



The Parachute Regimental Association
Aldershot Branch
Newsletter



09/2013	Charity Number 1125551	SEP 2013
Monthly Meeting	<p>The next monthly meeting will take place on Friday 30th August at 2000hrs in Malta Barracks. This meeting is one week early due to the large number of members attending the Airborne March in Arnhem from 5 – 8 September.</p> <p>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 4th October 2013. Will all members ensure that they close the gate after entering and leaving the Barracks.</p>	
Bar Opening Times	<p>The bar will only be open in September on Friday 13th from 2000hrs – 2359hrs, and Friday 27th from 2000hrs – 2359hrs. The bar will be closed on Friday 6th due to the Airborne March trip and Friday 20th due to the bar staff and committee members who are attending the Airborne Commemoration in Arnhem. A free Pool Table, Bar nibbles, Television 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.</p>	
Branch member Vic Carmichael	<p>It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death of Branch member Vic Carmichael. Vic died on Friday 9th August and his funeral will be held on Friday 30th August at 12.15pm in Aldershot Crematorium.</p> <p>Vic would have been 93 on Saturday 17th August. He started as a boy soldier in the Seaforth Highlanders when his father was the RSM. He served in Tobruk during the war. After the war he joined the Royal Air Force. During this time he was transferred to Aldershot when the Parachute Regiment moved into their new home at Maida barracks in October 1946. He was the MT Sgt of the Balloon Unit and although he was not a qualified dispatcher, he dispatched many Airborne Forces soldiers out of the balloon.</p> <p>Due to his close involvement with the Parachute Regiment he was invited to join the Branch by the then Chairman Tom Duffy as an honorary member in the early 70's. After consultation with Claude Milburn who was the National PRA Secretary he was made a full member. He has been a staunch supporter of the Branch and until recently attended all of the functions. He had recently been seen racing around Farnborough on his mobility scooter. May he rest in Peace.</p>	
Branch Member Dennis Priestley	<p>It is with great sadness that I inform you of the death of Branch member Dennis Priestley. Dennis died on Thursday 15th August at the age of 80. There will be no funeral service for Dennis as he has donated his body for medical research. I apologise as I do not have a record of Dennis' service record. May he rest in Peace.</p>	
Aldershot Branch Golf Day	<p>The Aldershot Branch golf day will be held at Pine Ridge Golf Club on Friday 30th August 2013. I hope to put a full report in the October newsletter. Good luck to all those taking part.</p>	
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Hog Roast	<p>The Branch will have held the Hog Roast by the time you receive this newsletter and a full report will appear in the next newsletter along with photos. Over 50 members have applied for tickets and the weather forecast is looking superb so it should be a great day.</p>	

James Burt

I mentioned in the last newsletter about the request we received from Margaret Burt Reynolds about her brother. I have received two emails from Australia informing me of the sad death of James Burt. The emails are as follows:

Email 1

Hi all,

Sad news - I contacted St Vincent's Hospital today to check on James Burt - unfortunately he passed away yesterday, Tuesday 14th August. I spoke to the staff who asked the Social worker to contact me as they only had his nephew and a friend in England on record.

The Social Worker contacted me and she told me there was a very nice lady, Jenny, who had been looking after him and he passed away early yesterday morning. I told Heather, the social worker, we (The Parachute Regimental Association) would like to be involved in his funeral service and she told me there would be no funeral service as he has donated his body to the university.

Heather did say she would ask Jenny to give me a call when she gets time. So if there is anything further I will keep you all in the loop.

Regards

Denise

Email 2

Hi all,

Just to let you know I have had a phone call from Jenny, the lady the social worker was telling me about. Apparently Jenny wasn't a nurse she was a very close friend and also listed as his next of kin in Australia. I spoke to her at length and she said he was a very private man and his wishes were for his body to be donated to the university.

We talked about our Association and she asked if there was any way we could find a chap who James spoke of at the end. He asked her if she could let him know he had passed away. Jenny said she had no idea how to go about this and even if the chap was still alive, living in Australia or the UK. I told her I would try through our (your) connections to see if we could locate him. She was very appreciative and I told her I would let her know if we did manage to track him down.

*So over to you Airborne Family - the chap we are looking for is **Basil Upton** - and I guess he was in the same Para unit which was the 16th Independent Parachute - unfortunately we don't have any dates but I notice that James was born on the 18.8.1933. Sad he was only a couple of days off his 80th birthday, so maybe Basil would be about the same age.*

Any help would be great.

Regards

Denise"

A request to try and contact Basil Upton has been sent to PRA HQ in Colchester but if any member is aware of the contact details of Basil Upton please contact the secretary.

Summer Ball

The Summer Ball was held in Potters International Hotel on Saturday 27th July. Although the numbers were down on previous years, those present ensured that the evening was enjoyed by all. The food cooked by the head chef, Paul Jennings was superb. Paul is a friend of the Branch and his wife Michelle attended the Ball. This is the only function where he can join his wife afterwards at the table. After assessing the age of the members and guests the disco man played the music that we all grew up with, which was greatly appreciated. Another great evening which was enjoyed by all. See page 4 for photos.

Branch Member Bob Sullivan

I have received a wonderful letter from Bob Sullivan. Bob started the letter with thanking the secretary for sending the newsletters and Welfare Member Jack Wigley for his phone calls every month ensuring that he is well and has no problems. He then went on to say that he enjoyed the article in the July newsletter about Operation Tonga. Just to remind you, the Chairman Iain Rodgers along with Brian Mulvey jumped into Sannerville, Normandy which was used during Operation Tonga which began at 22:56 on the night of 5 June 1944. Below is a copy of the handwritten letter that Bob sent to the Branch.

“The mention of Operation Tonga was of great interest to me as I was involved in the destruction of one of the bridges, perhaps I can add a little more to the article. The Sappers were from 3rd Para Sqn R.E. the Engineer element of 3rd Para Brigade, who were tasked with destroying four road and a railway bridge across the river Divers between Cabourg on the coast and Troarn about seven miles inland. The main one was a masonry arched bridge outside Troarn, the others were a road and railway bridge at Bures and road bridges at Robehomme and Varaville, all steel metal construction.

The 3rd Para Battalion were to give over to the Sappers at Troan and Bures and the 1st Canadian Para Battalion at Robehomme and Varaville, which they did. All bridges were successfully destroyed and the Sqn Commander Major Roseveare was awarded an immediate D.S.O.

We then returned to 3 Brigade HQ and fighting as infantry helped to defend the ridge under the command of Brigadier Hill at Les Mesneil with the Canadians, and then when the 9th Para was in danger of being overrun at Breville we were sent there as support.

I well remember seeing the Black Watch of the 51st Highland Division laying in the field with their red hackles blowing in the breeze. Not a very nice sight.

After the battle of Breville we reverted back to the C.R.E.’s command doing the normal things Sappers do. I carried on serving with 3 Sqn through Normandy, Ardennes and up until Operation Varsity, when I again dropped with 3 Brigade but was wounded on the D.Z. by mortar. After spending five months in hospital and two more getting fit I joined 9th Sqn R.E., part of 3 Para Brigade in Palestine. With them I was also involved in the King David Hotel incident before being demobbed in December 1946, after serving four wonderful years with the Para.

I look back on the experience as the highlight of my life and made some wonderful friends. Sadly there are not many of us left.

I would like to thank Bob for sharing this information with us.

SUMMER BALL



Will the people at the back please stand up



Barry Longbottom enjoying a laugh with his guests



Peter Richens' table enjoy the meal



Peter Gayler raises his glass – cheers Peter



The ladies start the dancing



John and Annie Pinkerton strut their stuff



David and Geraldine can still boogie



Pete and Lin show them how it's done