



The Parachute Regimental Association Aldershot Branch Newsletter

06/2010

Charity Number 1125551

June 2010

Monthly Meeting

The Monthly Meeting will take place on **Friday 4th June at 2000hrs in Malta Barracks**. After consultation with 145 Brigade, Colonel Long has requested that all PRA members park their vehicles on the edges of the parade square. On Initial Training weekends 145 Brigade expect over 200 soldiers to attend and they arrive in coaches and minibuses. Vehicles parked in the middle of the square make it difficult for the drivers. As an added assistance to prevent us having to issue car passes will all members please leave their Aldershot Branch membership card on the dashboard with their name visible. If you do not possess a membership card please see the Treasurer. Thank you for your assistance.

Bar Opening Times

There is also a change to the bar opening times. The bar will continue to open on Friday evenings but the opening times on Sundays will change. This is due to the number of troops attending the Initial Training weekends. We have recently had to put our opening time back to 4pm. We approached Colonel Long and suggested that if we do not open on a Sunday when there is an Initial Training weekend could we open earlier on the other Sundays and he agreed. The new bar opening hours are Friday evenings **8pm till midnight** and Sunday afternoon from **1.30pm till 6pm** (if members are enjoying themselves we can stay open till 8pm). All Sunday opening dates and times will be on the calendar attached to this newsletter. A free Pool Table, Bar nibbles, Television for all sporting events and a good atmosphere await you. Please note that fresh ground coffee is available for those who have to drive or would like an alternative drink. Don't forget there is a PRA bell on the side of the gate.

Branch Ties

Branch ties are available for purchase over the bar or from the Treasurer or Secretary at a price of £10.

Help for Heroes Wristbands

Please note that we have a supply of Help for Heroes wristbands on sale behind the bar at a cost of £2 each.

Bill (Aussie) Fotheringham

It is with great sadness that we have to inform you of the death of Branch member Bill (Aussie) Fotheringham. Aussie died on Saturday 15th May at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. He had been a member of the Chelsea Pensioners for the past two years. Aussie was a well travelled man and served with the following Airborne Units: 2 Bn Royal Can Regt, 1st Bn The Parachute Regiment and 16 Para TA Lincoln 1954-83. He also served with the 5/502 Royal Australian Signal Corps. Our thoughts and prayers go to his family at this sad time. His funeral will be held on Wednesday 23 June at 2.30pm in the Chapel at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.

Subscriptions

Please note that the yearly subscription is now due. Please make cheques payable to "**Aldershot Branch PRA**" and hand them to the treasurer at the monthly meeting or send them to the secretary at the address below. Please note that as in previous years if your subscription has not been received by the

end of June it will be deemed that you no longer wish to be a member of the Aldershot Branch and you will no longer receive the newsletter.

Television

I am pleased to inform the members that we have raised the money for the 42" Plasma widescreen television and it will be installed in position before the next meeting. Come along and have a look and make a note of the England football games and come down for a pint and cheer on England.

New Members

There were no new members last month.

London Marathon

Congratulations go to Nigel (Jonah) Jones and Wendy Davies for completing the London Marathon. Jonah's stats are very impressive. Compared to me Jonah is a young 44 year old and he completed the course in 3hrs 15mins. The total number of runners on the day was 36,459 and Jonah finished in 2,440 place. He was the first SSAFA runner home and he raised just under £2,000. He was also the 340th old bloke home but I don't think he wants me to tell you that. I know that Jonah will be the first person who would like to congratulate Wendy on completing her first marathon and what a marathon to pick. I know that the first marathon is always the hardest as you never know how you are going to do until you have finished so well done Wendy, how about training Bob up for next year?

Hog Roast

The information about the Hog Roast has been sent to the members and it will be a superb evening. Pitchfork who are our band for the evening are one of the best bands in the area. After a terrible winter come along and start the summer off with an evening you will remember for a long time and all for £15. Please contact the secretary for tickets.

ABF Weekend

As mentioned in last month's newsletter the Traf are running the Airborne Forces Weekend on the weekend 2-4th July. As most of the members who use the bar at Malta Barracks have indicated that they would like to attend the weekend the bar will be closed on Friday 2nd and Sunday 4th July.

Southsea Spectacular

I have only one seat left on the minibus to Southsea on Sunday 4th July. The cost is £12 if you would like to take the last seat please contact the secretary. The minibus will depart at 10am from the Princes Hall, Aldershot and will leave Southsea at 6pm for the return journey.

Airborne 70

The Branch will be running a coach to Colchester for the 70th Anniversary celebrations of the formation of Airborne Forces on Saturday 24th July. We are now taking bookings for the coach to attend the 70th Anniversary of Airborne Forces in Colchester. The cost of the coach is £15 per person. The coach will leave the Princes Hall, Aldershot at 0700hrs. This will get us to Colchester by 0930hrs. Due to the drivers working hours the coach will leave Colchester at 1900hrs so that we will be back in Aldershot by 2130hrs. As all events will take place inside Colchester Garrison I have been given permission to apply for all Branch members and guests tickets. If you would like us to apply for tickets please inform me of all of the names of the person's the tickets are for and also if you require a seat on the coach or are travelling up in a car. The cut off date for entry and coach tickets is Saturday 10th July.

Branch Golf Day

The Branch Golf Day has been arranged by John Mellon on Monday the 19th July 2010 at Hurtmore Golf Club. There are a lot of trophies up for grabs so please contact John and book yourself a place. Remember it is open to friends and family. As usual members will play for the coveted trophy and guest will have prizes to play for. Please see flyer for further details.

Summer Ball

As mentioned in the last newsletter the Summer Ball will be held in Potters International Hotel on Saturday 7th August. The cost will be £30 and a full evening program will be sent out with the next newsletter. Please book early to assist us in dealing with the hotel.

Devizes to Westminster Canoe Race

A marathon canoeing team from the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, captained by a veteran Atlantic rower, has won the Combined Services Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race in a new record time. Please see flyer for further details. Many thanks to Branch member John Sergison-Main for supplying the article. If any member has an article that is of interest to members please inform the secretary.

BBC TV Remembrance Week

My name is Hiral Patel and I am Researcher for a TV Production Company called Fever Media. We are making a TV series about Remembrance for the BBC to be shown daily during the week leading up to Remembrance Sunday. The series will feature first-hand interviews from a variety of people spanning decades from WW2 onwards. We are working closely with and have the full backing of the MOD for this series.

The series is about Remembrance and celebrating the courage and bravery of many thousands of people from decades gone by; we want to tell these story first-hand.

We are keen to include stories from members of the Parachute Regimental Associations, for example if any of your members were involved in Operation Dynamo or the Falklands – to hear experiences first-hand from veterans and/or those that experienced the conflict . As mentioned, the series is covering a variety of conflicts also and themes. We are looking for modern day stories, as well as experiences from the past. I'd appreciate if you are able to pass this email to your members and/or indeed suggest any individuals that you think would be of interest and willing to talk to us for the series. I would look to do a brief phone chat with as many people as possible before we actually go ahead and film any interviews in the coming months. As this will form part of a variety of stories, I am keen to find people who can talk through their own poignant memories and interesting stories that can be told first-hand.

I very much look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,



HIRAL PATEL

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Stuart

PARA ATLANTIC CANOEING HERO LEADS 2 PARA TO DEVIZES-WESTMINSTER VICTORY

A marathon canoeing team from the 2nd Battalion, The Parachute Regiment, captained by a veteran Atlantic rower, has won the Combined Services Devizes to Westminster International Canoe Race in a new record time.

This 125 mile non-stop race is the longest in the World with 53 miles of canal racing (from Devizes to Reading) and 72 miles on the River Thames. The two man canoes have to be carried over 77 canal locks. This was the first time the Parachute Regiment had won the event in 40 years and broke decades of domination by the Royal Engineers. In a remarkable feat of personal endurance, all three of the Team's scoring pairs completed the ordeal in under twenty hours, timings never previously achieved by a full Services Team. The team's combined time was also the fastest ever recorded by a Services team in the race's 62 year history.

The team was managed and led by 46 year old Major Frank Gargan, who in 2005 had rowed the Atlantic Ocean in a new British and European record time of 40 days 17 hours and 28 minutes. This record still stands today.

The 2 PARA Marathon Canoe Team started training in earnest in mid January with 10 canoeists. Canoeing conditions in January and February of this year were extremely difficult. The Avon and Kennet canal was regularly frozen and the Thames was dangerously fast flowing. Dressed for arctic conditions the team paddled between 25 and 35 miles every day, routinely enduring rain, hail and snow.

Night training was also an essential part of race preparation. On one dark, freezing night in February during a long training session, paratroopers Rob Curry and Jacko De Toit capsized on their own and were subsequently declared missing. This was a disaster for the team. Two of the most experienced canoeists, Simon Platt and Christian Le Roux, took on the difficult task of paddling back upstream, whilst road crews back-tracked to previous locks. The rest of the team scoured the bank, shouting after the lost crew. After 2 hours of searching the soaked canoeists were found, pint in hand, in the Dog and Duck near Theale!

The iconic Devizes-Westminster Race commenced on 03 April. The four crews and their support teams mustered at Devizes wharf and each of the boats set off at 5 minute intervals. The last crew left at 3 pm. At every lock the pairs jumped from their canoes, threw them onto blistered shoulders and sprinted down the canal path to the new water level. At Hungerford Frank Gargan and Sam Swannick snapped their rudder cable, costing them almost an hour of delay. Throughout the race all feeding and administration took place in the boats, with only one three minute stop at Reading. This was simply a quick change of clothing and some hot food before launching onto the river phase to Teddington.

The whole team pushed hard all through the bitterly cold night. Just after Windsor the first rays of dawn light broke through and the team had a mere 35 miles to complete. Immediately after Runnymede the crews passed under the M25 into Greater London; only 6 locks to traverse prior to joining the 18 mile tidal flow to Westminster.

Finally, at just before 11 o'clock and in front of hundreds of spectators, the leading three 2 PARA crews passed in rapid succession under Westminster Bridge. The fourth crew finished just over 20 mins later. The gruelling journey was undoubtedly the hardest 20 hours the paratroopers had ever experienced, each man finishing on the verge of total exhaustion. Sam Swannick was immediately taken to hospital, his hands ravaged by cold and blisters. The 2 PARA team's hard work and efforts resulted in a victory in the Services Team Cup and earned Frank Gargan and Sam Swannick the Services Cup for the fastest overall Services crew. It was a stunning day for Services Endurance Canoeing and sets up the team for a much-anticipated follow-up in 2012, after their return from Afghanistan next year.



THE 2 PARA TEAM IN TRAINING



FRANK GARGAN AND SAM SWANNICK POWER TO VICTORY



SAM SWANNICK'S HANDS PRIOR TO HOSPITALISATION

Branch Golf Day

To be held at Hurtmore Golf Club

19th July 2010

Morning individual scored round for trophies and plaques.

Afternoon round, team game for fun and prizes.

The cost of the day will be £40 per person

Please book asap for yourself and friends.

Itinerary

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| 0800. | Arrive |
| 0815. | Coffee and bacon roll. Short briefing of the days play and set into groups of 3.
Same groups am and pm. |
| 0852. | Group 1 tee off, 18 holes, Stapleford, ¾ handicap. To include longest drive and closest to the pin. (5 slots booked) |
| 1250. | Bar snacks (own purchase) |
| 1348. | Group 1 tee off, 9 holes. Texas Scramble Teams of 3. Rules below. |
| 1715 | 2 course dinner, Roast Topside of Beef and Fruit Crumble. |
| ?*?* | Presentations |

Misc.

1. Buggies are to be booked and paid for individually, call 01483 424440
2. If possible pre book your lunchtime bar snack as this will help speed things up.

Texas Scramble

Each player has three drives to count. This game is being played off handicap, add the team members handicaps together and divide by ten. Deduct the handicap from the final total.

Before an unrefundable deposit is made I need to know the sort of numbers we should be expecting.

So please let me know sooner rather than later.

Thank you.

Contact: John Mellon.