



David Dudley “Dai”

British Army – Royal Regiment of Wales

Interview (**Two**) Northern Ireland and life after the Army, recorded on 18th March 2024 at Dai’s home in Wales.

Description

In this short film, Dai talks about his tours of duty in Northern Ireland and life after the Army. The viewer should note that the interviewer adopted a policy of avoiding conversation in detail regarding traumatic events Dai was exposed to during his time in the province.

Tours of duty

Dai talks of his tour in 1983 and the every-day life of an RRW infantry soldier at the time. Dai remembers how the soldiers patrolled their areas and what they had to look out for.

He explains how specific patrols operated, during the time when the IRA Hunger strikes were occurring.

Dai talks about the different types of patrolling the regiment deployed and how accurate the local youths were at hitting targets with stones and missiles. He mentions the dangers to the patrol and the stress and strain on the individual soldiers the dangers created. As the interview progresses Dai talks about how difficult it was to identify dangers and the restrictions placed on soldiers engaging threats.

Riots

Dai expresses how surprised he was at the time, when becoming exposed to rioting in an urban area. During his five tours he was involved in four riots. He has previously mentioned that during one riot, he was engulfed in flames when a petrol bomb exploded at his feet. He explains how this made him feel at the time.

Belfast

Dai mentions a specific part of the city that drew special attention when his regiment was tasked to enter the area.

He also mentions the daily routines of the infantry soldier in their barracks and what this entailed.



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Anecdote

Dai offers some unconfirmed and uncorroborated background information that was circulating within the regiment, some-time after the tours ended. Although the information is speculative, it is included as it offers the viewer an insight into how information, confirmed or otherwise, can impact on a soldier's thoughts and feelings about a specific tour of duty.

Also, Dai reflects on the short-term legacy a particularly busy tour had on a soldier returning to more normal patterns of life, following a deployment to Northern Ireland in the 1980's.

Life after the Army

Dai left the Army in 1992 and had an ambition to join the Ambulance service. However, whilst he was playing for a local rugby team in Bristol (Thornley Vandals) he sustained a life changing spinal injury. The injury resulted in paralysis from the lower spine down. Dai talks about the irony of this injury and how it impacted him. He talks of his time in Rookwood hospital in Llandaff, Cardiff and how the pragmatic approach from the doctors helped him come to terms with the life changing injury.

Dai adapted to his new reality and decided to challenge himself. He happened upon an opportunity to train with the United Kingdom Paralympics team. This eventually led to Dai joining the UK team and being chosen to represent the UK at the Atlanta USA Paralympics in 1996. Dai won a silver medal in the Shot-put event.

Post injury, Dai met his wife, Sue. Sue was also a patient at Rookwood hospital. Over the years, the couple have not let life illness or injury hold them back. They have both successfully raised a family in Wales. Dai has enjoyed a successful career in wheelchair basketball, which Sue also enjoys and coaches. Sue has led a Husky dog team and was a regular horse rider.

Both attend armed forces Veterans events and by example of their achievements and attitude, offer inspiration to others throughout Wales.

- Photographs from the tour can be seen in the David Dudley collection on the West Wales Veterans Archive.

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