

Storybook Soldiers News



From the Management Team – June 2011

Directors : Kirsty Alderson and Rosemary Meeke

Administration : Jen Russell and Linda Corfield

Welcome to our first newsletter! After four years producing story CDs for the children of deploying soldiers, we thought you would be interested to hear

how we are getting on!

We are very grateful to our Sponsors, The Annington Trust and ABF The Soldiers' Charity for their continuing support.

Editors

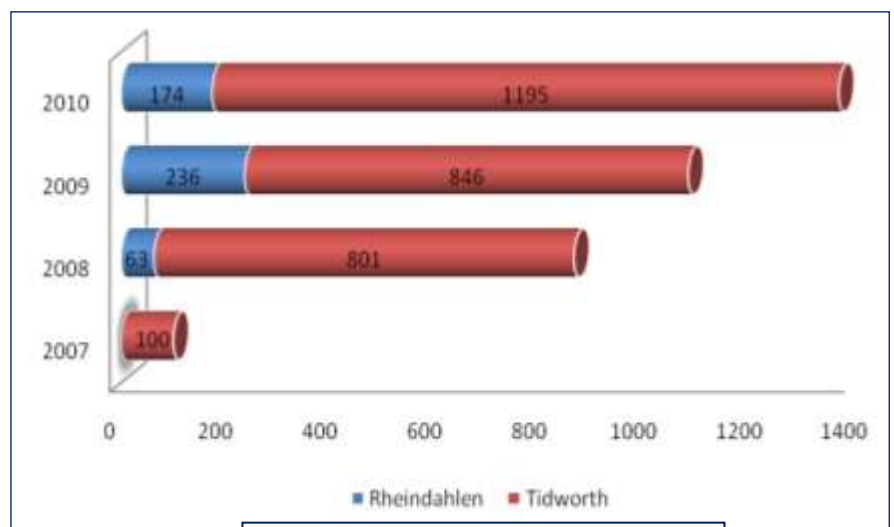
This scheme could not exist without the many hours that our volunteer editors give to support other Army families like their own. We are so grateful that people continue to contact us and volunteer to complete the two day training course in order to become editors. The nature of Army life is such that our editors do get posted away, but equally new recruits arrive! We have been able to hang on to some expertise and have four editors working 'from a distance' after posting.



Typically, we run two training sessions a year; sometimes with the **Storybook Dads** team from Dartmoor when we combine the training with an Alliance Meeting. About 50% of editors trained carry on in the scheme; those who don't are either posted, don't find the programme easy or may find a job and become unavailable.

A Few Numbers

Over the past four years Storybook Soldiers has become an assumed aspect of an operational deployment. In that time we have produced nearly 3,500 story disks, representing over 10,000 hours of voluntary work by our editors.



Annual Production 2007 - 2010

Recording Centres

There is a well established process now by which units, usually the Welfare Office, make contact with Storybook Soldiers in Tidworth some months before deployment. We are now in the second full cycle for most brigades so the pattern and expectation is pretty familiar and there are a good many children who will own two CDs. Recordings made before deployment take the pressure off the editing process and are often of better quality than those made in Afghanistan, however, the opportunity to make a recording during a deployment is important and appreciated.



If you would like to record a story, please get in touch with us – contact details at the end.

Editing Centres



We have two Editing Centres, one in Tidworth and one in Rheindahlen; this ensures we maintain control over the administration and the standard of the CDs that are produced. These two places provide the catchment areas for recruiting editors.

Last year two sponsors, **Annington Homes** and **ABF The Soldiers' Charity**, undertook to provide the running costs for Storybook Soldiers for two years. This has enabled us to employ two part-time administrators in Tidworth, Jen Russell and Linda Corfield. They have taken on the weight of the running of the scheme, bringing with them their dedication and

experience as editors and their own professional experience. Linda is being posted to Germany with her husband and three boys this summer and we are very sorry to lose her but very grateful to her for her support to the scheme.

Germany

Carol Yates and Jayne Bowen run Storybook Soldiers in Germany, based in Library Headquarters in Rheindahlen. They are currently busy recording and editing for the 20 Brigade deployment and we are standing by to assist if necessary!

The Storybook Alliance

This is a grouping of the organisations that operate the Storybook idea within the Prison Service, the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. As directors we benefit from the opportunity to share our experiences and learn from others who share the same ideals and aspirations although we may be operating in different contexts; it saves repeating errors and passes on success. Within the Armed Forces, it has enabled the schemes to be interoperable in so far as an Army Recording Centre in Afghanistan can record stories for Naval and Air Force personnel and then send them back to be edited by either **Storybook Wings** or **Storybook Waves** editors.



Maintaining quality, developing skills and sharing expertise across the 4 schemes within the Alliance is important and we all find that by working together this can be achieved more efficiently.

Impact on Forces' families

We calculate effect on a “nuclear” family of four for averaging reasons: a deployed parent, a home parent and possibly a sibling or two. We would therefore report that in 2010 alone the scheme has directly benefitted a population of over 5000 Service Personnel and their dependants. Feedback has demonstrated that older (teenage) siblings enjoy listening to the CDs of younger siblings. When this is coupled with reports from mothers of the reassuring effect of hearing their partners’ voices, we realise that the Storybook Soldiers CD supplies more than just “a bedtime story.”



We are always delighted to hear from families after they have received their disks and we always pass their comments on to the editors.

Here is a selection of responses from families, Commanding Officers, Welfare Officers and Padres :

From a Mother :

“We really cannot thank you all enough for providing this wonderful service. The CDs were kept a surprise for our girls and they are thrilled to hear their Daddy reading them each a special story. It’s a fabulous idea and I’m sure it brings many, many kids a lot of happiness. So we thank you HUGELY for the precious time given by all your volunteers – recording, editing, downloading and post out these fantastic CDs at no cost to us. You are all brilliant! Thank you”.

From a Mother :

"Thank you, Thank you, Thank you !! Our two Storybook Soldier CDs are a gift in every sense of the word, we will treasure hearing my husband's voice and the fun sound effects while Daddy is away and please believe what a joy and comfort you have brought to myself and our two daughters, 7 and 18 months. A particular "Thank you" to your volunteers and your sponsors in this depressing time of cuts and operational commitment".

From a Father

"What a fantastic package. My child was over the moon with the delivery of this CD with his name on it and all about his favourite story. May thanks go to all involved with the production of the CD and to all the volunteers that give up their precious time, so that others may share precious moments when their parent is deployed away from their family. Once again, THANK YOU".

From a Commanding Officer :

"Storybook Soldiers has been a real hit both here in Afghanistan and at home. It was also exceptionally quick and easy to record the story. The books are just the ticket - they are the current favorites and I expect that many of the parents hardly needed to read the words as they know most of them by heart. My three small boys loved 'Room on the Broom'. Thank you to you all from the 1 R IRISH Battlegroup in Afghanistan!"

From a Welfare Officer :

"I first heard of Storybook soldiers in 2008 prior to a tour in Afghanistan. Initially dismissing the idea, I eventually turned up one evening at the Education Centre and completed a recording of my daughter Maddison's favourite book, The Gruffalo. Eight weeks into the tour I called home only to have the phone answered by an extremely excited 3 year old who could talk of nothing but her recent gift which she had recently received in the post, yep you got it, it was the Storybook Soldier CD which, to quote my wife Terrie: "she has listened to it religiously every night since it came". As I lay in my bed that night I smiled away at how pleased a simple recording had made her, a recording that in reality had taken 15 minutes of my time to complete, a period I think we can all give up to produce an item which has such a positive effect on our children.

Not surprisingly, when I took over as the Unit welfare Officer to 3 (UK) Div HQ and Sig Regt it was something I wanted to ensure that all deploying personnel had access to, even our isolated sub unit, which we catered for by becoming a Storybook Soldiers Recording Centre. An additional benefit of this purchase has been our ability to deploy our equipment into theatre for those individuals who for whatever reason were unable to take advantage of this facility prior to deployment.

I would recommend Storybook Soldiers to all parents, male or female who have young children and who are due to deploy.

It really is like leaving a small piece of yourself at home and is something which can bring such happiness to our children through difficult periods of separation".

Capt Mac McDonald, 3 (UK) Div HQ and Sig Regt

From a Padre :

"All of the chaplains who deployed on OP HERRICK 11 took with them a recording device for Storybook Soldiers. It became apparent, as the tour went on, that not only was the scheme good for the family back home but that it was a really positive thing for chaplains to be able to offer to soldiers and had positive therapeutic effect. Strong feelings of homesickness can be debilitating, and for a chaplain to be able to guide a soldier through the process of making the recording, gives the soldier the opportunity to reflect on his family and provide something that reinforces the links with those he cares for and has left behind.

Thank you 'Storybook Soldiers' for helping me to help soldiers."

Revd Mark Christian, Senior Chaplain, HERRICK 11

For more information : www.storybooksoldiers.co.uk

