



CAPTAIN **ANTHONY SANDLE** RLC PSAO 238 SUPPLY SQUADRON ROYAL LOGISTIC CORPS

Anthony Sandle joined the Army on 14 August 1989 and has served almost 31 years to date. My Planet Liverpool asked him for his story with the Army and his current role with PSAO 238 Supply Squadron at Mather Avenue, Liverpool.

ANTHONY was born in 1971 and started life in Southdene, Kirkby before his family moved across town to Northwood. He attended St Lawrence's Roman Catholic Infant and Primary School before going on to St Kevin's RC Secondary Comprehensive. Not a lover of school life, "I couldn't wait to leave" he left St. Kevin's in 1987 to enter the big wide world at the age of 16.

Although his close family had a rich tradition of Armed Forces service, his mother was an ex-Woman's Royal Navy (a Wren) and he had two uncles that were Army and another who was in the Royal Marines, for Anthony, going into the services "Never really flicked my switch".

His first choice of career was to become a Professional Footballer, as was almost every 14-16 year old's dream in Liverpool at that time, but when he realised that was unlikely to happen he decided that he would become a Police Officer. He completed several jobs between the ages of 16-18 whilst biding his time to apply for the Police, including working in a fashion store in town, trying his hand at butchery and also as a Security Guard on St John's Precinct – you were supposed to be 18 to do this but Anthony was a big lad and background checks weren't as stringent in those days.

When he did officially reach 18, he applied to the Police service only to receive the response that he was too young and inexperienced and that he should go and "see a bit of life first and get some real-life experiences".

So Anthony did just that. He decided to apply to join the Army, for THREE years...

Anthony duly arrived at his first training unit in September 1989 and, with his ambition of becoming a Police Officer still acting as his primary driving factor, he joined the Royal Military Police (RMP). His initial training was conducted at the RMP Training Centre (RMPTC) at Rousillon Barracks, Chichester, West Sussex, where he spent just over six months in training, prior to passing out. However, as he was coming towards the end of his tenure there, it was becoming ever more apparent that he and the RMP had different perspectives on what constituted 'acceptable behaviour' – "you can take the lad out of Kirkby but...." as they say!!!

The impasse meant that Anthony was 'invited' to change cap-badge! So, not being completely enamoured with that 'forced career change',

he decided that he wanted to drive big trucks instead. As a result, Anthony transferred into the Royal Corps of Transport (RCT) and after a period of retraining, which included attaining his driving licences – "The RMP never did work out that I didn't have a licence to drive the car that I turned up in for training" – he arrived in May of 1990 at his first working unit of 1 Squadron RCT in Colchester for his 4-year stint, complete with a licence to drive BIG TRUCKS.



Anthony during in his basic training days in 1990

Continued overleaf ➡

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Anthony attending 10 Downing Street



Sergeant Anthony Sandle • 2003 Gulf War

ANTHONY is what is referred to as a ‘Late Entry Commissioned Officer’ which means that he joined the Army as a Private Soldier, progressing through every rank in turn, all the way to Warrant Officer Class (WO1), and was then offered the opportunity to apply for a Commission. A warrant officer in the British Armed Forces is a member of the highest group of non-commissioned ranks, holding the Queen's (or King's) warrant, which is signed by the Secretary of State for Defence. Warrant officers are not saluted as they do not hold the Queen's Commission, however they are to be addressed as 'Sir/Ma'am' by subordinates.

Once you have decided to apply for a Commission, the process itself takes 12-months. Many applicants are filtered out along the way, but ultimately it culminates in a 3-day residential psychometric selection process ranging from mental robustness to physical endurance tests. It is a daunting process to enter into, especially when you consider that you are already competing against what is seen to be the absolute cream of the British Army (only around 1% of those walking through the doors of a recruiting office make the rank of WO1) and of the 96 personnel that applied alongside Anthony in that year for his particular career stream, only 22 were offered Commissions.

When Anthony was commissioned in 2012, he was given an initial 10-year contract, which would likely have been extended out until his 55th birthday in 2026, when at which point he would have been forced to leave the Army on an age ruling. However, just before Christmas 2016, he found out about the job he is now employed in. After discussions with Shirley, he decided to apply for it and did so in early 2017. He was successful with his application and decided to terminate his Regular contract early – and in July 2017 he commenced the role he has today.

Anthony explains, “My contract type is called Full-Time Reserve Service, so I still serve in a full-time capacity. The only difference is that I am on what is termed a ‘Home Commitment’ only contract. Which means, although there are still circumstances where it can happen (exceptional circumstances) I am no longer deployable to operational theatres of war. I am employed for the one role I fulfil, with no need to move posts or compete for promotion – I have been selected for this role only. As this is a permanent position and if I am deemed to be ‘effective in post’ I could realistically be employed in this role until 60 years of age. Not bad for a bloke that joined the Army at 18 for just the three years hey!!!

During his time with the Regular Army, Anthony was deployed to many different parts of the world, including being deployed on operational service for a combined total of two and a half years of his career. He spent those times in Iraq (twice) Bosnia and The Falklands (not in 1982, “I’m not that old”). On both occasions in Iraq, 1990-91 and then again in 2003, during the two Gulf Wars, Anthony was deployed in a forward war-fighting role.

Anthony in 2009 at Lourdes

Ask him the question and Anthony will tell you that there have been many highlights over the years, too many to mention in fact, but those that particularly stand out for him are:

- “Each time I was deployed on active service as mentioned. That may sound a little unhinged, but as I often say to people – imagine being a fire fighter and never putting out a fire.”
- “Whilst employed at one stage in a Close Protection (CP) role, I was detached to London during the 50th Anniversary celebrations of VE Day (1995) and worked with SO12 of New Scotland Yard, as part of the CP Team for the President of Trinidad & Tobago.”
- “I spent around seven years of my career at differing stages in instructional roles in Defence Colleges. The satisfaction of taking a soldier with no knowledge and little faith in their own ability to achieve what you want them to do, right through to a tangible qualification, is an experience I cherish.”
- “The pride of not only making it to the rank of WO1 but doing it in such a timescale that meant I was afforded the opportunity to serve at that rank for five years and then being assessed as suitable to undertake a Commission.”
- In January 2016 I was added to her Majesty’s New-Year honours list for “outstanding service to the British Army”.

“A DEFINITE LOW-POINT WAS REACHED EVERY TIME I HAD TO LEAVE MY WIFE SHIRLEY BEHIND WHILST REPRESENTING MY QUEEN AND COUNTRY. THIS WOULD OFTEN BE FOR MONTHS AT A TIME AND SOMETIMES YOU WERE NOT TO KNOW IF YOU WOULD EVER RETURN, THIS WAS SOMETHING I CERTAINLY DON’T MISS. IT’S ALSO A COMMITMENT THAT MOST SPOUSES OF ARMED FORCES PERSONNEL DON’T RECEIVE ENOUGH CREDIT FOR COPING WITH EITHER.”



Tony and Shirley Sandle



On the subject of lowlights, Anthony says, “To be completely honest, there have not been that many. That said, a definite low-point was reached every time I had to leave my wife Shirley behind whilst representing my Queen and Country. This would often be for months at a time and sometimes you were not to know if you would ever return, this was something I certainly don’t miss. It’s also a commitment that most spouses of Armed Forces personnel don’t receive enough credit for coping with either.

SO WHAT IS ANTHONY’S ROLE TODAY?

Anthony is employed as the Permanent Staff Administrative Officer of an Army Reserve Unit which has a total Strength of 104, including Regular and Reserve Soldiers and a number of Civilian support staff.

This means that Monday to Friday 0830-1630 he oversees the management of the Squadron, ensuring that all its staff and equipment are ready to deploy on world-wide operations if called upon to do so. To that end, it is Anthony’s job to ensure that the troops and all their equipment make it to the camp gate. When they then drive through the gate and onwards to the operational theatre, the Reserve Chain of Command takes over, whilst he takes charge of those left behind – “Finally I am ‘in the rear, with the gear’!”

The role covers all aspects of Squadron HR Management, Recruitment of Reserve Forces personnel, Personal & Personnel Security, IT and general communications management, budgetary management and civil engagement, with not just the local councils and departments and the likes of the Emergency Services, but Anthony is also charged with developing relationships with local businesses. He says, “In this area, I explore where those ‘mutually beneficial’ relationships may be possible, in terms of us providing trained personnel to potential civilian employers or an opportunity for us to recruit from them and into our unit, thus hopefully enhancing their own product.

“It is a very involved, and at times, challenging role. That is why the MO of those that fill this sort of role are ‘often’ Late Entry Commissioned Officers with a wide and varied background from their Military Service. That said, it is also a hugely rewarding role. I am employed in a job which is in an organisation I love, with a language I can speak and a culture that I understand, and it still affords me the opportunity to work with soldiers daily.”

I would like to end by thanking my wife, Shirley. She is the most important part of my life. We got together in 1987, both aged 16, married in 1992 and are still happily married to this day – quite how she has managed to put up with everything I have put her through really is beyond me!

“I CONSIDER MYSELF A LUCKY MAN. I HAVE SERVED MY QUEEN AND COUNTRY AND WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO AND I HAVE EXPERIENCED ALL OF THE AFOREMENTIONED. TODAY, MY CURRENT ROLE MEANS THAT I AM NOW ONLY SIX MILES AWAY FROM MY ‘FOREVER HOME’ – WHY WOULDN’T I LOVE THAT?”