



POPPY AMBASSADORS

Colin & Heather Smith

Regiment Royal Green Jackets
Served from 1972 - 1987



Served in Northern Ireland in 1977, 81, 82-84 and 85-86. Undertook a United Nations operation to Cyprus in 1976. In Hong Kong between 1978-80 and in the Falklands in 1985.

Have very good memories in general apart from some obvious traumatic and emotional periods in Northern Ireland losing dear friends and colleagues.

Fortunate enough to avoid serious injury, despite being in major conflicts.

Found out about support available through ex-colleagues. Received supermarket vouchers, rent advance and deposit guarantee. Also white and brown goods.

The help has enabled us to rent a flat which is in a far better location for job searching. It has enabled us to survive whilst we were penniless and totally without any help between May and July 2011. It has also helped us to regain some sanity and much needed peace having, literally, slept on the floors of friends and relatives for 6 months.

We have been a couple since 1987, marrying in 1995. We have many dear friends and family. Heather's father served in the REME. Her grandfather was RSM at Woolwich Arsenal. Colin's father was sergeant in KRRC. His eldest brother served in the RAF and I also served in the Green Jackets.

Sadly we are both currently unemployed, having returned from the Gambia during turbulent times after carrying out voluntary work for 9 years. Colin's work experience is maintenance, dry-lining and warehouse. Heather's is litigation, administration, payroll and bookkeeping. We enjoy cryptic crosswords, reading and quizzes.

The Legion are our 'Angels'. We returned from the Gambia with 2 suitcases and nothing else in the world. Without the help of the RBL we do not know where we would have ended up. Despite the tolerance of relatives and friends, patients was, understandably wearing thin and the RBL at least gave us the opportunity to buy our own food and make a fresh start.

Because of the above, all our friends and relatives are fully aware of our feelings as we cannot thank the RBL enough. The aftercare to ex-service personnel is second to none.

"I joined the forces to follow family tradition, and to contribute to serving Queen and Country"

"The RBL has enabled us to survive whilst we were penniless and totally without any help"





Keith Burton

Served : Army 1978 -1979

Royal Marines 1979 -1991

UDR 1991- 1998

This was a boyhood dream. The UDR was a stepping stone to joining the Royal Marines.

Started learning Highland Pipes at 17 and was invited by members of the Bleary Pipe Band to apply for UDR at 18 to be part of UDR Pipes & Drums. This I did, but my personal desire was to join Royal Marines and passed out with Green Beret (and most improved recruit at PT) on 19th Oct, 79.

Deployed to 40 CDO in NI Oct 79 – April 80. Unit returned to Plymouth.

Deployed to Falkland Islands (Op Corporate). Numerous air attacks and friend had fatal injuries during one Argentine sortie. Undiagnosed combat PTSD. Drinking and debt difficulties.

Managed to deal with internal conflicts myself and qualified as Telecommunications technician class 11 but not quite happy fixing radios. Felt I should return to NI and contribute to the development of peace.

Left Royal Marines and joined UDR in 1991. Numerous murders in hometown of Lurgan including two friends from school and colleagues from battalion. One colleague had both legs blown off above the knee with under vehicle boobytrap.

The continual traumatic stress of ongoing operations took its toll on my mental health (and my wife) and I was admitted to Duchess of Kent's Military Hospital in 1996. I was medically discharged from Service in 1998.

Was granted accommodation in Royal British Legion in 1998, but treatment for PTSD was not readily available at that time and as my late wife's undiagnosed terminal illness progressed, this combination of circumstances lead to marital breakdown, her death and me becoming homeless.

Since my wife's death in 2006, I have received extensive treatment for my PTSD/depression through Combat Stress/NHS. This has allowed me a better understanding of myself and this disorder and to deal more effectively with the problems generated eg homelessness, debt, drinking etc.

Over the years I have had help from the RBL and at this point in my recovery I feel I am ready to give something back in terms of being a Poppy Ambassador.

I am currently engaged to Dorothy (a yoga teacher & holistic therapist) and together we use my musical skills as a Highland Piper and singer to entertain senior citizens in residential nursing homes.

I am widowed with a daughter & partner with 3 year old grandson. Engaged to Dorothy (need somewhere to live). Stepson on RBL Village. Unable to work because of mood swings etc., but with right support (someone close to keep me grounded) I can pursue my therapeutic activities – singing and playing guitar/highland pipes entertaining older folks in residential nursing homes.

I love being outdoors and camping and caravanning. Trying to develop training regime around injuries and need to lose weight. Have recently completed CLAiT IT with the Winfield Trust and have just started CLAiT Plus. Because entertainment is so beneficial for me, I want to help Dorothy build a business entertaining folks so that she gets some reimbursement for enabling me to perform. (She has given up some holistic therapy & yoga teaching to help me). We hope to get married soon (currently on Debt Management Plan with debts paid off in 2 years time).

The RBL is a superb organisation with a diverse range of help and staff and volunteers who understand the collective and individual psyche of the ex-service community. It provides a firm platform for helping those in whatever need and particularly those with physical and psychological injuries as a result of their service. If it wasn't for the RBL, I would probably be dead or in prison now!

The RBL provides a focal point for the ex-service community, giving an identity to those with difficulties adjusting to civilian life. The motto "Service not Self" reflects the attitudes of ex-servicemen and the diverse range of help and remembrance. Through the RBL network enables the whole ex-service community to embrace hardship and difficulties with dignity – a quite invaluable service!

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Paul McEwan

Served : Royal Marines 1993 –2006



Completed Commando training in May 1993 and posted to 45 Commando at Arbroath in Scotland.

While on 4 year draft was sent to various parts of the world and dealt with extreme situations involving the public sector. Quickly picked up a range of PR skills needed to carry out role in most professional manner possible. Spent two and a half years with SBS counter terrorist wing. Provided security cover with Marines at Joint Support Headquarters in Northwood. Here, he picked up even more experience in security, particularly looking after NATO forces personnel and in –depth vehicle searches as vehicles entered establishment.

Final posting was with Commando Logistics Regiment based near Barnstable, North Devon. Tackled completely different job role, which meant learning stores accountancy. Also managed a data base for civilian contractors wanting to gain access to the barracks. After an informal interview, classified their security level. Had responsibility for key holding for over 400 rooms within the barracks, maintaining the rooms and fire extinguishers.

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On leaving the Marines acted as a committed carer for a family member, but still managed to work on a construction site. No longer has carer commitments and is keen to start career within the security industry.

Wanted great career and to be part of the world’s most respected fighting force.

Great memory of Zimbabwe and Brunie. Back in 97 worked hard and played hard.

Left knee damaged while serving. Right knee damaged after service on CP course.

For 13 and a half years I was used to people treating me nicely – the same way I treated them. There was loyalty. When I came into civvy street it was hard to find. Basically, in the Royal Marines we could rely on each other for anything!

I am, and will continue to encourage people to support the RBL’s Poppy Appeal.

Needed support in 2010 for CP course. Found out about it through [civvy street.org](http://civvystreet.org).

Received loads of support financially for close protection course and SIA license also getting a motorbike to help get to work (2012 Olympics).

What they do, words cannot explain.

The RBL has changed my life so much. They have given great help in getting the course required to start career in the security industry with all the funding needed for which I will be forever grateful.

The hard work and dedication they put in for people to have a better quality of life.

I am now single. All my family are behind me in whatever I do, especially the route I have taken. My aspirations after working at the 2012 Olympics (which will also look great on my cv) is to advance further in the security industry as a close protection operative. I am currently a security supervisor at the games.

My interests are motorbikes, travelling, meeting new people and cultures and learning their languages.

The RBL is a fantastic organisation. Without their help I don’t know where I would be at this time in my life.

I am, and will continue to encourage people to support the RBL’s Poppy Appeal. What they do, words cannot explain. The hard work and dedication they put in for people to have a better quality of life.

