

OFF WITH IT!

'Mr Poppy' to go for clean shave in epic Tash for Cash fund-raiser

BIG-hearted Jim Griffiths is to shave off the imperial handlebar moustache he's been sporting for 40 years - to raise cash for his favourite cause.

The 73-year-old former soldier from Paderborn hopes parting with his trademark whopping whiskers will bring in €50,000 for the Royal British Legion's Poppy Appeal.

He spends almost two hours every morning meticulously brush-

by Phil Welsh

ing, blow drying and arranging his pride and joy - once admired by the Queen - a routine he has kept up for four decades.

HAIRSPRAY

Jim, who often rises at 5am to work on his facial hair, gets through two cans of hairspray a week.

"My tache is getting thinner as I get older and is a bit past its prime but I will miss it when it comes off," says Jim who, as chairman of the RBL Paderborn Branch, has helped raise some €350,000 over 20 years.

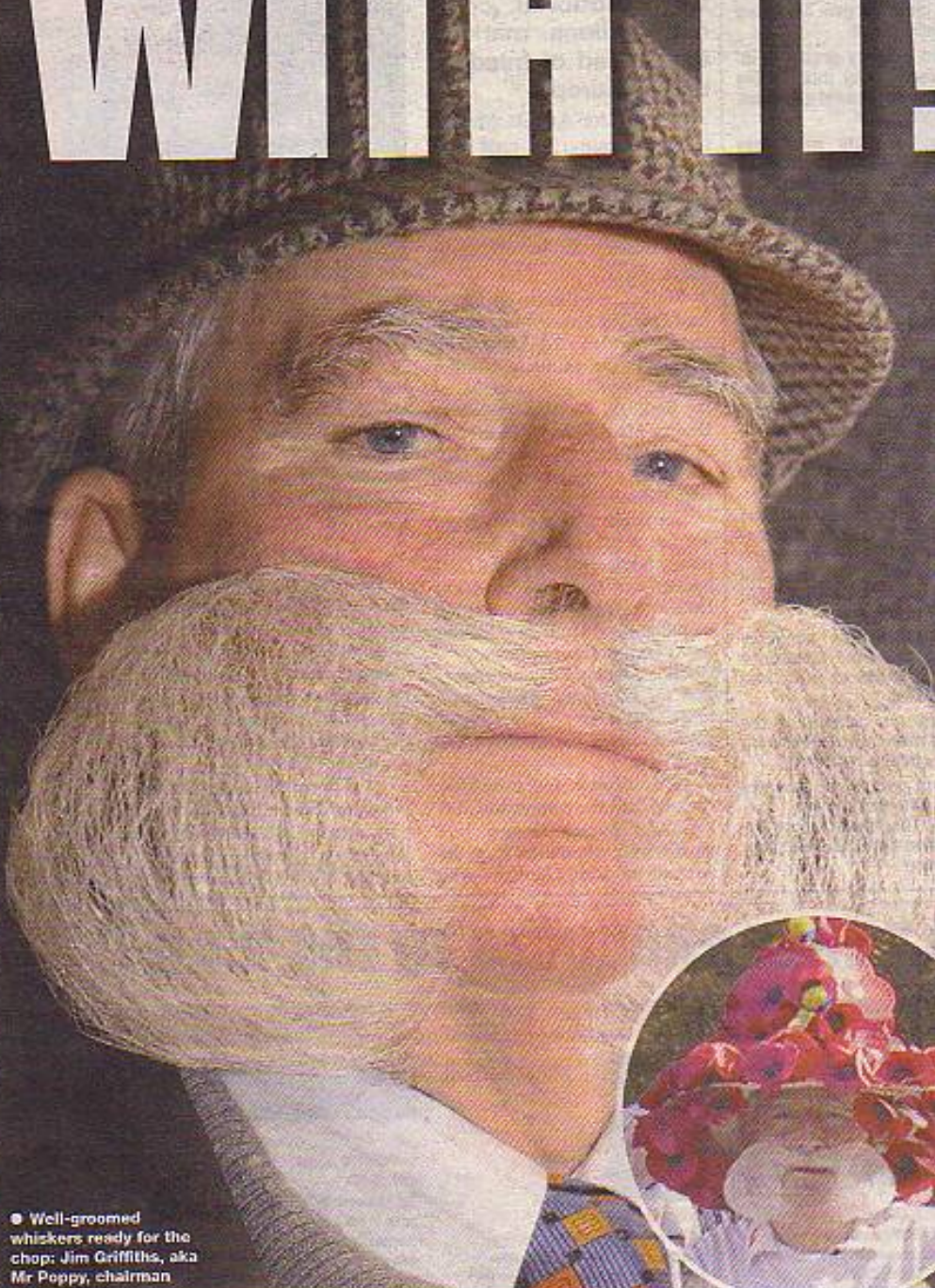
"But the time is right after 40 years. I am looking forward to having a lie-in for a change!"

The Tash for Cash fund-raiser starts today and runs until the day of the shave, expected to be during the British Day event in Paderborn on September 17-19 next year.

Jim, known as Mr Poppy around Paderborn Garrison because of the large hat of poppies he wears at fund-raisers, is used to folks staring at him.

"Some say it looks like a lamb chop and others say it looks like I have a bone in my mouth," says the married 73-year-old, who was permitted to grow his tache as a serving soldier.

● Well-groomed whiskers ready for the chop: Jim Griffiths, aka Mr Poppy, chairman of the RBL Paderborn



Jim and his mission to raise thousands for the Poppy Appeal

Support the RBL's Mr Poppy who is parting with his much-loved tache – all in the name of charity

● *Continued from front page*

Jim started growing his facial decoration when he was a colour sergeant serving with 3 Light Infantry in Cyprus in 1970, 14 years after he joined the Army.

He says: "I don't know why I grew the tache back then but I let it get bigger and bigger. Then the RSM said to me: 'What the bloody hell have you got on your face!?' Luckily, the CO said I could keep it, but put in orders that no one else was allowed to grow one.

"I became a mascot for the battalion. Not one officer ever mentioned it for the rest of my service."

He adds: "I once saw a bugle major with the Royal Green Jackets who had a fancy moustache, but mine was way bigger."

After being demobbed in 1983 he worked for GLSU in Paderborn for 18 years.

MARVELLOUS

In 1995 he was made an MBE for his services to the RBL and Paderborn Garrison.

"When I picked up my MBE in 1995 at Buckingham Palace, the Queen, who had seen me somewhere before, commented, 'What a marvellous moustache you have. Are you the gentleman from the RBL?'," says Jim, who celebrates 50 years of marriage to Helga next year.

"It's a lot of work keeping my tache in shape. It droops if it rains and hangs 22cm down to my chest when wet.

"If I have to leave early in the morning, I'll fix it the night before and sleep on my back."

A few comrades tried to cut it off during his Service days, but Jim always got away in time.

"I once hid in an oven in the kitchen of the sergeants' mess in Minden when someone came after me with a pair of scissors," he says.

STAGE

Then there was the joker who swapped the label on Jim's can of hairspray with one from a can of plastic skin.

"It was like chewing gum in your hair, but I wouldn't cut my tache."

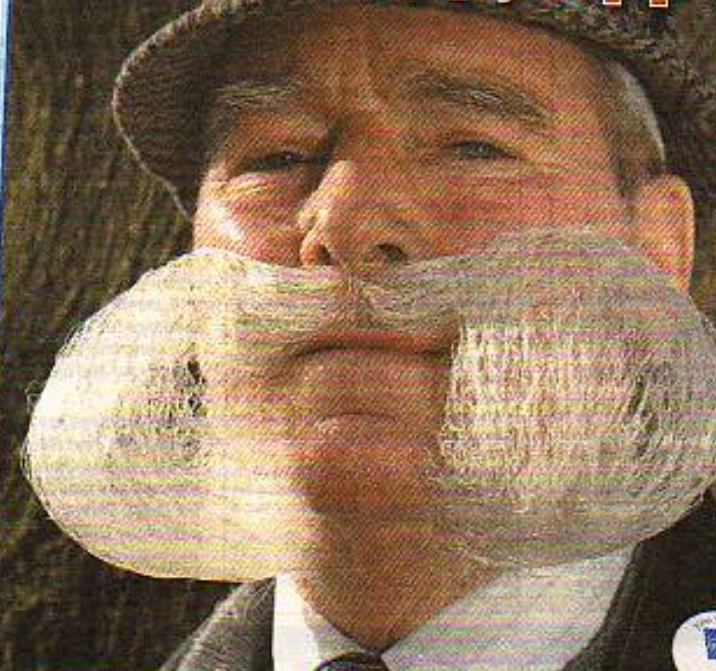
● Jim's shave is planned to take place on a stage in front of the Rathaus during Paderborn Garrison and the Stadt's British Days event next September 17-19.

To make a donation to Tash for Cash, use one of the following methods of payment: Bank details: Sparkasse Paderborn, Bankleitzahl /Bank Sorting Code 472 501 01, Kontonummer/Account number 17255357, IBAN: DE 36 4725 0101 0017 2553 57, Bic/Swift Code: WELADED 1 PBN.

Donations via Pay Pal to be made to the email address: events.pad-rbl@hotmail.com or via the donation button at the following link on Paderborn Royal British Legion Web site: www.rblpaderborn.netfirms.com/index.htm

● **Right:** The poster advertising Jim's charity fund-raising event soon to be distributed across Paderborn Garrison

Jim's Tash for Cash for the Poppy Appeal



'Mr Poppy' Jim Griffiths is shaving off his trademark handlebar moustache after 40 years to raise funds for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal. Jim hopes his hairy deed will raise €50,000 by September next year, when he will part with his whopping whiskers on a stage at the British Day festival in Paderborn town centre. To sponsor Jim's Tash for Cash fund-raiser, send donations via: www.rblpaderborn.netfirms.com