

Case studies and quotes

Develop new skills

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David Middleton, Army Reservist

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David Middleton, Army Reservist

“The three years I spent doing basic military training gave me a chance to find out about the different specialisms and I’m now a Media Operations Officer, which is like being a press officer for the Royal Navy. It’s a hands-on role – both in the UK and overseas – involving arranging press trips, escorting journalists, writing press releases and providing media training.”

Tamar Howard-Pearce, Royal Naval Reservist

Get paid to train

“I usually train on Tuesday evenings, one weekend every couple of months and once a year do two weeks’ continuous training. The time commitment isn’t a problem for me. My managers have always been very supportive and I’ve never had any problems balancing training with work.”

Tamar Howard-Pearce, Royal Naval Reservist

Challenge yourself

“Being a Reservist is an amazing experience. I’ve travelled to locations I would never have had the opportunity to visit, with deployments across the globe to places as diverse as the Arctic, the rain forests of Australia, the Middle East, Europe and North America.

“I really enjoy sport and adventure and have had a go at lots of activities ranging from scuba diving in the Mediterranean and qualifying as a glider pilot to undertaking arctic survival and ski touring in Norway.”

David Middleton, Army Reservist

“My advice to anyone who wants to give up some of their spare time to do something exciting, to keep fit and to support the defence of the nation – I would say – do it!”

Tim Wates, Army Reservist

General

“Being in the Army has opened up so many opportunities that I wouldn’t have achieved elsewhere. I’ve gained new skills and had the opportunity to travel to Switzerland, all of which has been done in my spare time.”

Marcus Cribb, Army Reserve

“I was attracted to being a Reservist because it’s fun, keeps you fit, you get paid and make lots of friends whilst doing something worthwhile.”

Tamar Howard-Pearce, Royal Naval Reservist

“I’ve certainly had some fantastic experiences: sailing through the Suez Canal; serving on a Turkish warship for anti-piracy patrols off Somalia; and being within sight of Tripoli the day the Libya campaign officially ended. And at home I’ve had the privilege of representing the Navy on Remembrance Sunday and at other events and I’ve made lasting friendships.”

Jeremy Olver, Royal Naval Reservist

Case studies

Warrant Officer Class 2 Stuart Jordan, Army Reserve (Territorial Army)

Stuart Jordan, 41, from Welling in Bexley is a Warrant Officer Class 2 in the Royal Engineers and a Senior Engineer for Arup.

“Being a Reservist is an escape from the daily grind, enabling me to test myself against challenges that aren’t available to most people. Passing the All Arms Commando Course is, without doubt, the greatest highlight of my time in the Reserves. Being part of the local reconstruction process in Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan comes a very close second.

“I started off by visiting different units to see where I felt most at home. The Commando Engineers offered me a balance of engineering and infantry allowing me to enjoy both mental and physical challenges. Being a civil engineer, the practical experience I’ve gained has been invaluable.

Training

“If you want to progress through the ranks, training helps you to prepare for the challenges that lie ahead. I train once a week and for about eight weekends throughout the year. I also attend a two-week annual training camp.

“The training is good and generally progressive and although I’ve found myself stretched, I have felt prepared even for probing minefields south of Basra before the main assault.

“I’ve trained as a plant operator including JCBs, excavators and bulldozers; undergone combat engineer training covering explosives, water supplies and bridge building and worked closely with the regular army in many different countries. I’ve also attended several courses that have developed my leadership skills and have been very fortunate to be mentored by some experienced regular and ex-regular soldiers

“As a member of the Troop management, a typical training session involves planning and delivering training for others, career management, equipment checks and mentoring. For the troops it involves a mix of physical training, trade training (we have plant operators, drivers, signallers, combat engineers and more), preparing for field exercises and developing commando field skills.

“Sometimes it is hard to limit the time I give to the Army Reserve as there are always more good training opportunities than free time available. It helps that my work and Reserve unit are flexible and more importantly, my wife and family have been supportive throughout.

Tour of duty

“My squadron deployed to Kuwait and Iraq in 2003 as part of Op TELIC. As a corporal, my role was to command engineer plant operators, many of whom were regular soldiers, for the initial preparation stage, assault and subsequent reconstruction works.

“In 2006 I was deployed as a sergeant in Afghanistan to manage the plant equipment in Camp Bastion. It took a couple of months of hard work to locate the equipment in various outposts and return it to a serviceable state. I was then re-tasked Lashkar Gah where I worked on reconstruction projects such as sustainable water supplies, new security infrastructure for the Afghan Forces and toilets for schools. We also designed and constructed a two-storey midwife training facility in the grounds of a regional hospital.

“We used local contractors to put money back into the local economy, which created a sense of ownership from the locals who genuinely appreciated the value that their work was adding to their future.

“The work with schools was particularly satisfying. My wife is a teacher and we have two school-age children so it was easy to appreciate the benefits that we were able to bring in partnership with the locals.

“Overall, being a Reservist gives me a sense of achievement, has improved my confidence and helps to maintain my fitness levels. If you're thinking of joining the Reserves you should start by talking to anyone you know who is a Reservist and go online to see what type of unit might best suit you. It will give you some of the best experiences of your life.”

Corporal Jonathan Wheeler, Army Reserve (Territorial Army)

Corporal Jonathan Wheeler, 40, from Hillingdon is a HR Combat Clerk for the Adjutant General's Corps and an Internal Audit Manager for Xerox. He has been a Reservist with 131 Independent Commando Squadron for the past six years.

"A member of my team at Xerox was a Commando Engineer in the Reserve Forces and encouraged me to apply.

"Basic training was quite a challenge as I wasn't used to the military atmosphere but the training team did a good job and I made some good friends who I've kept to this day.

"As well as being a HR Combat Clerk, I'm trained in infantry skills and have taken part in adventure training activities in places such as Bavaria. I'm also a Class 3 driver after two weeks of intensive driving training and have completed a Defence Instructional Training Techniques course which shows you how to instruct others, something which has been hugely helpful in my day job.

"There isn't really a typical training session. I may be confirming new recruits, on the rifle range refreshing my training on the SA80 rifle, or taking part in a weekend exercise. It's an extremely varied role that I feel fortunate to have.

"The strength of character I've developed from my training has been a huge help to me in other parts of my life and I believe I only obtained my role as a manager at Xerox due to my time as a Reservist. It also helped me on non-military activities such as trekking across Scotland and camping in snowstorms.

"There have been many highlights during my time in the Reserve Forces including two weeks in Cyprus helping to create a military base for troops getting ready to deploy to Afghanistan. Training in 38°C was quite full on and it gave me an appreciation of what the troops in Afghanistan must go through. I've also taken part in the annual Commando Speed March in Scotland which is hard work but a great experience. I'm lucky that Xerox is very accommodating with my training, and when I have to travel with work, the Reserves are equally understanding.

"If you're thinking of applying, I'd say go for it. You will learn so much and it will be useful in every area of your life."

Colonel David Middleton, Army Reserve (Territorial Army)

David is a Senior Employer Relationship Manager for the Department for Work and Pensions as well as a Colonel in the Army Reserve.

“I wanted to have a broader outlook on life, and go out and see the world without sacrificing my career. I decided to join as a soldier but I soon applied to attend Sandhurst to train as an officer.

“I’ve travelled to locations I would never have had the opportunity to visit, with deployments across the globe to the Arctic, the rain forests of Australia, the Middle East, Europe and North America.

“I really enjoy sport and adventure and have had a go at lots of activities ranging from scuba diving in the Mediterranean and qualifying as a glider pilot to undertaking arctic survival and ski touring in Norway.

“It’s a brilliant way to build a dual career path where you could be doing one type of job in the week but doing something completely different at the weekend.

“As an officer I arrange overseas training for my soldiers and this has helped me develop competencies in planning, problem solving, communications and team work.

“The Army recognises the importance of personal development. Having already become a Member of the Chartered Management Institute they are now supporting me to undertake a Masters qualification in strategic leadership.

“One of my proudest moments was graduating from the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst as an army officer. By the time you pass out from Sandhurst you are equipped with the skills to be a leader who people want to follow.

“Getting involved with the Reserves isn’t difficult and there is something to suit everyone. They recognise that family life should come first, secondly their civil job commitments, and thirdly their Reservist role. They make this very clear from day one so no one need to worry too much about their work life balance.

“I’m coming towards the end of my time with the Reserve Forces but I would definitely do it all over again if I had the chance.”

Image available to order. Please email reserves@cabinet-office.gsi.gov.uk.

Lieutenant Commander Ian King, Royal Naval Reserve

Lieutenant Commander King is an English teacher and is on his first assignment in Kabul as a media advisor.

“I like the positive, disciplined environment where people are willing to do things, often before you have even asked them.

”Over the years I’ve seen massive changes in the roles and opportunities that are open to Royal Naval Reservists. And it’s still expanding; it’s becoming a much more deployable organisation now with all kinds of niche activities. I’ve been to Kosovo, Macedonia, Poland, Romania, and now Afghanistan. I wouldn’t have had the chance to do all that if I hadn’t joined the Reserves.”

Trooper Marcus Cribb, Army Reserve (Territorial Army)

Marcus has been a Reservist for four years. He is in full-time higher education, studying project management, and works as a Challenger 2 driver in his spare time for the Army. He features in the new Army recruitment TV advert.

“Being in the Army has opened up so many opportunities that I wouldn’t have achieved elsewhere. I’ve gained new skills and had the opportunity to travel to Switzerland, all of which has been done in my spare time.

“My university has been supportive of my role in the Army alongside my studies and I’m keen to bring all of the skills and qualifications that I’m gaining in the Army to my studies and future career.

“Not many people realise that Reservists have all the same opportunities as Regular soldiers but we do. I would encourage anyone looking for an exciting challenge and new opportunity outside of their day job to join.”

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Colour Sergeant Tim Wates, Army Reserve (Territorial Army)

Tim works on the Smart Meters Programme for the Department of Energy & Climate Change.

“Just over 10 years ago I made the decision to do something positive with my spare time – and having an interest in most things military and being fiercely patriotic, I decided to join the London Regiment and London’s only reserve infantry battalion.

“When I first joined, my biggest worry was more about what I would have to give up, and how much it would infringe on my social life, but I soon realised that the requirement of a minimum 27 days training, plus attending an annual two-week training period was not nearly as restrictive as I thought. You get paid for your time in uniform and receive an annual tax-free bonus.

“The highlights were being mobilised to serve on a tour of duty in Iraq and two tours to Afghanistan. Another was taking part in the Armed Forces muster parade in Windsor to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of HM The Queen. I’ve also taken part in two Remembrance Sunday parades. A sombre and thought-provoking occasion, but one that I was honoured to take part in.

“My time spent in the Army Reserve has really benefited my main career. It’s given me different perspectives and other ways to look at situations. I have added confidence when speaking in front of large groups of people or in tackling challenging situations. Leading troops on operations in a war zone has definitely enhanced my leadership skills.

“So my advice to anyone who wants to give up some of their spare time to do something exciting, to keep fit and to support the defence of the nation – I would say – do it.”

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Senior Aircraftman Mandy Mitchell, Royal Auxiliary Air Force

Mandy is an Administrative Officer for Jobcentre Plus She deployed to Camp Bastion in Afghanistan in 2012 as a specialist driver.

“I began accompanying my daughter to the cadets and it wasn't long before I discovered an opportunity to join the RAF as a Reservist. Since that day I haven't looked back.

“Being a Reservist has given me additional confidence as a team member and as a team leader. It's helped me to tackle tasks and use my organisational abilities in some difficult situations.

“I have always had support from my colleagues at the Job Centre. They also kept in regular contact with me during my tour of Afghanistan and when I returned to work after seven months away they helped ease me back into my role.”

Lieutenant Tamar Howard-Pearce, Royal Naval Reserve

Tamar Howard-Pearce works in Maritime Policy at the Department for Transport and is also a Lieutenant in the Royal Naval Reserve, working in Media Operations.

“As a student I was in the Bristol University Royal Naval Unit and missed it when I moved to London. Along with a lot of other people, I was attracted to being a Reservist because it’s fun, keeps you fit, you get paid and make lots of friends whilst doing something worthwhile.

“I did Junior Officer training at HMS President in London, focusing on core military skills, naval knowledge, leadership and teamwork. This was followed by a two-week intensive course at the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth, doing practical leadership tasks with a small team. This involved building rafts and bridges and rescuing a dummy casualty.

“At the end of the course we camped out for three nights in ‘bivvies’ whilst we completed our leadership tasks so ended up sleep deprived as well as physically and mentally exhausted. But the camaraderie in the team was great which meant I really enjoyed the experience.

“I usually train on Tuesday evenings, one weekend every couple of months and once a year do two weeks’ continuous training. The time commitment isn’t a problem for me. My managers have always been very supportive and I’ve never had any problems balancing training with work.

“The three years I spent doing basic military training gave me a chance to find out about the different specialisms and I’m now a Media Operations Officer. It’s a hands-on role – both in the UK and overseas – involving arranging press trips, escorting journalists, writing press releases and providing media training.

“Next week I’m going to Cyprus on an exercise. I don’t know exactly what I’ll be doing yet, but that’s part of the challenge - to see if I can cope with whatever’s thrown at me. It means I have to be adaptable and has taught me to make the most of every situation I find myself in.”

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