



The Parachute Regimental Association Aldershot Branch Newsletter



07/2014

Charity Number 1125551

July 2014

Monthly Meeting

The next monthly meeting will take place on **Friday 27th June at 2000hrs in Malta Barracks**. Please ensure that all PRA members park their vehicles on the edges of the parade square and leave their Aldershot Branch membership cards on the dashboard with their name visible. The meeting after this will be the monthly meeting held on **Friday 29th August 2014**. The venue for the next meeting will be announced in the August newsletter. Will all members ensure that they close the gate after entering and leaving the Barracks.

New Members

There were no new members last month.

Branch Subscriptions

This is another reminder that Branch subscriptions are now due and need to be paid by the end of July. The subscriptions have been held at £15 for the year. Please make cheques payable to "Aldershot Branch PRA" and post them to the secretary at the address below.

Jean-Pierre Harrar



I am sure that a many of you still remember Jean-Pierre Harrar who has been a member of the Aldershot Branch for many years. When Jean-Pierre retired he moved back to France to look after his and his wife's ageing parents. I met up with him when he returned to Aldershot for a visit two weeks ago. He informed me that he had received a personal invitation from Mr Manuel Valls, who is the Prime Minister of France, to attend the 70th Anniversary which was held in Normandy. The Anniversary he was invited to was held in the Bayeux War Cemetery, which is the largest Second World War cemetery of Commonwealth soldiers in France. The cemetery contains 4,648 burials, mostly of the Invasion of Normandy. Her Majesty The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh attended the Anniversary which was shown on British television. It was a great honour to be invited, well done Jean-Pierre. A copy of the invitation can be seen on the left.

Dennis Devey



Dennis Devey informed the members at the last monthly meeting that he had run the London Marathon on Sunday 13th April. The marathon was held a few days after Dennis' 80th birthday and he told us it is 50 years since his first marathon. When most people of his age and younger are relaxing at home, Dennis constantly goes out running with his local running club. Congratulations Dennis, you put a lot of us to shame. Dennis can be seen with his London Marathon medal in the photo on the left.

Nile Wilson



I have mentioned in past newsletters about the progress of Nile Wilson who has been competing in gymnastics at junior level for Great Britain in European and World events. His last event as a junior was in the European Championships in Sofia. In the European Championships Britain's junior gymnasts won four gold and four silver medals on the final day. Nile was the star taking the pommel, parallel bars and high bar titles. The results confirm Britain's greatest ever Junior European championships. The medals are added to the team gold and all-around gold (Nile Wilson) and bronze (Brinn Bevan) from earlier in the championships.

Nile's grandfather JJ Wilson is an ex 2 Para RSM and is extremely proud of his grandsons efforts who has been training since the age of four. The England team for the Commonwealth Games has just been announced and Nile is in the senior gymnastics team. You will be able to follow Nile when the games are shown on television in the next couple of months. Just remember you read it in the Aldershot Branch Newsletter first

70th Anniversary Summer Ball

A full report will be in the next newsletter.

Victoria Branch, Melbourne

I have received the report below about the 70th Anniversary Commemoration in Melbourne from Dick Murphy.

The Branch was on Parade yesterday at the Shrine, good multi national turnout, with the French, US, British consuls and the leader of the Opposition Party, Australian Government, all made the rounds and chatted to the 7 Normandy Veterans before having a chat with all the other groups. I had the honour of being Standard Bearer for the Parade, which turned out to be a bit rough. The Parade Commander forgot to stand us at ease, so there we stood for 50 minutes. I would have had a problem back in the day. Photos will be available soon.

Airborne Forces Weekend

The unofficial Airborne Forces weekend will take place in the Trafalgar Inn, Short Street, Aldershot over the weekend 4-6 July. This weekend has grown over the years and has over 300 ex airborne members attend. If you have not attended over the last few years, why not call in for a couple of hours on the Saturday. You will be surprised at the varied age range of the people who attend.

Request for Assistance

We have received the request below for help from a student at the University of Southampton. If any member is able and willing to help Edward in achieving his degree please contact the secretary.

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am currently a student studying History at the University of Southampton. For my dissertation topic I am researching the Sixth Airborne Division, I am unsure if this is the correct place to be emailing, but I am in search of a veteran who was present either in Normandy or crossing the Rhine in 1945. Any kind of account or background information would be a fantastic source for me. I am situated in Southern England and would be extremely happy to travel to see any of the veterans. Any ideas or suggestions you have would be much appreciated.

Thank you in advance.

Regards,

Edward Tavares

Airborne March, Arnhem 2014

This year's Airborne March trip takes place in Arnhem from 4 – 7 September. Places are still available on this year's trip. The cost of a stay in the hotel is £250 and a stay on the campsite is £125. This year is the 68th Airborne march. If you would like further information please contact the secretary.

Resurrection

Dutch artist, Fransje Povel-Speleers wandered alone in the Airborne Cemetery in Oosterbeek reading the names of the young dead soldiers. She wondered what gift she could give them as a token of her thanks. She saw a vision in which they emerged from their graves and returned to life in their full glory, young and strong just as their mates, now veterans, their families and relatives remembered them. Unarmed, of course as the war is over, surprised and happy to see everybody again.

This vision gradually took shape in clay as she rolled large flat tiles and modelled graves and soldiers for months. She was inspired by the stories about the battle of Arnhem and she studied many photographs of those who had died so very young. She said: "It was not my intention to make look-alikes. The soldiers I portrayed stand for all those who bravely gave their lives for our freedom. With the exception of a few, any likeness is coincidental.

When working on her clay tiles, she received a special request from England from Harry (Darkie) Houghton, a veteran who for many years had been her guest during September commemoration ceremonies. Harry asked Fransje to resurrect one of his officers of the 10th Battalion, Lieutenant Leslie Kiaer, known as Pinky who was mortally wounded helping him to hook up a six pounder gun to a jeep at the van Borsselenweg crossroads in Oosterbeek. He considered this to be a fitting tribute to the sacrifice Kiaer had made. Harry has left a lasting legacy to his comrades who did not survive Arnhem.

Our own Arnhem veteran Ralph Sunley, ex 10 Para, who died in December 2008 was a very good friend of Harry Houghton and fought alongside him in Arnhem. They met up in Arnhem on the 60th Anniversary in 2004. They can both be seen in the photo below. Photos of the Resurrection model can be seen on page 4.



Harry in between Ralph and Doreen

Resurrection



Rising from their graves



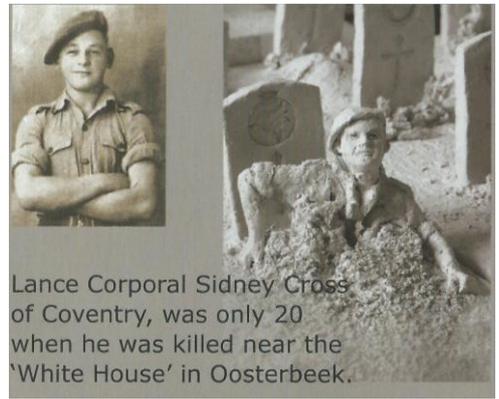
The Gronert twins hugging at the back



Giving a helping hand



The model of Lt Leslie Kiaer



The model of L/Cpl Sidney Cross



Re-united after 70 years