

## ROUTE IRISH

**Directed by** KEN LOACH

Written by PAUL LAVERTY

**Produced by** REBECCA O'BRIEN

Starring MARK WOMACK ANDREA LOWE

Running time: 109 minutes
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A UK/France/Belgium/Italy/Spain Co-production

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## **ROUTE IRISH**

Liverpool, August 1976. 5-year-old Fergus met Frankie on his first day at school. They've been in each others' shadow ever since. As teenagers they skipped school and drank cider on the ferry over the River Mersey, dreaming about travelling the world. Little did Fergus realise his dream would come true as a highly trained member of the UK's elite special forces, the SAS.

After resigning in September 2004, Fergus persuaded Frankie (by now an ex-Para) to join his security team in Baghdad. £10,000 a month, tax free. Their last chance to "load up" in this increasingly privatised war. Together they risked their lives in a city steeped in violence, terror and greed, and awash with billions of US dollars. In September 2007, Frankie died on Route Irish, the most dangerous road in the world. Back in Liverpool, a grief-stricken Fergus rejects the official explanation, and begins his own investigation into his soul mate's death.

Only Rachel, Frankie's partner, grasps the depth of Fergus's sorrow, and the lethal possibilities of his fury. As Fergus tries to find out what happened to Frankie on Route Irish, he and Rachel grow closer. As he approaches the truth behind Frankie's death, Fergus struggles to find his old self and the happiness he shared with Frankie twenty years earlier on the Mersey.

## INTRODUCTION

## PAUL LAVERTY - Writer

We are all familiar with the ritual of the body of a dead soldier returning from foreign soil: solemn music, the national flag, escorts and salutes recorded in detail by the nation's media. Words of consolation flow from politicians and generals to brokenhearted relatives, many so young they often clutch infants. It wasn't quite that way for Deely, the sister of Robert, an ex-Paratrooper who was ambushed in Iraq. He was flown back from Kuwait and arrived at Glasgow airport. The undertaker told Deely there were ten bodies on the plane that day, two of which were unidentifiable. Robert's coffin looked "like a big orange crate". There was no fanfare, no Union Jack, no journalists and not one question. His death, as far as we know, wasn't added to any list. The reason is simple. Robert was no longer a Paratrooper, but a private contractor. Some call them private soldiers, or Corporate warriors, or security consultants. Iraqis call them mercenaries.

The business of war is being privatised slowly and deliberately before our eyes. Robert's orange crate of a coffin tells us so, as do the statistics. Patrick Cockburn, a well respected commentator on Iraq, estimated that there were around 160,000 foreign contractors in Iraq at the height of the occupation, many of whom - perhaps as many as 50,000 - were heavily armed security personnel. The conduct of the war, and occupation afterwards, would have been impossible without their muscle.

Thanks to Paul Bremer, the US appointed head of the Coalition Provisional Authority, each and every one of those contractors was given immunity from Iraqi law in the shape of Order 17 which was imposed on the new Iraqi Parliament. (Order 17 lasted from 2003 till the beginning of 2009.)

Nobody is interested in counting how many Iraqi civilians have been killed or injured by private contractors, but there is a vast body of evidence to suggest that there has been widespread abuse. Blackwater's massacre of 17 civilians in the middle of Baghdad was the most notorious incident, but there were many more that went unreported. One senior contractor told me, on condition of anonymity, that he spoke to a South African who told him killing an Iraqi was just like "shooting a Kafir". Other bone fide contractors, proud of their professionalism, told me of their disgust at the violence of "the cowboys". If a contractor was involved in an incident which caused a fuss, they were whisked out of the country by their company. Impunity, by order.

While lowly contractors gambled with lives and limbs on Route Irish, the Chief executives of those same companies made fortunes. Mr David Lesar, chief executive of Halliburton, (former CEO being Dick Cheney) earned just under 43 million dollars in 2004. Mr Gene Ray of Titan earned over 47 million between 2004 and 2005. Mr JP London of CACI earned 22 million. The devil is always in the detail. Private contractors charged the US army up to 100 dollars to do a single soldier's laundry bag. In an official report dated January 2005, the Special Investigator General for Iraq Reconstruction Stuart Bowen revealed that over 9 billion dollars had disappeared in fraud and corruption, and that was only during a very limited period of the Provisional Authority. Financial impunity too.

As one contractor told me, the "place stank of money". Little wonder poorly paid soldiers and elite Special Forces left in such numbers to join these private military corporations, as they saw their chance of a lifetime "to load up".

These men "load up" with more than cash.

We are now used to seeing images of carnage and slaughter "over there." We are accustomed to stories of missing billions, corporate greed, abuse, torture, and secret prisons. *The Lancet's* detailed estimate of 654,965 dead as at June 2006 is almost beyond the mind's capacity to grasp. It all seems now at a safe distance in time and place. Iraq fatigue, we are told, is upon us.

But "over there" is on its way back home. Iraq is inside the heads of "our boys".

I was stunned to learn from the charity Combat Stress that deals with ex-soldiers suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome that on average, it takes approximately 17 years for PTSS to manifest itself. They are bracing themselves (as is the US army) for a massive surge in the years to come.

Norma, a gentle nurse on the point of retiring who had spent years with ex-soldiers, opened the way for this story when she told me "many of these men are in mourning for their former selves." An ex-soldier showed me a painting he had done of himself. "I just want my old self back."

Order 17 may have been revoked in Iraq but its spirit still reigns supreme: the stink of impunity, the lies, the contempt for international law, the undermining of the Geneva conventions, the secret prisons, the torture, the murder...the hundreds of thousands of dead. As I imagine the intellectual authors of the above, Bush, Blair, Rumsfeld and co, collecting their millions in after dinner speeches and setting up their interfaith foundations, I cannot help but think of the nurses in Falujah assisting the births of babies born with two heads and deformed faces thanks to the chemical bombs rained on that city. Our gift to the future.

So we wondered about Order 17 back home.

Iraq, in an English country garden.

PL - 11th May 2010.

## **KEN LOACH - Director**

The challenge is always to find the microcosm that suggests the bigger picture: the unresolved conflict, the contradiction that, when explored, reveals the landscape.

#### REBECCA O'BRIEN - Producer

After LOOKING FOR ERIC we felt it was important to make something serious and uncompromising and our French partners on that film, Pascal Caucheteux at Why Not and Vincent Maraval at Wild Bunch, were willing to support us fully. It was excellent to be able to work with them again, the financing became simple and straight forward and it gave me the opportunity to concentrate on the production. Our other regular European partners came on board along with North West Vision in the UK.

We filmed in Jordan for the Iraq scenes – not only did The Royal Jordanian Film Commission prove very supportive in setting up the production but there are many Iraqi refugees there who were able to work with us as supporting cast. Their truly harrowing stories brought the truth of what we were filming into close perspective. It was a joy to work in Liverpool again – it's a really manageable city full of wily characters and charm.

## FERGUS - Mark Womack

Ken has you do a lot of research. He'll have you meet a lot of people that might be similar to the character. You have a lot of conversations that might be useful and read a lot about the world the character lives in, so when the scenes are thrown at you, you've met contractors and heard all their stories and you can build the character from that. You also spend a lot of time with the characters you're going to work with and you bond with them. I went to army boot camp with John Bishop who plays Frankie and Trevor who plays Nelson, so I got to know them quite well. We were already comfortable with each other by the time it came to filming. I was upset on the first day to be told John was dead, I felt pretty much how I imagine it feels to lose a friend. John was great because he knew all along and he kept it quiet.

Fergus is on a path of self-destruction like many of the soldiers I met with combat stress. One of the guys I met said you go in the army and they turn you on, but nobody turns you off. How can you go from seeing what you've seen in Iraq and Afghanistan to shopping in Sainsbury's with the wife and kids. Some guys can adjust, but a lot of them can't.

## RACHEL - Andrea Lowe

I'd seen most of Ken's films and I thought, like a lot of people perhaps, that they are improvisation based. But they're not, there's a beautiful script. Where the improvisation comes in is in the development of the character.

Sometimes you know parts of the script that the other actors don't, but you don't ask them and they wouldn't tell you because we all really enjoy the process. It ensures that your reactions are natural and keeps things fresh and spontaneous and so as an actor you don't over analyse. The essence of Ken's films is the truth in people and this film is about broken people.

When we were working on the back story we established that Rachel had met Fergus first and she's had a bit of a wild past and been into the music scene and travelled around a lot, she's just decided to become a personal trainer and she's into her yoga and they met in a gym. He's dark and moody and she would perhaps have gone for it with him in the past, but she's at a time in her life when that's not what she wants, so there's an unfulfilled attraction between them. Fergus introduces her to Frankie and she falls for him, he's big and light and fun. After Frankie dies, Fergus is in a dark place and can't let her in to save him. They can't rescue each other, it's tragic.

## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **FERGUS - Mark Womack**

British actor Mark Womack is best known for his television roles, starring as DC Mark Callaghan in 'Liverpool 1' (1998), as Jack in 'Sorted' (2006) and also starring in Willy Russell's 'Dancin' Thru the Dark' (1990). Other television credits include 'Hillsborough', 'Moving On', 'Murphy's Law', 'Clocking Off' and 'Playing the Field'. 'Route Irish' is Mark's feature film debut. He will also be seen in the forthcoming thriller 'I Against I'.

#### RACHEL - Andrea Lowe

Andrea Lowe is a graduate of Goldsmiths College. 'Route Irish' is her first film. She has worked extensively in television, including roles in 'Silent Witness', 'The Unloved' (directed by Samantha Morton for Revolution/Channel 4), 'Shameless' (directed by David Threlfall for Company Pictures/Channel 4), 'The Tudors', 'The Bill', 'Coronation Street', 'Torchwood' and 'Where the Heart Is'.

## FRANKIE - John Bishop

John Bishop is a stand-up comedian and Edinburgh Comedy Award (formerly the Perrier) nominee 2009, from Liverpool. He continues his sell out tour throughout the UK performing in large venues and arenas until 2011. His TV appearances include: 'Live at the Apollo' (BBC1), 'Friday Night with Jonathan Ross' (BBC1), 'Michael McIntyre's Comedy Roadshow' (BBC1), '8 out of 10 Cats' (Channel 4), 'Mock The Week' (BBC2) and 'Skins' (E4). More recently John joined sports show 'A League of their Own' as their regular panellist on Sky 1 and Sky HD. In November John's live DVD will be released.

## WALKER - Geoff Bell

Bell has appeared in many films including 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' (2003), 'Stardust' (2007), and Guy Ritchie's 'RocknRolla' (2008). One of his best known roles is in 'Green Street', where he appeared as Tommy Hatcher, the main characters rival. Bell's television credits include 'The Long Firm' (2004) and 'Making Waves' (2004). He recently appeared as the sports teacher in 'Tormented' (2009) and he will also appear in the 2010 feature 'Wild Target' alongside Rupert Grint, Bill Nighy and Rupert Everett and also in 'The Heavy.' In spring 2010 Bell appeared in the BBC series 'Five Daughters' as DC Roy Lambert.

## HAREM - Talib Rasool

Talib was born in Southern Kurdistan where he trained to be a teacher. He was a member of the Mesopotamia Music Group and as a singer he performed at festivals all over Kurdistan. In 2000 he sought asylum in the UK. 'Route Irish' is Talib's first acting role.

## **CRAIG - Craig Lundberg**

On 22nd March 2007, Liverpudlian Corporal Craig 'Freddie' Lundberg, a sniper in The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, was serving his second tour of duty in Iraq. His platoon was part of an operation to arrest known insurgents in Basra when a neighbouring unit came under heavy attack. Craig and his men immediately tried to draw the enemy's fire.

In the fierce fighting that ensued, Craig took a direct hit in the chest from a rocketpropelled grenade. The impact shattered his left arm and sent razor-sharp fragments of burning shrapnel flying into his face.

Craig lost his left eye instantly and his right eye was damaged beyond repair. Incredibly, he tried to continue fighting: "I got up and demanded my rifle, but it had been bent by the force of the blast. My mate got me another rifle and I tried to carry on firing. But I only managed a few steps before I collapsed." Doctors couldn't save his sight and Craig was flown back to the UK knowing he would never see again. He plays football for England in the European Blind Football Championships and last October he climbed Mt. Kilimanjaro. 'Route Irish' is his first acting role.

## **NELSON - Trevor Williams**

Trevor Williams has worked extensively on television over the past year – starting with appearances in 'Cold Feet', 'Clocking Off', 'The Cops' and more recently appearing in some of the best UK drama productions including 'The Street', 'Shameless', 'Coronation Street', 'Life on Mars' and 'Bradford Riots'. 'Route Irish' is his first feature film role.

## **HAYNES - Jack Fortune**

Fortune has narrated many documentaries for Horizon (including the Emmy award-winning 'Fall of the World Trade Centre'), and other productions include 'Beslan' for 'Dispatches' and 'Wonders of the Solar System' for BBC World. His television appearances include the Channel 4 series 'Dunkirk', 'North Square', 'Doctors' and 'Casualty' for the BBC, 'Serious and Organised' for Company Television, 'Taggart' and 'To Play the King'. Theatre credits include the international and UK tours of the National Theatre of Scotland's 'Black Watch' and 'King Lear' at the Bristol Old Vic.

## **CREW FILMOGRAPHIES**

## **KEN LOACH - Director**

ROUTE IRISH (2010), LOOKING FOR ERIC (2009), IT'S A FREE WORLD (2007), THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY (2006), TICKETS (short film) (2004), AE FOND KISS (2003), 11'09'01 (short film) (2002), SWEET SIXTEEN (2002), THE NAVIGATORS (2001), BREAD AND ROSES (2000), MY NAME IS JOE (1998), CARLA'S SONG (1996), LAND AND FREEDOM (1995), LADYBIRD LADYBIRD (1994), RAINING STONES (1993), RIFF-RAFF (1991), HIDDEN AGENDA (1990), FATHERLAND (1986), LOOKS AND SMILES (1981), BLACK JACK (1979), THE GAMEKEEPER (1979), FAMILY LIFE (1971), KES (1969), POOR COW (1967)

## **REBECCA O'BRIEN – Producer**

ROUTE IRISH (2010), LOOKING FOR ERIC (2009), IT'S A FREE WORLD... (2007), THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY (2006), TICKETS (2005), AE FOND KISS (2004), 11'09'01 (2002), SWEET SIXTEEN (2002), THE NAVIGATORS (2001), BREAD AND ROSES (2000), PRINCESA (2000), MY NAME IS JOE (1998), BEAN (1997), LAND AND FREEDOM (1995), HIDDEN AGENDA (1990), FRIENDSHIP'S DEATH (1987)

## **PAUL LAVERTY – Writer**

ROUTE IRISH (2010), EVEN THE RAIN (2009), LOOKING FOR ERIC (2009), IT'S A FREE WORLD...(2007), THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY (2006), CARGO (2006), TICKETS (2005), AE FOND KISS (2004), 11'09'01 (2002), SWEET SIXTEEN (2002), BREAD AND ROSES (2000), MY NAME IS JOE (1998), CARLA'S SONG (1996)

## **GEORGE FENTON – Composer**

Credits includes: BOUNTY HUNTER (2010), LOOKING FOR ERIC (2009), FOOL'S GOLD (2008), IT'S A FREE WORLD... (2007), THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY (2006), MRS HENDERSON PRESENTS (2005), AE FOND KISS (2004), SWEET HOME ALABAMA (2002), SWEET SIXTEEN (2002), MY NAME IS JOE (1998), THE CRUCIBLE (1996), LADYBIRD LADYBIRD (1994), LAND AND FREEDOM (1994), GROUNDHOG DAY (1992), THE FISHER KING (1991), DANGEROUS LIAISONS (1988), THE COMPANY OF WOLVES (1984)

## **CHRIS MENGES – Director of Photography**

Director of Photography credits include: LONDON BOULEVARD (2010), THE READER (2008), NOTES OF A SCANDAL (2006), THREE BURIALS OF MELQUIADES ESTRADA (2005), THE GOOD THIEF (2002), DIRTY PRETTY THINGS (2002), THE BOXER (2007), MICHAEL COLLINS (1996), THE MISSION (1986), THE KILLING FIELDS (1984), LOCAL HERO (1983), KES (1970) Director credits include: SECOND BEST (1994), A WORLD APART (1988)

## **FERGUS CLEGG - Production Designer**

LOOKING FOR ERIC (2009), IT'S A FREE WORLD... (2007), THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY (2006) Art Director credits: AE FOND KISS (2004), SWEET SIXTEEN (2002), THE NAVIGATORS (2001), MY NAME IS JOE (1998), CARLA'S SONG (1996), LADYBIRD LADYBIRD (1994), RAINING STONES (1993)

## **SARAH RYAN - Costume Designer**

LOOKING FOR ERIC (2009), DONKEY PUNCH (2009), SUMMER (2008), DOWNTIME (1997)

## JONATHAN MORRIS – Editor

ROUTE IRISH (2010), LOOKING FOR ERIC (2009), IT'S A FREE WORLD (2007), THE WIND THAT SHAKES THE BARLEY (2006), TICKETS (short film) (2004), AE FOND KISS (2003), 11'09'01 (short film) (2002), SWEET SIXTEEN (2002), THE NAVIGATORS (2001), BREAD AND ROSES (2000), MY NAME IS JOE (1998), CARLA'S SONG (1996), LAND AND FREEDOM (1995), LADYBIRD LADYBIRD (1994), RAINING STONES (1993), RIFF-RAFF (1991), HIDDEN AGENDA (1990), FATHERLAND (1986)

## CAST AND CREW

Fergus Mark Womack Rachel Andrea Lowe Frankie John Bishop Walker Geoff Bell **Jack Fortune** Haynes Harim Talib Rasool Craig Lundberg Craig **Trevor Williams** Nelson Russell Anderson Tommy Jamie Michie Jamie

Young Fergus Bradley Thompson

Young Frankie Daniel Foy

Marisol Najwa Nimri

Frankie's Mother Maggie Southers

David R David

Andy Anthony Schumacher

Undertaker Gary Cargill
Peggy Donna Elson
Steve Stephen Lord
Jay Jaimes Locke

and Natalie Flood, Andy Dwyer, Taban Othman, Ali Karami, Nasredine Banda, Nick Baty

Yousef Tayf Basil
Ranj Ranj Hawra
Mother Hind Kamil

and Malik Amir, Mohsen Fakhir, Aseel Salam, Kevin Burton, Tagreed Asad, Omar Abdelaazeez and Sajida Hassan Director Ken Loach
Screenplay Paul Laverty
Producer Rebecca O'Brien

Production Designer Fergus Clegg
Photography Chris Menges
Recordist Ray Beckett

Casting Kahleen Crawford

Costume Designer Sarah Ryan

Assistant Directors David Gilchrist, Michael Queen

Locations Claire Newton
Sound Editor Kevin Brazier
Line Producer Tim Cole

Editor Jonathan Morris Music George Fenton

Stunt Co-ordinator Paul Heasman

Stunt Performers Kid Richmond, Barrett Snow (Jordan)

Lee Sheward, Gordon Seed (UK)

Production Co-ordinator Eimhear McMahon

Production Loren McLaughlan, Sophie Agnew

Owen Arnold, Danny Boocock

Casting Assistant Caroline Stewart

Research Ann Cattrall

3rd Assistant Director
Unit Manager
Runner
Unit Manager
Runner
Runner
Unit Manager
Runner

Drivers Keith Wignall, Paul Walker

Focus Puller Carl Hudson

Camera Trainee Ricky Mears
Additional Camera Jason Bulley

Script Consultant
Script Supervisor
Stills Photographer
Script Consultant
Susanna Lenton
Joss Barratt

Gaffer Lee Walters
Best Boy Paul Sharp

Electricians Laurent Van Eijs, Adam Walker

Boom Operator Pete Murphy
Sound Assistant Ric Perrin

Playback Technicians Rick Bailey & Ben Hodkinson,

Red Frog

Art Director Grant Armstrong

Assistant Art Director Julie Ann Horan

Prop Buyer Anita Gupta
Prop Master Colin Mutch
Dressing Props Mark Reynolds
Standby Props Ben Johnson

Armourers Steve Wilkerson (Wilky)

Weapons Co-ordinator Charlie Phillips, Perdix Firearms

Action Vehicle Co-ordinator Neil Adams
SFX Supervisor David Harris

SFX Senior Technician Stuart Wishart

Carpenters Alex Robertson, Colin Relph

Standby Carpenter Mark Brady
Stagehand Johnny Mellor

Painters Paul Curren, Martin Feely

Make-up and Hair Designer Carli Mather
Costume Supervisor Sam Scragg

Dailies Michael Biggam, Mark Garside, Lynn

Gibson, Kay McIntosh, Victoria Yates, Chris Wanklyn, Mark Jones, Paul Taylor, Mark Burness, Antoine Doyen

Production Accountant Tina Shadick

Assistant Accountants Marc Grant, Habib Rahman

Auditor Malde & Company

1st Assistant Editor Anthony Morris

2nd Assistant Editor Paul Clegg

Steve Carr Sound Transfers

Effects Editor / Foley Recordist Robert Brazier

Ben Brazier Dialogue / Foley Editor

> Foley Artists Rowena Wilkinson, Sue Harding

Re-recording Mixers Ian Tapp, James Doyle

Sound Mix Technician Tim Siddall

> Paramedics Mediprop

Caterers Michael Ross, Red Chutney Security **Keith Jenkins & Tony Molloy** Travel Agents Katie Grist, Alhambra Travel

JORDAN UNIT

Linda Mutawi, Production Services Supervisor

The Royal Film Commission

**International Traders Production Services Company** 

> **Fuad Khalil** Production Manager

Production Co-ordinator Reem Bandak

Production Assistant Ashraf Mezied Production Accountant Maha Hanna

Assistant Location Manager Saeb Abu Al Ragheb

3rd Assistant Director Omar Sawalha

Arifa Bseiso Runner Jalal Khreisat Best Boy Third Man Maggie Kabariti

> Lara Atalla, Raya Hamdan, Basil Casting

> > Karim

Art Department Karim Kheir, Nasser Zoubi

Samy Keilani, Samir Zeidan, Ashraf Construction

Ahmed Alnawai

Phaedra Dahdaleh, Abdel Rayyan Wardrobe

Assistant Make Up Reem Naber

> Transportation Omar Ayesh, Omar Deeb (Abu Alaa),

> > Nader Ayoub,

Jihad Tamimi, Ahmad Smadi, Majdi

Abdul Qader, Ziad Qariyouti

Vehicle Coordinator Garo Youmdjian

Caterers Wael Jabaji

Locations Security Abu Rashed

First Aid Services Civil Defence 19

Music Recorded by Steve Price at

**Angel Recording Studios** 

Pro Tools Mat Bartram
Programmer Leigh Lawson

Music published by Shogun Music Ltd

## Songs

'Rocks' performed by Primal Scream
Licensed courtesy of Sony Music Entertainment UK Ltd.

Words and music by Bobby Gillespie, Robert Young & Andrew Innes © 1993
Published by EMI Music Publishing Limited & Complete Music Ltd.

'Baghdad' performed by Talib Rasool Composed and Arranged by Ilham al-Madfai, Lyrics by Nizar Qabbani Licensed courtesy of EMI Music Publishing Arabia

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Lawyers Stephen Grosz, Bindman & Partners;

John Lafferty; Natalie Usher,

Lee & Thompson

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Lucy Borleteau

For Wild Bunch Marie Besançon, Emmanuelle Castro

For Les Films du Fleuve Delphine Tomson, Tania Antonioli,

Marie Schoenmaeckers

For Vision+Media Tara Cooke

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