

Hero Edgbaston pilot Roger Gower saved helicopter passenger's life

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Now his devastated family want to raise £50k to help his work live on

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Roger Gower, who was shot dead in Tanzania.

A Birmingham pilot shot and killed by elephant poachers heroically saved his passenger's life.

Ex-Edgbaston schoolboy Roger Gower, 37, was fatally wounded by machine gun fire aimed at his helicopter by criminals in Tanzania.

But he managed to safely land the chopper before succumbing to his injuries.



Mr Gower's downed helicopter.

That allowed his passenger, named as South African Nicky Bester, to escape from the craft and hide from the poachers.



Mr Gower was reported to have been a former accountant who qualified as a pilot in 2004.

He was believed to have been the youngest son of David Gower, a former partner of Birmingham-based law firm Pinsents.



The wreckage of Mr Gower's helicopter.

He was understood to have attended the prestigious **Hallfield independent school in Edgbaston** , while his family had links to Edgbaston Golf Club.

The Duke of Cambridge , who has campaigned against poaching, was among those who paid tribute.

A statement from Kensington Palace said: “He was very saddened to hear of yet more lives lost due to poaching.”

A neighbour who lived near Mr Gower’s family’s

former home in Edgbaston said his parents had retired to live in Wales around ten years ago.

He said: “They were a beautiful family.

“David was a tax lawyer, a very intelligent man and was very well thought of around here.

“I know he was very prominent for many years at Edgbaston Golf Club.

“I didn’t really know Roger as he boarded for much of his schooling but they were just a lovely family.

“David retired and they decided to move to Wales.

“They left around 10 years ago.

“When I heard what had happened I was very upset as I was very fond of the family.

“It is absolutely tragic.”

Mr Gower’s cousin, Jo South, said on Twitter: “So amazing to see condolences from all over the world for my amazing, brave cousin Roger Gower #flyhighcaptainroger.”

And a JustGiving campaign was launched by the pilot's brother Max to raise £50,000 to help the fight against poaching in Tanzania.

Max wrote: "I am Roger's brother, his friend and father of the nieces that he adored.

"I am proud to have known him and to be able to say he was my brother.

"Those who knew him will remember his idiosyncrasies but also his principles, his morality and his infectious love of having fun."

Mr Gower was helping the authorities in Tanzania track the criminals when they fired on his aircraft, the Friedkin Conservation Fund (FCF) said.

He managed to bring the helicopter down in the Maswa Game Reserve, near Serengeti National Park in the country's north, but died from his wounds before he could be rescued.

Pictures posted online showed the badly damaged remains of the helicopter, including a bloodied bullet hole in the pilot's seat of the aircraft, which lay on its side in the savannah grass.

In a message posted on its website, FCF founder Dan Friedkin said the organisation was “profoundly saddened by the loss of our dear friend”.

He said: “Roger was killed while piloting a helicopter during a co-ordinated effort with the Tanzanian wildlife authorities to track down and arrest active elephant poachers.

“In the course of this action the poachers fired upon the helicopter and Roger was fatally wounded.

“We are committed to honouring Roger and his work.

“We are also committed to ensuring that those responsible for this attack are found and brought to justice.

“We believe that Roger can best be honoured by redoubling our commitment to protect elephants and our priceless wildlife heritage.

“This tragic event again highlights the appalling risk and cost of protecting Tanzania’s wildlife.”

Pratik Patel, a colleague from the Friedkin Conservation Fund, told the BBC that Mr Gower was

shot on Friday afternoon during a patrol as he approached the last carcass of three elephants that had been killed by poachers.

He paid tribute to “a great guy, a great friend, a great pilot” who he said loved working with Tanzania’s wildlife.

He said: “Roger was an amazing person, an amazing character, full of joy, full of life.

“He loved Africa, he loved Tanzania and he loved being in the bush.”

The pilot’s main role was flying people between the different camps on the reserve, Mr Patel said, but he also spent some time every day flying patrols to support ground staff in their work against poachers.

Tanzanian MP Lazaro Nyalandu, a former minister for natural resources and tourism, paid tribute to the Briton’s work.

He said on Twitter: “RIP Capt Roger.

“You loved our country and I knew you on many flights we took together in defence of our wildlife

heritage. Life is precious,” he went on.

“Those poachers who killed Capt Roger are coward(sic), evil, and sad people.

“A fine-hearted individual gone too soon, and our hearts are broken.”

A Foreign Office spokesman said: “We can confirm the death of a British national in Tanzania and are providing assistance to the family at this difficult time.”

To donate to the JustGiving appeal, visit crowdfunding.justgiving.com/roger-gower

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Pride of Birmingham winner's community

group boosted by Sport Relief

19:00, 31 JAN 2016 | BY FIONNUALA BOURKE

The Smiles Project run by Community Champion Raj Kaur offers more fitness and nutrition sessions with grant - in partnership with Sport Relief

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Pride Of Birmingham Awards Community Champion Raj Kaur

Pride of Birmingham Community Champion Raj Kaur has told how a community cash grant from Sport Relief helped her to help youngsters in **Dudley** keep fit and eat properly – as well as deal with bullying.

Raj won a Birmingham Mail Pride of Birmingham Award last year for helping ladies aged 18 to 80 lose weight and feel good about themselves by setting up a ladies-only gym. She was chosen by listeners of BBC WM.

During the summer she runs The Young Smiles Project which helps teach children aged between five and 16 about healthy lifestyles, and provides a perfect environment for families to come together to have fun.



The Smiles Project run by Raj Kaur boosted by Comic Relief/ Sport Relief community cash grant

Young Smiles, which has been running since 2013, was able to provide free fitness activities and nutritional sessions to more than 60 children and parents last summer as a result of the Comic Relief/ **Sport Relief** community cash grant.

It also funded a party for families attended by the Mayor of Dudley who handed out awards.

The inspiration for the project came from a group of mothers who regularly met in the gym and wanted to do something about the growth of childhood obesity in their community.

They hold indoors and outdoor sessions in a local park.



The Smiles Project run by Raj Kaur boosted by Comic Relief/ Sport

Relief community cash grant

Raj said: “We have attracted a lot of interest, it is important to people that children have a safe environment where they can develop physically and mentally while having fun and learning about keeping a healthy nutritional diet at the same time.

“We encourage and motivate children that are dealing with bullying and help grow their self-confidence.

“For me, the highlight of the summer was attending the party on the last day and seeing the smiles on everyone’s faces. We were able to witness first-hand the joy and enthusiasm that we had helped create and we could see such a change in all of the families. Watching the children get presented with their awards gave everyone a sense of value, recognition and a real community spirit.”



The Smiles Project run by Raj Kaur boosted by Comic Relief/ Sport Relief community cash grant

- Sport Relief Community Cash grants of £500 to £1000 are available to small organisations in Birmingham and the Black Country that are doing great work to help local people living tough lives.

Applications are open now, with the Heart of England Community Foundation working with Comic Relief to get the cash to the groups that need it most. Interested groups can apply by going to

How you can help

Almost £2 million was raised in the West Midlands for the last Sport Relief in 2014 which funded 180 local projects to help transform people's lives.

The money was also used across the UK and among the world's poorest communities.

You can help raise funds by taking part in the Sainsbury's Sport Relief Games from Friday, March 18, to Sunday, March 20.

There will be at least 50 running and swimming events held around Birmingham as the motto of this year's event is: "Do yourself proud."



BBC Radio 1s Greg James, is facing his toughest challenge yet with the Radio 1 Gregathlon for Sport Relief

The flagship games will take place at Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park on London, as well as Belfast, Cardiff, Glasgow, Norwich and Sheffield.

Radio 1 DJ Greg James is among the celebrities taking part. He is aiming to complete five triathlons in five days in five cities where the flagship games will take place.

And former Aston Villa goalkeeper David James is

competing against celebrities including Samantha Cameron and Jason Manford in Sport Relief Bake Off.

In partnership with Sport Relief



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