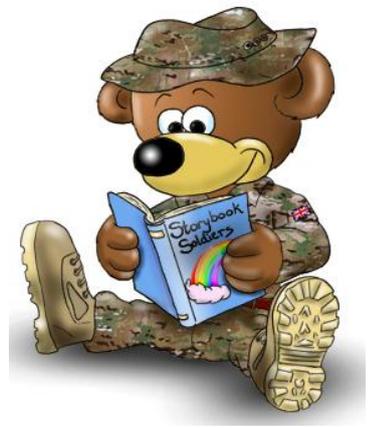


Storybook Soldiers News



From the Management Team – Summer 2014 – Issue No. 4

Directors : Kirsty Alderson and Rosemary Meeke

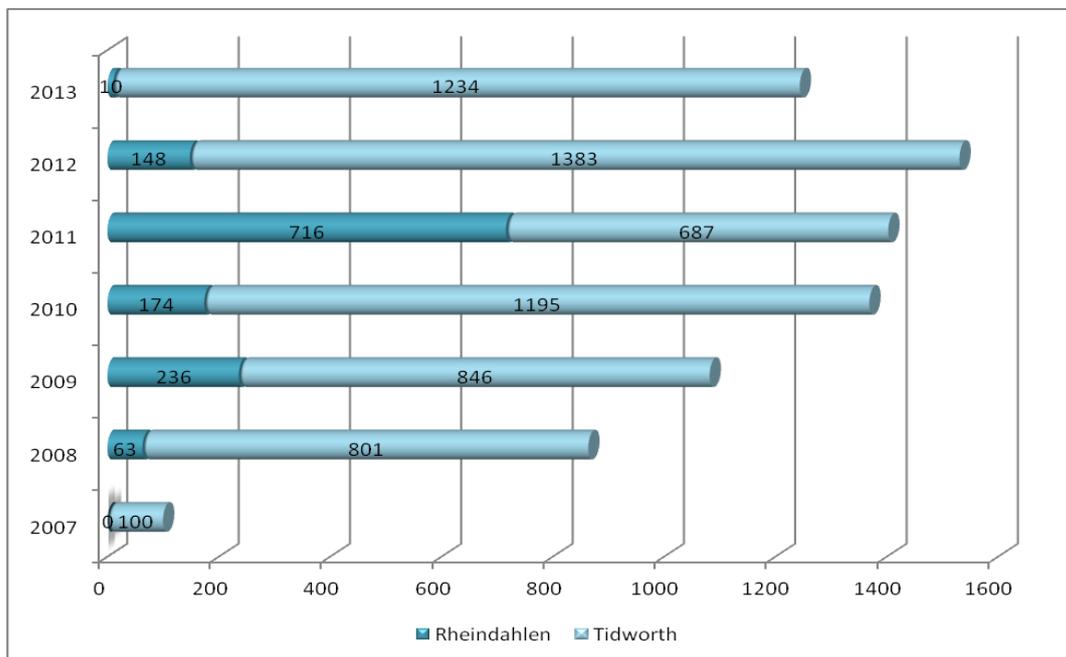
Administration : Jen Russell and Jane Mans

Storybook Soldiers is now in its seventh year producing story CDs for the children of deploying soldiers. This newsletter will explain how we are now able to increase the eligibility to take part in the scheme, enabling more soldiers to record stories for their children.

A Few Numbers

The total number of recordings we received in 2013 is lower than in previous years. This is due to fewer soldiers deploying to Afghanistan as the end of HERRICK operations draws nearer.

The small number of stories edited in Rheindahlen is due to the repatriation of our Editing Centre from Germany to Tidworth in 2013.



Annual Production 2007 - 2013

The 1244 story disks produced in 2013 brings the total since we began to almost 7,750 stories, representing around 24,000 hours of voluntary work by our editors.

Our Service is changing

Until recently, the huge numbers of soldiers wanting to record stories for their children meant that we had to limit everyone to reading one story per child per tour, in order to ensure that as many children as possible received at least one story. With military operations in Afghanistan coming to an end by the end of 2014 and fewer soldiers deploying on Op HERRICK, over the past few months we have often been able to edit second stories for children.

In addition to this, Storybook Soldiers is now able to open up our scheme to all soldiers who are separated from their families by the exigencies of the Service. From now on, any soldiers being deployed on long non-operational exercises (eg BATUS/BATUK) can also come to us to record a story for their children. The criterion, as always, is that the separation between parents and children is not the personal choice of the soldier.

Anyone wishing to make a recording for their children, or to set up a Recording Centre in their Unit, please get in touch with Storybook Soldiers in Tidworth, either by phone or email – you will find our contact details at the end of this letter.

Our Editors



The success of what we do is dependant upon the skill and effort of our dedicated team of volunteer editors, who all come from the military community. After specialist training from the Management Team, they give their time freely to produce story disks for families just like their own, spending on average around 3 hours editing each story. It is a particular strength of Storybook Soldiers that our Editors know exactly what it feels like to have a member of the family deployed on operations and away from home for months at a time.

We'd like to say a special 'thank you' to them all :

Petra Swift, Carla Monroe-Reid, Mark French, Helen Thorogood, Jackie Jones, Shirley Brown, Sally Osment, Lorna Stewart, Kate Mann, Lulu Spink, Katia Kidds, Kate Clark, Linda Corfield, Louise Legrande, Jen Russell, Claire Wilson, Hannah Shannon, Jenny Seabrook, Tracey Hibberd, Jackie Morris, Jenny Brady, Sarah Marshall, Jane Mans, Helen Chalmers, Jayne Bowen, Sarah Scott, Amy Davies, Michelle Hodgson, Celia Brister, Lindsay Luke, Trudi Marshall, Sian Burns, Sam Illingworth, Sally Gregory, Liz Cooper, Claire Morris, Sherri Haywood, Antonia Robb, Angela Shaw, Natasha Catmur, Sarah Elviss, Carol Yates and Nancy Denny.

Our Recording Centres

The success of the scheme also depends on the work of the people in our Recording Centres all over the Forces world, from Scotland to Cyprus and from Northern Ireland to Germany, whose efforts make it possible for so many soldiers to take part in the Storybook Soldiers scheme. New Recording Centres can start recording stories as soon as they have received their Recorder Training from the Management Team in Tidworth and we have we set up new or trained new people for around 20 Recording Centres in 2013.

Special thanks go to everyone who has recorded for us in Afghanistan, including the staff in the Joint Theatre Education Centre (JTEC) in Camp Bastion who, over the years, have volunteered to do this on top of their already-heavy workload. Those soldiers who didn't have a chance to record before they deployed, are particularly grateful to them. The JTEC will be closing in September 2014 as British troops are withdrawn from Afghanistan.



If you know you have a deployment or an exercise coming up, it is a good idea to record a story well in advance so that your children can receive their story disk as soon as possible and have the benefit of it for longer while you are away. Recording Centres are usually located in unit welfare offices, but sometimes in libraries or Army Welfare Centres, so if you want to record a story, get in touch with us to find out where the nearest Centre is.

Storybook Soldiers in Germany

The repatriation of our editing operation in Germany to Tidworth went very smoothly and now all editing is co-ordinated by our Tidworth office.

Our Recording Centres in Germany have been busy, with the final two Brigades deploying to Afghanistan having Headquarters based in Germany. Many thanks to British Forces Broadcasting Service and the Sixth Sense newspaper for helping us to inform soldiers in Germany about our scheme and how to get in touch with us.

Sponsors

We were delighted to welcome Helen McMahon MBE from ABF The Soldiers' Charity, who came to visit us in May 2013. She was very interested to learn more about Storybook Soldiers and meet the Management Team.

We continue to be very grateful to all our Sponsors: ABF, The Soldiers' Charity, Annington Ltd and The Army Central Fund, for their continuing support and for recognizing that there will still be a need for our service after operations in Afghanistan have come to a close.

Tall Stories

The link between the Tall Stories children's theatre group and Storybook Soldiers is as strong as ever.

The link was first forged in 2012, when the Storybook Soldiers scheme inspired Tall Stories with ideas for the staging of their production of "The Snail and the Whale" by Julia Donaldson. Once the show was ready to go on tour, they brought it here to Tidworth, Netheravon & Bulford Garrison during the 12 Brigade deployment and six months later they performed it at Catterick Garrison when 4 Brigade was deployed.



The following year, in July 2013, Tall Stories brought their new production, "My Brother the Robot", to the Bulford Study Centre (right) and the old Tidworth Theatre, performing it for the children of the Garrison, many of whom had a parent in Afghanistan with 1 Brigade at the time.



In December, Storybook Soldiers were invited to a special performance of "The Snail and the Whale" at the St James's Theatre in London. Kirsty, Rosemary and Editor, Nancy Denny, are pictured here (left) with Tall Stories Director, Toby Mitchell.



After the show, Toby spoke a few words to the audience, saying, "Storybook Soldiers are doing amazing work in helping children cope when one of their parents is abroad for long periods" and he thanked the team for all their hard work and dedication.

The Storybook Alliance

We continue to operate as part of the Storybook Alliance, with our Recording Centre in Camp Bastion available to members of the Royal Navy, (Storybook Waves) and the Royal Air Force, (Storybook Wings). We in turn have received recordings made by the RAF in the Falkland Islands.

All four 'arms' of the Alliance held a meeting in the RAF Club in London on 8th April, hosted by Storybook Wings. This was a good opportunity to catch up with the latest news from our fellow Storybook schemes, and for the Forces schemes to discuss the way forward post Afghanistan.

Thanks

Our story disks are produced at no cost to the serving soldier or his family and their thanks go mainly to the Editors and to our Sponsors. We received these two comments only recently :

"I simply cannot thank you all enough for the wonderful gift my children received yesterday. It brought both tears and laughter and has been played continuously. My son fell asleep listening to it last night and it is so lovely that they can hear Daddy when they choose to not when he can manage to call. Many, many, many thanks."

"This is a fantastic service. I am currently sat with tears streaming down my face at my husband's voice. Thanks you so much for providing this for our children. It's about all they will get out of deployment. Thank you also to ABF, Annington Ltd and the Army Central Fund for supporting."

If you would like to record a story, please get in touch with the Management Team in Tidworth : 01980 – 650515 or email storybooksoldiers@hotmail.co.uk