



Once
a Soldier...
Always
a Soldier.

MY FLAG IS NOW MY BED

A Veteran's Story

By Paul Baldry



SAME
PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
DIFFERENT
TIMES

We wore the colours once with pride.



Come on, you're
holding everybody up!

I'm making sure
I look respectable.



Bit late
for that!



All right, lads —
MOVE!



We were young, we were soldiers, and whatever waited ahead,
we faced it together.



MY FLAG IS NOW MY BED

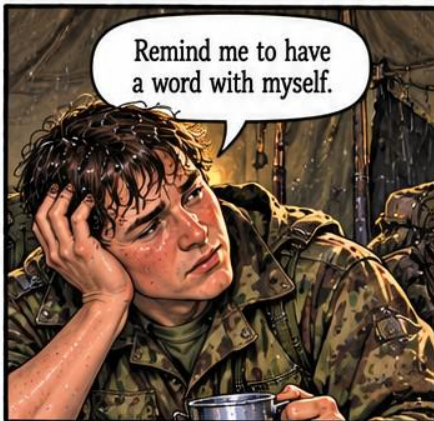
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SAME PEOPLE
SAME PRIDE
DIFFERENT TIMES

Under Canvas

Rain, mud, cold and canvas became our home. It wasn't luxury, but it was ours — and we made the best of it.



*We complained about everything —
and somehow never complained about anything that really mattered.*

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SAME PRIDE
DIFFERENT TIMES

Far From Home

Different lands, different languages,
same job — keep going, keep your
mates safe, and get back.



We carried our kit. We carried our fear.
And sometimes we carried one another.



Different
Battles,
Same
Brothers.

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Standing Together

In the chaos, there was no time for pride — only for each other.

I've got you.

Leave me.
I'm slowing
you down.

Not happening.

BROTHERS
IN ARMS
ALWAYS



Give him here.
We'll carry him
together.

NO
SOLDIER
LEFT
BEHIND



Bravery didn't always look heroic.
Sometimes it was simply refusing to leave a mate behind.

Brothers
in Arms
Forever.



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The Empty Place

After the mission, the shooting had stopped, but the silence said enough. We sat together, but one of us was missing.



He'd have hated us sitting here looking miserable.

He would.

Tea?

Yeah. Tea.

Some came home with us only in photographs, stories and memories.

ONCE A MATE
ALWAYS A MATE

Service
Sacrifice
Friendship
For Life.



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SAME
PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
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Queen and Country

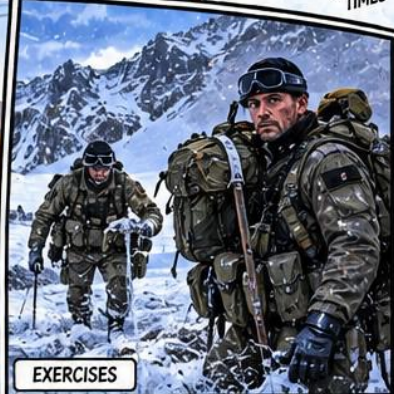
Different places, different times,
but always the same reason —
for Queen and Country.



TRAINING



ON OPERATIONS



EXERCISES



MATES FOR LIFE



PLACES FAR FROM HOME



STILL PROUD



LAUGHTER IN THE TOUGHEST TIMES



Different uniforms.
Different countries.
Same brotherhood.



Why do you do it?

Them.



I meant
the Army.

So did I.

For Queen and Country we went,
but it was our mates who made it all worthwhile.



Same
Soldier.
Different
Battle.



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Handing It In

Years later, the time came to hand in the kit that had been part of my life for so long.



No enemy. No battle. No dramatic last stand.
One day I was a soldier, the next, it wasn't.



Same Skills.
Different World.



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SAME PRIDE
DIFFERENT TIMES

Civvy Street

Back in the real world, everyone seemed to know where they were going — everyone except me.



The Job Interview

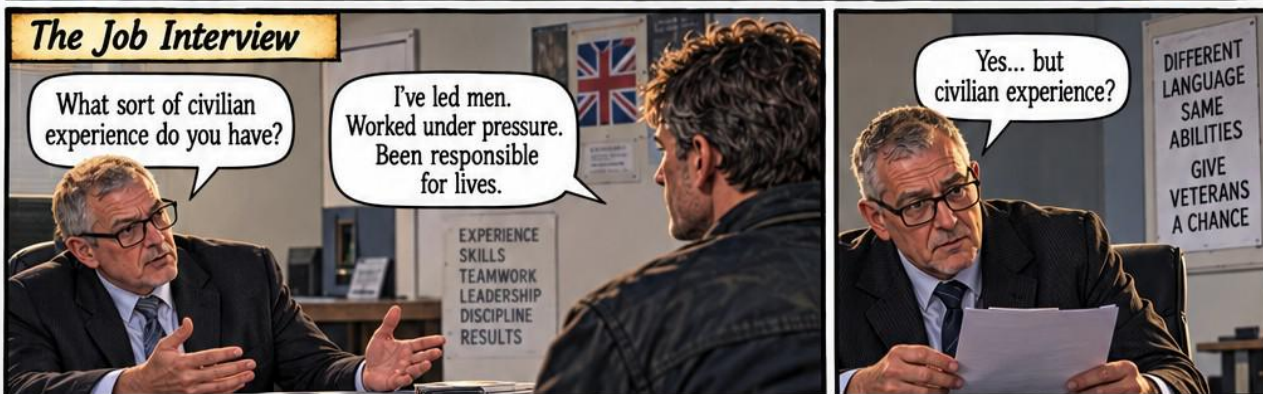
What sort of civilian experience do you have?

I've led men.
Worked under pressure.
Been responsible for lives.

EXPERIENCE
SKILLS
TEAMWORK
LEADERSHIP
DISCIPLINE
RESULTS

Yes... but civilian experience?

DIFFERENT LANGUAGE
SAME ABILITIES
GIVE VETERANS A CHANCE



I thought that counted.

SAME VALUES
DIFFERENT BATTLEGROUND



NOT LAZY
NOT A FREELoader
NOT A FAILURE
A VETERAN
STILL HERE
STILL TRYING

SOMETIMES THE HARDEST BATTLE IS FINDING A PLACE IN PEACE



I knew how to belong to a section,
troop and company.
Nobody that taught me how to belong out here.

STILL A SOLDIER
JUST WITHOUT A UNIFORM



Service Gives You Skills... But Life Brings New Battles.



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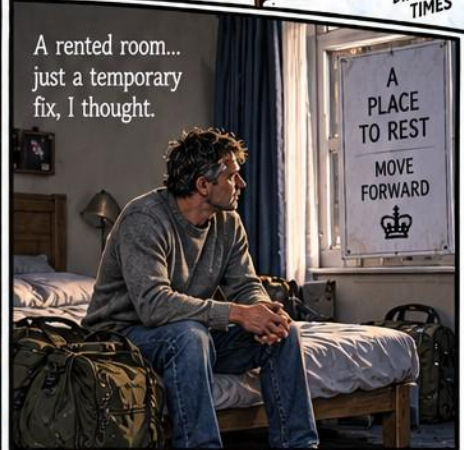
SAME PEOPLE
SAME PRIDE
DIFFERENT TIMES

Falling Through the Gaps

At first I thought I'd be fine. I had a plan. But life doesn't always go to plan.



The money ran out faster than I expected.



A rented room... just a temporary fix, I thought.



You can stay here a few nights.

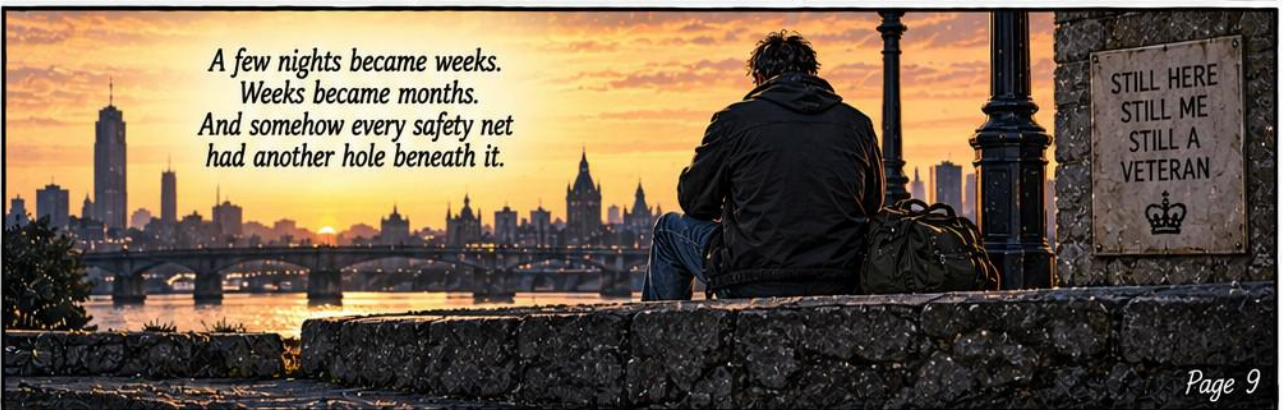
Just until I sort myself out.



Thanks, mate. I won't forget it.



And just like that... I was out again.



A few nights became weeks. Weeks became months. And somehow every safety net had another hole beneath it.

Service
Ends...
The Struggle
Begins.



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TIMES

Falling Through the Gaps

At first I thought I'd be fine.
I had a plan. But life doesn't always
go to plan.

Another
bill...
another
setback.



The money
ran out faster
than I expected.



A rented room...
just a temporary
fix, I thought.



You can stay here
a few nights.

Just until
I sort myself
out.



Thanks, mate.
I won't forget it.

REAL
FRIENDS
MAKE
LIFE
LIGHTER



Until one day...
my key
no longer
opened the door.



No home.
No plan.
Just
uncertainty.



DIFFERENT
PEOPLE
SAME
STREETS

STILL
SEARCHING
FOR A PLACE
TO BELONG



A few nights became weeks.
Weeks became months.
And somehow every safety net
had another hole beneath it.



Same
People.
Same
Pride.
Different
Times.

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SAME
PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
DIFFERENT
TIMES

Invisible

Present day. Same streets,
different uniform. Some people
see me, but they don't really see me.

PEOPLE
PASS
BY

ONCE
A SOLDIER
ALWAYS
A SOLDIER

A
LITTLE
KINDNESS
GOES A
LONG WAY

Don't make
eye contact.

Poor bloke.

You don't
know me.

DIFFERENT
UNIFORM
SAME
MAN

STILL
HERE
STILL
ME

THEY SAW
THE COAT.
THE SLEEPING BAG.
THE CARDBOARD.
THEY DIDN'T SEE
THE SOLDIER.

Brothers
Then...
Always.

They saw the coat. The sleeping bag. The cardboard.
They didn't see the soldier.

SOME
STORIES
DON'T END...
THEY JUST
GET QUIETER.

Same
Memories.
Same
Brothers.
Always.



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SAME
PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
DIFFERENT
TIMES

The Box

Some things are never
really left behind.



Same blokes...
Different places...
Same mates...
Always.



Look at us.



Smile, you
miserable sod!



Heh...
Good times.



Brothers in arms...
Forever.



Morning, mate.



But nobody
is there.

Some memories still keep me warm,
even when the world feels cold.



MEMORIES
NEVER LEAVE.
THEY JUST
SIT A LITTLE
QUIETER.

Same
People.
Same
Pride.
Different
Times.



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SAME
PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
DIFFERENT
TIMES

My Flag Is Now My Bed

A bitterly cold night.
The temperature falls,
but the memories never do.



The flag I once wore proudly upon my sleeve
now helped keep the winter from my bones.



Same
People.
Same
Pride.
Different
Times.



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SAME
PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
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TIMES

Someone Stops

Morning.
Hundreds of feet have passed him.
Then one pair stops.



Sometimes it only takes one person to stop walking
and see the human being behind the headlines.



Same
People.
Same
Pride.
Different
Times.



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SAME
PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
DIFFERENT
TIMES

Still a Soldier

Two cups of tea.
A conversation that
matters.

What was
it like?



DIFFERENT
TIMES
SAME
SOLDIER



Which bit?



Being a soldier.



Best mates you'll
ever have. Worst days
you'll ever have.
And everything
in between.



Best mates...



Worst days...



...and everything in between.



Do you miss it?



Every day.



ONCE
A SOLDIER
ALWAYS
A SOLDIER



The uniform may be gone,
but the soldier within never leaves.



SOME
JOURNEYS
NEVER END



Same
People.
Same
Pride.
Different
Times.



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PEOPLE
SAME
PRIDE
DIFFERENT
TIMES

The Battle Nobody Saw

Different battlefields.
The same fighting spirit.



Keep going!



VETERANS
SUPPORT
CENTRE



ADVICE
HOUSING
WELLBEING
A BRIGHTER
TOMORROW



THEN...
THROUGH
STORMS.
THROUGH
FEAR.
TOGETHER.



All right, lad.
I'm trying.

SUPPORT
BELONGING
OPPORTUNITY
YOU'RE NOT
ALONE



SAME
DETERMINATION.
SAME
COURAGE.
SAME
SOLDIER.

A
DIFFERENT
BATTLEFIELD.
THE SAME
FIGHTING SPIRIT.



VETERANS
SUPPORT CENTRE
REAL PEOPLE
REAL SUPPORT
NEW BEGINNINGS



Perhaps courage had never left him.
Perhaps the battlefield had simply changed.

SUPPORT
OPPORTUNITY
BELONGING
A BRIGHTER
TOMORROW



Same
People.
Same
Pride.
Different
Times.



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SAME
PRIDE
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TIMES

Remember the Man

He walks through the city.
For the first time,
people actually notice him.

Thank you
for your service.

Look Dad...
he's a veteran.

Yes, son.
Let's say
thanks for
your service.

RESPECT
COSTS
NOTHING
BUT
MEANS
EVERYTHING

Here you go.
A hot cuppa.
You've done
so much for us.

Some people still see you.

Is there anything
I can do to help?

Sometimes, a little kindness
goes a long way.

The same
man.
A different
time.

Different roads.
The same courage.
The same heart.

When you see someone sleeping on the street,
don't only see where their journey ended.

Wonder where it began.

There may be a story beneath
those worn clothes that nobody
ever stopped long enough to hear.

PEOPLE
NOT
PROBLEMS

A VETERAN
TODAY
A CITIZEN
ALWAYS

YESTERDAY

A soldier standing tall.

TODAY

A shadow beside a wall.

BUT STILL ME.

*Brothers
in arms
Forever.*

SAME MAN.
SAME VALUES.
SAME PRIDE.
DIFFERENT TIMES.
STILL SERVING
IN MY OWN WAY.



A
VETERAN
STILL HERE
STILL PROUD
STILL ME

Not
Forgotten



*When you see someone sleeping on the street,
don't only see where their journey ended.*

Wonder where it began.

*There may be a story beneath those worn clothes
that nobody ever stopped long enough to hear.*

*Perhaps the uniform may be gone,
but the soldier within remains.*

*The battlefield may have changed,
but the courage is still the same.*

Different roads, the same heart.

A veteran yesterday, a human being today.

Still me.

By Paul Baldry

Final Page