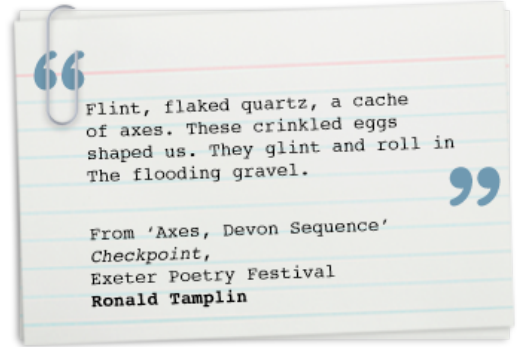




Good Morning! It's Tuesday on August 02, 2011.

Literature for everyone in the South West



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Initially commissioned into the Queen's Own Highlanders, **Colonel Stuart Tootal** served in Germany during the Cold War and completed several emergency tours of Northern Ireland during the 'Troubles'. He saw active service in the 1991 Gulf War and during the invasion of Iraq in 2003. He has also completed tours in the MOD and was awarded an OBE when working as the personal Military Assistant to general Sir David Richards.

He was selected to command the 3rd Battalion of the Parachute Regiment (3 PARA) in 2005. This included commanding the first UK Battle Group of 1200 soldiers to be sent to Helmand Province in Southern Afghanistan in 2006, for which he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. The fighting 3 PARA participated in during their six month tour of duty in Afghanistan has been described as the most intense combat the British Army has experienced since the Korean War. It involved 498 engagements with the Taliban and the expenditure of over 479,000 rounds of ammunition. Fifteen members of the Battle Group were killed in action and another 46 were wounded in combat. The numerous gallantry awards for the Battle Group included a posthumous Victoria Cross and George Cross. On returning to the UK, he set up the 3 PARA Afghan Trust charity. The charity provides



Literature Clips
M.R. Hall *The Disappeared*



John Haynes and You (courtesy Seren Books)



support to the seriously wounded soldiers and the next of kin of those members of 3 PARA that were killed in the fighting.

Following promotion to full Colonel in 2007, he surprised many by giving up his promising career and resigned from the Army in protest over the poor treatment of his wounded and equipment shortages. Stuart is pursuing a career in the corporate banking security. He is also a media defence and security commentator and has lectured regularly on leadership in complex environments to a number of business organisations. He is a trustee of the 3 PARA Afghan Trust and remains active in raising funds for Army related charities.

He is the author of the Sunday Times best seller - *Danger Close – Commanding 3 PARA in Afghanistan*

About *Danger Close*

3 PARA was at the forefront of the war in Afghanistan – the first unit into the lawless province of Helmand. Colonel Stuart Tootal, who lead the unit into battle, is the first senior commander to provide an account of the intense fighting.

The deployment was heralded as a peace mission. But the Taliban thought differently. The unit became engaged in a level of combat that has not been experienced by the British Army since the end of the Korean War. Undermanned, isolated and suffering from equipment shortages, 3 PARA fought doggedly against the Taliban. Through raw courage and determination, they won the break in battle for the British campaign.

Numerous gallantry decorations were awarded to the Battle Group, including the Victoria Cross, but they were not without the cost of many wounded and killed in action. On his return from Afghanistan, Tootal fought doggedly against an indifferent government to get proper treatment for his wounded.

Frustrated with the government's treatment of its soldiers, he resigned from the Army and is pursuing a career in corporate banking security. He has become one of the UK's foremost authorities on the situation in Afghanistan, and is regularly in the public eye. He is a trustee of the 3 PARA Afghan Trust and remains active in raising funds for Armed Forces charities.

A proportion of the proceeds of this book are going to the Afghan Trust www.afghanistanstrust.org



Matt Lynn, author of the acclaimed Force series of military thrillers caught up with Colonel Tootal to ask a few questions about the book for Cyprus Well:

How did you find the experience of writing a book after a career in the military?

It was both emotional and cathartic. I was also uniquely privileged to be able to interview over 100 of my former soldiers to gain an insight of what we went through from their perspective from the position of being a civilian.

Were you worried about the reaction the book might receive among your former colleagues? How was it received?

I was only concerned with how those in 3 PARA would receive it. They were my critical audience that I really cared about. It was received extremely well. Their view was that I told it how it was.

Did you leave much out because you felt it was too sensitive?

For obvious reasons, I avoided certain details about some of the casualties we took, although I wrote to all the next of kin of those killed before publication.

There have been a huge number of books about the British campaign in Afghanistan. Why is that?

It has captured the imagination of the British public, especially in regard to what our soldiers do there and what they experience.

What lessons do you think we should learn from that campaign?

These are legion, but the top 5 would be:

- a. Get your intelligence right and don't ignore what it is telling you.
- b. Resource operations properly with the right numbers of troops and correct equipment.
- c. The fighting prowess of the British soldier is second to none.
- d. The lack of proper combat among very senior officers and an over concerns about political/career considerations was very apparent and they should have been quicker to listen and act on what those of us with combat experience were telling them.
- e. The country needs to do more to support and care for its wounded.

Was being a published author as you expected? What was better and what was worse?

I had no expectations of what it would be like. I always said that if I sold more than 100 copies beyond my immediate family and friends I would have been very pleased.

Which writers do you admire - military or otherwise?

George McDonald Fraser (*Flashman* and *Quartered Safe Out Here*) and Max Hastings – *Overlord*, *Nemesis* and *Armageddon*

Are you planning another book?

We'll have to wait and see.

What do you miss about the Army? And what do you not miss?

I don't miss the Army, but I do sometimes miss being a soldier and especially 3 PARA. However, my time was over and leaving was the right thing to do.

**Interview Archive**

June 2010: Katy Guest

July 2010: Susanna Jones

August 2010: John Haynes

September 2010: Candy Neubert

October/November 2010: M.R. Hall

December 2010 Waterstone's Exeter Roman Gate

January 2011 Dave Bradley Editor in Chief, SFX

February/March 2011 Keith Blount, Scrivener/Literature & Latte

April 2011 Rachael Boast

May/June 2011 Ginny Baily

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