

Some times it good to go back to your roots and for me that's back to my army days as a Lance Carpal in the Royal Fusiliers; I was also the "Be the Best Man" for the national posters – oooh. So this week it was a real thrill to go under cover and invade Garrison FM to debrief and chat with their breakfast show host Mr **Hal Stewart**.

Stand by your beds! What do I do, salute or just pour the tea? I know, let's start off with an easy question, what's the difference between army radio and civilian stations?

For me this is a key question, with a constant source of information from the Armed Forces we're able to create compelling and informative radio which is never dull; no two shows will be alike because we bounce off the latest breaking news and reports. We're also dedicated to bringing those troops serving closer to their families back home, I feel this is a vital service and really makes me believe like I'm doing an important job which can help people cope. I try and inject a lighter side to my breakfast show and there's enough varied content to keep civilian audiences (with no connection to the Forces) gripped as well.

And this must have given you some great moments at Garrison FM, what would you say has been your biggest?

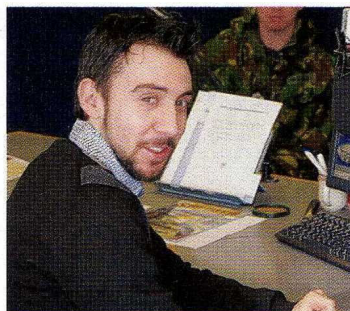
The biggest moment had to be going from an AM station on Medium Wave to getting the FM license. Since we've started broadcasting on 106.9 FM everything has changed. The workload has increased ten fold and we're inundated with stories from

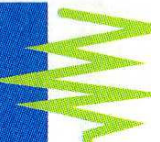
the Forces. It's meant my day is spent as much

out and about in the Garrison as it is behind the studio mic.

What about other stations, have you any stories from previous shows and stations?

Since I've been involved in professional radio I've loved every minute, I suppose University radio in Stoke was the hardest. I was trying to bring an under played specialist music to the small minority of students who actually knew the Uni had a radio station and it never really felt like my ideas were getting across, couple that with the fact that my final year grade was resting on it's success and you could say the whole thing was a major headache. In the end it all worked out for the best and I've been back since to see some of the improvements I suggested have been implemented, such as interactive competitions (there wasn't even a phone before) and piping the station into the various eateries and Unions. I could list another moment which was hard but wasn't the station's fault, I was working the breakfast show on Heartland FM and suddenly felt the urge to go to the bathroom, as I was sponsored by a local curry house I feared the worst. A frantic 4 songs worth of time later I returned to find the automatic locking system had locked me out of the studio and my keys were on the desk, the station was playing a bizarre mixture





of classic golden oldies and my jingle bed, which I programmed in to speak over. I had to call the boss as he was only one who had a spare key; he wasn't best pleased as he'd just left that day to go to Tea in the Park. I waited 3 hours until he arrived, opened the door and left without even looking at me. I fielded some interesting calls that day I can remember.

Cool! So what's your boss like now, would you change anything about your job if you were the big chief?

The boss is former Radio 1 DJ Mark Page, he's very well known in the area and it makes for a fun day at the office almost everyday, he's a good cheery boss...most of the time. I'd like a sidekick to bounce off

and of course a huge pay rise but apart from that I love working here and the boss is really helpful. Having a former DJ in charge instantly commands respect and you know you can get sound advice from someone who has been there, seen it and done it. Mark's always keen to pass on his pearls of wisdom and at this stage of my career I'm keen to listen.

I'm quite large would I do to bounce off? Or should I ask who would be your least perfect person to bounce off?

I'd probably go with Adrian Durham of 'TalkSport', I've got a few differences of opinion that I'd like to air! The one thing it would be is compelling radio.

Good choice! So as a quickie tell us something about you?

I'm football mad; I spend my weekend's watching Sheffield United in the UK and Real Mallorca abroad, as my family live on the island. I also produce a free podcast called 'The Football Log' on iTunes.

It's been a pleasure and I hope my tea beats your normal army plastic mug full of brown liquid and with that in mind, please give us a good old fashioned shameless plug.

My listeners know I'm already at every event going and my show will report on all major news stories plus the local side of life. For those that haven't heard me I'd say give me 5 minutes to impress you...it worked with the wife.