

Doctor, Soldier, Father.

One might expect that a man who has spent his life travelling the world with a kit bag over his shoulder, jumping out of planes into warzones and stitching up soldiers and civilians alike should look something like a hero. Scars covering at least forty percent of the body, tales taller than the empire state building, maybe even a prosthetic limb or an eye patch.

But when I sat down to interview Philip Resell, I was faced with a mild-mannered, easy going father of two, just coming in from his garden after attending to his small barnyard menagerie. After having only recently returned from Afghanistan, it was amazing to see how he had managed to settle right back into everyday life. We hear stories of people coming back from battlefields shellshocked: waking up in the night in a cold sweat after having a flashback, but Philip was perfectly happy to talk about his experiences in the Middle East.

"It was very intense," he explained bluntly. "There were no days off when I was there. There's one surgical team in Helmand Province and they're working pretty much around the clock every day." According to Philip, there was a bigger concentration of surgical operations in Afghanistan than in other recent wars, and even the Second World War.

But what was it like working out in the Middle East? Apparently, no different from working in a field in Wales. "I flew in to Kandahar at night, I flew out of Kandahar in daytime but all I saw was the airfield, I flew into camp bastion out in Helmand province, I stayed there for two months, I didn't go outside the camp wire, I could see the same five square miles of desert for two months with no view and no change and then I fly home and people ask what Afghanistan's like and I say well a bit hot, a bit

dusty and that's about it. It's strange. People don't ever quite understand it.

As a consultant orthopaedic surgeon and lieutenant colonel in the parachute regiment, Philip now has a number of important responsibilities. Since the age of 14, he decided that he wanted to be an army doctor. He grew up in Aldershot, living close to the British army, so it made sense to him to join up. It also gave him the opportunity to try a normal job with just a small twist added to it. "One of the best things I've been able to do recently," he told me with enthusiasm as a smile began to creep across his face, "is going back to Headley Court. It's the rehabilitation centre for the British army, so the troops that come back end up there." Soldiers injured in combat are sent back to Headley Court for rest and eventually training to get them back onto the field of battle. Philip met a number of soldiers from Afghanistan that he had operated on. He was able to explain to the recovering patients what he had done in their operations, why certain amputations had to be made and in one case, how he had managed to bring somebody back to life after their heart had stopped beating. "It's very humbling to see them through, and it's also very pleasing in that you come away thinking 'here's someone who is alive today because of what I've done' and .-that's incredibly rewarding."

So far, Philip has lived quite an incredible life. I remember seeing an advertisement for the US Army which asked "If somebody wrote a book about your life, would anyone read it?" This is certainly true of Philip. "Oh, well I've been around a lot of Europe, United States, Canada, Middle East, Kuwait, Afghanistan..." The list went on and on, until he mentioned one particular place. "The Jordanian Desert." Just thinking of it seemed to move him slightly as he began to recall fond memories of his past. "We were camping out in the desert for 6 weeks in Wadi Rumm which is one of the most

spectacular places. It's like a lunar landscape." Being deployed during peacetime gave Philip a chance to really admire his surroundings, which provided an opportunity for him to reflect on his life in the army, especially when compared to some of the more horrific things that occur.

"People with bits of body blown off them... That's quite grim." Philip's face was the embodiment of serious as he explained some of the gruesome injuries that he bore witness to whilst away in Afghanistan. "People with wounds or ulcers in their legs... that have things living in them. That's quite unpleasant. Actually, the botfly larva's quite a good one." He began, enthusiastically. He told me a tale of a soldier waking up to find a small speck of blood on his pillow, and upon surgical inspection, a maggot was removed from the back of his head. The botfly will lay its eggs on living tissue and the larvae will burrow into the skin, deploying a local anesthetic so that they can happily eat away at their host's flesh completely undercover. "They don't get very big and they stay very local and you basically have to cut them out. That was pretty gruesome."

Philip continued to talk about the army from a medical point of view, and it became very clear that he spoke with a heavy heart. "The worst bits of it... we don't always win. People die," he said very bluntly. "Sometimes they die because they were going to die anyway, and sometimes they die because we miss bits. That's probably the hardest bit, when, effectively, we fail." However, for every story of an unpredicted death, there seems to be twice as many describing scenarios in which death seemed like the only option. Major David Bradley was given a five percent chance of survival after being hit by a rocket propelled grenade in Basra, Iraq, but against all odds survived his injuries and is now back on his feet, physically fit and getting involved in further military business.

Besides seeing a lot of horrific things, being in the army allowed Philip to meet a lot of interesting people, from local tradesmen touting bootlegged DVDs and exotic scarves to the other allied soldiers themselves, hailing from all over the globe. When asked about the US troops, a smile spread across his face, and he responded saying "Ah. They're great." He explained that, while they are just as able-minded as any other soldier, they seem to have a much simpler, more US-centered view of the world. "I met a chap who'd been injured, and we were talking to him in the emergency department, and I asked him where he'd come from, expecting the location in Afghanistan where he'd been injured, and he just said "Alabama, sir!" almost straight out of Forrest Gump, and it was sometimes hard to keep a straight face."

Despite being holed up in military camps for months at a time with nothing to see but dull khaki tents and dusty landscapes, joining the army was a very rewarding experience for Philip. He explored the world with a group of close friends, which is a dream for many people nowadays; he met countless interesting characters and still has a few souvenirs from some of them; above all, though, he was able to perform a regular job in extreme circumstances, providing a break away from the regular, day-to-day, nine-to-five grind that so many of us have to endure.

Commentary:

I chose to interview Philip Rosell, an army soldier and orthopaedic consultant (currently not in service). I decided to interview him about his recent return from Afghanistan. I tried to portray Philip as a likeable character, highlighting a number of positive aspects of the army whilst keeping the focus away from the negative.

The article was written for the Telegraph, as I feel that the political views and readership would correspond well with the tenor and style in which I decided to write it. My target audience for the article was quite broad, as war is always a topical subject, so many people would be interested. This prompted me to use a variety of both receptive (menagerie, touting, landscapes) and productive (said, happy, interesting) language to try and make the piece seem intelligent yet slightly more relaxed. It also related well with the slightly informal register of the Telegraph.

During the interview, I stuck rigidly to the questions that I had prepared, and this gave me quite a large range of information that I could comment on in the article. However, I was left with little information on a lot of subjects so I had to do a lot of independent research. This also left me without a cohesive thread, so I had to create one myself by mix-and-matching various parts of the interview: I explored the fact that Philip had managed to live a diverse and exciting life whilst remaining modest and humble about his incredible deeds.

I tried to use as many types of speech as possible to create variety. I used a large amount of free direct speech to get the reader to try and connect with Philip, as if he were talking directly to them ("I flew into Kandahar at night, I flew out of Kandahar..."). I also used direct speech and narrative reported action to try and communicate emotions and actions that cannot be conveyed through quotes ("Philip's face was the embodiment of serious as he explained..."). I used free indirect speech to represent my own sentiments without referencing myself, as this would remove focus from the interviewee ("But what was it like working out in the Middle East?"). I used indirect speech once, although I feel that this may have disrupted the discourse slightly, as it is a much simpler way of describing speech. I included a number of inquirers to try and 'spice up' the indirect speech ("he explained" "which asked" etc).

Almost all of the quotes I used in the interview have been transcribed verbatim. I feel that the field-specific nouns (amputations, rehabilitation) that Philip used were not too complicated, so I did not need to edit them down. My target audience should be fully capable of understanding it.

I did not include a pun in the title of my article, as broadsheets do not usually rely on them to attract attention. However, I used power of 3, as it is a strong rhetorical device, useful for creating hooks. I also attempted to keep the graphology similar to that of the Telegraph, using two columns and the formal *Times New Roman* font.

I feel that, had I focused more on a specific subject, I would have been able to create a cohesive thread with much less trouble. While the interviewer should prepare questions, he' or she should not be afraid to deviate from their plan if something more interesting arises.