

Corporal Alexander 'Sandy' Dakers RM



I first met Sandy Dakers when I joined Recce Troop 45 Commando RM in November 1966 and moved into the same room as him in the accommodation huts at BP Camp, Little Aden.

He wasn't the easiest person to get to know. He was a reserved man and said little; commenting only, perhaps, when he felt the need to do so.

That said, he was unfailingly helpful to those that needed it and his meticulous attention to his kit, general turnout and his personal weapon were an example to us all.

As I came to know him a little better, I began to realise that here was a man from whom I could learn a great deal. Sandy had already completed an earlier tour in Aden, with a spell in Scotland's police in the intervening period. His experience and maturity were proving to be invaluable within a body of men that operated outside the normal parameters of the unit, whilst at the same time providing a steadying influence upon the younger members of the troop.

I never heard him raise his voice. He didn't need to: when he spoke, men listened. Those stripes on his arm were merely symbolic. His quiet authority was never questioned. When the unit moved "up country" to the camp at Al Habilayn, on the edge of the Radfan district, Sandy and I were designated the role of Lead Scouts. He would be armed with a 94 Energa Grenade attached to his 7.62 mm SLR, to be used in the anti personnel role, and I was to carry an M16 Armalite rifle.

His knowledge of the terrain was more than just useful; it was crucial to the success of troop's operations, and his professionalism as a soldier came to the forefront. Tireless and watchful on long patrols, instinctive and faultless in his navigation at night, he led us unfailingly in areas where most men would have faltered. I began to rely upon his judgement and intuition without question, as did our troop commander and the rest of the men. He never once made the wrong decision. I soon came to the conclusion that we were in very safe hands.

Sandy was a private man. Those long, blisteringly hot days spent in OPs (Observation Posts) with him revealed nothing about his private life. Any thoughts that he may have had about his home and family five thousand miles away in a little Scottish town called Kirriemuir, of which I'm sure that there were many, remained firmly locked away. He confined himself to the job in hand: meticulous in his habits in those confined hides, and ever watchful and alert.

I came to the conclusion that I was in the company of an exceptional man; a man that it was a privilege to work with and with whom I was able to share experiences that few have the opportunity to experience during their lives. We managed to keep in touch in later years: the occasional phone call and almost always an exchange of cards at Christmas. When I heard of his death it came as a shock, for he had never even hinted that he was ill.

Rest in Peace, old friend.

Vic Balsdon (on behalf of Sandy's son Steven)

*Alexander 'Sandy' Dakers
19 October 1935 - 14 December 2009.*