

JOHN CASSON'S BIOGRAPHY

John Casson was born and raised in Coventry.

At the age of 18 he joined the West Midlands Police serving for four years as a Special Constable (police reservist) in Coventry. Finding policing fascinating he decided to become a *regular* police officer and joined the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary in 1979.

John enjoyed eight memorable years with the *police*, serving at Torquay, Plymouth (Charles Cross), Kingsbridge and Dartmouth.

During his police service John received a Chief Constable's Commendation for the number of arrests made and crimes detected. He was also a finalist for the annual Ada Murran cup for community policing and received a St John Ambulance meritorious first aid award for saving the life of an extremely fit and violent man who had slashed his wrists.

Wishing to fulfil an ambition to operate his own local security company John left the police in 1987 to form Securewest.

With a concept of providing nothing short of a professional security service employing former police, armed forces and prison officers who had left their respective service with *exemplary* references, his UK operation quickly expanded into one of the largest owner/managed independent security companies in the country, with many prestigious clients.

In the mid nineties the standards set by Securewest were recognised when John was honoured to be invited to give evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee at the House of Commons (Parliament) who were examining the unregulated UK security industry. Following that he was regularly consulted on security industry regulation issues by the (UK) Home Office and the (UK) Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO).

This very successful company was sold at its peak in 2000.

Turning now to John's international business activities.

In 1988 four United States Navy Military Sealift Command (MSC) ships visited Torbay (South West England) and Securewest was awarded the contract to provide security, the start of a very long and close association with MSC.

In 1995 these ships were re deployed on a permanent basis from the USA to Europe and the renamed *Securewest International* provided permanent security riding teams. This service expanded to other similar ships in Guam and Saipan in the Pacific in 1996, which also saw the start of the company's successful land based operations on the islands. Further expansion to the United Arab Emirates followed shortly afterwards.

Realising a need for quality and reliable manpower and with the downsizing of the (British) Brigade of Gurkhas with the *hand back* of Hong Kong in 1997 John opened a Gurkha recruiting centre in Kathmandu the capital of Nepal the same year.

These brave and loyal men together with former British and American armed forces personnel have been a huge asset to Securewest International's expansion into, what is now one of the world's largest specialist maritime security companies which provides a full range of security

services to many well known maritime companies, supported by its offices in the UK, USA, Singapore, Saipan and Nepal.

One of John's greatest business challenges was to successfully provide after '9/11', an additional 150 Gurkha and former British armed forces personnel within a very short space of time to over 20 MSC vessels worldwide.

John considers it a huge privilege to serve MSC and the United States and has been publicly recognised for his services to it during important events in Washington, at one the United States Joint Chief of Staff was present.

After the Tsunami in 2005, John organised through Securewest International to send four teams of former Gurkhas and Indian Armed forces personnel to Sri Lanka. Arriving well before international aid agencies, these hard working and dedicated teams remained in the country for between one and two months helping with the fair and disciplined distribution of food and restoration of life support to many coastal villages.

Now semi-retired from the business, John dedicates a considerable amount of his time to raising money for charity and worthwhile causes.

In the remote India Himalaya near Darjeeling John has since 2001, been the primary sponsor of St Mary's School.

When he first became involved with the school it had 250 pupils and was almost bankrupt. Today, as a result of the sponsorship almost every child in the area, 428 in all, receive a good education and a chance in life

Since 2003 John has been the Chairman of the Exercise Tiger Memorial, a memorial dedicated to the Second World War tragedy off the coast of Devon in which almost 1,000 American servicemen lost their lives.

John is honoured to be a Trustee on the board of Sandy Gall's Afghanistan Appeal.

Every year, John organises at least one charity event.

In 2010 this was at Gidleigh Park, Michael Caines MBE two Michelin star restaurant on Dartmoor, Devon. The guest speaker being Simon Weston who was injured in the Falklands War. In aid of adoption agency Families for Children, this successful and enjoyable event raised just under £11,000.

In 2011 at the same venue it was a lunch in aid of the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund, the guest speaker none other than the iconic presenter and broadcaster Sir Michael Parkinson. Just over £25,000 was raised on the day.

John Casson's latest charity project called Challenge-X aims to raise around £250,000 for the Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund by supporting three solo cyclists as they attempt to complete the renowned 3,000 mile Race Across America (known as RAAM).

One of John's personal interests and a real passion is travel, often to *off the beaten track* and sometimes dangerous places such as Afghanistan, Mustang in the Himalayas and French Polynesia to mention just a few.

His other interests include, but are not limited to, wine (both for enjoyment and investment), current and international affairs, Winston Churchill, Margaret Thatcher, politics, Tibet, India, USA, policing, terrorism, *observing* life and watching old British black and white films.

Some highlights of his life:

A private and fascinating audience with the Dalai Lama, having the friendship of the great actor Sir John Mills, meeting Margaret Thatcher over lunch, visiting Afghanistan with the highly respected reporter and former presenter of News at Ten, Sandy Gall, who is also a friend, and for four years having Police Horse 142 Jupiter from the Metropolitan Police for his well deserved retirement.

John published his first book *Afghan Faces* in November 2010. This book reflects on the lives of Afghan people through their faces. He will donate the profits from the book (£20,000 already) to Help for Heroes and the Royal Marine's Charitable Trust Fund who are helping injured British armed forces personnel returning from Afghanistan and Sandy Gall's Afghanistan Appeal.

His friends say 'a bored Casson is a dangerous person', a very true statement! John leads a very active life!