

Brother of Birmingham hero pilot thanks public after £39,000 donated in his memory



Roger Gower was killed by ivory poachers who shot down his helicopter in Tanzania

89
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Pilot Roger Gower from Edgbaston

The brother of the **Edgbaston** pilot killed in Africa by elephant poachers has thanked the public after £39,000 was raised in his memory in just three days.

Roger Gower managed to land his helicopter after being shot by **ivory poachers as he tracked animals in Tanzania**, saving the life of passenger Nicky Bester.

But the 37-year-old, who attending Hallfield independent school, sadly died of his wounds before he could be rescued on Friday.

His brother Max told the Birmingham Mail that his brother had died doing the job he loved.

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“Roger was very much his own man,” said Max Gower, a corporate lawyer at a London law firm.

“He was strongly principled and always had a very strong moral compass.

“When he got the opportunity to go out to Africa and watch the animals, it was just perfect because it was everything that he loved.”

Roger, the youngest of three sons, attended Hallfield School in Edgbaston along with brothers Max, 42, and John, 43.

Yesterday the school, which has been flying their flag at half mast since his death, paid tribute to the former pupil.

Cecila Hooper, Executive Officer at the Old Hallfieldian Society said: “The Hallfield community were devastated to hear the tragic news of Roger’s death.

“Roger was incredibly funny, extremely entertaining, and he was a one-off.



Roger Gower, circled, at Hallfield School in 1987

“He is still remembered by a few members of staff here. The whole Gower family were exceptional sportsmen and excelled in all sports.

“Roger represented the school in Football, Rugby and Cricket.

“He was immensely popular amongst his peers and was awarded the Allday Cup in 1991, the most prestigious cup to be awarded at Hallfield.”

Roger left Hallfield School in 1991 and later studied at **Malvern College** and trained as an accountant.

But after becoming a pilot, he moved to Africa to help track poachers with the Friedkin Conservation Fund.

His aircraft was **shot down by poachers who had slaughtered three elephants** in the Maswa Game Reserve, near Serengeti National Park.

Two days later his brother Max decided to set up a fund-raising page to raise vital funds to tackle animal poaching in Africa in his brother's memory.



Animal lover Roger Gower pictured with a cheetah

“The response has been amazing,” added Max.

“I got asked by my MP about whether I wanted to raise a question at Prime Minister’s Questions today.

“What I really wanted to raise with the Prime Minister is how amazing the British people are.

“I have been blown away by some of the messages on the fund-raising page.

“One was a homeless man who has donated £10, and another was someone who gave £1,000 anonymously.

“All the messages, many from strangers, have been a great help to me and my family.

“A lot of the time Britain takes a knocking, and I just feel that there is a lot of good and a lot that we can be proud about.

“The Foreign Office have been amazing, helping us to get his body home and giving us updates. I’m not convinced that every country would be like that.”



Mr Gower's downed helicopter.

Now Max hopes to meet with survivor Nicky Bester to discuss the best way to use the money to fund a future conservation project.

“The guy in the helicopter was of Roger’s best friends in Tanzania. He is a conservationist and my brother liked him a lot.

“I would really like to sit down with him and talk about whether there is a specific project we could use the money for.

“I’m determined that it won’t be frittered away.”

The family are hoping to get Roger’s body flown home tomorrow (Thursday), and his family to spread his ashes near his parents home in Wales.

*To donate in Roger’s memory visit: To donate in his memory visit:

<https://crowdfunding.justgiving.com/roger-gower>

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Solihull Pegida march: Police warn they will 'come down hard' on troublemakers

12:17, 5 FEB 2016 | **UPDATED** 12:17, 5 FEB 2016 | BY ALISON STACEY

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Pegida UK co-ordinator Tommy Robinson held a debate with Coun Waseem Zaffar in Lozells.

Police have warned they will ‘come down hard’ on troublemakers ahead of Saturday’s protest by **right-wing group Pegida UK** .

More than 300 Pegida members are expected at the **mile-long silent march ‘against extremism’** .

It will start at Birmingham International railway station at 1pm.

The group will then walk to the demo point at

Starley Way, which will be closed throughout the day to motorists.

Bickenhill Lane will also be closed for a short time.

Police said they were also expecting a small group of counter-protestors, who would be kept separate.

Solihull police commander , Chief Supt Alex Murray said: “The protest is away from residential and retail centres.

“Organisers have told us they are planning a peaceful, silent march from the train station to the protest site.

“So far around 370 Pegida supporters have indicated they intend to participate – and we are also planning for a small group of counter protestors near the railway station but away from the Pegida protest site.

“Ensuring there is no protestor crossover, and minimising the risk of potential flashpoints, is a key

element of our event planning.

“There is nothing to suggest there is a significant risk of disorder but the public can rest assured we will take swift action against anyone committing criminal offences.

“We will have a highly visible police presence on the ground, including protest liaison officers, and sufficient police resources on standby to manage any eventuality.”

On Thursday, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Hodge Hill MP Liam Byrne joined the opposition against Pegida by posing with a sign saying ‘We Choose Hope #OurBrum’.

The slogan is part of a campaign by anti-fascist campaigners Hope not Hate.

It urges opponents of the march to pledge to have a cup of tea with someone from a different race or religion, in opposition to the march.

Chief Supt Murray added: “We do not anticipate any serious traffic disruption but we would advise anyone intending to use Bickenhill Lane early in the

afternoon, including people heading to the airport, to allow extra time for their journey.

“We have visited affected businesses to inform them of the plans and to offer any assistance they need to ensure staff and deliveries can come and go unhindered.”

Organisers said they were planning a “peaceful, silent demonstration against radical Islam” as part of a Europe-wide day of action involving Pegida branches in different countries.

Chief Supt Murray also explained that police forces were **not able to ban the protest** .

He added: “People often pose the question: ‘Why don’t you ban the protest?’

“However, the right to protest is enshrined in law and the police have a positive duty to protect and not apply restrictions that are disproportionate.

“We cannot ban protests because they are a static assembly of people and, as such, are legal as long as they are peaceful and within the law.

“Equally, police do not have the power to ban any marches; any decision to prevent a march from taking place would be agreed by the secretary of state – and only in the most extreme circumstances – on the request of the police and local authority.”



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