

XCHANGE

FOR EMPLOYERS OF RESERVISTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

FROM BELFAST TO IRAQ
Mark answers 'Call of the Sea'

INTENSIVE SERVICE
Nurses on the Front

PEACE BY PIECE
Helping Rebuild Balkan Life

Plus...
Get in touch with
mobilized employees



WELCOME



RESERVE
WITH PRIDE

TERRITORIAL ARMY CELEBRATES CENTURY OF SERVICE



2008 marked the 100th anniversary of the foundation of the Territorial Army. A major campaign, TA100 was launched to present a year of celebration, acknowledging the contribution of the Territorial soldier since 1908.

The term Territorial Army by name did not enter the Ulster dialect until 1948 – however, reserve service here goes much further back than one hundred years and many of our TA units have long military history with roots dating back a couple of centuries!

Another centenary was also celebrated in 2008, that of the Reserve Forces and Cadets Associations (RFCA), the country-wide organisations which are charged with supporting and promoting the Volunteer Reserves of the three services and the Cadet organisations within the community, delivering property and facilities management as well as employer support and support to recruiting.

Given that backdrop, you might well expect us to be concentrating on the illustrious past of the Territorial Army

and other Reserve Forces (the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Marine Reserve). While we wish to celebrate our past, pay tribute to our veterans and record our thanks to those who have served, we also recognise the need to look to the future.

These are challenging times for the TA and Reserve Forces which today make up around one quarter of our country's defence forces. If history teaches us one thing however, it is the ability of these highly regarded and dedicated forces to evolve and strengthen according to the circumstances of the day.

Changes to our organization have clearly impacted upon employers. Here in Northern Ireland many employers, from small family run businesses to large multinational companies, have been called upon to give active support to Reservists in their employ. Since 2002, SaBRE (Supporting Britain's Reservists and Employers) has been working with employers, of all sizes and sectors, providing support and information regarding the benefits, rights and obligations associated with

employing a member of the Reserve Forces. We know that supporting Reservists in the workplace can be a challenge, particularly for small businesses, but employers should be reassured that there are safeguards in place and advice and support is available through SaBRE which will help them, particularly when employees are mobilized.

We are proud of the contributions which have been made in the past and which are being made today by the men and women of the Reserve Forces – we hope that reading this publication will remind you of their service and the value of your support as an employer.

Trevor Salmon OBE
Chairman

Regional Employer Support Group



Athene is Here to Help



Athene Gordon is Northern Ireland's Regional SaBRE Campaign Director. SaBRE links employers and employees who serve in the Territorial Army and other Reserve Forces (Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Marine Reserve). Athene will answer

all your questions and offers invaluable support activities including:

- One-to-one meetings.
- Education sessions for Human Resources.
- Talks to business organisations.
- Regular briefing lunches and more.

Athene says,

"The importance of employer support for Reservist employees cannot and should not be underestimated. Companies who understand and provide a supportive role to staff in the armed forces are themselves making a huge contribution to the nation's defence. Socially responsible employers reap the benefits in many ways, in fact 80% of UK employers agree that Reservists are an asset to the workforce. However, we recognise that having Reservist staff on the pay roll can sometimes be testing for bosses, particularly when valuable team members are deployed for service overseas. At SaBRE we acknowledge and appreciate the difficulties that may arise and we have the experience and tools to help minimize any inconvenience in the work place."

Talk to us at:

SaBRE

The Reserve Forces & Cadets Association
Northern Ireland, 25 Windsor Park,
Belfast, BT9 6FR

Tel: **028 90 664902**

Fax: **028 90 662809**

email: **ni-empsp@ni.rfca.mod.uk**

web: **www.reservesandcadetsni.org.uk**

FREE direct helpline: **0800 389 5459**

or visit **www.SaBRE.mod.uk**

HELPFUL PUBLICATIONS:

A wide range of SaBRE publications is available to employers and Reservists. Just contact us for a copy.

- An Introduction to Employing Reservists
- New Financial Assistance Regulations for Reservists and their Employers (JSP 584, May 2005 Ed.)
- A Guide to Employing Reservists (2007, 3rd Ed.)
- Working with Your Employer – A Guide for Reservists
- Guide for Reservists Returning to Civilian Employment Following a Period of mobilized Service (JSP 532)
- Reservists: An Asset to Employers; Reservists: An Asset to the Nation.



INTENSIVE SERVICE

“The hardest aspect of the tour was dealing with children. Few of us had experience of nursing children yet youngsters were to make up a significant part of our workload.”

Captain Neill Montgomery

Intensive Care Nurse, Captain Neill Montgomery of 204 (North Irish) Field Hospital (Volunteers), relates his experiences at the front.

When I joined the TA over five years ago I knew that I would in all probability have to serve in a conflict zone, so I entered my part time career with no illusions. Rather than simply await the inevitable call-up however, I opted to take advantage of ‘intelligent mobilisation’, which allowed me to choose a time for deployment best suited to myself and my employer.

I opted to go to Afghanistan and to serve on Operation Herrick with 212 (Yorkshire) Field Hospital, a TA unit similar to my home unit in Belfast. My employer, The Mater Hospital, was extremely supportive and, although they had the right to ask that my tour be deferred, they recognised that this was something I was very keen to do, and chose to let me go.

It was with no little trepidation that I flew out to Afghanistan on a Military transport aircraft, arriving in Camp Bastion.

As the centre for British military operations Bastion is the hub for all British medical activities and the location of the British military hospital, a 25 bedded facility with two Intensive Care beds. (However during surges of activity the accommodation of the hospital was doubled for a limited time.)

As an ICU Nurse of some experience, I was made a shift team leader in the intensive care unit in Camp Bastion. Four teams of three registered nurses each staffed two intensive care and two high dependency beds 24/7. We treated everyone and anyone: Britons, Estonians, Danes, Czechs, Americans, Canadians, local forces, old folk, young folk, babies, even the Taliban. We had a patient who refused to eat the food provided, so we had to sit down with him and eat out of the same dish to prove it wasn't poisoned.

Working so far away from home base presented unique challenges and, despite heroic efforts on the part of the Royal Air Force and the Royal Logistics Corps to supply us, sometimes innovation was the name of the game. Everything from humidifiers to mousetraps were produced, Blue Peter style, until supplies of dedicated equipment could be sourced from the UK.

Sometimes our Heath Robinson efforts appeared to work better than the mass produced versions!

Operational nursing is very different to NHS Nursing; the care is the same, the standards are the same but the stressors are very different. At home you are with your colleagues forty hours a week more or less, on ops you are with them 24 hours a day. You see people at their best and their lowest ebb; you learn what makes the others tick. You can be cold, hot, tired, hungry, scared and you still must perform. No matter what the circumstances - day or night, hot or cold, fresh or exhausted, we would turn out when needed because we were the last, best hope for our patients. There was nowhere else to go, for our tiny tented complex was by far the best hospital in the entire region, if not the country.

The hardest aspect of the tour was dealing with children. Few of us had experience of nursing children yet youngsters were to make up a significant part of our workload. Many were injured ‘playing’ with ordnance or heritage mines from previous wars. They were often admitted with catastrophic injuries that pushed the boundaries of our abilities to the limit and beyond. Many lives were saved and many children who would have been disabled or disfigured for life have had their lives restored.

As team leader I quickly learned that leadership and management are not the

same by any means and that neither can be learned from a book or a course, but from practice. Being on an operational tour gave me the opportunity and the challenge of leading a small team of gifted, dedicated individuals and using them to the best of their abilities for the optimum benefit of the patients. It is a cliché that leadership is a lonely position, but in the dead of night when decisions were called for, I had to make decisions quickly, sell them to my team and the chain of command and then live with them. That was a very difficult but ultimately useful learning experience.

Coming home was a delight. We had thirty-six hours of decompression in Cyprus with watersports, entertainment and a barbeque laid on and then a private charter flight back to the UK. After a short and efficient demobilization period I was released from military service and flown home.

My homecoming was very smooth. My wife and family were delighted, our dogs were ecstatic and our cat was ambivalent. After a month of leave I returned to my civilian job as an ICU Nurse in Belfast. And after a short period of getting my head around the NHS again, I quickly slipped back into my ‘normal’ role. I have found that my no-nonsense, military experience has helped a great deal and since coming back I have even helped translate one project from my field hospital directly into NHS experience.



Dealing with Demobilization

Demobilization may be a difficult time, with a Reservist returning to work after a challenging period on deployment. Helping to ensure smooth re-integration into the team and updating them on changes and developments in the organisation can help prevent any feeling of dislocation.

Reservists returning from duty bring many valuable new and improved skills back with them. In fact, 96% of employers of Reservists say their employee's leadership and teamworking skills are developed through service in the Reserve Forces.

To find out more about demobilization visit www.sabre.mod.uk or ask for an Employer's copy of SaBRE Briefing 6 - returning From Mobilization



Employer, Rosemary Hamilton from Hollywood greets employee medic, Cpl Elaine Prynne with great delight on the morning of her return from Afghanistan

stretching your Business

Exercise Executive Stretch - an annual challenge to Northern Ireland's business community - took place at Magilligan Training Centre on the Northwest coast.

The exercise was organised and run by 2nd Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, on behalf of SaBRE and while a great weekend's fun and excitement was had by all, there were also lots of important business benefits brought back to Northern Ireland's workplaces.

Not only did the Executives find themselves mentally and physically stretched, but the exercise also allowed them to find out at first hand what service in the Reserve Forces entails. After enjoying the experience at first hand, the business people involved brought back a better understanding not only of the demands, but also the potential benefits that Reserve Service can bring to the workplace.

Athene Gordon of SaBRE Northern Ireland was delighted at the enthusiastic response to her challenge, both from young executives and from their employers, many of whom paid a flying visit to Magilligan by helicopter to see their staff in action.

She says, "Exercise Executive Stretch is a hugely successful 'seeing is believing' opportunity. In the space of one action-packed weekend, employers and staff get a taste of the challenges which Reservists face and they see at first hand the opportunities for building practical as well as team and leadership skills. As employers are quick to recognise, many of those skills transfer into the civilian workplace which will, we hope, encourage whole-hearted support for employees who may choose to pursue part-time military careers."



Are your staff up for the challenge?

This is your chance to sign up for a REAL team building experience. To register for Exercise EXECUTIVE STRETCH 2009 or to find out more about the benefits of this Exercise visit www.execstretch.co.uk or contact SaBRE on 02890 664902

Rigid Boat in action on Exercise Executive Stretch with members of the Royal Naval Reserve, HMS CAROLINE.



SaBRE's Exercise Executive Stretch was well attended by young executives and their employers, many of whom paid a flying visit by helicopter to Magilligan to see their staff in action. The helicopter support for the Executive Stretch exercise was provided by 230 Squadron, RAF Aldergrove (Regular).

s Muscles!

What Employers Thought...



▶ **Belfast girls, Alison Curtis and Eileen Logan who work for Castlereagh Borough Council, can't camouflage their delight as they learn new skills at Executive Stretch which helped improve their leadership, planning and teamwork abilities.**

Eileen Logan, Enforcement Officer at **Castlereagh Borough Council** said;
"All the staff involved had such a fantastic weekend and the series of tasks they undertook certainly helped bring out the best in them. The problem solving tasks in particular were immensely rewarding for our team and the socialising opportunity was the best we've had in a long time - there were some great war stories circulating the departments when we returned! All round it was a worthwhile and enriching experience."

▶ **Edel Cocoman and Faustine Marzetto, employees of Dairy Produce Packers take a break from the action at Executive Stretch.**

Ernie Roxborough, Human Resources Manager at **Dairy Produce Packers** said;
"Our intrepid employees came back to work with bags of new confidence and enthusiasm and a whole host of newly learned skills under their belts. It was a great teambuilding exercise which can be applied to advantage in all industries - I would thoroughly recommend Exercise Executive Stretch to any employer"



▶ **Tina McQuillan an employee of BT Ireland, makes a splash and finds her sea legs during the Executive Stretch weekend.**

Oli Husemeyer, Head of HR Projects, **BT Ireland** said;
"Naturally we value communication at BT and Executive Stretch was the perfect way to enhance the interpersonal communication skills of our staff. Some of the tasks, such as the Sea Mission, also helped staff to move out of their comfort zones and was excellent for building leadership and strategic thinking skills. Plenty of fun and banter was had in the process and the camaraderie that came back to the office was infectious!"



▶ **Philip Moffett, Saintfield who works at Bombardier Aerospace, learning how to drive a CVRT (Combat Vehicle Reconnaissance (Tracked) armoured fighting vehicle) at SaBRE's Exercise Executive Stretch.**

Philip said; "In almost thirty years of management, Exercise Executive Stretch is by far the best team building exercise I have ever been on. I've gained a lot of insight from the two days spent with the armed forces".



PEACE by PIECE

Territorial Army Corporal, Stephen Black from Londonderry tells how Reservists are helping the Kosovo people rebuild their lives.

Just when it seemed that The Balkans had slipped from the international news bulletins, a recent flare-up brought the region back to our screens. It was a reminder – if we in Northern Ireland needed one – that peace isn't achieved overnight and it highlighted once again the role of the peace keeping forces in The Balkans.

Territorial Army Corporal, Stephen Black, from Londonderry, is more aware than most of the importance of that role. He has recently returned to his unit after deployment to Kosovo where he found himself working as part of the international peace keeping presence.

He says, "From the moment I arrived at Camp Clarke I found myself working alongside Portuguese, Finns, Americans, Swedes . . . even a few other Irish people! It seemed that every nationality was represented somewhere on camp, although I was the only Signaller from Northern Ireland to go at that stage. In civilian life that would make you feel a bit isolated but, for your six month tour of duty, those people are going to have to be both friends and family to you – so you learn very quickly to make the best of it.

"The work was pretty varied but I had been well prepared and turned my hand to everything, from my key role as Information Systems Manager to fixing electrical generators as required. I was also out and about doing patrols and searches and had

to learn in all my work to be adaptable, for people not only had different languages, but also different practices and styles of operating.

"That's the big difference in Army and civilian life: in civilian life I think we all tend to moan a bit when things don't work out the way we think they should: in the Army you just get on with it. If you have to work that bit longer, if you have to cover for someone or don't immediately have the sort of tools and equipment you feel you need, then it's a big deal ... in the Army you work out the best solution and make it happen. It's a great discipline to take on board."

While Stephen's work regime proved tough, he and his colleagues still found time to befriend a local primary school and that community service was, for him, a high point of his overseas deployment. He says, "It was a privilege to get to know some of the locals and we were really glad of the opportunity to become involved with doing something practical for the community. When we moved in, the troop we were taking over from showed us around 'their' school and made us promise to keep up the connection they had started!

"We helped with painting and sorted out the playground and we managed to get some equipment for the classrooms too. Building peace in Kosovo is not just about ending violence. The war destroyed a lot of properties and stopped investment in services such as education. Now they are

re-building and we were glad to play our part.

"Mind you, our team work sometimes failed abysmally. I got co-opted onto an Irish Army football team only to be hammered by those primary school kids! They obviously knew far better than we did how to put a winning team together!"

Back with his TA unit and his civilian job in Derry, Stephen is once more balancing two careers. It can be challenging at times but he says, "Overseas service really made me see the value of what I do at nights and weekends with the TA and I'm more committed than ever. I'd also recommend it to anyone who feels, like I do, that they want to do something really worthwhile."

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Rgr Michael Hughes smiles with delight as he opens a parcel of goodies received from home.



When you are far away on duty, there is nothing like receiving a handwritten letter or a parcel of goodies to remind you of friends and family back home. There are a number of ways of keeping in touch with service people while they are away - and there are also many employer benefits in doing so.

By letter/package

'Blueys' are free aerogrammes to Forces personnel serving abroad. You can get them free from your local Post Office.

How to Keep in Touch with a mobilized Employee

Although 'Blueys' are free, 'normal' letters and packages require standard postage rates to be paid. Rates are available on: www.bfpo.mod.uk

E-bluey

Simply log onto www.bfpo.mod.uk set up an account and send your employee an e-bluey!

E-mail

Depending on where they are serving, Forces personnel may also have access to the public internet. You may therefore be able to communicate with a mobilized employee through his/her personal email address. Most Reservists on operations will, however, be limited to approx. 20 minutes internet connection per week, so if you do choose to communicate by email, do not expect a quick response!

How to address mail to Forces personnel

To send a bluey, letter, e-bluey or package to a mobilized Reservist you will need to

know your employee's:

Rank, name and Service number

Unit name

Operation name

Iraq = Operation TELIC;

Afghanistan = Operation HERRICK

BFPO number

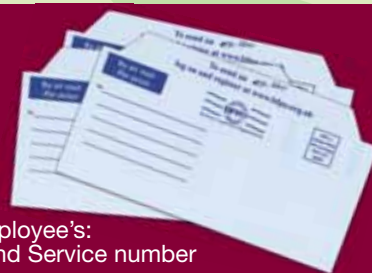
If you do not already have this information, the Unit Employer Support Officer at your employee's Reserve unit will be able to give this to you. If you are not sure which unit your employee belongs to, please contact SaBRE and we will try to put you in touch with the correct point of contact.

Where to find more information

Details of e-blueys, postage rates, prohibited items etc, can all be found on: www.bfpo.mod.uk

Alternatively, contact Athene Gordon, Regional SaBRE Campaign Director for Northern Ireland on 028 9066 4902 or ni-empsp@ni.rfca.mod.uk

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Mark Seas Service from Belfast to Iraq

When Mark Coates left the Royal Navy after seventeen years he felt he was ready for a new life in 'Civvie Street', but the call of the sea proved too strong to resist and, within a short time, he found himself enlisting for more service, this time with the Royal Naval Reserve.

Mark says, "I was enjoying my new life and career, but I certainly missed the camaraderie and the whole ethos of the Navy. I thought that joining the Reserves might give me a little of what I missed, but I had no intention at that time of it being more than a link with the past and a pleasant way of passing a few evenings and maybe one weekend a month. How wrong can you be?"

Mark has recently returned from service in Iraq, serving on board the Royal Fleet Auxiliary Ship, SIR BEDIVERE. He says, "Today the Royal Naval Reserve is a part time career, not just a hobby. When I joined HMS CAROLINE in Belfast I found myself working amongst people who were every bit as capable and committed as those I had previously served with as a Regular. Certainly having previous service under my belt gave me an advantage but there was no question of coasting on past glories!

"It was great to be back in that sort of challenging environment and I found the training and the work immensely satisfying. Of course one thing led to another and I looked for new challenges... and the opportunity to serve in Iraq has been the most exciting of those challenges to date."

Mark's role in Iraq was Watch Team Leader on board the RFA SIR BEDIVERE, a 137 metre vessel with a ship's company of around 120 people. The Royal Naval officers and crew had little opportunity to go ashore, although the civilians they worked alongside had rather more recreational opportunities and shore leave. He says, "It was five tough months of



service, but we were well trained and prepared for what we faced out there. Naturally the heat takes quite a bit of getting used to but the biggest problem lies in staying alert, even when work appears to be routine. There is always a security threat and it would be all too easy to be lulled into a sense of complacency"

Mark discovered that for himself when one apparently routine operation uncovered a fishing boat packed with explosives!

That background of potential danger undoubtedly puts pressure on family and friends at home but Mark found that staying closely in touch helped to reassure his wife, Pauline, that all was well. He says, "I was able to telephone and speak to her for a couple of minutes each day and we e-mailed too. I actually met my wife through the Royal Naval Reserves so she understood what I was doing and why I was doing it. Her support made a huge difference.

"I also had great support from my employers back home. It can't be easy to lose a member of staff for six months or more, but I hope they feel that, now I'm back at work again, they benefited from my overseas deployment. I feel that I have come back with my batteries re-charged, ready to cope with whatever is thrown at me.

"I was working as a Team Watch Leader which meant that I was both leading others and working as part of a team – skills which you need in civilian life too. Having spent five months pretty well confined on board a ship, I now appreciate the comforts of my working environment in Northern Ireland. I think too many people in civilian life are inclined to moan about what's not right with their job or why somebody else should be doing a certain task rather than just getting on with it. That's just not how things happen in the Royal Navy and the can do/must do attitude is one of the most important transferable skills!"

So what are the main benefits which Mark feels his service overseas delivered? Perhaps surprisingly he points not to personal fulfilment – although that was clearly important – nor even to employer benefits. He says, "I was involved in protecting the two main Iraqi oil terminals which, between them, generate around 95% of Iraqi income. They are vital to reconstruction so our work was of considerable importance. I'm proud of making a contribution, I know HMS CAROLINE is proud to be able to deploy well trained Royal Naval Reservists... and my civilian employer played an important part too in encouraging and facilitating me while I did my bit." X



Pictured with Athene are (left to right) Mr Ian McClelland & Mrs Lyndsay McClelland, MSO Cleland Ltd; GOC NI; and Mrs Margaret Sinclair, Identity and Passport Services.

Keeping Employer Support ship shape

Having established policies and procedures for the issues that arise from employing Reservists is the best way of demonstrating support. SaBRE has developed a simple code of practice to help you manage Reservist employees consistently. A number of basic steps can help to establish a strong working relationship with Reservists on your staff, while extracting optimum value for the company.

If you would like help with setting codes of practice, contact Athene Gordon
T. 028 90 664902.

Also, did you know that you can register with SaBRE to become officially recognised as a Supportive Employer? See the back page for details of how to register and a list of some of the companies that are already recognised as official Supportive Employers.

“WE ARE DETERMINED TO SUPPORT ALL CURRENT AND FUTURE EMPLOYEES IN THE RESERVE FORCES.”

Aegon Scottish Equitable Plc
Arnold Clark Automobiles Ltd
Automobile Association Ltd
AXA PPP Healthcare Group
Babcock International Group Plc
BAE Systems
Barclays Bank Plc
British American Tobacco Holdings
BT Group Plc
Castlereagh Borough Council
Centrica Plc
Co-operative Group
Corus
Craegmoor Healthcare
Debenhams
Dimension Data
E.on UK
EADS
Foyle Food Group Ltd
Future Image PR
GNER
Halfords Ltd
Home Retail Group
Identity and Passport Service
Imperial Tobacco Limited
Jaguar Cars Ltd
Jarvis Hotels Plc
JJB Sports Plc
Jones Lang Lasalle
KPMG LLP

Kuehne & Nagel Ltd
Land Rover
Lloyds TSB Group Plc
Marsh Ltd
Marston's Plc
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Northern Rock Plc
Nuffield Hospitals
Orange Pcs
Phoenix Energy Holdings Ltd
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Sonae UK Ltd
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Stagecoach Group Plc
Standard Life Assurance Co
Tesco Plc
Thales UK
The Carphone Warehouse
United Business Media
Victoria Day Care Centre
Waterford Wedgwood UK Plc



**The Full Statement of Support which the above
employers have signed up to can be seen at
www.sabre.mod.uk/output/Page36.asp
Why don't you pledge your company's support today?**