



The Parachute Regimental Association Aldershot Branch *Newsletter*

05/2008

May 2008

Monthly Meeting

The monthly meeting will be held on **Friday 2nd May 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 £9.

Annual Subscriptions

Please note that your annual subscriptions were due after the Annual General Meeting in April. The subscriptions of £15 are being held at the same amount as last year. Please make cheques payable to "**Aldershot Branch PRA**" and send it to the secretary. As in previous years if payment has not been received by 2nd June it will be assumed that you no longer wish to remain a member of the Aldershot Branch and you will cease to receive the newsletters.

Tower of London

The trip to the Tower of London was a memorable evening. We left Aldershot at 5:30pm and arrived at the Tower in good time to be met by our Yeoman Warder, Andy. The members realised that they had to behave themselves, when Andy informed us that he had lived for many years in Brecon and was used to dealing with the Parachute Regiment. It had nothing to do with the fact that they have very big dungeons in the Tower. The weather wasn't kind as it was cold and raining, but this did not deter those present as they listened with interest as Andy gave us an enlightened talk of events that had happened in years gone by. After the tour we headed to the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Officers Mess. The Mess had laid on a fantastic buffet for which we were very grateful. A few drinks followed until the time neared 10 o'clock. We were then taken down to Traitors Gate and observed the ceremony of the keys. This was followed by the Last Post, which was played on the steps next to the courtyard where the scaffolds used to stand. It was back to the Mess for a final drink before we boarded the coach to return home. We would like to thank Branch member Tony Trown for arranging this visit. See page 4 for photos.

Charity Event

A few members at the last monthly meeting asked if the Branch would run a coach for the “**SUPPORT OUR PARAS**” at Old Sarum on Sun 25 May. Unfortunately, only twelve seats have been filled and the cost would be too expensive for this small number.

Southsea Spectacular

The Branch will be running a coach to the Southsea Spectacular on Sunday 13th July. If any member would like to book a seat or seats on the coach please contact the secretary. We can't book the coach until we have the final numbers as the cost varies depending on what size coach we book. Please book early so that we can finalise the coach booking. The cost last year was £10 and we hope to keep the price the same.

London Marathon

We would like to congratulate Branch member Nigel ‘**Jonah**’ Jones who took part in last weeks London Marathon. His superb time of 3 hours 6 minutes ensures that he will receive an automatic entry next year due to the fact that he is now a veteran, at the age of 44 yrs.

Nostalgia

Many years ago Aldershot had the greatest number of military and airborne public houses than any other town in the country. Unfortunately, this has sadly declined until we only have one military pub left. The Trafalgar Inn affectionately known to those who used it regularly as the “**TRAF**” is also an airborne pub and is situated in Short Street, just along from the Halifax Building Society. Gaz Grant, who finished his career in the Parachute Regiment as RSM of 1 Para, took the pub over two years ago. His aim was to keep the pub going as an airborne pub and to this end he has organised a £60,000 refurbishment of the premises. All of the photographs and memorabilia are now back on the walls. The pub has also been raising money for Headley Court Rehabilitation Centre and to date they have raised £2,348. Not to be outdone Gaz's daughter Hollie Grant and her boyfriend Phil Muggeridge are riding from John O'Groats to Land's End on a tandem bicycle to raise money for the children's charity “**The Rainbow Trust**”. So far they have raised £3,227 of the expected £5,000 they hope to raise. If any member would like to donate to help them reach their total please contact the secretary.

Eagle Strike

The Branch newsletter by various means is sent around the world and one of the locations is our Airborne Brotherhood in South Africa. I have received a request from Manie Grove who is the publisher of a book by Colonel Jan Breytenbach who is South Africa's most highly decorated soldier, a real soldiers soldier. He is a living legend in South Africa, a tough but thinking soldier with an independent turn of mind. He was the founding commander of 1 Reconnaissance Commando (The Recce's)- the forerunner of the present Special Forces Regiments (the equivalent of the British SAS,) the founder of the famous 32 Battalion and 44 Parachute Brigade. He also formed the original Pathfinder Company, and was OC of the SA Army's Guerrilla School until his retirement.

The book is a complete work on the Airborne assault on Cassinga on 04 May 1978, lavishly illustrated with colour photographs, maps, pax lists right down to the original hand written orders of Col Breytenbach done on fullscap at De Brug on 28 April 1978.

This airborne operation was one the biggest airborne ops since WW2. Certainly the biggest in Africa, with 357 South African paratroopers jumping into a SWAPO base, inflicting enormous casualties on the enemy with very little loss of life to own forces.

There is not a more comprehensive account of the Cassinga assault- it also deals extensively with the thesis of Maj Gen McGill Alexander's, as well as other issues, a true work of current military airborne history.

If anyone is interested in obtaining a copy, please contact me via e-mail and I will forward further details.

The book will be released on 04 May 2008, the 30th anniversary of Cassinga (Ops Reindeer).

There are two versions of the book, ie, 250 leather bound, numbered and signed copies @ R 2 500,00 ea, and 3 500 "normal" copies @ R 450,00 ea.

If any member would like to purchase a copy of the book please contact the secretary.

Stuart

TOWER OF LONDON



THE MEMBERS AT THE TRAITORS GATE



ANDY OUR YEOMAN WARDER TELLS SOME MORE GRUESOME TALES



THE MEMBERS ON THE STEPS LEADING TO THE COURTYARD THAT HELD THE GALLOWES



THE SUPERB BUFFETT PROVIDED BY THE OFFICERS MESS



THE MEMBERS ENJOYING THE GOOD FOOD AND ATMOSPHERE



DENIS AND VALDA HAVING A CHAT PRIOR TO THE CEREMONY OF THE KEYS



BERNIE FISHER, I'M SURPRISED THEY DIDN'T LOCK YOU UP WEARING THAT HAT