his invisibility. Measuring up to the assumed model of self presented in the past frequently triggers a conflict between the assumed-self and often more limited authentic-self. Superficially their hexis, bluff-confidence and dressage may well suggest success; however their inability to access established labour markets or cope with the practicalities of an autonomous occupational existence, likely derives from their own shortcomings, martial indoctrination and lack of secular occupational awareness.

To speculate that being physically fit somehow makes you a personal trainer is as suggested naive and to a degree symbolic of their unpreparedness, trepidation and disconnection from civil labour markets. Thus in the absence of knowledge relating to a relevant occupational alternative the soldier falls back on the only transferable aspect or resource that appears available to him, he withdraws into his physicality, his body (Foucault. 1988, p. 18). His desire to be self-employed is also likely driven by an attempt to preserve his imagined identities, those founded on representations of a highly successful self. Therein to restrain contrast or prevent the deterioration of long established identities, roles focusing on self-employment are conceived, as much for the benefit of significant others as self. Those who do well in business regardless of its nature do so as a consequence of collaboration with others or an innate talent or skill for commerce.

<sup>107</sup>. **Heropreneurs:** Charity providing collaboration and links between the Armed Forces Veterans and industry.

Some identify niche markets and with the help of their broader support networks produce credible plans to develop hitherto unexploited markets. A flexible outlook is another prerequisite, one capable of taking advice from others rather than boorishly muddling on, often for the sole purpose of retaining the social rank and assumed status of the Boss. Loss of status for many causes a biographical rupture, and an uneasy period of adjustment, not to mention resentment and difficulty in comprehending the attitudes of the indifferent other (Berger *et al*, 1977), particularly those who fail to sympathise with the albeit impractical ambitions of the aspirant personal trainer.

**Tam:** August 3 2012

1768 Tam: It's hard at first ken having tay start over, uz auld man  
 1769 says the most senior rank in the army iz Mister. But like  
 1770 I missed the responsibility a bit; I liked being the man,  
 1771 I'd earned it, but now ken after all the chyte I'm more  
 1772 than settled on Mister. Fuck it's nice to be able to tell  
 1773 people tay jog on we no fear uv 'em jailing youz. An  
 1774 just having one boss rather 'an every c\*\*t wi one mare  
 1775 tape or crown 'an you telling youz how it iz, iz top.

## 7.2.2 Soldier Speak

Other conditions restricting notions of professional advancement can be located in the occupational language of infanteering. To the Sapper the language of engineering is universal and transferable, a theodolite, shuttering plate or pier being terms common to engineering; this is not the case for the infantry. Discourse in the infantry is dominated by acronyms, mnemonics, slang and often archaic terms of phrase centred on an occupation language that spans centuries. Infanteers work in the FEBA<sup>108</sup>, use tools called 'Gympie's', tubes<sup>†</sup> and shorts, operate as MFCs<sup>109</sup>, Snipers and AT<sup>110</sup> specialists, each role and its occupational language unique to the Infantry. They move into the FEBA by Tabbings, wear rigs, belt kit or webbing, eat from Rat-Packs and drink NATO Chai<sup>111</sup>. Theirs are highly specialist roles that require equally specialised language (Cornell 1981, pp. 195-200) deployed in discourse that exists both on and off the battlefield.

<sup>108.</sup> **FEBA:** Forward Edge of the Battle Area

<sup>109.</sup> **MFC:** Mortar Fire Controller, **Mortar**<sup>†</sup>: short smooth-bore gun for firing bombs at high angles.

<sup>110.</sup> **AT:** Anti-Tank

<sup>111.</sup> **NATO Chai:** Taken from the term NATO Standard = Milk 2 Sugars – *Masala chai*. Popular Indian tea, *Chai*; term commonly used by soldiers, adopted by British Indian Army 1858-1947.

When Colin was engaged on Public Duties the language was equally restricted in a sense archaic. Ceremonial drill rituals use a language that dates back to the New Model Army, it's purpose whilst ostensibly linked to long obsolete military tactics and manoeuvres now serving the training establishment and military spectacle only. Indeed, millions of pounds drawn in revenue from tourism relating to the 'Changing of the Guard', 'Trooping of the Colour' and a plethora of additional military events from the Edinburgh Tattoo to Remembrance Sunday Parade. And whilst the orders bellowed out during such events by the parade Sergeant Major remain largely incomprehensible to the untrained ears of the general public they are each responded to reciprocally by the squad on parade. Their movements a precise responses to equally precise orders to turn in a given direction, march at a given pace or perform a given movement.

Yet there is little need for drill in mainstream society, or use of language centred in the spectacle of the public military pageant. Similarly the extreme use of expletives which have dominated soldierly discourse for years (Higate<sup>1</sup>, 2012), have remained unchecked by social censure, deployed habitually in homocentric company have become the norm (Walker 2012, pg. 11). Any notion of political correctness having been largely ignored since adolescence will for over a decade have been exercised in an environment where women are 'birds', men who do not conform to the rigorous nature of occupations preoccupied by identities centring on military or rural masculinity (Higate<sup>2</sup>, 2012; Woodward, 2000/1998) are addressed as 'mincers' and any who fail to self-police 'wankers and tarts'. None of the above provokes notions of employability, indeed the use of expletives now deeply engrained in everyday speech work against the Veteran in all but the most male dominated civilian occupations.

**Ade:** 21 August 2012

1576 Ade: Well I'm slowly getting my 'ed round the P,  
 1577 political correctness thing, 'ave to now. Do  
 1578 you think my language is bad?  
 1579 B: Getting better I'd say, you don't use the 'C'  
 1580 word as much as you used to.  
 1581 Ade: That's fuck all But; I got a warning for calling  
 1582 some birds 'ladies', fucking munters they was,  
 1583 I was just being polite.

**Tam:** August 3 2012

1747 Tam: I 'hink I speak well, no fucker kens half what  
 1748 I'm saying anyhow. But a few uh the lads I  
 1749 got working fe us, fuck me take out a few choice  
 1750 words fe their vocabulary un uh fuckers ud be

1751       mute. Had tay apologise to one uh the clients  
 1752       Tuesday, told the general managers daughter  
 1753       tay move her fucking motor, I says like aye  
 1754       I told um ayed be aways if ay did-nay curb it.

Many civilians find the harshness of discourse aggressive (Booth-Kewley, S. *et al*, 2010, pgs. 330-337), the habitualized and highly critical references made to civilians who do not conform to the battalion norm, more importantly men who have not served, being relegated to the lowest form of cur.

**Col:** August 18 2012

1843 Col: Bunch uh pussies the lot of ‘em, I’m sat there this  
 1844       guy says something ‘bout Afghan, I sayz fuck all  
 1845       then he sayz something about Brize, he gets up to  
 1846       go get a brew so I go too; I’m there sayz like you  
 1847       got a lot to say ‘bout stuff, he sayz tuz like oh don’t  
 1848       tell me you were in the Army mmm. I sayz do you  
 1849       want a fucking smack? Coz ‘at’s where this is going,  
 1850       he sayz I’m entitled to my opinion it a free country.  
 1851       Free country I sayz and who keeps it free, c\*\*\*s like  
 1852       youz. Suspended, 3 weeks that was just the training.

These speech patterns have been reproduced and validated as the norm to a degree where they continue to be deployed in public space, the Veteran often finding himself in difficulty where the deployment of well established lexical choices prove to caused offence (Walker, 2012 p. 214). There is also an expectation in society that some form of repair (Schegloff *et al* 1977, pp. 361-382) will follow the *faux pas*, yet soldier-*self* is often unconscious of the social speech error, frequently belligerent in the face of censure and aggressive if pressed. Once again these factors rarely aid occupational transition, moreover they hinder it.

**Dez:** 11 August 2010

1765 Dez: You’ve got uh laugh though we ‘ad to go the office  
 1766       mediation like, boss says ok boys need resolve this,  
 1767       come on I think you need to apologise to each other.  
 1768       I said there’s no way I’m apologising to that sack uh  
 1769       shit. He said Dez, you’ll leave me no choice, come on  
 1770       shake hands. I said nope, he said this means a second  
 1771       written warning, I said shove it up your arse, you can  
 1772       keep your shitty job. An if I see you again you’ll be  
 1773       eating through a fucking straw. That’s how I ended up  
 1734       working in residential care.

Lacking qualifications, possessing a restricted outlook regarding potential fields of occupation, and finding one’s self caught up in discourse preoccupied by either

occupationally restricted or socially inappropriate language, are compounding disabling factors. The notion that finding work at a time when unemployment in the UK is high, standing at the time of writing (December 2013), at 2.39<sup>112</sup> million and likelihood as discussed that employment in the uniformed Public Services is becoming more difficult to access, collaboratively render the outlook for many a bleak one. Countless ex-servicemen will, however weather the storm and secure employment offering a living wage, indeed the PMSCs are flourishing, their employees trained via Catterick and the CTP, their courses sponsored by the public purse through the ELC scheme. Against the odds some will find work in the sort-after roles located in the uniformed Public Services, whilst other will establish their own businesses to differing degrees of success.

Many will struggle with the transition and become reliant on state benefits, remaining unemployed for years. As the Royal British Legion suggested (RBL, 2006) actual levels of Veteran unemployment are far higher than any government estimates, and whilst millions are invested annually in resettlement programs many need substantially more time to make the adjustment, time as the NOA (2006) acknowledge that is not always available. Having friends and family in the area of intended resettlement doubtless helped most of the individuals in this cohort, at least those who decided to remain as planned in South Wales. Dez after an awkward start ended up working with his wife in a Residential Care Home, whilst three working for local security firms found their current niche as a result of knowing people already employed in the industry. In relation to the above, each had previously served together in the same Regiment, as had the Managing Directors in two out of three cases.

Jon emigrated, finding employment with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), again as a result of family ties; in this case his brother and father-in-law were each senior RCMP Officers. The only clear exceptions to this rule seem to be the four who returned to the Armed Forces as regular or reserve soldiers and three who assumed employment with PMSCs. Of the two who decided to join the TA one eventually found full time employment; however it took almost two years for him to secure a job as a driver for the NHS. The other Qui was dead within 18 months. By contrast all but three returned to education formally, seeking futures in care, teaching or in Fab's case already a graduate enrolled on a postgraduate Law walkover. In relation to self employment one teamed up with a school

<sup>112</sup> Office of National Statistics: Labour Market Statistics, December 2013

friend who had simultaneously left the Royal Marines, to form what has become a very successful high-rise window cleaning and servicing business. The Marine's Father a former RAF Officer, had built a successful double glazing manufacturing firm in his own right, and supported the lads in setting up their business.

Four remained unemployed as a consequence of their mental health difficulties, and tragically two have died, one as suggested from injuries sustained on operations having reenlisted the other to suicide. Motivation in seeking out employment was in all cases more energetic for those with families to support. Providing for the needs of children a particular driver, the need to cover the cost of accommodation, utilities, clothing, and food pursued responsibly. For the single men their journey back to civilian occupations assumes an altogether different tone, one that centred in the absence of employment on lengthy periods of social isolation and reliance on the benefits system. Their outlooks were also more flexible; many viewing the opportunities presented by the PMSCs as being their best option, in the absence of wives and partners their path to Privateering unopposed.

### **7.2.3 Veteran Housing**

The Armed Forces Community, be they serving or Veterans view accommodation like all human beings as primary necessity. Accommodation is fundamental to the wellbeing of individuals and families and a central component of the Armed Forces Covenant. In the 2012 Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report, the Government updated the House of Commons in relation to their ongoing election pledge to secure significant changes to the welfare provisions supporting the Armed Forces Community. The Annual Report as discussed is a measure of the delivery of legislation outlined in the Armed Forces Act. 2011 and guarantees proposed in the Armed Forces Covenant, relating to the social outcomes of Veterans.

“This report clearly states where Service personnel are considered to be at a disadvantage and sets out where special provision is considered to be justified. In accordance with the legislation, it covers the effects of membership of the Armed Forces in four fields – education, healthcare, housing and the operation of inquests – throughout its chapters. It also sets out the new commitments that we have made in the last year together with a progress report for each of the previous commitments, enabling the Government to be held to account over time.”

(Armed Forces Covenant, Annual Report 2012, p. 3 )

Whilst both the MoD and government recognises the principle that accommodation is a basic human necessitate, their operationalisation of the principal in relation to both Serving Personnel and Veterans has been all but piecemeal.

**Tam:** August 3 2012

1800 Tam: Aye I 'hink uh worst bit's ken being ignorant  
1801 to every-'hing. Ken the mortgages and deals  
1802 an 'at. 'is wuz our first hoose like so et wuz  
1803 all hard going. She's changed et a few times  
1804 now, ken better deal, but back 'en it wuz like  
1805 chyte, job-house-money fucking panic!

The MoD's work in preparing leavers for life beyond the Barrack block or Married Quarter falls someway short of the rhetorical pledges made by consecutive governments to offer practical support. It moreover fails to offer a realistic introduction or moderately sensible connection to civil housing markets, homeownership or rented lodgings. Indeed the HC Defence Committee noted in 2013 that actual levels of homeownership had declined substantially over recent years, and sort to instigate more research in this area. In their view house purchasing in the Army can lead to separation from the Regimental family and produces an increased desire for families to leave (HC 2013. p.5). Thus it is not often in the interest of the MoD to promote home ownership, since many dwelling in social rather than military housing become more aware of their potential as private citizens and consequently leave early. Many will have married sometime after enlistment their social aspirations having progressed beyond those of the young adults that arrived at Harrogate in the mid teens.

**Ian:** August 11 2012

1728 Ian: Complete waste of fucking time like education,  
1729 we was up there like best part uh 2 years and I  
1730 don't think we spent that much time in like the  
1731 classroom, well not doing anything that weren't  
1732 linked to job. Wankers mate, should make it  
1733 compulsory to do basic like GCSE stuff. My  
1734 kids know more than I did at their age. I got  
1735 my head round it now but too late. Should 'av  
1736 beasted it in to us when they 'ad our attention  
1737 as boys.

Concerns regarding financial matters and knowledge centring on home purchase or rents have been discussed for many years by consecutive governments to no avail. This most recent report retreading what has become common ground, the Defence Committee once again voicing its concerns rather than implementing its own policies,



“We recommend that the MoD should ensure that the lessons learned from its work in developing schemes to encourage home ownership should be taken forward into the Future Accommodation Project. These lessons should include better financial education and information for Armed Forces personnel and greater flexibility in relation to the offers available. The MoD should increase the size of the Long Service Advance of Pay as it is 22 years out of date and therefore not likely to encourage a high uptake amongst those eligible.”

(HC, 2013 pg. 7)

Of the 20 interviewed all but two owned their own homes, one having been left a property in his area of origin, one having bought one with his partner. Advice as such regarding housing falls to either the Joint Service Housing Advice Office (JSHAO) or Career Transition Partnership. The former provide information and advice in addition to assistance with removals for families living in Forces accommodation. Whilst the latter offer much the same service presented in the forms of both workshops and literature, each provide notional forms of support only. Housing Resettlement advice like most of the provision offered by the CTP is just that, advice. Therefore statements made in relation to rented accommodation like the below, offer very little practical help and moreover state the obvious, leading few to attend the follow-up workshops and presentations. ,

“A wide range of options exist via local councils, housing associations and private lettings. You are advised to research the local area fully, and contact local government housing offices and local housing associations in order to ascertain application and assessment processes for registering for accommodation in your chosen area.”

(Right Management 2011)

This is also a component of the resettlement process requiring registration with the broader CTP resettlement program. Which as discussed in the previous chapter was an option dismissed by many on the grounds of timing and their own sense of overriding apprehension and foreboding focused on their impending departures.

**Fab:** August 5 2012

1761 Fab: I think I can sympathise with most, these are  
1762 hard men, belligerence be thy name, not best  
1763 suited to taking help and well the CTP make you  
1764 do all the work, their an advice shop. So when  
1765 you're in a room with a flange of highly motivated  
1766 tradesmen who more often than not will have  
1767 been planning their exits for months, the tables  
1768 are turned somewhat. Usually their shitting it  
1769 because there a real soldier in their midst now

1770 that counts for very little, it's their advantage. So  
1771 most just streamline, go with minimum, but that's  
1772 not to say they don't need help, they truly need more.

Many in the cohort suggested that more time spent in the area of their intended resettlement speaking directly to those providing accommodation would have at least prepared them more precisely for what was to come. The value underpinning this proposal has been acceded by the Welsh Affairs Committee. Who recognise that those like Tam who were on operations only months before their exits, will find it exceeding difficult to access social housing prior to leaving.

“The mobility requirements of a career in the Armed Forces can be a real disadvantage for personnel trying to access social housing, because of local authorities' requirements for a 'local connection.' This is a serious concern and more priority should be given to those who have put their lives on the line for this country.”

(HC Welsh Affairs Committee, 2011. Paragraph 41)

In hindsight most of the cohort conceded that whilst they had been allocated times for this very task, the stipulation of having to sign up with the CTP discouraged them. And whilst each would have been reimbursed for any travel expenses from their regiments to the area of resettlement, their decision was made at a time when they possessed no idea of what lay ahead. Many choosing not to engage were preoccupied with the very real perspective that their termination timelines and careers were drawing to a rapid end. Furthermore, the CTP resources in keeping with all resettlement activity are administered online; thus whilst comprehensive, are viewed as overwhelming, one drop down menu after the next offering a raft of information that as suggested could be accessed closer to home face to face with a Local Authority Housing Office representative. Regrettably the sheer volume of information was too much for most, its ill-timed deployment conveyed to leavers unable to cope lucidly with their resettlement let alone this aspect in isolation. As the Welsh Affairs Committee reported,

“The MoD's resettlement programme has improved in recent years but requires further refinement. Some personnel may decide not to take up the MoD's support and this is a choice for them. But we are concerned that some personnel still do not take up elements of resettlement support due to a lack of awareness of the services available.

(HC Welsh Affairs Committee, 2013, Paragraph 21)

In many cases it was not the issue of awareness that hindered engagement but moreover the notion that after years in uniform they were mired by the extent of tasks now dominating their daily activity. Most focused on the termination timeline only, rather than take advantage of broader support offered by the CTP, concluding perhaps unwisely that it was extraneous, much of the support superficial and a duplication of the activities they would have to undertake anyway. When considering that these themes are still under debate, yet to be resolved in a manner in keeping with either the principles of the Armed Force Act (2011) or Covenant, one can only speculate as to why government is so reluctant to carry the principles forward. When viewing Council Housing waiting lists most were dismayed to discover that thousands were in fact on such lists, in the case of the single men their eligibility when calculated placed them at the very bottom. Considering that in many cases the Army's primary strategy for assessing the potential for social exclusion centres on a Pre-Exit interview conducted by an Army Officer, there is little wonder that so many actually become socially excluded.

**Ian:** August 11 2012

1828 Ian: Resettlement interview yeah right like your  
1829 gunnu make a twat of yourself in front of  
1830 some knob. Instead of wasting their time  
1831 asking pointless questions about shit you  
1832 know fuck all about why don't they let you  
1833 just get on with it. Fuck sake, it's all advice  
1834 from people who know jack shit about being  
1835 like where you are. Take me there like show  
1836 me but stop bull shitting on with the advice.

In most cases both married and single men were forced to engage with the private housing market, since their needs were immediate. Life in the Army had rendered most ignorant to notions of either buying or renting a home, and whilst each had paid for their accommodation throughout their service, payments were taken directly from their wages, thus the responsibility for organising rent or mortgage payments had been removed. Many of the single men struggled to pay their rents until either employed or in receipt of benefits proper, a process which had taken months to resolve. In acknowledging the issue of disadvantage and notion that Veterans continue to face difficulties resulting from years of disconnection from civil society, the Welsh Affairs Committee summed up their concerns and resolution thus,

“We are concerned that some veterans struggle to obtain information about the services available to them upon returning to civilian life. We believe that the most effective way to provide them with

information and assistance would be through a network of 'one stop shops' across Wales, broadly similar to the Scottish model."

(HC Welsh Affairs Committee, 2013, Paragraph 31)

In relation to this cohort within months of leaving 6 had resolved to move in with family members when it became clear that they were not coping, one of the fundamental problems being the ability of the individual to budget either their benefit or minimal wages effectively.

**Col:** August 18 2012

1721 Col: least I had some idea of what it was going to be like, the  
1722 singlies, like the ones from AFC they'd have bin right  
1723 up shit creek. At least if you had a woman in-tow she  
1724 could like show you the ropes; I'd have been in a sad place  
1725 without the boss, she really got my shit together.  
1726 B: Housing wise?  
1727 Col: Everything wise, I was in fucking shock first off.

As suggested both Central and Local Government have debated this point on many occasions; Stella Creasy MP for Walthamstow cited the Royal British Legion's work (RBL 2006) on the growing problem of debt.

"The Royal British Legion states that debt problems tend to be much more complex for Army personnel than for civilians, and that they require a higher level of debt advice. It estimates that 63% of the debt advice that it offers is classified as specialist advice, compared with just 12% of the casework of normal citizen's advice bureaux."

(Creasy: Hansard, 10/11/2011, pg . 517)

More recently debt in the Armed Forces has become an endemic problem, particularly in the wake of payday loans which have become a significant enough issue to prompt the government to consider following the American Department of Defence model and create countermeasures in Law. Yet preventing the exploitation of hard-up service personnel and Veterans might have been avoided had the Veteran or indeed serving soldier been educated in basic budgeting.

**Dez:** August 11 2011

1670 Dez: No La we're now just about squaring off the fucking  
1671 loans and shit we got when I left. Fuck we were like  
1672 desperate, work was, that was mostly my fault but it  
1673 was all over the shop an when my last wage went we  
1674 had to borrow. Got some door work, but like I 'ad  
1675 to do me Door Supervisors, an the like SIA training  
1676 took ages to sort out, an then the them credits was a  
1677 nightmare. Done it in Newport eventually, but like  
1678 everything takes time dun-it. We just needed cash.

Clearly the Level 1 Numeracy skills qualification gained by the Harrogate cohort [the Junior Entrants], had in the long run proven a grossly ineffective tool in tackling debt or counter encouraging proficiency in budgeting incomes. Veteran disadvantage in terms of the state of their financial educational and ability to grasp the like of budgets, mortgages or realistically posit themselves financially beyond their service was another theme tackled by the HC Welsh Affairs Committee in response to the Armed Forces Covenant Annual Report 2013. Therein they suggest,

“Armed Forces personnel require a good grounding in financial management for their transition to civilian life. We are pleased that the MoD is placing additional importance on providing such skills to serving personnel. This should continue.”

(HC Welsh Affairs Committee, 2013, Paragraph 22)

Service leavers often face complex welfare problems, many centring on financial difficulties and lack of understanding in the rudiments of home ownership or rental markets. For all the rhetoric little has been done to secure either a better standards of education or create reasonable opportunities for service personnel to secure their own homes during service. Chris Evans MP for Islwyn made this point clearly, commenting on the purported interventions and support being lavished on Veterans, Evans remarked,

“Yet I hear all the time about veterans who leave the forces and receive no help, and in 2005, the Royal British Legion produced a report that stated that 6% of those leaving the forces had welfare issues and nowhere to go. I want the Government to do more. It is easy, especially at this time of the year, to think of veterans as the old folk who walk in remembrance of their fallen comrades, but a veteran can be anyone—a 21-year-old or a 60-year-old—and we must do all we can to honour them. It is time for the Government to honour them properly, and that means creating a department for veterans.”

(Evans: Hansard, 10/11/2011, p. 521)

Evans, quite correctly, asserts that Veterans are often young men and women, their definition in law being anyone who has served in excess of one day (Burdette *et al* 2012; Dandeker, *et al* 2006). Yet some five years later, the Government are still debating the notion of making the Armed Forces a protected community on the basis of disadvantage. Whilst the Armed Forces Act 2011 remains ambiguous referring to ‘various broad and undefined categories of welfare including housing’ (Browne 2008; Walters 2012, p. 30), it offers no practical support beyond a welfare briefing executed by an officer Pre-Exit and an opportunity to journey home to secure accommodation weeks, possibly months before one’s exit.

**Col:** August 18 2012

1750 Col: Council said we couldn't go on no lists till we like lived  
1751 here, what the fuck does that mean? I said at the time  
1752 like I'm a fucking squaddy I live all over the fucking gaff.

Unless the NSL signs up with the CTP, a matter of choice, then he is all but cast adrift. Many in government have avoided the question of granting the Armed Forces community the status of a priority group that would offer guaranteed housing, on the grounds that to do so might cause an uneasy back-lash (Ainsworth, 2008).

Ainsworth (2008) considered that such a policy might be unpopular with the British Public, in light of the fact that Local Housing Authorities have a limited housing stock anyway and are under immense pressure to cope with current requests for social housing. In Written evidence submitted to the HC Welsh Affairs Select Committee in December 2012, the Royal British Legion (Wales) confirmed their concerns in relation to Veteran access to social housing.

“With over 90,000 households on social housing waiting lists, alongside 26,000<sup>113</sup> private homes standing empty for six months or more, greater action is required in this area to increase supply. The Legion welcomes the Welsh Government commitment to deliver 7,500 new affordable homes this Assembly term.”

(RBL, 2012, Sn: 6.2)

Changes to the benefit system were also raised in relation to the means testing of Armed forces benefits and entitlement accessed through service:

“War Pensions and Armed Forces Compensations Scheme (AFCS) are not income support payments but are paid as compensation for injury, illness or loss as a result of service in the Armed Forces and these should not be used to penalise those who have given Service to their country.”

(RBL, 2012, Sn: 2.4)

A state of annoyance prevails where War Pensions are taken into account when calculating a Veteran's entitlement to state benefits, since far from being a compensation award based on injuries sustained during service; War Pension's are actually deducted from one's state benefits. Thus the War Pensions exists in name only, likewise in the cases of social housing, to argue that Veterans must compete with other priority groups on the grounds of their assessed need, rather than the instability of service-life is frankly a ridiculous argument.

<sup>113</sup> Shelter Cymru – 2012.

The idea that general provisions are directed at England rather than the UK, and the reality that none of the above after years of debate have been finalised, written up in the statutes and made regularly available to Service Personnel or Veterans, speaks volumes for the position of consecutive governments regarding the welfare of their Armed Forces.

“In an important step for those who require non-Service housing, Local Authorities in England are now required to frame their housing allocation schemes to give additional preference to members of the Armed Forces Community who have urgent housing needs.”

(Armed Forces Covenant, Annual Report 2012, pg. 7)

In describing their current successes the government exposes a fragmented approach to the support of Veterans, addressing England specifically rather than the UK collectively in its rhetoric. The most recent version of the Armed Forces Covenant (2015) states in unambiguous terms that support is available, yet the text, context and actual experience of veterans has remained fixed since 2011 when the government stated;

“They [the NSLs] should have priority status in applying for Government-sponsored affordable housing schemes, and Service leavers should retain this status for a period after discharge.”

(MoD, 2011. pg 7)

This statement whilst applying to England demonstrates how differentiation between home nations has proven to complicate the issue, frustrating many Veterans since they each served the Crown in the “British Army”, rather than the Welsh, Irish or Scottish Army. Local arrangements and differing policies drawn up between the UK’s four nations again exacerbates the problem, Wales’s leading veteran support in the area of community mental health, whilst trailing in other areas. Standardisation requires a central approach as well as funding and whilst the Armed Forces Act (2011) gives many assurances; it is in its infancy as a piece of legislation, promising much whilst delivering very little.

#### **7.2.4 Life Skills**

Other factors affecting the cohort specifically centred on basic life skills and the experience of living independently. In most cases none of the single men had ever been called upon to take responsibility for utilities bills and were all dismayed at the cost of gas, electricity, water and land line telephone. Paying for these essentials of normal daily living had been spared them during service, so having to find the means to cover fuel and so forth came as something of a shock. Even the most basic life skills such as budgeting for food and the

weekly shop were to the single men at the least a new and challenging proposition. Disposable incomes had for many become a thing of the past, a condition that remained in many instances for years. In the best situations, employment had brought with it relief, yet these opening weeks, month and in cases years had left their mark, partially with debt. Basic tasks like food preparation were also an issue, and whilst each could prepare quite elaborate meals based on a selection of choice recipes, few could budget for standard meals offering nutrition within a more realistic price range.

**Dez:** August 11 2012

1682 Dez: We never thought it'd all cost so much, you're like  
1683 protected when you're in, just have to 'old on till  
1684 like the next month, an being away all the time you  
1685 save a bit. But out here you're fucked, an like I say  
1686 by the time the situations sorted you're weeks down  
1687 the line. Gas and lecki and water and fucking poll  
1688 tax everyone got to live, but it's 'ard starters.

**Ern:** November 11 2013

269 Ern: I'm skint most weeks mate, don't go out much.  
270 B: Where are you living?  
271 Ern: Well I go over me sisters on weekends in-it,  
272 anything to get out of the flat really. Meter  
273 takes like 20 a week 'en food, my cooking's  
274 OK, I do a good all-in but don't eat much. I'm  
275 down Tripler Street by the Industrial Estate.  
276 B: Had you ever lived on your own before?  
277 Ern: No mate, Always in like the block in-it, well I  
278 was in care 'for Juniors, but in like. My sister's  
279 good, I look after the kids and she like does me  
280 food for the week, I try to give a few quid but  
281 she won't take it. Her Blokes a diamond too...

**Gaz:** November 14 2010

229 B: OK been up to much?  
230 Gaz: Not much.  
231 B: Any thought about them ELCs?  
232 Gaz: Not really, just getting to grips with stuff.  
233 B: Right enough, what kind of stuff.  
234 Gaz: You know just getting used to not having to  
235 be somewhere. Lots of time to think like an  
236 work things out.  
237 B: Are you signing now?  
238 Gaz: Yeah 'bout one month, they want me to think  
239 about a job. I just don't know what I wants to  
240 do, mum says there's nothing down her way, I'm  
241 thinking maybe plumbing, or maybe something  
242 with animals.  
243 B: You managing at home OK, cooking and whatever?



244 Gaz: Yeah sorted I eats like mostly fruit and cereals, toast  
245 an stuff. Nothing flash but I don't go hungry.

### 7.2.5 Hindsight

The specifics of resettlement are now viewed with calm reflection and to varying degrees of acceptance that the period was one shaped by their own naivety and lack of engagement with a process that is still believed [by respondents] to be geared to those with trades or management experience. Widespread opinion amongst the informant group also leans on the notion that any amendment to the current system of resettlement would need to be embedded throughout a soldier's career, rather than condensed into a single episode at its end. It would also need to be viewed as standard practice rather than something one volunteered for, in a sense that the principles of Lifelong Learning need to be adopted by the military for all non-traded personnel. Of the various topics discussed throughout this study four themes have predominated discourse of the broader period, those themes settling on education, employment, housing and the lack of political continuity that has resulted in an absence of support to both our Service Personnel and Veterans.

### 3.2.6 Education

By 2013 it became apparent that attitudes were changing, awareness of the benefits of education that had been absent in the opening transcripts being one such area of transition, resulting principally from failed jobs applications and informants helping their children with school work. What also emerged was a sense of relief on the part of those who had completed their GCSEs and an appreciation of the advantages those qualifications brought in terms of accessing higher level courses. Likewise the reluctance of many like Colin to engage in training had elapsed, in Colin's case because of injuries that excluded him from manual work and like Dez, the opportunity to take on part time study whilst in work.

**Ade:** June 23 2014

9236 Ade: I 'ad GCSEs like and 'av to say I'm  
9237 grateful now [...] that I done 'em. Back  
9238 in the day, I dunno I was caught up in  
9239 all sorts, an just wanted a job-the army  
92 40 gave me an opportunity an I took it.  
9241 An it's easy to look back an think it  
9242 was wasted time, but then I think what  
9243 else would I have done. No, there are  
9244 plenty of good things came out of it  
9245 an 'aving the confidence to do what  
9246 I'm doing now was one of 'em.

9313 B: Could the army have made it easier for  
 9314 you to get into teaching do you think?  
 9315 Ade: Me probably not, but like the level of  
 9316 education across the board like, was  
 9317 shocking, Harrogate was a joke there,  
 9318 I mean just 'aving GCSEs makes a massive  
 9319 difference, 'least you can do an Access.

**Col:** June 30 2014

9196 It took us a while Taff to get the nerve to do  
 9197 my quals, an I'm not talking rocket science  
 9198 here, I'm on about the basics. The little-ones  
 9199 got me on board, homework like maths and  
 9200 English. We should have had this stuff beasted  
 9201 into us, miles before we shot off. That would  
 9202 helped like proper, wish I'd put some real time  
 9203 in to actually learning stuff 'stead uh bull-shitting  
 9204 my way round, pretending like. But when your  
 9205 like in you don't see it. But like they know get me...

**Tam:** February 30 2015

10216 Tam: I ken your meaning an 'hink 'em left us  
 10217 high an dry, an like 'em knew we wuz no  
 10218 that fond uh the education centre. I got me  
 10219 on tay a Level 4 coz I had me schooling.  
 10220 'spose I'd uh bin fucked we out et, mean  
 10221 like I'd uv had tay de mere college uh-fore iz,  
 10222 an like et all takes time.

There are many similar observations running through the transcripts that lead collectively to the conclusion that had the Army provided a means of achieving GCSE level qualifications, that the men would have completed them. Ade also suggested that they might have gone further, advocating that an Access course undertaken part time over 4 years would have required less than a half a day's study a week. Since education is fundamental to the acquisition of employment, the Armed Forces should make provision for those engaged in careers predominated by marshal skills sets.

### **3.2.7 Employment**

As the preceding chapters have established the task of initially finding work at a time of significant upheaval was met by most with trepidation. Educational deficiencies most certainly failed to promote an easy transfer into civilian labour markets or reduce the insecurities and instability raised by the loss of friends, income, accommodation and

livelihood. Over the years all but a handful have embarked on a definitive career trajectory, most having taken on a number jobs before finding their niche in occupations as diverse as ambulance drivers, community safety officers and residential carers. Fewer still embraced the notion that education would lead to job security and opportunities for promotion. On reflection their chances of finding well paid work beyond the PMSCs and get rich quick schemes promoted through self employment were always slim. Yet as a mark of their own resilience and to a certain extent lack of choice, most have remained in some form of employment or another, purchased or successfully rented their homes and brought up their families. Those who joined PMSCs have also come full circle with fewer opportunities post Iraq and Afghanistan they now face some stark choices.

**Bob:** April 11 2014

8972            or what wee man, it wasn't like I had that  
8973            much choice, and to be straight it's done  
8974            us true enough, I mean things are quiet  
8975            nay but there was no shortage of work  
8976            when we got out. I've paid of most the  
8977            house tay and Clare never liked me being  
8978            in doors anyhow [laughter] what to do next  
8979            is a bigger question.

Bob's discourse centres on his choice to join a PMSC [in November 2009], which as he suggests has kept him in well paid work and enabled him to pay off much of his mortgage, that said he now faces the unenviable choice of either continuing to work overseas at a reduced rate or starting out afresh as his peers had done. In a sense Bob avoided many of the challenges the cohort initially faced when they set out on their resettlement, yet after five years of overseas contracts he now faces many of the problems the like of Ade and Tam have now overcome. And whilst he and his partner invested their income prudently his future is as uncertain as it was at his point of discharge. To compound matters further, now in his early forties, he must find work with same skills-set and qualification that he had when he left the army.

By contrast Dez reflects on the previous six years with a sense of relief.

**Dez:** February 16 2015

9923            ...it was a ropy start, but we got there, and no thanks to the  
9924            army really, but care work is like dead rewarding some  
9925            uv them old lads done a bit like, an I think deserve more,  
2926            but I was proud as fuck to get um Veterans badges an

9927        since I'm chief of the mini bus I gets 'em down to the  
 9928        camp, fair play to the RSM makes 'em feel dead welcome  
 9929        in the mess like, but no I really fell on my feet here, quality  
 9930        an between you an me Taff it's a fucking relief. But it's  
 9931        about being open to change though [...] and listening to  
 9932        people, in the job things are different, there's no real  
 9933        trust in the boys, an the only people who get anything  
 9934        out of it are the Ruperts, they nick all the kudos on the  
 9935        backs of the lads. I don't resent that now but it's like  
 9936        an eye opener coz it's an abuse, your made to feel like  
 9937        inferior which fucks you up when you leave.

Dez having enlisted with no formal qualifications left the army as an NCO with two level 2 skills certificates in Literacy and numeracy skills. Now working in residential care, he has bridged the gaps in his own education having spent the past five years completing a range of residential care courses and through the medium of the Open University will qualify with BA in Health and Social Care in 2017. Dez found his transition into residential care relatively easy however engaging with education came later when he realised that a work based trajectory existed, for Dez the encouragement of his family and fact that he was an intuitive carer gave him the confidence to press on with his training.

Confidence and notions of aspiration to become something other than a soldier had led him into a hitherto unknown career. Yet at the point of his discharge with few qualifications of value or for that matter knowledge of civilian occupations Dez worked as a doorman and briefly as a fork lift-truck driver. His fortunes changed when his wife's employers advertised for member of staff with security experience to cover night duty, after a series of burglaries had led to the staff calling for a security guard to share the night shift. Dez had gained his Security Industry Authority Licence for door-work and was invited to join the shift; from there he went to strength to strength engaging with the broader care role and as suggested training.

**Col:** August 31 2015

10847        You laugh but its true, when we were in that flat  
 10848        I nearly lost it, and I was thinking about joining  
 10849        up again. The boss wasn't having none of that  
 10850        thank fuck.  
 10851 B:        What would have made finding work easier then?  
 10852 Col:        [...] Time really.  
 10853 B:        In what way?  
 10854 Col:        Well time to work it all out, time to retrain even  
 10855        if you done it in your own time, 'spose if they  
 10856        treated youz like adults would have bin a start

10857 instead of making youz feel like a c\*\*t coz you  
 10858 signed off. Naa they could do heaps, get youz  
 10859 on some courses youz could use out here be grand,  
 10860 your lot do CCTV stuff why couldn't we have a  
 10861 crack uh that?  
 10862 B: I think that's Int or Sigs but I take  
 10863 your point. So courses and time to get your heads  
 10864 round civi street, jobs like,  
 10865 right enough would ha bin  
 10866 for openers, truth be known they like tolerates youz  
 10867 when you're in, but got no place for youz when you  
 10868 let on you calling time. I regret not getting some proper  
 10869 education in though, cool-as now but they could uh done  
 10870 more, it's not like they don't know how things out here.

Colin now works as an IT security consultant and manages a small team with responsibility for several retail management companies in South Wales. In keeping with Colin many of the informants believe that the army regard their soldiers as children, insomuch as they detached them from the most basic responsibilities for their own lives, which leaves them at a distinct disadvantage. Ade when discussing his recruitment celebrated this point (Ade: 16 August 2012 Ls. 1442-1447) suggesting that he felt like the infantry were a cut apart and that as a sub culture were legitimately supported by others [notably the support arms] to be kept in the field, they were fed, clothed, housed and transported thus all they had to do was remain fit and parade at the allotted time.

Whilst an oversimplified analogy this seemingly positive outlook might be viewed in retrospect as a necessary condition considering their role, yet there is also much boredom in the infantry role and time spent undertaking mundane seemingly pointless and repetitious tasks, time that might be spent learning new skills or trades that fall beyond the infantry remit. Another common theme centres on the principle that the MoD are aware that poor educational achievement will hinder their futures as civilians yet do very little to address the issue unless in their interests to do so. Thus many continue to struggle to find rewarding forms of employment offering progression, which could be avoided if the military shared their broader in-house resources, particularly their training and education facilities including schools of engineering, catering, transport, logistics and communications.

### **2.7.8 Housing**

In relation to housing some scathing comments have been voiced over the intervening years, clarifying the MoDs failure to enable home ownership whilst providing their own often sub-

standard accommodation during service, being surpassed only by discourse deriding the government for all but abandoning its service personnel and their families post service. Not being able to register on Local Authority housing waiting lists until they moved from their bases meant that those who had not planned to move in with family would have to rent privately. The financial implications of finding deposits, key money<sup>114</sup> and a month's rent up-front in most cases exhausted savings, leaving many at that point not in full time employment, in a very difficult position. Those with young families found the going undeniably hard, principally because they needed to put down adequate roots and create routines that would enable their children to settle at school and in their new communities. Ian found the process frustrating and reflects on the period as one that could have been avoided.

**Ian:** October 24 2014

9721 We were talking about this last time [...] an I have given  
 9722 it some thought, [...] it wasn't so much that we weren't  
 9723 prepared, we'd put money aside and been up to see an  
 9724 estate agent, but were going to be charged whether we  
 9725 were living there or not, we couldn't plan ahead though  
 9726 because we couldn't afford to be paying to live in two  
 9727 places at the same time. And the army weren't going  
 9728 let us off accommodation; in fact they billed us large on  
 9729 on our last march out. When we had to find a place we  
 9730 started in Dots, 'cause we had no choice, took 3 month  
 9731 then to find a house and another 2 before we move in  
 9732 an this was when I was looking for work, an no the  
 9733 army weren't helpful at all; I spent days on the blower  
 9734 and it got me nowhere...

A sensation of being abandoned after years of living in married quarters was aggravated by the fact that the support networks in place simply failed to support. The Local Authority housing department referred them back to the Joint Service Housing Advice Office, who in turn referred them on to the CTP, who told them it was a Local Authority Housing Department matter since they were now civilians. All of these inconveniences added up to making what should have been an exciting and positive experience in to a stressful and unnecessarily complicated transition. For the single men the move into civilian housing was just as difficult, many without family or partners living locally being forced to stay with friends, until they could resolve their housing problems. For most to discover that they would be placed at the bottom of housing waiting lists came as a shock and contradiction to

<sup>114</sup> **Key Money:** A payment made to a building owner, manager or landlord by a potential tenant in an attempt to secure a desired tenancy. Key money can be considered a type of deposit on a housing unit such as an apartment unit.

what they had been advise during their initial resettlement briefing. Most had to start at the very beginning and learn from the ground up how the system worked. When we consider that Ian for example left home at 16 to live in barracks and was married and living in married quarters shortly after his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday it should come as no surprise that he found things difficult. Ian had at no time lived in a private dwelling that he was responsible for, that said others found the transition into their civilian homes far easier.

**Ade:** February 20 2015

10312       ...very lucky bud, an like you try to tell the  
10313       singlies to get it sorted but they just leaves  
10314       it to the last minute. I'd 'av done the same  
10315       mind coz you don't know how it works, me  
10316       I was lucky like I say, I'd been living out  
10317       for time an 'ad Bella on my case, all I 'ad  
10318       to do address my boxes.

A consensus of opinion leads to the conclusion that soldiers need more time and support to prepare for their discharges by spending scheduled and more importantly structured time periods in the communities they intend to settle. Well managed transition evolves from local knowledge and an appreciation of local housing trends and availability. The MoD could help with these notions of community familiarity yet fail to prepare soldiers effectively beforehand; ideally when the time comes for the leaver to move on they should know exactly how to employ their Pre-Exit leave periods affectively. The fact that the activities surrounding resettlement are self-driven is of itself unpractical, the cohort at the centre of this study were pedestrians in terms of their knowledge of the workings of the social world yet left to create a future based on flawed or at best naive approximations of their future social realities.

There are countless organisations either statutory, voluntary or private-sector that support people leaving the armed forces<sup>115</sup> with housing advice, there is no question that many of these organisations provide a first rate and up to date service and work in the interests of the Armed Forces community. The services they provided whilst relevant are however largely information based thus many present duplicated information and referral to a source sights, often UK Government and Local Authority websites. Information overload, data smog and infobesity are terms used to describe the difficulties people may experience when trying to understand an issue presented on the internet; which are often caused by the presence of too

much information. The effect of disseminating countless similar packages of information on individuals looking for specific data, have been well documented, Van Zandt, (2001) and others (Scardamaglia et al, 2013; Speier et al 1999; Schenk, 1997) suggesting that,

‘As the costs of generating and transmitting information fall,  
the main bottlenecks in communication networks are becoming  
the human receivers, who are overloaded with information.’  
(van Zandt, 2001)

Should a Service Leaver or Veteran enter the Google search term ‘Armed forces housing charities UK’ they face a return of some 1,560,000 results. Thus as Schenk (1997) proposes,

"The sheer volume of information which many of us are exposed  
to every day may actually impair our performance and add stress to  
our lives."  
(Schenk, 1997)

What’s missing is a more direct path to the traditional face-to-face interactions, commonly available through local council housing offices and drop-in centres, whose services are well signposted yet often, lost in the densely populated pages of our internet search engines. A reliance on the internet to disseminate often generalised information relating to housing [for example] can provoke irritation and confusion, particularly when the researcher is anxious to access accommodation. Likewise those seeking information pertaining to education and employment may well fall into a similar data trap.

<sup>115</sup>. See Appendix XVIII





## **Appendix xvii**

Transition to civilian life for members of the Armed Forces thinking of settling in Wales.

<http://www.army.mod.uk/structure/32942.aspx#32942>

### **Employment Links**

Regional employment links  
DWP - National Partnership Teams:  
Wales Employment links  
Becoming self employed  
British Forces Resettlement Services  
Career Transition Partnership CTP  
Civvy Street  
Department for Work and Pensions DWP  
Employment Support Allowance  
Find a job with Universal Jobmatch  
Heropreneurs  
How and when benefits are paid  
Income Support  
Job Centre Plus  
Jobcentre Plus

### **Services for the armed forces and their families**

Job Seekers – DirectGov Jobs  
Jobs4Reservists  
Looking for work if disabled  
Officers Association  
Prince's Trust Programmes and services  
Quest Online  
Recruit for Spouses  
Regular Forces Employment Association RFEA  
Remploy  
Veterans Skill Force Soldier On  
Sorted! – Employment Services  
Take 2 – Individual Support Project  
Universal Credit  
World Wide Volunteering

### **CTP Quick Guides**

Employment Guide  
Guide to approaching the employment market  
Guide to interviews and negotiations  
Guide to managing your career  
Guide to networking and social media

### **Finance and Pensions**

Pensions Calculator

Money Saving Expert  
Rewards for Forces

### **Other useful information**

Links Career Transition Partnership  
Quick links Service Leavers Pack  
Find your local council  
Regular Forces Employment Association  
Department for work and pensions  
Armed Forces Covenant  
Veterans UK  
SaBRE - Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers Transition videos  
Watch Transition guides on YouTube  
Downloads Options on Leaving Service Accommodation PDF 573.27 kb  
Welfare Guide for the Service Leaver PDF 1533.64 kb  
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National Careers Service  
UK National Recognition Service Information Centre – NARIC  
The Open University  
CTP Health and Education Quick Guide  
UCAS

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Welsh Government Housing portal  
Hafod Housing Association

#### **Housing links**

JSHAO - key documents  
Haig Housing Trust  
SPACES  
Housing Matters NW download  
Housing Matters Magazine  
Riverside  
SSAFA  
Shelter  
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Council housing and housing association

Co Ownership Housing  
Coming Home: Tailored housing for wounded soldiers  
CTP Quick Housing Guide  
National Housing Pathway for Ex-Service Personnel



## **Chapter VIII**

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

#### 8.0 Introduction

So a man picks up a rifle and goes to war, from 2017 this analogy will quite properly apply to women, who like millions before them, will go on to serve their country as combat infantry soldiers. In years past it became accepted that service made a smarter, cleaner, timely and more subservient civilian, and that the act of giving service was the patriotic and right thing to do. It seems only fair to conclude that each of the respondents honoured the principles of the social contract they swore as adolescents. For all the criticism launched at the Pre-Exit and resettlement period, very few disparaging comments were directed at the 'Battalion' level organisation. Each of the soldiers interviewed retain an enormous amount of respect and fondness for their Battalions with an emphasis placed on their Companies. Thus as 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion people for example, they pre-cursor their regimental identities and narratives quite deliberately with their Company titles. There is also an obvious respect for those they regard as immediate family and the individuals who once resided within in the platoon level of operation, a notion that permeates through their broader discourse and accounts of being. These factors became more apparent as the years following their service unfolded, the army as such being regarded as a bureaucratic mechanism that attracted much criticism, as opposed to the platoon, which attracted very little.

As far as their tales of service are concerned, humorous anecdotes rather than the account of raw experience, loss or the bitterness that once populated their discourse of the termination process now predominates. Self deprecation is also a common premise, likewise the skill and conduct of others, which are frequently reported with a sense of humility. By 2014, some four years after their resettlement each of the six who had formed the nucleus of the study had progressed [though to quite contrasting degrees] and were settled proper in South Wales. Their view of the experience of becoming and being soldiers has also moved on, each of those who survived the transition has found work or support in the case of those affected by mental health problems and have now found some degree of stability. *Citizen-self* it should be noted is easier to locate than that of the Veteran however, most as suggested in Chapter V, reserve open discourse on the topic of being soldiers to Remembrance Sunday dinks and the occasional reunion.

Housing as suggested in the introduction of Chapter VII, is central to wellbeing; shortfalls in Local Authority housing provision when combined with high degrees of unemployment have resulted disastrously for countless ex-servicemen, many of whom find themselves unable to cope, reach a crisis point and end up living rough. Difficulties faced in accessing affordable homes and failure to secure meaningful employment, find many on benefits, where poor life skills, particularly budgeting, led to debt and a deeper sense of social disconnection. The net outcome in many cases results in social exclusion, a loss of status and in the absence of financial security fiscal hardship. In the year running up to their exits, an estimated 6% of London's non-statutory single homeless population had served in the Armed Forces, with an additional 2,500 ex-Service personnel in statutorily homeless families, living in London on any given night (Johnsen *et al*, 2008, pg ix). Homeless ex-service personnel are predominantly ex-Army, almost all men most of whom are of white ethnic backgrounds. They also comprise of an older age profile than the wider homeless population (NAO, 2007; Dolan, 2005).

These Veterans are also more likely to be alcohol dependant, frequently use controlled substances and present mental health problems. Gee & Goodman (2013) and others (Goodwin *et al*, 2015; Van Staden, *et al* 2007; Iversen *et al*, 2005) have also commented at length on the numbers of young veterans who succumb to mental illness centring on depression resulting in heightened degrees of suicide. Failure to access work also leads to many employing their unique skill-set in acts of deviance resulting in custodial sentences. The Howard League for Penal Reform published its final report into former armed service personnel in prison in 2011; they estimate the most accurate figures regarding the ex-service prison population are those published by the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Justice. They assert that approximately 2,820, or some 3.5 per cent of all those currently in custody in England and Wales, had served in the Forces. Of this number the study estimated that 77 per cent of ex-servicemen in prison served in the Army.

Shortfalls in the culture of the Infantry to encourage educational advancement or opportunity to access meaningful and transferable forms of education and training has been a strand running through all but one component of the analysis. With the exception of the period during which these men were fully employed as combat infantrymen, their life chances and opportunity to thrive have been marred by a lack of transferable skills and basic education. Underperformance in the most basic Skills for Life centring on Literacy and Numeracy have



rendered many unsuitable for countless forms of employment in which they might otherwise have thrived. And whilst many go on to bridge the educational gap, they were neither encouraged nor supported appropriately during their service to address such deficiencies as a consequence or component of that service. Education in the infantry is routinely neglected; indeed its shortfall in many cases shaped the initial selection of the infantry branch as an occupation of choice for many from the outset of their careers,<sup>116</sup> since many were disgruntled adolescent's legitimately fleeing school.

This has been a condition that has continued to play its part in disabling life-chances and opportunities to access meaningful employment, as well as better comprehend housing and welfare entitlements post service. Life Skills centring on budgeting, cooking or the most primary competences required to live as an independent person could and should be taught as an ongoing component of maturation. Whilst a radical notion, it would appear that in the absence of marriage, or chance to live 'out of barracks', these opportunities fall few and far between. The men eat centrally, thus have no need to learn how to cook or budget for food. Have their accommodation charges stopped out of their wages, thus pay no rent or utilities bills in the manner that all young people living independently must regularly perform. Nor do they develop a relationship to the social world that might raise their awareness to the benefit system, housing market or cost of living beyond their brief periods of leave.

Indeed leave often constitutes a false sense of security since it is brief, funded and generally activity intensive. Unlike holiday entitlements earned from civil employment, leave is often facilitated at home; social interaction therefore has a tendency to be viewed by many as celebratory, particularly during the post deployment leaves. However leave is far from typical, the social detachment shaped by service distorts social reality, presenting leave as a condition devoid of the more often mundane aspects of life, aspects which remain invisible until the serviceman becomes a Veteran in earnest. Only then as the weeks become months will the Veteran, come to realise the measure of living a 'normal' existence. The initial transition period [during resettlement] is vague and unlike any of their former experiences of more often supported and successful transition. There is no distinct termination point, or parade under which one might symbolically draw a line. The reinvention of self will for the first time in a decade be unrestricted, conceived in the absence of significant uniformed

<sup>116</sup> **House** of Commons Defence Committee, Duty of Care, Vol 2, Ev 70

others, the presentation of self as a publicly confirmed artefact no longer established through engagement with regimental lore, or progression along an indelibly fixed trajectory.

Disadvantage results, in most cases, from the embodied significance soldier-*self* posits in martial service, and the activities which arise from social conditions symbolised in the military ritual. He has been embroiled since his teens in customs centred in mutual participation, reproduced via defining interactions like his basic training, where as a rite of passage he aspired to become one with an elite. His journey, yet incomplete, required an operational aspect wherein the activities of daily life brought him into the closest proximity to death and the taking of life, each self-defining activities (Winslow, 1998/1999). Further exposure to additional military tasks personified by the military lifestyle ensured his submission to this greedy sub-culture (Coser, 1974). Yet, in the long run, practical limitations emerge telling of what became a blinkered means of appropriation of existence, potentially rendering him deficient in relation to his ownership of knowledge required to approach the construction of a citizen-*self*.

When exit from service became necessary a limited form of realisation existed in the mind of soldier-*self*, limited in the sense that he was often unable to posit himself beyond the role of soldier. The shaping of a distinctly civilian-*self* in this instance has become stalled; giving way to an existential manner arising from the habituation of an existence in what is essentially a distinctly specialised occupation. Therein the individual's unique position as a self-determining agent responsible for the authenticity of his choices became somewhat blurred, since the supplementary yet all consummating character of soldier-*self* had taken hold. Forms of associated communication exchanged through an existential manners and form of life arising in relation to abstract meaning added a further layer of handicap to the already problematic task of resettlement. It might be argued that such conditions result from the embedded immediacies and reference to restricted condition encountered in the military sphere, his disconnection from the social realities of a secular existence rendering him a stranger in the social sphere.

Unchecked his transition moved uneasily forward to the point where as a civilian his resettlement merged with the rest of his life. The activity of becoming a civilian recollected as one characterized by a sense of unpreparedness and disdain for the system. The system in this case being the MoD's, [since none would deride their former units], had failed to prime

him adequately for either his reinvention as a citizen or transition into new areas of occupation, and disdain centring on the notion that the MoD knew what lay ahead yet did very little to ensure best outcomes. Therein the MoD as the department of government with ultimate responsibility, are negligent in their duty of care to those who had served their country with diligence and distinction.

## **8.2 Recommendations**

### **Mental Health**

Current resettlement practice is both detailed and thorough; those responsible for the discharge of resettlement activities are likewise professional people who often find themselves in roles that do not necessarily fit with their initial career choices to be soldiers. Where welfare briefings require an assessment of likely vulnerability to social exclusion many simply lack the skills to assess the complex needs of Service Leavers effectively, as might be expected of a SSAFA<sup>117</sup> social worker or QARANC<sup>118</sup> mental health professional. Future leavers aged over 22 [in 2016] will almost certainly have been involved in operations in Afghanistan and other locations where the experience of armed conflict may well impact on a soldiers mental health.

If the task of assessing need were transferred to either SSAFA or the QARANC a more accurate assessment could be achieved. An early diagnosis invariably leads to early treatment, thus minimising the likelihood of future debilitating mental health conditions. Many soldiers either unwittingly or deliberately conceal their mental health status in order that they are not retained in service until the condition is treated. If those with mental health problems could be transferred to the Community Veteran Mental Health and Wellbeing Service then many could be treated in their areas of intended resettlement, and benefit from the support of family and local support networks.

### **Education**

In 2016 Parsons TQ [a global education provider] won the contract to teach soldiers Leadership & Initiative at the Infantry Training Centre in Catterick. They also run the

<sup>117</sup> **SSAFA:** Sailors Soldiers Airman and Families Association. SSAFA employ graduate Social Workers

<sup>118</sup> **QARANC:** Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps. graduate Psychiatric Nurses

Defence 6<sup>th</sup> Form College Welbeck and Apprenticeships for Engineers and Technical Officers of the Royal Logistics Corps and Royal Engineers. They will moreover be responsible for delivering the vocational education and other parts of the skills training to learners at the Army Foundation College Harrogate, centring on a BTEC Level 3 Certificate in Public Services, Functional Skills L1-2, Leadership Initiative and Physical Education. Yet with the exception of Welbeck a highly selective 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, none of the other military training establishments will teach or enable re-sits in GCSE English and Maths. As suggested in this study the importance of academic rather than skill or functional training is one endorsed in Alison Wolf's 2011 'Review of Vocational Education'.

In recent years we have actually reduced the numbers and proportions of 16-19 year olds sitting for and achieving GCSE re-sits post-16. Instead, they have been steered into courses (or simply into tests) of 'key skills', which are simple and, in progression terms, valueless. More recently, the previous government moved to replace key skills with 'functional skills'. However, these suffer from major and fundamental flaws.

(The Wolf Report, 2011, p170)

The Wolf Report now five years old is implicit in its resolve that key and functional skills training should not be viewed as substitutes for GCSEs. In 2013, the British government declared that all pupils who fail to achieve a good pass [A\*- C] in GCSE English or maths by the time they finish secondary school must continue to study the subjects in post-16 education until they achieve these qualifications<sup>119</sup>. Since access to AFC Harrogate can be accomplished by Junior Entrants as young as 15½ years of age, many will likely not have sat their GCSEs.

Furthermore a vast swathe of recruits to the infantry arrive with no qualifications<sup>120</sup> consequently the award of a contract to supply educational support to either Harrogate or Catterick should have included a compulsory GCSE provision. Clearly Wolf's recommendations and the Government's own education policy seem to have been overlooked. Parsons TQ represents the future of education where the army is concerned, yet is complicit in this collaboration with the MoD, of failing to provide recruits with this most basic opportunity to access these vital qualifications. GCSEs in English and Maths need to be introduced as standard qualifications within the army's common syllabus; the delivery of

<sup>119</sup> UK Gov 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2013: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/major-reform-will-help-hundreds-of-thousands-of-young-people-get-good-jobs>

<sup>120</sup> The House of Commons Defence Committee, reporting in 2010 on the MoD's Duty of Care for Junior Entrants, reported that 60% of Junior infantrymen left school with no qualifications.

such courses for candidates struggling with these subjects could feasibly be delivered over an extended period, notionally during their minimum engagement of 4 years following basic training. Ironically Parsons also delivers job specific training in pastoral care for Army's Unit Welfare Officers.

The current system of Enhanced Learning Credits need to be modified to a point where all service personnel become eligible on completion of their training, rather than requiring registration. Courses offered need also to be tailored to those that offer enhanced opportunities for gaining employment, rather than interest or leisure based pursuits such as fly fishing, PADI Sports Diving or sailing. Additionally the practice of offering public sponsorship for the completion of courses designed to enable ex-service personnel to access Personnel Military Security Companies should be dismantled, since courses in close protection or body-guarding fall some considerable way from the spirit of the scheme. They also place individuals already likely to suffer from mental health problems at additional risk, whilst distancing them further from social reengagement.

### **Housing**

Accommodation is a basic human necessity, for soldiers wishing to enter private housing as substitute for Defence Estates Married Quarters the way should be clear and inclusive with the delivery of existing systems of enablement opened up to both married and single Service Personnel alike. For those leaving the Armed Forces a system of reserving council provisions should be made available prior to their actually moving into their area of intended resettlement. Likewise the Government's assurances of creating a special status for Service Leavers needs to be made good and universally applied throughout the UK. Similarly provisions to educate Service personnel in the rudiments of private tenancies and home purchase needs to be embedded into Armed Forces culture and education long before the Pre-Exit and resettlement period.

### **Employment**

The British Army advertise 200 different trades thus with the introduction of a GCSE scheme soldiers having served in the infantry for four years should be encouraged to transfer to the support and service arms and assume trades and specialist occupations that offer recognisable transfer routes into civilian labour markets. Corresponding schemes might also resolve recruitment and retention issues and to a degree enable more realistic impressions of occupations that fall beyond the infantry role, as well as form the foundation for occupations

that might follow ones service. In the same way regular exchanges between trade based formations from within the army and those of the infantry might encourage notions of where to transfer to.

### **Recruitment & Training**

The practice of recruiting minors into the Armed Forces needs to end. Since the Army Cadets Force retains its young people up to the age of 18 an accelerated pathway could be established in collaboration with the Territorial Army and Volunteer Reserve; wherein the cadet post 16 years of age might complete Phase 1 of their Basic Training under the wing of Reserve Forces whilst attending school or college. An extended period of time spent in civilian space would raise the young person's awareness to the workings of society, whilst they further their academic or skills based education alongside their military training. Budgets currently spent on exclusively military trade apprenticeships could be redistributed into local education and training provisions where courses feeding into a final military familiarisation phase could adequately provide the service and support elements of the British army with their technical, artificer and artisan trades.

If we are to believe the notion promulgated by military recruiters that regular and reserve forces are as one in terms of their capability to perform then this initiative should be embraced by the MoD. This endeavour would also facilitate the need for many to revisit their GCSEs in military space, thus addressing in principle one of the recommendations discussed above. At present a cadet who has attained the proficiencies of a 4 Star or Master Cadet would be expected to begin their basic training from scratch. Likewise for the Reservist wishing to enter into a Regular engagement. It seems only rational that to avoid duplication in terms of repeating basic training that to bring the broader Armed Forces community [notably the ACF, TA & Regular Army] together would save money whilst producing the same career start point. More importantly it would establish a more aspirational element to the agency of soldiers at their point of exit.

### **Pre-Exit and Resettlement**

The thesis was conceived to assess why poor outcomes follow certain forms of military service. The case discussed being that of a career in the infantry and impact of such a career on the average soldier when time came for him relocate back into civilian space. As suggested it was not necessarily his recruitment however contrived, or the performance of his duties in the field that brought poor outcomes. Moreover a combination of the remoteness of

his occupational lifecycle and specifics of his trade impaired his future prospects, soldier-*self* was imagined on the back of greedy institution that sought to make fraudulent claims of self-advancement that became impossible to realise. Soldier-*self* existed on a fine thread, one supported vast bureaucracy of hidden military support networks that enabled him to function in the very worst circumstances. When that thread was severed, he was left with very little by way of transferability, thus his exit requirements needed to be supported with the same diligence as his service had been.

Therein, regardless of the length of his service he should receive the fullest support and unlike his career with-in, resemble at least some of the features described above. His Pre-Exit and resettlement need to be managed with the greatest care and proactive delivery of support, rather than a self driven campaign which too often leads to failure particularly for those who lack the tools to sustain the journey. Each of the aspects discussed would in no small way offer him a degree of unrestricted fairness as opposed to the feigned support presented in the full knowledge that in most cases it will fail to address his needs, in keeping with his service and that which he fairly deserves. Resettlement is a thorough and well devised article for those who comprehend its nature and purpose, for those who do not it is simply a waste of time and will in the long run fail to offer the very services it purports to offer.

Perhaps the Army Reserve might be viewed as the best place to situate a soldier for a significant portion of his final tour; a year spent in ones' local TA unit would at least ensure some degree of local employment knowledge, assistance in finding and funding accommodation and time to settle ones family. It would also advantage the military since those undertaking resettlement possess higher degrees of military skill and knowledge than their territorial counterparts, likewise the TA soldier possesses elevated degrees of local knowledge particular to housing, health and employment.

## **Conclusion**

A deepening divide in the attitudes of many would-be recruits can be seen in recent adjustments to the MoDs method of calculating Monthly Service Personnel Statistics<sup>121</sup>. Data have been adjusted since October 2016, insomuch as the definition of a trained soldier

<sup>121</sup> Following public announcements and public consultation the definition of Army Trained Strength has changed. From 1 October 2016, UK Regular and Gurkha personnel in the Army who have completed phase 1 training (basic Service training) are now considered Trained personnel.

has now shifted to anyone who has completed their first 6 weeks of basic training, thus enabling the army to meet its National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review (2015) commitment to improve support to UK resilience. The SDSR had previously set a target strength of 82,000 [trained personnel] for the Army, which stood on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 at 83,770. Previously, only personnel who had completed Phases 1 and 2 of their training (eg. the CIC) were considered trained soldiers, without the adjustment a shortfall of some 4,000 soldiers would be presented. Whilst the definition was changed in the name of national security and home defence, it cannot be ignored that the army is struggling to recruit and that without the adjustment it would have failed to achieve its own targets. The proposed recommendations serve to enhance the careers of soldiers enabling them to posit themselves in countless occupational roles and therein facilitate a far less problematic transition, leading to the successful reinvention of a versatile citizen-*self*.





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## Glossary of Military Slang

### Numerals

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- 432** AFV 432 (Armoured Fighting Vehicle) also see Pack
- 6 p's** Prior Planning and Preparation Produces a Perfect Performance
- 66** 66mm LAW (Light Antitank Weapon) replaced with MATADOR
- 7 p's** Prior Planning and Preparation Prevents a Piss Poor Performance  
Poor Preparation and Planning Produces a piss poor performance
- 84** 84mm MAW (Medium Antitank Weapon) Carl Gustav, portable reusable anti tank recoilless rifle produced by Saab
- 105** 1. FV105 Sultan CVRT  
2. 105 mm Self-propelled Gun, Abbot-FV 433

### A

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**AK** “*Avtomat Kalashnikova*” Kalashnikov. Derived from the AK - 47 and the popular culture surrounding it, generic reference to enemy small arms.

**Ally** Stylish, tough or 'hard' looking, a battlefield fashionista - desirables include having a beard, using a different rifle, carrying vast amounts of ammunition

**Andy Capp's Commandos** – Army Catering Corps (1965-2009) formally the Catering Corps was a component of the Royal Army Service Corps

**ARAB** Arrogant Regular Army Bastard  
Another Real Army Bastard

**ARMOURBARMA** using a heavily armoured vehicle to drive over unsearched ground;

**Armoured Farmers** – 3 RTR - Royal Tank Regiment  
32 (Armoured) Engineer Regiment, Royal Engineers

### B

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**The badge** Company Sergeant Major, named for the large crown on the WO2 rank badge. Now more usually used to refer to the Guards RSM or Regimental Sergeant Major. "You're to report to the Badge"



<b>BADMIN</b>	Used to describe a soldier with poor organisational skills or inability to look after their kit properly.
<b>Ball of chalk</b>	Situation deteriorated beyond repair, about as much use as a ball of chalk, all went for a ball of chalk
<b>Ballbagged</b>	exhausted – out of energy
<b>Bandy</b>	(RM) musician (i.e. member of the <u>Royal Marines Band Service</u> )
<b>BARMA</b>	Drills and procedures for searching for IEDs (improvised explosive devices), normally using a vallon detector.
<b>Basha</b>	Sleeping quarters, Malay for Hut. Usually a poncho
<b>Battle Taxi</b>	Warrior Armoured Personnel Carrier
<b>Beer Tokens</b>	Money
<b>Benny</b>	A Falkland Islander, from Benny on Crossroads style woolly hats. His character had mild learning difficulties, thus a politically incorrect and insulting address
<b>Biff / biffer</b>	Someone who spends a lot of time on sick parade
<b>Biffed</b>	Being ill or injured
<b>Biff chit</b>	Sick note
<b>Bimble</b>	Walking slowly without intent – usually a bimble is a patrol that has no specific destination or tactical purpose.
<b>Binned</b>	discharged
<b>Blag</b>	To acquire something
<b>Bleeps</b>	Royal Signals
<b>Blighty</b>	The UK, the name was taken from a province in India...
<b>Blue Jobs</b>	RAF
<b>Bobfoc</b>	Body off Baywatch, Face off Crimewatch
<b>Bodysnatcher</b>	(Army) stretcher bearer
<b>Bootneck</b>	A Royal Marine

<b>Booties</b>	Royal Marines
<b>Bone</b>	1. not good, something pointless. 2. lazy "Bone idle"
<b>Bondook</b>	Rifle
<b>Box</b>	MI5/6 operatives
<b>Brat</b>	(Army) child of service family usually proceeded by pad's = pad's brat. (RAF) Apprentice
<b>Brassing up</b>	Shooting a lot of rounds of ammunition and creating a small mountain of spent shell cases next to your fire position
<b>Brass Swap</b>	Firefight
<b>Brew</b>	(Army/RAF) a hot drink, a cup of tea or coffee. "Want a brew?" = would you like a hot drink?
<b>Brown job</b>	(RM/RAF) the British Army soldier
<b>Bull</b>	High polish on Parade Boots or heightened adherence to cleaning with the aim of creating a highly polished surface. May be extended to sweeping or any activities regarded as pointless
<b>Bunch of fives</b>	punch
<b>Buzz</b>	gossip, rumours
<b>Buckshee</b>	easy/free "I've just got a buckshee day sack" spare kit acquired without proper chits
<b>Bine</b>	(Army) Cigarette (Woodbine)
<b>BV</b>	1. Boiling Vessel 2. Arctic version of the Warthog
<b>C</b>	
<b>Casevac</b>	Casualty evacuation
<b>Charlie</b>	Vietnam era - the enemy Viet Cong
<b>Charlie Delta / CD</b>	casualty dead
<b>Charlie Foxtrot</b>	Chaotic situation with all plans disintegrating in all directions

<b>CF</b>	referring to above: Cluster Fuck
<b>Chin-strapped</b>	(Army) tired, knackered
<b>Chunky</b>	Pioneer
<b>Civi</b>	Civilian
<b>Civies</b>	Civilian clothing
<b>Clacky</b>	(Army) chocolate
<b>Colonel Gadaffi</b>	NAAFI
<b>Compo</b>	Composite Ration (also called rats)
<b>Contact wait out</b>	The words most soldiers dream of and fear saying in equal measure. They're the first thing you say when you've been engaged by the enemy.
<b>Collie</b>	Combined Services Correction Centre Colchester (also see Glasshouse)
<b>Coy</b>	abbreviation for Company
<b>Crab or crabfat</b>	(Royal Navy) a person in the RAF. Crabfat was a naval slang for a treatment for pubic crabs which happened to be the same colour as the RAF uniform. Also from a drill move where the men move sideways / diagonally only practiced by the RAF
<b>Crab</b>	Crappy Royal Air Force Bastards
<b>CRAP-HAT</b>	A unit judged as inferior. For the Parachute Regiment, that includes every other unit and regiment anywhere in the world.
<b>Crow</b>	Cant Read or Write. Derived from a term used with WW1 recruits, now refers to a new recruit or inexperienced soldier, or Combat Recruit of war!
<b>CV</b>	Command Vehicle

## D

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<b>Daisy cutter</b>	(RAF) faultless landing
<b>Dhobi dust</b>	(Navy/RM/Army) washing powder (detergent); derived from the Malay word <i>dobi</i> , meaning "washing" or "laundry"
<b>Dhobi Engine</b>	(RAF/Navy/RM/Army) Washing machine.

**Diffy**        deficient; to lose a piece of your issued kit, (General) “Im diffy my Burgan”, or “I’m diffy the rent”

**Dip stick**    (RM) idiot

**Donkey Walloper**    Household Cavalry

**Doss down**(Army)    To sleep

**Doss Bag**    (RM/Army) Sleeping bag

**DS**        Directing Staff, often referring to Special Forces instructors

**D shape**    A pasty of that shape

## **E**

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**Egg Banjos**        Fried egg sandwiches

## **F**

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**FUBAR**        (Army) acronym, Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition. "The situation's gone FUBAR!" = it's a mess!

**Fairy**        (RAF) Avionics Technician

**Fat Albert** (RAF) Hercules transport plane

**FIB**        acronym, Fighting In Buildings

**FIBUA**        acronym, Fighting In Built Up Areas

**Fighting Irons**        Knife Fork & Spoon

**Fish-head** (Navy/ RAF) Fleet Air Arm Slang term given by WAFUs to members of the General Service. Slang term for a member of the Royal Navy.

**Fizzer**        (RAF) Form 252 Charge sheet

**Flap**        Panic

**Fobbit**        someone who doesn’t leave the Forward Operating Base (from Hobbit and FOB)

**Full-screw**        Corporal

**FYB** (Army) Fill Your Boots. Military Banter help yourself, carry on

## G

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**Gash** (RN/RM) waste such as food wrappers

**Gash** (RAF) Poor quality workmanship or inadequate kit/food

**Gat** (1970s Army) derived from GAT .77 air pistol, infantryman's personal weapon (the SLR)

**Getting Eyes On** seeing something

**The Glasshouse** (Army) military prison

**Gleaming** to describe something as good, desirable or brilliant. A particular favourite of Guards, who enjoy their shiny boots and buttons more than most.

**GUCCI** A reference to a desired piece of kit, as in: "That sleeping bag is a Gucci piece of kit."

**Gong** a campaign medal

**Gonk Bag** sleeping bag

**Grollies** Underpants

**Guz** (RN/RM) Plymouth, said to have originated from the World War I radio ID letters for the city's port (GUZ)

**Gen** Genuine "What's the gen?" What's the true gossip?

**Green Slime** Army, Intelligence Corps personnel

**Grow bag** (RAF) Slang term for Aircrew SNCO on account of being made a SNCO purely due to their job.

**Gym Queen** Physical Training Instructor

## H

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**Hack It** To endure or to do something without complaint

**Headshed** Planning room, part of military intelligence or senior offices

## J

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**Jack** Selfish, lazy, workshy. "He's Jack as f\*\*\*!" = He's as selfish/lazy/workshy as can be! Sarcastically, "I'm alright, Jack, pull the ladder up!" = You're being selfish!

**Jack, to** to give up

**Jack brew** making oneself a cuppa without making one for anyone else, especially on a cold and wet exercise.

**Jack Tar** (RN) A sailor, sometimes 'Jolly Jack Tar' from Tarpaulin

**Jenny** Jenny Wrens members of the (former) Women's Royal Naval Service

**Jock** (Army) a Scottish soldier or a soldier in a Scottish regiment (now amalgamated into the Royal Regiment of Scotland-Black Jock = soldier of the [former] Black Watch (Royal Highlanders)

**Jockey** RAF Pilot

**Joey** Parachute Regiment recruit

## K

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**KFS** knife, fork and spoon

**Kiwi** New Zealand military

## L

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**Lance Jack** Lance Corporal

**Long Range Snipers** Royal Artillery

## M

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**Maggot** Sleeping Bag

**Matelot** A Navy sailor, from French

a **Mick** Irish Guardsman

**Mincing** doing things with no specific purpose

**MINTUA** "Mind In Neutral - Thumb Up Arse" Not having a clue

**Mod plods** Ministry Of Defence Police

<b>Mong</b>	Idiot
<b>Monkey</b>	Military Police
<b>MUFTI</b>	civilian dress; also used in a non-military context in other Commonwealth countries
<b>Muckergee</b>	A comrade a friend brother in arms. Brought back with the Army from India. Also Mucker and Mucka

## N

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<b>NAAFI</b>	Navy, Army and Air Force Institute; TriService, shops, bars...
<b>Nails</b>	Hard (as nails)
<b>NATO</b>	How do you want your brew? NATO? = Milk +2 sugars, standard (NATO) issue
<b>NIG</b>	New In Germany, New Intake Group (in training)
<b>NUTTY</b>	(RN/RM) term for Chocolate

## O

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<b>Oggin</b>	(RN) water. "On the oggin" = at sea
<b>Oggy</b>	Army Royal Engineers Combat Engineer
<b>Oppo</b>	1. A friend an associate someone who does back to back tasks with you your opposite number 2. Operations officer

## P

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<b>Pac</b>	see: AFV 432
<b>Pad</b>	married quarters
<b>Paddy</b>	an Irish soldier [other than Irish Guards]
<b>Padre</b>	generic term for Chaplain
<b>Para</b>	member of the Parachute Regiment
<b>Pit</b>	Bed
<b>Plumber</b>	(RAF) Armourer
<b>Pongo</b>	(RN/RM) Army soldier. Everywhere the Army goes the Pong-goes

**PONTI Plank** Person of No Tactical Importance. A more polite form of REMF (unpopular) member of the Royal Artillery

## R

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**Rag order** squad in disarray / in a mess

**Ranker** A Late Entry Officer (LEO)-someone who has risen through the ranks and attained the status of a Commissioned officer

**Razz Man** Regimental Sergeant Major

**Recce** reconnaissance

the **Regiment** Special Air Services

**REMF** Rear Echelon Mother Fucker. Originated in US forces during the Vietnam War, also used to refer to 'uncool' styles of dress or attitudes associated with those from 'rear echelons'

**Rigger** (RAF) Parachute Packer

**Rigger** (RAF) Aerial Erector

**RHQ** Regimental Headquarters

**Rock Ape** RAF Regiment, members of

**Rodney** (Army) MC Commissioned officer

**Ropes** Restriction of Privileges-Local [Battalion/Coy] punishment for Misdemeanours

**Rubber Dagger** (RM) Royal Marines Reservist

**Rupert** Commissioned officer, including guards, medical officers (physicians) Upper MC/UC

## S

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**Sangar** derived from the Hindi; Safe place. Usually a low wall with side wings built to give cover from fire in areas where digging is difficult or impossible.

**Scaley** (RAF) Married airmen/women living in quarters

**Scaley Brat** (RAF) Airmen's/Women's offspring



**Scaley, Scaley back** (Army) Royal Signals radio operator, from WWII Scale E Pay

**Scoff** (Army) Food

**Scran** (RN/RM) Food

**Secret Squirrels** MI5/6 operatives

**Septic Tank** Yank (American) A Listerine = anti-septic or anti-American

**SNAFU** WWII British (generic) Situation Normal, all fucked up

**SOGI** (generic) Senior Officers Good Idea - detrimental term

**Snowdrop** Military Police (Specifically Royal Air Force Police - in relation to their white SD caps)

**Spin a Dit** (RN) tell a story

**Sprog** (Generic) Recruit or Soldier under Training

**Squaddies** (Army) soldiers

**Square away** sort your kit out / finish off

**Square Bashing** marching around the parade square

**Squidgy boats** (Army) Special Boat Squadron (RM) Special Forces

**Stag** Period of time one spends on Guard duty

**Sticky** (Army) chocolate bar

**Stick Man** RSM or soldier let off guard duty early for being well turned out

**Still/Stills** Still a Bennie (see above) after orders not to refer to them in a derogatory way ("Still a Benny")

**STAB** (Army) Stupid Territorial Army Bastard

**Sumpy** (RAF) Aircraft Engine Technician

**Swamp Donkey** Someone who wets the bed

**SWEAT** Soldier With Experience And Training, The Old-Sweats never do weekend stags

**Swing the Lantern** (Army) tell a tale, often followed by ...and pull up a sand bag.

## T

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**TAB** (Army) acronym for Tactical Advance to Battle, a forced march in battle dress order, either ending in battle or during training

**Tab** (Army) cigarette

**Taffy, Taff** a Welsh soldier (Not used in Welsh Regiments, unless as Regimental Mascots [Goats] name)

**Take a knee** a short rest on a patrol

**Terry** Terry Taliban. Common reference to the enemy. The American expression is T-Man.

**Tommy Atkins,** soldier in the British Army, Tom a young soldier in a Scottish Regiment or the Parachute Regiment

**Trapping kit –** posh clothes worn on a night out with the intent of gaining male/female attention

**Troopy** Troop Commander / Leader (Armoured units)

**Triple Crown** (generic), to vomit, urinate and defecate in your place of sleep due to excess drink.

**Tubes** Mortars

## U

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**Ugly** An Apache gunship helicopter -

**Ulu** (Army) a remote or rural area, from the Malay language; "Out in the ulu" = away from base and populated areas.

## W

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**Walt / Walter Mitty** A fantasist who makes up stories about their time in service, or pretending to have served and won unearned medals. From the movie "The secret life of Walter Mitty"

**Warry (or War-y)** aggressive, militaristic; can be an insult.

**Wet** (RN) a hot drink, a cup of tea or coffee. "Want a wet?" = would you like a hot drink?

**Wibble** (RN, spec. Submarine Service) crazy; "to go wibble" means to go crazy after being at sea too long

**Wooden-top** (Army) a soldier from the Foot Guards, Bear Skins traditionally had a wooden plate fitted to protect the wearer from lancers

## **Y**

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**YOMP** (RM) Your Own Marching Pace. To force march with a heavy load [also see tab]

**You're** on your own time now"

The polite way of saying "You're not going anywhere until this is done.

**YOYO** Young **O**fficer, an officer in training

## **Z**

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**Zob** a commissioned officer