

## Parcels

Hi June & all the kids at 301st Kinghurst Scout Group

Firstly let me start by giving you all a massive thank you for your generosity in sending out such a large amount of parcels.

It came as a complete surprise to me and the other guys who I work with. Normally if we receive a parcel from home they come on their own but yesterday a huge sack with my name on it arrived and needless to say it created quite a bit of interest. The parcels were received on 28 Nov 09, 16 in total, I am aware that 34 were sent, however I'm fairly confident the remainder will arrive the next time we are resupplied by helicopter.

I'm assuming you received my address from my friend's wife Kath Knight? I feel sure her husband said she was going to give my address to you.

We have been in Afghanistan since 02 Sep09 and we are currently in a location called Sangin in Helmand province where we have unfortunately lost a lot of British lives here.

Sangin is very different to a lot of Afghanistan; if you can imagine stepping back in time at least 500 years then I'm sure you can imagine what its like. The Taliban had banned schools and education, music and pretty much everything except religion when they were ruling the country. Thankfully things are changing, but very, very slowly, which is where we come in.

My unit is the Military Stabilisation Support Team (MSST) and our job is to assist with the stabilisation and reconstruction of the area, we patrol the area and try to identify projects which will help the local community get back to a normal life. The majority of the projects we have been carrying out have been things such as rebuilding schools, repairing bridges, building of wells and the repair of mosques etc. We have large meetings known as Shuras with all the key village elders, where we sit down and discuss ways of improving the area, these Shuras can be very frustrating as with so many people attending things can get a little bit out of hand.

Overall though, it is quite a rewarding job, really making a difference to the Afghan's way of life. A particular project I enjoyed was a school project which when completed saw 1600 children enrol in the new school. The schools however are in no way similar to the schools of UK, normally a compound with some tents in and a couple of desks. The school normally opens at 0700 and closes at 1900, this allows the pupils to attend in 2 separate groups, some in the morning others in the afternoon. The subjects taught will normally only be Religion and language. The difficulty is trying to find teachers who are willing to work due to the threat from the Taliban.

I hope this gives you a brief insight into what we are doing over here and if you have an email address I can email you with regular updates, I will also attach some photos to let you know who you sent the parcels to and what we're up to.

Once again, many thanks to all the kids who send parcels, they will be shared amongst everyone here and I can guarantee you put smile on some normally grumpy soldier's faces.

Hopefully you all have a fantastic Xmas and a great new year!!

'G' Geddes