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3 LANCASHIRE BROTHERS CALLED UP TOGETHER FOR GULF

Three brothers in the Territorial Army were surprised to find themselves deployed at the same time on operational service in the Gulf.

The Gregsons – Ray, 49, Steven, 47, and ‘kid’ brother Graham, 37, from Lytham St Annes in Lancashire - are all serving in southern Iraq, albeit at different locations. They met up specially for this family portrait with a difference, taken at Basrah International Airport, headquarters of the Multi-National Division (South East).

Elder brother Ray, a Major in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) based at the UK National Support Element headquarters in Umm Qasr, admits he was “shocked” when the brown envelope containing his mobilization papers for ‘Operation Telic 2’ dropped through the door.

“I thought I was too old,” he joked. Ray, an environmental health and force protection officer with 207 Field Hospital, has the most military experience out of the three having served 24 years as a regular and nine years in the TA. “You could say I’ve been out of uniform for just one day since I was 16,” adds Ray, who took part in the 1991 Gulf War and has seen postings in Belize, Germany and Hong Kong (twice).

In his civilian life, Ray works as a senior risk control consultant with Royal & SunAlliance, who he says have been “terrific” about his mobilization.

Apart from his family in Lytham St Annes – partner Sue and daughters Michelle and Lisa - the thing he will miss most whilst in Iraq is watching his beloved Blackpool FC. “I have tangerine blood,” claims Ray, referring to the Bloomfield Road club’s famous orange strip.

For middle brother Steven, a Sergeant with 150 Provost Company, part of the 3rd Battalion of the Royal Military Police, Army life actually means a ‘demotion’. In his civilian job, he’s a chief inspector with Lancashire Constabulary, based at Divisional HQ in Blackburn.

But Steven, who helps run the RMP desk at the Basrah Palace headquarters of 19 Mechanized Brigade, has no complaints: “I really enjoy the change of pace,” he says. “The job’s a challenge but I’m enjoying every minute of it.”

The RMP's chief mission is to re-train the Iraqi civilian police in southern Iraq. "I'm slowly getting to understand the Iraqi psyche - Basrah is very different from Blackburn," he says. "Back home, there are structures and procedures in place to deal with problems. In Basrah we're starting from scratch."

Steven, who lives in Newton-with-Scales, Kirkham, with wife Joan and sons Andrew, 18 and Simon, 16, is looking forward to seeing his family again later this month when he heads home for a week's leave.

Youngest brother Graham is a Captain serving with 508 Specialist Team Royal Engineers (Works) at Multi-National Division (South East) headquarters based at Basrah International Airport.

He is involved in helping to set up a new communications network for southern Iraq and is also responsible for carrying out structural surveys. "For example, I've been checking what needs to be done to disused buildings to make them habitable," he explains, "or to arrange for power and water supplies."

In civilian life, Graham works for Persimmon Homes as the area safety advisor for Yorkshire and the North-East. He says he is "thoroughly enjoying" his tour but is also eagerly looking forward to his week's 'R&R' with wife Rachel and 15-month-old son Matthew in Calverly, Leeds.

The three brothers' proud parents, Albert and Lili, live in St Annes Road East, Lytham St Annes. Stephen and Graham attended Kirkham Grammar School; Ray went to what was Ansdell Secondary Modern, St Annes.

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