



**The Parachute Regimental Association
Aldershot Branch
Newsletter**

07/2009

Charity Number 1125551

July 2009

Monthly Meeting

Please note that the Monthly Meeting will not take place on the first Friday in July but will be held on **Friday 10th July at 2000hrs in Malta Barracks.**

Bar Opening Times

The bar is open on Friday evenings **8pm till midnight** and Sunday afternoon from **3pm till 8pm**. Pool table 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.

Branch Ties

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

Bar Closed

Please note that due to Airborne Forces weekend, the Army Show and the Southsea Spectacular the bar will be closed on Friday 3rd July and Sunday 5th July.

New Members

There were no new members this month.

Summer Ball

Transport has been arranged by Barry and the pick up point will be the Princes Hall, Aldershot and the pick up times are :-
1845hrs Princes Hall, Aldershot
1915hrs Princes Hall, Aldershot
Payment for the transport is at the discretion of those using it. The drivers are giving up their time to ensure we can enjoy ourselves, please be generous. If you still require tickets please contact Barry. The cost of the tickets are £28 each. Please contact Barry Longbottom to apply for tickets. Please send a stamped addressed envelope to Barry when ordering your tickets. All cheques are to be made payable to **Aldershot Branch PRA.**

Southsea Spectacular

The coach will be leaving the Princess Hall, Aldershot at 1000hrs, please ensure that you leave time to park your car. I have a few seats still available should any member wish to come. The cost will be £12 per person. We will be returning to the Princess Hall leaving Southsea at 1700hrs. Please contact the Secretary if you wish to book a place on the coach.

Project 65

I am pleased to inform you that Iain Rodgers completed the 65 mile run from Tarrant Rushton Airfield to Pegasus Bridge. He arrived in good spirits and without any problems. He was joined on the run by Pete Learmonth (ex Para Log) who decided to take up the challenge at short notice. The full story can be seen on page 3.

Pathfinder Group UK

Gill Rashbrook returned to Holland along with her husband Dave and sister Julie to complete her fifth jump and to be awarded her Dutch Military Parachute Wings. She was joined on the course by Branch members Ian Dorling, and Stuart McLaren. A report can be read on page 4.

Summer BBQ

The Summer BBQ will take place at Malta Barracks on Sunday 30th August. Further details will be posted nearer the date.

Stuart

Project 65

Well Pete and I made it, the run was ok except for some of the signs which were taken down by the local drunks in Southampton and some of the signs were so bad we missed them altogether and we had to back track, so Pete and I clocked up an extra 8-10 clicks or so. "Nobody said it would be easy".

Pete and I stayed together on the second leg and arrived in Portsmouth at 06.30hrs we finished in about 10th and 11th places unfortunately I did not hydrate very well or eat on the second leg so when we stopped my body wanted to shut down, but after sitting down for two minutes or so I was ok. My feet were fine but I had the most severe nappy rash you could imagine, fortunately I got some zinc oxide from the local shop and within an hour or so that began to subside.



Iain on the way



The trip over on the ferry was pretty uneventful, I managed to get a shower and two hours quality sleep. Pete decided to climb into his doss bag on the steel deck and wondered why his hip was hurting when he awoke? The beer flowed nicely on board ship but we took it easy until the final 3 miles were over and we reached the bridge in one piece.

Pete looking good

We arrived at the bridge in glider formation Pete was in glider No 2 and I was in glider No 6 at precisely 00.16hrs which was the exact time that the first glider smashed through the barbed wire defences on D day the 6th June 65 years ago. Members of 3 Para formed the guard over the bridge, the crowd must have been in the thousands and more top brass than you could shake a stick at along with the French dignitaries. I did the last 3 miles in Regimental beret, belt, combats and boots and the project 65 tee shirt. The top brass asked if I was still serving, to which I replied "No, I left in 1974 but just wear well" at least this brought a smile to their faces. After a very good fireworks display on the bridge we retired to our cots and doss bags in the tented area next to the school, about 500 meters from the bridge.

Later that morning we were awoken by some of the locals who had prepared breakfast for us, which consisted of three tables piled high with pastries and coffee, which was a nice touch and very appreciated. That morning we met up with my private support group outside the Café Gondreee with my wife Lis, eldest daughter Ruth her boyfriend, my sister and her husband and my daughter's Auntie. Branch member Barry and Carol Dance who went to Arnhem with us last year read my article in the Surrey Advertiser and came over to support us, I was very, very pleased to see them, it was very good of them to make the effort.

Later on in the day we had the official unveiling of the memorial stones within the grounds of the museum. Then we spent the remainder of the time in the bars. Three Para decided to get out of their heads, but just about stayed on the leash.

The final day, Sunday we started drinking about 10.00hrs. An ex Para who we helped through the event - Jim Clarke who was very grateful for the support we gave him on the run bought Pete and I a bottle of wine each at the ferry terminal in France and we just carried on drinking until we left the ship at Portsmouth, so the return trip was a bit of a blur, my little support group and I got home about midnight. I hope Pete got back in one piece??

I came into work this morning with the staff cheering and applauding, that was a nice touch.



Pete and Iain at Pegasus Bridge

Iain Rodgers

Pathfinder Group UK

As Gill had hurt her arm on her fourth jump in April she was unable to pull down on her steering toggle so to complete her fifth jump and be awarded her Dutch Military Parachute Wings she had to return. Branch members Ian Dorling and Stuart McLaren were unable to attend the April course due to prior engagements but booked on the June course and joined Gill and thirteen others. The course was made up of one American Navy Lt Col, a Polish doctor from University Hospital Krakow, a Dutch girl, a Canadian and the rest were Brits. Sunday was very busy learning how to pack your own parachute, the one you packed was the one you jumped with. You could have heard a pin drop as Ian Marshall (right), the Jump Master explained the format of packing. The Monday was taken up with Parachute Landing Falls (PLF's), aircraft exits and possible problems. We were jumping from two aircraft the first being a Polish Antinov and the second was a Cessna. Although the weather was superb with very warm sunshine the winds were gusting at 15mph at ground level and 30mph at 2,000 feet.



We would normally start jumping on the Tuesday but due to the high winds we were all grounded. Tension started rise on the Wednesday as again the winds were blowing too strong. Thursday morning arrived and yes it was still windy, at this stage we wondered whether we would manage one jump during the week. The winds subsided a bit on Thursday afternoon so it was decided that we would give it a go and twelve of the team were selected to jump from the Cessna in sticks of three. Ian (left) was on the first jump and Gill, Stuart and three others had to wait. The oldest member of the course was Les Philip an Ex Guards Para at 69 years of age. Les was in the last stick of three jumping at number 11. The wind was still gusting and he hit the ground with force, was lifted into the air and again smacked into the ground. Help was soon with him and he was transported to the hanger. A few of the other jumpers had problems including a serving Captain and Sergeant from 13 Air Assault who had recently been posted to Germany and came along for the jumps. Once in the hanger Grzegorz Zajac, the Polish doctor checked Les' leg and informed Roy Mobsby that he should be taken to hospital. Upon return Les had a cast on his leg and told us that he had broken his ankle.

Friday was our last chance and at long last the winds had dropped. Unfortunately some members had to go home due to work commitments so that left twelve people jumping. The first flight was in the Antinov with ten jumping in two sticks of five. Gill (right) was number one in the first stick, Ian was number two and Stuart was number four. The aircraft took off and we were soon at 2,000 feet when Jump Master Ian Marshal said those immortal words **"Stanby"** followed by **"Go"**. All had good descents and landings and Gill had a smile a mile wide as she said "I've got my Dutch Military Wings". From then on the day was frantic as we had to repack our chutes ready for the next jump. The Dutch National Parachute Centre pulled out all of the stops to help us complete the course and ensured that the aircraft were at our disposal. The next three jumps were from the Cessna.



Stuart (left) had just completed his third jump of the day and returned to the hanger to hear his name being called again for the next manifest and within five minutes he was in the air again. The final jump was out of the Antinov. Ian was number four in the first stick and Stuart was number one in the second stick. With all down safely handshakes and hugs were the order of the day followed by a few beers. They were awarded their certificates and Dutch Military Parachute Wings by Captain Simon Woerlee, the Chief Instructor. Denis Melia, Ian Dorling, Dave Rashbrook and Gill Rashbrook will be jumping from a Dakota onto the Ginkel Heath at Arnhem on Saturday morning 19th September. Stuart will be jumping from a Dakota onto the Polish Drop Zone at Driel in the afternoon. This

jump will be most appropriate for Stuart as his mother is Polish. If any member would like to attend the course at Teuge please contact the secretary.