



Lyla Stevens - *Hougoumont*

“ Life after the Military can only be described as a *roller coaster ride* ”

In 1997, while based in Germany with her husband, Lyla trained as a family's officer with the support of the Royal Military Police. After completing the course, Lyla chose to specialise in Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) counselling after losing a very good friend to the silent killer. "At that time, I never thought the fight would end up coming into my own home with a vengeance."

Gary and Lyla married in the Guards Chapel in 1992 and within a week of their wedding Gary was deployed to Cyprus for 6 weeks. As Lyla says, 'her life as a military spouse had begun'. Gary joined the Army at age 16 and served with the Grenadier Guards in Germany, Northern Ireland, the USA and the Gulf before transferring to the Royal Military Police. Lyla, who now lives in Tameside, describes exactly what being a military spouse meant for her and her family; "Between July 1992 and March 2007 I lived in 10 married quarters, had two children, 12 jobs and lived in London, Munster, Fallinbostel, Portadown, Lisburn, Gibraltar, Shipton Bellinger and Aldershot.

"Life after the Military is what can only be described as a roller coaster ride. But now looking back, I can say I had some exceptional experiences and encounters, some amazing trips and falls, and made some amazing friends both military and civilian."

Gary, a member of Help for Heroes Band of Brothers fellowship is in remission from cancer and also has complex PTSD which Lyla explains includes "Sleepless nights, shouting, arguing and other endless tortures that PTSD brings on in waking and sleeping hours - but we still get on with it."

Considering a Military family's life is challenging, and along the way many of their friends' marriages ended in divorce, she is proud that they will celebrate 25 years together this year with two amazing children and, while it's not been all fun and games, they are still here, together.

Lyla admits that most of her own personal goals have fallen by the wayside during this roller coaster of a life, but she was delighted to represent the Band of Sisters in creating some new arrangements for the Flowers for Heroes collection, something she has always wanted to do.

Lyla put an enormous amount of care and thought into the design of her bouquet which she has named after the Chateau d'Hougoumont, a key victory in the Battle of Waterloo where both the Provost (the forerunner of the Royal Military Police) and the First Guards (now the Grenadier Guards) served, as a fitting tribute to her husband's Service.



Lyla chose 17 stems of white flowers for her bouquet in tribute to the 17 flames on the cap badge of the Grenadier Guards and the white plume on the side of the bearskin headdress of the Grenadier Guards. The white long stem Lily and Eucalyptus branches are flowers from her wedding bouquet.