

## Alabaré Mission to Malta Veteran's Profiles



### **Richard Costello (2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Princess of Wales)**

Meet **Richard Costello**. He served 10 years in the 2nd Battalion Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment carrying out operational tours in Northern Ireland, Afghanistan and Iraq. Richard enjoyed his time serving, saying 'It was the best thing I could have done at that age'

On leaving the forces he worked for Stoke on Trent council as well as the NHS at The Royal Stoke Hospital.

Richard asked Alabaré for support following a breakdown in his mental health. We welcomed him to one of our dedicated homes for veterans and it was during this time we helped Richard rebuild himself. Richard has since found his own accommodation, full-time employment and regularly participates in Alabaré's innovative programmes.

Richard is an inspiration to other veterans showing that hope can be found when falling on hard times.

### **Susan Bradley**



Meet Susan – veteran, mother of three, and inspiration to many. Susan is joining our 'Mission to Malta' having contacted Alabaré for support in April 2024. Following a career in the forces, Susan worked hard to support the elderly, vulnerable and disabled adults in a variety of care settings and latterly became an accomplished hotel chef.

Following the breakdown of her marriage to a serving soldier and the loss of her working income during the COVID Pandemic, Susan's debt spiraled as she fought to raise her children and keep a roof over her children's heads through private renting. Despite her best efforts – she was forced to give up her tenancy, leading to her children being housed by family and friends. Susan was left homeless, spending cold nights living in her car or sofa-surfing with family and friends.

Susan's life has been transformed thanks to her own resilience and participating in Alabaré's innovative programmes dedicated to building veterans' self-esteem, resilience, skills and wellbeing.

Susan says, “I actually feel like I belong. While I love being around family members, I am more confident that I can live independently from them and start a new positive chapter.

### **Jay (Audio only)**

Jay was referred to Alabaré through Op COURAGE, an NHS mental health specialist service designed to help serving personnel due to leave the military, reservists, armed forces veterans and their families. A veteran with five tours, three in Afghanistan, Jay was diagnosed with complex PTSD and chronic burnout in 2016. This led to huge adjustments and sacrifices that both him and his partner had to make. Jay’s symptomology makes it very difficult, sometimes impossible to function in a normal capacity even when dealing with normal daily routines.

Jay says, “Alabaré have enabled me to explore a different approach to my recovery and I am beginning to rebuild resilience, motivation and a focus on managing my symptoms in a far more positive manner. I now believe that I still have something to offer, a notion that I did not share before. I still have a long way to go but I am more optimistic about my future.”

### **Phillip Rood (Warrant Officer, Class 1)**



I joined the Army in 1982 as a Staff Clerk, leaving as a Warrant Officer Class 1 in 2010. During those 28 years I had a fantastically varied career, serving in small army units, Major Headquarters, Defence Attaché in Poland, a language school in Hong Kong and finally becoming a Microsoft certified IT instructor. I learnt to speak German, Polish and Chinese (Cantonese). I deployed on operations to Kosovo (Twice) Northern Ireland and Iraq. The Army isn’t all about square bashing.

When I left the Army I needed to escape the office environment and wanted to do something completely different, something that would challenge me. I learnt to become a Barista, kitting out a van with a coffee machine and became a self-employed mobile café. I had a regular pitch at a local train station car park and served coffee to the London bound commuters and a successful coffee round within Salisbury. It was a fantastic opportunity to meet people from all walks of life making lasting friendships with customers. I did this for 10 years eventually selling the business on.

I got involved with the Armed Forces Veterans Breakfast Club in 2016 with 4 people attending the first breakfast, today it has a membership of almost 700. It was through this organisation I became a Buddy-to-Buddy volunteer with Boots on the Ground (BoTG).

Volunteering with BoTG for me is a great opportunity to volunteer for a charity and stay within the veteran community. It's rewarding to see within the first 5 minutes of a new attendee arriving they can work out you are a veteran, and the initial suspicion has gone, and trust has been established.

### **Mike Davies**



Mike joined the Royal Welch Fusiliers aged seventeen and after becoming interested in the Military because of a neighbour; a serviceman that was tasked with making small arms such as 303 rifles, he saw the forces as an opportunity to learn a trade and see the world beyond his home in North Wales.

By the age of 18 had deployed on his first of five tours of Northern Ireland, like many others he found his service there incredibly challenging. His time training recruits at Lichfield were amongst his most proud moments in the services and he especially enjoyed seeing them progress and become capable Soldiers. The military also gave him opportunity to enjoy adventurous training, much of which has remained part of his life.

The adversity he faced after leaving has made him very invested in his community and he's always the first to volunteer within both the veteran and local community. He's a great advocate for activities and as well as the outdoors enjoys sessions with the local Veteran choir & Guitars For Heroes.