

# Storybook Soldiers News

From the Management Team – June 2012 – Issue No. 2

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**Administration :** Jen Russell and Jane Mans



Storybook Soldiers is now in its fifth year producing story CDs for the children of deploying soldiers – the scheme is growing in popularity and we are busier than ever !

One of our experienced editors, Jane Mans, joined Jen Russell in the Storybook Soldiers office after Linda Corfield moved to Germany with her family last Summer. Together, Jen and Jane have kept the office running smoothly: receiving recordings from recording centres, liaising with the editors, quality assuring every story and preparing disks to send to families, as well as continuing to do an enormous amount of editing themselves too.

## A VIP Visitor

In July last year, we were pleased to welcome Elizabeth Filkin to Tidworth. Mrs Filkin, formerly the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards (1999-2002), is now the Chairman of Annington Homes. Annington has supported Storybook Soldiers for a number of years and Mrs Filkin was delighted to meet the Management Team and several of our Editors.



## Editors

It would not be possible to operate Storybook Soldiers without our dedicated team of editors. They are all volunteers who all come from the military community and give their time freely to produce story disks for families just like their own.

Sometimes we lose editors when they are posted away and so, last September, we were very grateful to ABF – The Soldiers' Charity for allowing us to have a stand

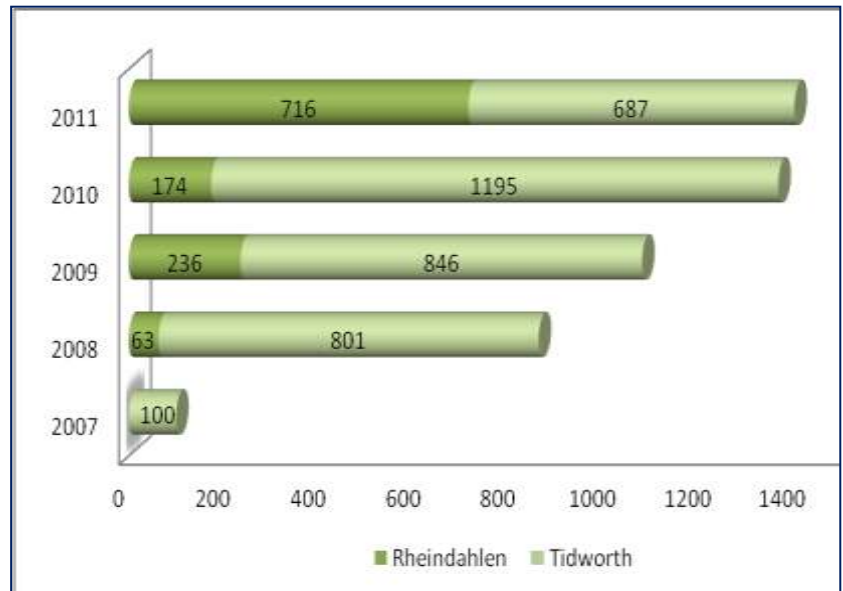
at their annual Early Early Christmas Fair at Tedworth House, which gave us the opportunity to recruit some new editors.

The two-day editing course is run by the Management Team in Tidworth. In 2011 we held two editing courses and welcomed six new editors to our team. At a recent gathering of editors, one of the six, Trudi Marshall, was presented with our now-traditional Storybook Bear for already completing 50 stories.



## A Few Numbers

In 2011, Storybook Soldiers produced 1403 story disks, slightly more than in 2010. Rheindahlen's increased share of the output from reflects the deployment of 20 (Armd) Brigade from Germany last year. This brings the total since we began to almost 5000 stories, representing over 15,000 hours of voluntary work by our editors. The annual figure for 2012 looks like it will be well ahead of previous years.



## Recording Centres

We are constantly improving our procedures and we now get in touch with units well in advance of their deployment, enabling them to come to us in Tidworth for Recording Training much earlier than before. This has meant that more soldiers have been able to make recordings before they deploy. We have found that recordings made before deployment are generally of better sound quality than those made in theatre because it is much easier to find a quiet location ! Many thanks to all our Recording Centres !

We have set up 14 new Recording Centres in the past 12 months; most of these are units now deployed on Op HERRICK 16 and some are from Catterick, in preparation for Op HERRICK 17.

For all sorts of reasons, including the pace of Mission Specific Training, it is not always possible for soldiers to make their recordings before they deploy and so they – and we - are grateful to the staff in the Theatre Education Centre in Camp Bastion who volunteer to record for us, on top of their already-heavy workload.

## Storybook Soldiers in Germany

Carol Yates and Jayne Bowen continue to run Storybook Soldiers Germany from Library Headquarters in Rheindahlen and were very busy last year during the 20 (Armd) Brigade deployment. The imminent reorganisation of libraries in Germany will lead to some administrative changes over the next few months, but the service Storybook Soldiers offers to deploying soldiers based in Germany will remain unchanged.

## 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 and the Royal Air Force. We in turn have received recordings made by the RAF in the Falkland Islands ! Congratulations to Storybook Dads for recently winning an 'e-inclusion' award at the European Commission's Digital Agenda Assembly Conference in Brussels.

## Sponsors

The increasing numbers of soldiers who record, thanks to the efficiency of their Welfare Offices, has not surprisingly meant we have needed more funds from our Sponsors to underpin the operation of this scheme. We are very grateful to The Annington Trust and ABF - The Soldiers' Charity, for their continuing support and also thank the Army Central Fund for recently agreeing to come on board.

## The Snail and the Whale

With Bulford-based 12 (Mechanised) Brigade deployed in Afghanistan this Summer, the Management Team was delighted when a chance email from a London theatre company led to Storybook Soldiers being able to offer free entertainment to around 350 children of the Garrison – most of them with a deployed parent.

The Tall Stories Theatre Company specialises in children's theatre and has in the past performed plays based on many of the books by Children's Laureate, Julia Donaldson. At the beginning of 2012 they were starting to look at "The Snail and the Whale", a beautiful story about a small snail who gets bored sitting on a big black rock like all the other snails and wants to travel the world. In the book, the snail is given a lift on the tail of a huge whale; they have many adventures together and when the whale gets beached in a bay, the snail saves the whale's life. A beautiful book, but tricky to put onto a stage ...

Then Co-Director of Tall Stories, Toby Mitchell, came across Storybook Soldiers. He came down to spend an afternoon with us talking about the work that we do – and when he left, he was happy that he had found the answer to the problem of how to stage the story.

We were delighted to help, because Julia Donaldson's books are very frequently chosen by soldiers when they are looking for a story to record for their children. In fact, 30 % of the story disks we have produced have been books by Julia Donaldson – and "The Snail and the Whale" is one of the most popular, after "The Gruffalo", "The Gruffalo's Child" and "Room on the Broom".

Four months and several excellent reviews later, Tall Stories came down to Bulford to put two shows on at the Bulford Study Centre. On stage, it becomes "a story within a story", a favourite of a Father, who is about to go away to sea for six months, and his daughter. Knowing it is her favourite, he records it and sends it back to her on a disk in the post to have while he is away. As she listens to her Father's voice, she becomes the snail, reliving the adventure - including the part where the whale is rescued ! The play is a lot of fun and was greatly enjoyed by the two military audiences who immediately empathised with the underlying story.



Tall Stories Stage Manager, Kaley Freeman and Storybook's Jen Russell enjoy an ice cream from the BFBS "Ice Cream Ops" van which was a popular added attraction on the day, handing out free ice cream to the children.



SBS Director, Rosemary Meeke, on stage with the cast of "The Snail and the Whale" in Bulford

The feedback has been unequivocal : After seeing the play with his family, a father whose wife was about to deploy told us that it would now be easier to broach the subject of 'Mummy going away' in a few weeks' time.

One Welfare Officer remarked that he "expected kids to cope better with the deployment" after seeing the play and another hoped that Tall Stories would put on another play in the Garrison when their Brigade deploys next year! The Management Team hopes that the link between Storybook Soldiers and Tall Stories will continue ... watch this space !



## Impact on Forces' families

Our story disks are produced at no cost to the serving soldier or his family and they are all very grateful for the efforts of our volunteer editors.

A picture is worth a thousand words and this series of pictures shows how delighted this little girl was to get her story CD from her Daddy. The Daddy in question was so pleased to get these pictures from his wife while he was out in Theatre that he sent us some copies, by way of a 'thank you'.

While the story disks are usually made for younger children, the feedback we receive tells us that older siblings and the parent at home all enjoy listening to them too. We are always delighted to hear from families after they have received their disks and we always pass their comments on to the editors; just knowing that their work is appreciated by the families makes it all worth while !

### Here is a selection from the feedback we have received this year :

*Our little boy, Oliver, listens to the story every night before bedtime. It really is the most **beautiful gift**. I can only now, after three months of listening it to it daily, not burst into tears! Thank you for giving us the opportunity to have such a wonderful part of Craig at home - **it really does make a difference** and I know Oliver will treasure it always. Keep up the good work!*

*THANK YOU! The CD is just perfect and so professionally edited. Our little girl is 3 in August and her face when I turned on the CD player and she heard her Daddy's voice, was a sight to behold. **A brilliant initiative and thoroughly appreciated.***

*My children were thrilled with the CD and had **such a lovely surprise**. They want to listen to the story over and over.*

*Thank you so much for the CDs. The girls love them so much & hopefully it'll help them cope with missing daddy for the next 5 months until he is home. They listened to their CDs before bed and my eldest 3 spoke the words along with daddy, laughed and danced along with the sound effects. Thank you again, they are really appreciated and will be **treasured for ever**.*

*Thank you so much, what a fantastic gift. My 2 year old was **shaking with excitement** to hear daddy's voice and giggled at all the sound effects.*

*Thank you so much they are both fantastic and have **made bedtime so much easier**. Keep up this fantastic work. We are really grateful for the work you all do.*

*What can I say, I think this is amazing & not only does Ryan get to hear his voice, but so do I cos I miss him so much & **just listening makes it feel like he is really here**. Many many thanks you have all done a wonderful job.*

*As soon as my 2 yr-old son heard his Daddy's voice he stopped crying and sat and listen to it. **A BIG THANK YOU FOR SOME PEACE!***

**If you would like to record a story or would like more information about becoming a Storybook Soldiers Editor, please get in touch with the Management Team in Tidworth : 01980 - 650515**

