



# The Parachute Regimental Association Aldershot Branch Newsletter



05/2018

Charity Number 1125551

May 2018

## Monthly Meeting

The **May Meeting** will be held at **8pm on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2018** in the Conservative Club, Aldershot. The meeting after this will be the June meeting which will be held on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> June.

## Jan Chambers

It is with great sadness that I must inform you of the death of Jan Chambers after a three year battle with cancer. Chris has informed me that Jan's funeral will take place at 10.45am on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May at Aldershot Crematorium, Guildford Road, Aldershot GU12 4BP. It will be of great comfort to Chris, Sean and Kelly to have the support of the members of the Branch at this very sad time. The thoughts and prayers of the Branch members are with Chris and his family.

## New Members

There were 2 new members who joined at the last meeting. Chip Walker and Tom Onions who served in the Catering Corps. Tom was attached to 2 and 3 Para and Chip with 7 RHA and he joined 10 Para when he left the army. They both completed P company whilst attached to the Airborne. Welcome to the both of you.

## Branch Subscriptions

Please note that Branch subscriptions are now due. The subs are £15 a year. You can pay your subs by Standing Order. Should you wish to pay this way please contact me and I will send you the form that you will need to fill in and return to your bank. You can cancel the Standing Order at any time. Members are given 3 months to pay their subs and if we have not received them after this time you will cease to receive the newsletter. Cheques should be made payable to "**Aldershot Branch PRA**".

## Welfare Member

If you are not well, or you know of another member who is ill, can you let me know so that I can inform the Welfare member, Chris Rogers.

## Annual General Meeting

I am pleased to inform you that the serving committee were re-elected to serve for another year. It was also proposed at the meeting that the Branch should make a donation to help pay for the Airborne Statue that will be placed in the Royal Garrison Church. The donation the Branch will make will be £1,000 and the members have individually donated a further £675. This money will be passed to the organisers.

## Branch Photo

A big thank you to all the members who turned up for the AGM and wore their blazers. The Branch photo is below.



## Pen-Y-Fan

Members of the Branch are off to Brecon on the weekend of 18-20 May for the annual walk up Pen-Y Fan. The walk which is called "The Fan Dance" is organised by the British Airborne Forces Club and we will be hosted by the Brecon Rugby Club. A full report and photos will be in the next newsletter.

## New Memorial in Municipal Gardens, Aldershot

Brigadier Alfred Maurice Toye VC MC was an English recipient of the Victoria Cross, the highest and most prestigious award for gallantry in the face of the enemy that can be awarded to British and Commonwealth forces.

Brigadier Toye was born in Aldershot on 15 April 1897 in Stanhope Lines, the son of James Robert Toye an Army Pensioner and Clerk, and Elizabeth Charlotte. Before joining the Army, Brigadier Toye was an active Boy Scout, attaining the rank of patrol leader at the 2nd Aldershot Scout Troop. He was also the first member of his troop to become a King's Scout.

He enlisted into the Royal Engineers as a bugler in 1912 before being commissioned into the Middlesex Regiment during World War I. For his gallantry in 1917 while serving with the Royal Engineers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battle of Ypres (also known as Passchendaele) at some time between 26 October and 10 November, Lieutenant Toye was awarded the Military Cross.

He was 20 years old, and an acting British Army Captain in the 2nd Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own), when the following deed took place for which he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

On 25 March 1918 at Eterpigny Ridge, France, Captain Toye displayed conspicuous bravery and fine leadership. He three times re-established a post which had been captured by the enemy and, when his three other posts were cut off, he fought his way through the enemy with one officer and six men. He counter-attacked with 70 men and took up a line which he maintained until reinforcements arrived. In two subsequent operations he covered the retirement of his battalion and later re-established a line that had been abandoned before his arrival. He was twice wounded but remained on duty.

Captain Toye was invested with the Victoria Cross by King George V on 8th June 1918 during a ceremony on Queen's Parade, Aldershot.

A week after his investiture with the VC he married Flora Robertson at the Church of St Michael in his native Aldershot. They had a daughter, Enid Audrey Toye. From 1925 to 1932 he was chief instructor at the Royal Egyptian Military College and Commandant of War Office Schools of Chemical Warfare 1940 - 1942. Major Toye then joined the teaching staff at the Staff College, Camberley. He was promoted to Colonel in 1942 and served with the **6th Airborne Division** in 1943-44 and with General Headquarters, Middle East from 1945 to 1948. He later achieved the rank of Brigadier serving with the **6th Airborne Division**. He retired to Tiverton in Devon where he died in 1955 and is buried in Tiverton Cemetery.

On 25 March 2018, on the 100th anniversary of the action in which he won his Victoria Cross during World War I, a memorial to Brigadier Toye

was unveiled in the Municipal Gardens in his native Aldershot.

His Victoria Cross is displayed at the National Army Museum, Chelsea.

The Branch was not invited to the unveiling so I contacted Councillor David Clifford, who is the lead councillor for Rushmoor Council. I asked if he could give me a reason why, as Brigadier Toye had served in the Airborne, we were not invited. David replied and said:

*“Stuart, That’s outrageous!! We love our airborne troops serving or veteran. Very sorry for the oversight and 100% sure no offence or snub was intended. To cover our bases we will make sure you are on ALL military event notices. Whatever the reason, thank you for bringing this to my attention – we will ensure we avoid this in future.”*



Brigadier Toye and his medals



King George V presenting his medal



Brigadier Toye's Memorial



The Memorial's position in the gardens

## Ribbons of Poppies

As this year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War Rushmoor Council have dug some beds in the grass in all of the parks in the area. They are asking members of the public to come along and sprinkle poppy seeds in these beds. They would like to see ribbons of poppies on Remembrance Sunday.



One of the Poppy Beds



The notice asking the public to sprinkle poppy seeds

## Arnhem Victoria Crosses

The five Victoria Crosses that were awarded for the battle of Arnhem are brought together for the first time in history. They form the new exhibition: *For Valour* in the Hartenstein Airborne Museum, Oosterbeek, Arnhem.

They will be on display from the 5<sup>th</sup> April 2018 until 1<sup>st</sup> October 2018. The VC's of the Battle of Arnhem are currently part of four different collections in Britain: Lord Ashcroft Medal Collection housed at the Imperial War Museum, the Staffordshire Regiment Museum, the Airborne Assault Museum and the collection of the family Grayburn. They are also the original medals and not copies.

These five VC's tell the poignant stories of Lieutenant John Hollington Grayburn, Flight Lieutenant David Samuel Anthony Lord, Lance-sergeant John Daniel Baskeyfield, Major Robert Henry Cain and Captain Lionel Ernest Queripel.

Major Cain is the only one who survived the battle of Arnhem. The other soldiers received the VC posthumously. Members of the Branch who are attending the Airborne March or the Commemoration weekend will be able to view the medals.



## Aldershot Branch Tabbers Walking Group

Please bring waterproofs in a small back pack and a change of shoes/trainers at the end of the walk as we don't want to walk into the pub with muddy boots. This also helps when getting into the car for the ride home. The group will be meeting in the Garrison Church Car Park from 9am - 9.15am next to the Wellington Statue. It is proposed that we car share to save taking empty cars. Peter Richens has now organised the following walks for March. The walks are 5/7 miles and we are now getting a regular 10 – 13 walkers.

The next three walks will take place on **Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May, Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> May** and **Thursday 31<sup>st</sup> May**.

If you would like to attend any of the walks please turn up on the day or if you require further information please contact the Secretary

The walk on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> April took us to Godalming, south of the Hog's Back. After the rain in the previous weeks it was wet and muddy underfoot, but this did not deter us and nine members made their way to the Manor Beefeater on the Guildford Road. We were delighted that two new tabbers joined us on this walk. Ron Burgess who has been a member for many years brought along his dog. Russ Mason who joined at the end of last year travelled down from Epsom. Peter did say that there were a couple of steep climbs. At the end of one steep climb we ended up on Chinthurst Hill. There is a stone folly at the top which was built in the 1930's, and is now a Grade II listed building. The Tower was constructed by Lord Inchcape as a folly.



The Tabbers and the Folly



The view from the top

**Regimental Day and PRA AGM at the National Arboretum**

The Branch will be running a minibus to the National Arboretum for the Regimental Day and PRA AGM which is taking place on **Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> June**. The cost is £20 per person and this includes £10 for the meal. The minibus will depart from the Princes Hall, Aldershot at **0730hrs** and will return to Aldershot at 1800hrs.

Wristbands for the meal will be issued at the entrance to the National Arboretum. The wristband is to ensure that only those who have paid for the meal will gain access to the marquee. The dress for the day is blazers or suits and Regimental or Branch ties.

There is a motor train that travels around all of the gardens and wheelchairs can also be booked for those who can only walk short distances. Please advise the secretary if you require a wheelchair so that he can book you one.

The minibus is a brand new minibus and the comfort is better than previous minibuses that we have hired. There are only 17 seats so please book early so as not to be disappointed. The cut of date for booking a seat is **Friday 25<sup>th</sup> May**. I have to forward the names to the organisers after the date.

**Skiing in Austria**

Next year's skiing trip will be in Saalbach, Austria from Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> January till Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> February. If any member would like to join us please contact the secretary. If you are thinking of having a go and have never skied before, we go to the indoor ski dome at Hemel Hempstead during the year. The ski dome has a small slope for beginners and a 140 metre slope for more experienced skiers. You can also book lessons in the ski dome.



The beginners slope is on the right



At the top of the main slope

