



Grace Cussons: First Reserve Woman to Complete Selection for English Paratroopers

Lance Corporal Grace Cussons has made history by becoming the first woman from the Army Reserve to pass the notorious and grueling Pre-Parachute Selection course, known as P Company.

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At 28 years old, Lance Corporal **Grace Cussons** has made history in the recent annals of the British Army by becoming **the first woman in the Army Reserve to pass the Reservist All Arms Pre-Parachute Selection**, a selection commonly known as **P Company**.

A milestone that requires clarification, however: Cussons is not the first woman ever to have passed the selection for British airborne forces. Before her, other regular forces personnel had completed the course, including Captain Rosie Wild, the first female officer to pass the All Arms Pre-Parachute Selection in 2020, and Soldier Addy Carter, the first non-commissioned woman in

the regular army to achieve it.

For Grace Cussons, the result represents a specific milestone for the **British Army Reserve** component.

The P Company Selection

The Pre-Parachute Selection is one of the most demanding courses in the British Army and serves to verify that candidates possess the physical fitness, determination, and mental resilience necessary to operate in the Airborne Forces.

Among the tests faced by candidates are marches with equipment, stretcher and log carries, collective endurance tests, and the so-called *milling*, a boxing match used to assess determination and controlled aggression.

For Cussons, this was her **second attempt**.

After failing to complete the selection on her first try, the officer substantially overhauled her preparation. In particular, she worked with **Farren Morgan**, a former Coldstream Guards member turned personal trainer specializing in preparation for the most demanding military courses.

Cussons explained that she realized running alone was insufficient and dedicated greater attention to muscle conditioning, particularly in the lower limbs.

The result came after approximately one year of preparation.

The Memory of Captain Lizzie Godwin

Behind the decision to return to P Company lies a personal story.

One of Grace's closest friends was **Captain Elizabeth "Lizzie" Godwin**, an officer of the Life Guards and the first woman to become an officer of the regiment. Godwin died on **September 5, 2025**, at age 28, following a road accident in Surrey.

Shortly before her death, she had encouraged Cussons to attempt the selection.

Grace succeeded in passing P Company on the anniversary of her friend's death, later telling Forces News that this memory had been one of her principal motivations throughout the course.

Godwin had joined the Life Guards in 2020 after attending the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, where she had also earned the prestigious Sword of Honour.

From the Honourable Artillery Company to airborne forces

Cussons serves in the **Honourable Artillery Company (HAC)**, one of the oldest units in the British Army and today part of the Army Reserve.

Before achieving selection, she operated as **Detachment 2IC in 3 Squadron of the HAC**. Following her success, she is expected to transfer to the **A (1st City of London) Battery**, also of the Honourable Artillery Company.

The battery maintains close operational ties with the **7th Parachute Regiment Royal Horse Artillery (7 PARA RHA)** and is integrated into the support capability for the **16 Air Assault Brigade Combat Team**, the British Army's primary airborne formation.

Battery personnel can undertake P Company and subsequently the Basic Parachute Course.

The journey is not yet complete

Passing P Company allows Grace Cussons to formally enter the Airborne Forces pipeline, but **it does not mean she has already earned her parachute wings**.

The next step will be the **Basic Parachute Course**, during which she will conduct jump training and earn her *parachute wings*.

Cussons has explained that she has never parachuted from an aircraft before and therefore views passing P Company not as the finish line but as the beginning of the next phase.

Reserve soldier and manager in the private sector

A distinctive aspect of her story involves her dual professional commitment.

Like many Army Reserve members, Cussons balances military service with a civilian career. During her preparation for P Company, she continued working in the corporate sector and, in

the days following her selection success, took on a new role leading British sales for the electric toothbrush brand **SURI**.

The training necessary to tackle the selection was therefore scheduled around her work commitments, with sessions sometimes exceeding two hours.

For Cussons, however, the primary significance of her achievement goes beyond personal accomplishment: the British soldier has expressed the hope that other Reserve women will decide to attempt selections considered particularly demanding.

Her milestone thus represents another step in the gradual integration of women into operational roles within British airborne forces: **not the first woman to pass P Company, but the first female reservist to achieve it.**

News link: <https://www.forcesnews.com/services/army/first-female-reservist-pass-p-company-says-fallen-friend-inspired-her-succeed>