

# Buy our heroes a drink

**One of the basic luxuries UK soldiers miss while they're abroad is a good, old-fashioned pint in their local pub.**

That's the idea behind a new scheme set up by The British Forces Foundation (BFF), which is asking pubs around the country to treat their local troops to a morale-boosting drink when they return home this Christmas.

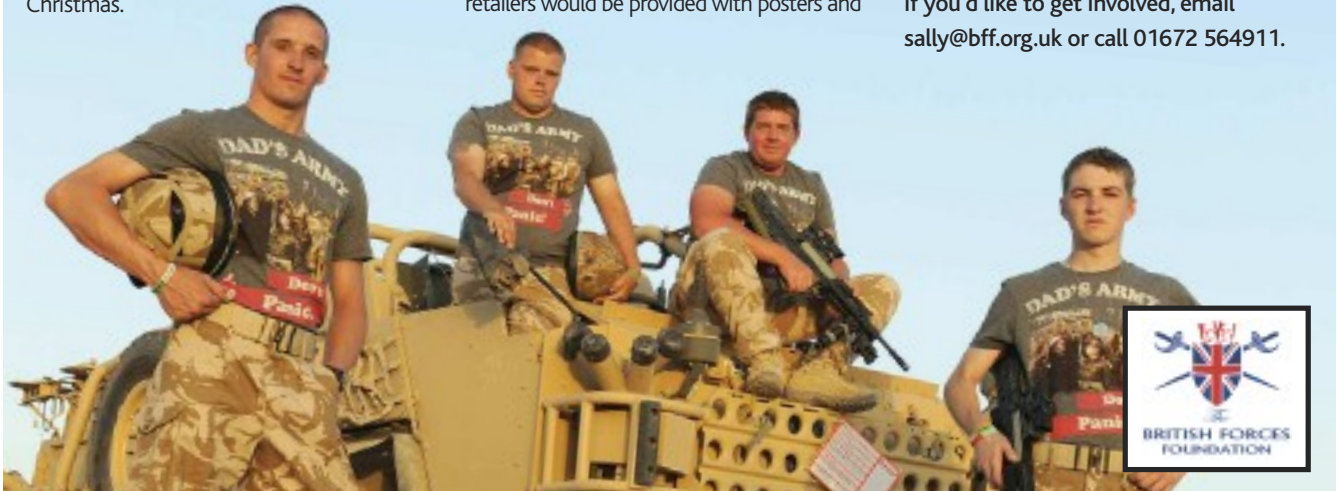
With support from Enterprise Inns, the BFF plans to send packs to soldiers in Afghanistan, Iraq, Cyprus and other countries, containing a voucher entitling each to a free drink, and a CD of celebrity Christmas messages.

The cost of the drink could be covered by fundraising buckets on the bar, and retailers would be provided with posters and

other materials to help promote the initiative.

Once back on British soil, the soldiers would search, via a dedicated website, for a participating pub nearest them. While taking part could boost trade during the festive season, it's also an apt way of rewarding local servicemen and women in the community.

**If you'd like to get involved, email [sally@bff.org.uk](mailto:sally@bff.org.uk) or call 01672 564911.**



## Public service

For the last two years, staff at the **Cross Keys in Wootton Bassett** have dedicated themselves to serving not only their local community, but also the families of fallen British soldiers from all over the UK – without any agenda other than to simply 'do their bit'.



ROYAL RECOGNITION: HRH Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall visit the Cross Keys while honouring fallen British soldiers in Wootton Bassett

The Wiltshire market town has become the national focus for honouring servicemen and women who've given their lives in action. At least once a week, the busy wet-led pub opens its doors to bereaved families and friends, offering them free refreshments and a private sanctuary away from the bustle of the public and the press.

It's a fair bit of work for manager Kirsty Lambert and her team, who close the kitchen and sacrifice much of their regular trade during 'repatriation' days.

"Many of the people have travelled quite far, so providing a few teas, coffees and sandwiches is the least we can do in terms of giving something back," says Kirsty. "If they want to, they can make a donation to Help For Heroes or Afghan Heroes. We get some lovely thank-you cards and letters, so clearly it's appreciated."

## George offers a helping hand

**The George in Higher Bebington**, the Wirral, has become a welcome source of support for the forces community by hosting fundraisers in the memory of a regular customer killed in action.

So far this year the pub has held two events in honour of 22-year-old Corporal Steven Boote, who was a big supporter of the Help For Heroes charity before he died in Afghanistan late last year.

According to manager Sharon Vine, both occasions have brought families together as well as generate much-needed cash for wounded troops. About £4,000 was raised at the first event – a disco, buffet and raffle night that was ticketed at £10 per person. The total is still being counted for the recent family fun-day, which attracted people in with a bouncy castle, BBQ and face painting.

"We sold hundreds of tickets and both were really well turned out," says Sharon. "Lots of family and friends helped out and suppliers offered their services for free so we could raise as much as possible. It made for a great atmosphere."