

THE COLONEL'S FUND - 2011

The Colonel's Fund is supervised by a Steering Committee on behalf of the Regimental Trustees. The Steering Committee reviews the Fund's activities on a regular basis, whilst day to day management is carried out by the Director of Welfare and the Regimental Welfare Committee.

The Fund has been busy. During 2011, donations have continued to trickle in with many individuals contributing. Their generosity is very much appreciated. As at 31 Dec 11, the fund had raised £1,867,759 and had spent £460,112.

Since the fund was launched in 2007, the MOD has greatly improved its support to injured servicemen and the advent of the Army Recovery Capability and Personnel Recovery Units have been very welcome. In addition, the creation of the H4H Operational Fund, administered by the ABF "The Soldier's Charity", has meant that most of the needs of injured servicemen are well met. These two factors have enabled the Colonel's Fund to focus more on families of the injured and bereaved families, as well as continuing to provide support to injured Grenadiers.

This support is being delivered through the Regimental Casualty Officer(RCO), Andy Hill (formerly a Warrant Officer in the Regiment) who assumed the appointment in the Autumn of 2010 and is paid for by The Colonel's Fund. His responsibilities are:

- To ensure that the Regiment is involved at every stage of a wounded Grenadier's rehabilitation. He monitors their Individual Recovery Pathway (IRP) to ensure that they have access to the key services and resources required to help them, either to return to duty, or to make a smooth transition into an appropriately skilled civilian life. This involves:
 - Having a strong working relationship with the 1st Battalion's Unit Welfare Officer (UWO).
 - Maintaining and developing a network of serving and retired Grenadiers, charities and the commercial sector to identify sources of support and employment.
 - When required drawing on the Colonel's Fund to give financial assistance in providing advice, welfare, and benevolence quickly to the point of need.
 - Co-ordinating holiday offers, sporting and adventure training opportunities and other generous offers of help, all of which are geared to aiding recovery.
 - Effective mentoring and being a dedicated and trusted ally, who will help individuals explore new ideas for the future.
 - Constantly being alert for opportunities to upgrade IRPs with practical and financial help from either the Colonels Fund or the ABF Operational Fund. Examples of this are the provision of funding for training courses, specialist orthopaedic beds, exercise bikes and light weight wheelchairs.
 - Providing the reassurance that wounded Grenadiers have the full support of the Regiment behind them, and highlighting the benefits that this brings. This bespoke support helps build self-esteem, mental strength and resourcefulness at times when individuals may be feeling low or depressed.
- To provide support to bereaved families. Initially managed by the UWO, at an appropriate time the families become the responsibility of the RCO to give the enduring Regimental support for as long as they wish for it. The ghastliness of bereavement and the stress for families coping with the serious injuries of their sons or husbands takes a huge toll. The RCO co-ordinates all our efforts to alleviate the stresses and strains to these families. This involves:

- Acting as a Regimental point of contact, offering reassurance, giving confidential advice, sign-posting, and actively seeking opportunities for their lives to be enhanced as they recover from their loss.
 - Assisting the families in various ways, supported by appropriate financial assistance from the Colonel's Fund. A "nothing is too much trouble" approach from all Grenadiers has helped to build a strong connection with the families concerned for which they often express their gratitude, and we are proud to have them continue as members of the Regimental family.
- Some families still had a degree of uncertainty about the circumstances of their son's/husband's death (often caused by erroneous media reports, thoughtless comments by individuals, books on Afghanistan etc), and the RCO has been instrumental in setting up meetings, chaired by the Commanding Officer, between the bereaved family concerned and those who were involved; the purpose of these meetings was not to re-run the inquest, but to answer the "nagging" concerns straight from "the horse's mouth" in a more informal setting. These meetings have been very well-received.

In addition to funding the work of the RCO, The Colonel's Fund has engaged a firm of financial consultants to provide professional financial advice to bereaved families and seriously injured Grenadiers so that they can explore the options for investing the quite significant sums of money that they receive from insurance and compensation so that the money can be invested wisely for their long term benefit.

The Fund has also provided holidays for those who have been seriously wounded and their close families, and for the close families of those who were killed, in order to give them the opportunity to recharge their batteries.

Finally, there is the as yet unknown toll of mental casualties. Some young men who have seen, and in some cases done, horrific things may suffer psychologically from those memories in years to come. The Army is much better at trauma management now, and there are mechanisms in place to detect the danger signals early. But some problems may not be identified until it is too late, maybe 10-15 years in the future. At that point, the Fund will be ready to try and help individuals pick up the pieces of shattered lives, sometimes ruined by drink/drug dependence, loss of jobs and family breakup. It is for this reason that the Colonel's Fund needs to husband its resources for the long term.

The courage, dignity, stoicism and humour of the injured, their families and the bereaved families in the face of such adversity is truly humbling, and it is that which makes the Colonel's Fund so worthwhile.

The 1st Battalion will deploy once again to Helmand Province between January and April 2012, returning by the end of October the same year. It is a sad reality that there will probably be other Grenadiers and Grenadier families requiring our help and support in the future. You can be confident that the Regiment is providing the appropriate support whenever and wherever it is needed, and in doing so upholding its great traditions.