

Veterans Make an Impression on Rory Bremner at Launch of Scottish Poppy Appeal

Poppyscotland Ambassador, Rory Bremner, today (23 October) launched the 2009 Scottish Poppy Appeal in Jedburgh. The comedian and impersonator was joined by young veterans Steve Beedie and Stuart Proudfoot who appear in a hard-hitting TV advert for Poppyscotland, to call for people in Scotland to dig deep for the ex-Service charity and to wear their poppies with pride.

Poppyscotland, the organisation behind the Appeal in Scotland, raises money throughout the year for veterans and their dependants, many of whom suffer as a result of physical, psychological or financial problems. This year is set to be their most important yet, as more men and women return from Service in Iraq and Afghanistan in need of specialist support.

Speaking at the launch, Rory said: "It is a great honour to launch the Scottish Poppy Appeal and to meet Stuart and Steve, who are remarkable young men.

"Poppyscotland does some fantastic work, all year round, but their success rests on the amount they raise from people buying poppies and taking part in other fundraising activities. I would urge everyone in Scotland to give as much as they can this year, so that people like Stuart and Steve can continue to receive the support they deserve."

Rory recently took part in the BBC Series, *Who Do You Think You Are?* where he learned about his family's long history of military Service. His father, Major Donald Bremner, who fought in WWII and played a pivotal role in the battle for the Dutch city of Hertogenbosch and his great-grandfather was decorated in the Crimean War.

The Scots-born comedian said: "Scotland has a fascinating military history and there are countless men and women, past and present who have continued the Scottish military's traditions of dedication and courage. I strongly believe that we should honour their sacrifices by wearing our poppies with pride."

29-yr old veteran Steve Beedie, from Portsoy, Banff, also spoke of the importance of getting behind the Appeal. He left the Army in 2005 with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder after serving in Iraq. Steve's condition left him unable to work full-time and he struggled to adjust to civilian life whilst trying to support his wife and four children.

A Poppyscotland grant enabled the family to clear their rent arrears and settle into a new home. Steve is now in full-time employment and looking forward to brighter future.

He said: "I'm a proud man and I found it very difficult to deal with the stress and difficulties I was facing, particularly as my scars were mental and very hard to come to terms with. After reaching our lowest point as a family, I was able to turn my life around, with the help of Poppyscotland. I can't thank them enough for the lifeline they have given us.

"I know that there are lots of people like me, going through the same struggles that I did and it is so important that we raise enough money to give them the support they need to heal their scars."

Poppyscotland helps more veterans in Scotland than any other organisation, through direct assistance to veterans and their families and through grants to other charities such as Erskine and Combat Stress.

Chief Executive of Poppyscotland, Ian McGregor, explained that the organisation now relies on the support of the public more than ever.

He said: "Over the years, we have benefited enormously from public generosity and the support of our dedicated volunteers around the country. We now face greater challenges than in recent years and we are increasingly coming across very young men and women who are in acute need of the help we provide.

"The more money we raise the more of these people we can reach and in many cases this can mean the difference between a bright future and one of unemployment, alcoholism or even homelessness.

"We understand that money is a worry to a lot of people for the moment, but if everyone in Scotland put just one pound in a poppy tin, we would be able to double the support we give to veterans and their families."

The 2009 Scottish Poppy Appeal will run until Remembrance Sunday on 8 November.

ENDS

Poppyscotland

- Poppyscotland supports more veterans and dependants in Scotland than any other veterans' charity. This is in two ways:
 - directly through financial assistance – last year we helped 1,424 individuals
 - indirectly by giving grants to veterans' organisations who specialise in veterans' issues, such as Combat Stress and Erskine. In the last five years we have given over £1 million to Erskine alone.
 - Poppyscotland supports veterans of all ages and, increasingly, those from recent and current conflicts, namely Iraq and Afghanistan.
 - Compared to their English and Welsh counterparts, veterans living in Scotland are:
 - 10% more likely to become homeless
 - 8% more likely to suffer from mental health problems
 - 5% more likely to have financial problems
 - 5% more likely to have a criminal record
- www.poppyscotland.org.uk

Steve Beedie

Steve is 29 and served in the Royal Signals until 2005. Steve's wife Lindsey also appears in Poppyscotland's current TV advertising campaign.

Stuart Proudfoot

Stuart is 24 and served in the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards. He was the victim of a roadside bomb in Iraq in 2006, which left him with a shattered jaw and cheekbone and a perforated eardrum. He will be medically discharged from the Army later this month, when he will move into a Scottish Veterans Garden City Association property.

To find out more about Stuart, Steve and the campaign, visit www.poppyscotland.org.uk