



From the Secretary – Maj (Retd) PA Raison



# THE PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Patron: His Majesty King Charles III KG, KT, PC, GCB, AK, QSO, ADC

## NEWSLETTER March 2023

Please see below the monthly news from RHQ PARA. If you have anything you would like to promote in this, please send submissions by the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month to the Secretary at [secretary@prahq.com](mailto:secretary@prahq.com)

### Topics:

- A. Happy Birthday Raymond Whitwell RASC
- B. Welfare Process
- C. Regimental Commemoration Service – NMA
- D. Regimental Commemoration Dinner Weekend - 07-09 July 2023
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### A. Happy Birthday Raymond Whitwell RASC

On the 17<sup>th</sup> March 2023 Arnhem veteran Raymond Whitwell will be 104 years old. Raymond was a member of the RASC. Here are a few details from his ParaData page:

*Dvr. Whitwell flew from RAF Fairford on Monday, 18 September 1944, as part of the Second Lift for Operation 'Market-Garden'. The Horsa glider, chalk number 941, had a Jeep and trailer loaded with ammunition. "I flew on the Second Lift on Monday, as far as I can recall from Fairford at about 2 pm. We had a Jeep and trailer on board the Horsa. I don't know what the trailer was loaded with.*

*"There were several supply drops, but each time all the supplies were dropped in German held territory. After each supply drop, we were told to go by Jeep and recover some of the supplies, but we never got any, but it was very exciting! The role of the RASC was to supply the Division with all it needed, but with no supplies we could not do that. We were then used as infantry soldiers and given a position on the Oosterbeek perimeter to defend and stop the enemy when they attacked."*

*"We fought our own little battle in the woods for nine days, defending the perimeter. We had no food in that time, but while we were drawing water from a well a sniper shot at us and his bullets made holes in the bucket. After that, getting water took a long time, and was very dangerous, we could have been shot dead at any moment".*

You can read his full story here: <https://www.paradata.org.uk/people/raymond-whitwell>

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Raymond was delighted to be able to get a ride in a glider again on a visit back to Arnhem with The Taxi Charity for Military Veterans at the ripe age of 101.



Happy Birthday Raymond

## **B. Welfare Process**

It is very important that Branches use the regimental welfare Team for any cases that are reported to them. We have had several cases recently that have escalated into quite complex cases and members of the Branch have been unnecessarily burdened by the work this has produced. The Welfare Team are trained to deal with these cases and will be able to identify the most suitable course of action for an individual in need.

For serving personnel, please contact your Unit Welfare Officer (UWO) in the first instance for any welfare support.

For veterans, please contact the Support our Paras (the official charity of The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces) Welfare Team for any queries.

Laura McPhilemy, Head of Welfare. Email: [HoW@supportourparas.org](mailto:HoW@supportourparas.org) Tel: 07702 190685 or

Lisa Stapleton, Welfare Manager. Email: [wm@supportourparas.org](mailto:wm@supportourparas.org) Tel: 07340 347136

We are based within RHQ PARA in Merville Barracks, Colchester.

Support our Paras can assist any past or present member of The Parachute Regiment or wider Airborne Forces and their dependants.

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If you require financial assistance please contact either SSAFA 0800 260 6767 or use this link to find your nearest Branch: <https://www.ssafa.org.uk/get-help/find-local-branch> or the RBL 0808 802 8080 [info@britishlegion.org.uk](mailto:info@britishlegion.org.uk) in the first instance. You will be allocated a caseworker who will complete a Form A request for assistance with you. This will then be sent to the Support our Paras Welfare Team for consideration. Successful grants are issued swiftly back to the caseworker for onward payment. Urgent grants can be made on the day if required. This process is both confidential and transparent, providing an audit trail.

### **C. Regimental Commemoration Service – NMA**

The Regimental Commemoration Service will take place at 1215hrs at The National Memorial Arboretum on Saturday July 8 2023. Please note that the venue has changed its opening times and you will not be able to enter the venue until 1000hrs.

#### **Outline**

The day will start with the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the PRA. This will start at 1030hrs and is open to all PRA members only. This will take place in Oak 3, Aspect building.

An outline of events is as follows:

0945hrs	Reception Open
1000hrs	Venue Opens
1030hrs	PRA AGM (One Hour)
1145hrs	Iraq Memorial Wreath Laying (20 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary)
1215hrs	Service Starts
1315hrs	PRA Parade
1345hrs	PRA Photograph
1400hrs	Red Devils Display
1430hrs	Reception Starts

#### **Tickets**

Tickets for the reception lunch are £9 per person and we are restricted to 300 people in the Aspect building where it will be held. Lunch will be in the form of a hot buffet.

Please make cheques payable to PRA and send to PRA Admin, RHQ PARA, Merville Barracks, Colchester, Essex, CO2 7UT. Alternatively electronic transfer payments should be made to: PRA. Sort Code 16-19-26 A/C No 19954846 (**PLEASE REMEMBER TO INCLUDE YOUR SURNAME AND NMA as the payment reference**) If you require assistance, please email Julia on: [admin@prahq.com](mailto:admin@prahq.com) or call 01206 817077.

Tickets will be available for collection at the reception desk when booking in. Tickets for the buffet will be sold on a first come, first served basis with the cut-off date Thu 29 June 2023. Only ticket holders will have entry into the Aspect building after the service using their wristbands. Those not wishing to purchase tickets, can use the NMA catering facilities in the main building or bring packed lunches.

#### **Dress**

PRA member's guests lounge suit or blazers beret and medals. Ladies as appropriate. Flat comfortable shoes are recommended due to the ground.

#### **Standards**

Standard Bearers to assemble to the rear of the Aspect building after the AGM.

#### **Parking**

Parking should now be booked in advance, by going to this link: [NMA Parking](#). Go to book tickets/Plan your visit, insert the date and pay online. Alternatively, you can book your parking by calling **01283 245100**. The cost to park all day is £4 per car/minibus (£6 if you pay on the day at reception. Blue badge holders will be able to use disabled spaces in the main car park. None badge holders can also use the main car with plenty of parking spaces, when full the overspill car park will be available to use.

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Coaches/Mini Buses can drop off at the designated points by the main entrance and the driver will be directed to parking areas.

#### **D. Regimental Commemoration Dinner Weekend - 07-09 July 2023**

I'm pleased to report that the Regimental Commemoration dinner weekend will be continuing in 2023 and will once again take place at the Royal Court Hotel Coventry (RCH). Roy Hatch has very kindly agreed to take this on after the retirement of John Carey. I would personally like to thank John for his hard work and support for many years for this and many other events.

Roy will be the main point of contact on behalf of RHQ Para and 23/144 PFAOCA. We look forward to seeing you all in July and of course those who will be joining us for the first time. If you are traveling any distance to attend the Commemoration at the NMA Alrewas, this is the ideal opportunity to make a weekend of the event and share time with old comrades from your past service time. Full details are available in the attached documents.

**Please note that the daytime activities and commemoration will be controlled by RHQ Para (See Item F)**

#### **E. Affiliation Fees 2023**

Thank you to all those that have forwarded their affiliation fees to Julia for 2023. Branches that may be having some difficulty raising this sum are requested to make representation to their Regional Secretary. The annual Affiliation Fee remains at £50. This is despite the rising costs of many aspects of the service.

Payment can be made by cheque payable to: The Parachute Regimental Association or by BACS transfer to: Sort Code 16-19- 26, Acct No 19954846. Please ensure you use your Branch name as a payment reference so that we can track payments.

#### **Affiliation - A Reminder of the Benefits**

1. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) permission to use the Regimental Logo on Branch Standards and letterheads.
2. Full Public Liability Insurance and Branch Standard Insurance (new certificate issued in Apr 22).
3. Access to Regimental support for organised functions, i.e. The Band, RDFFT, Pony Mascot, associated Regimental assets (subject to availability).
4. Support from the National Executive Committee and RHQ PRA on constitutional and branch management and membership matters.
5. The ability to fundraise in support of the Branch, its members and branch activities.
6. Receive Monthly Branch Newsletters and other correspondence.

It is requested that all Affiliation Fees are paid NLT 31 March 2023.

#### **F. Applying for Military Records**

Please note that RHQ PARA does not have the capability to check the eligibility of any Airborne Veteran unless they have previously joined the Association. As with applications to join the Association, it is up to the applicant to provide evidence of their Military Service. Anyone who is not in possession of their Military Records can apply to the Army Personnel Centre in Glasgow at:

Army Personnel Centre  
Disclosures 2  
Mail point 535  
Kentigern House  
65 Brown Street  
Glasgow  
G2 8EX

[apc-sp-disclosures2@mod.uk](mailto:apc-sp-disclosures2@mod.uk)

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or apply online at: <https://www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-service-records>

Evidence of Military Service must include the details and date of your Parachute qualification.

**Please note that this can be a very slow process as the records are hard (paper) copies and are stored off site.**

#### **G. The Victims and Survivors Service**

We want to highlight the existence of 'The Victims and Survivors Service' (VSS) which is managed on behalf of the Northern Ireland Office. The Northern Ireland Office is a department of His Majesty's Government responsible for Northern Ireland affairs.

The scheme disburses a grant to those **bereaved of a parent, spouse/partner, and/or a child where** that the bereavement is related to Op BANNER (1969 to 2007) during **the Troubles**. The scheme equally applies to all citizens who lost a parent, spouse/partner or child during the Troubles.

Individuals **bereaved of a parent, spouse/partner, and/or child** will receive a payment of £500. Payments cannot be made retrospectively, but the process is straight forward with an application form attached to this newsletter. The electronic version of the form is here: [Application Form](#)

Please pass this onto anyone you know who that lost a spouse or partner, parent or child in the Troubles. The bereavement grant funds are in place and once agreed it continues year on year. Regimental Secretary ([adam.jowett100@mod.gov.uk](mailto:adam.jowett100@mod.gov.uk)) has written to our next of kin that we are in touch with and is linked in with the VSS team in Northern Ireland to help with any questions regarding the process.

#### **H. NI Legacy Update - January 2023**

The following key events are due in the first quarter of 2023:

**The NI Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill.** The bill has reached the committee stage in the House of Lords which will take place on 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January. It will then return to the House of Commons for a final round of scrutiny. Consultation on concessionary amendments is likely. The bill is currently due to receive Royal Assent in May 2023.

**David Holden (GUARDS).** David Holden was found guilty on the charge of gross negligence manslaughter of Aidan McAnespie on 25 November 2022. His sentence hearing will take place on Friday 27 January 23. David is being fully supported by the Army and his Regiment.

**Soldier F (PARA).** The committal hearing adjourned earlier this year was reopened on Monday 16 Jan 23 in Londonderry and will take evidence until 3 Feb 23. A committal hearing is held in a magistrate's court where a magistrate considers the evidence the prosecution intends to use and decides if there is enough to take the matter to a trial. If the Judge rules that the case proceeds beyond the committal hearing stage it will be sent to the Crown Court, a date for the trial will be set at that point.

**Healey Inquest (PARA)** - An inquest into the death of a 14-year-old boy shot on the 19 August 1971 by 1 PARA on Lenadoon Ave, West Belfast is currently in session. The inquest re-opened on 6 Jan 23 for civilian witnesses to give statements. Currently a small number of 1 PARA have been contacted and asked to provide statements. All those involved have MoD funded legal support. The Regiment is providing pastoral and welfare support.

#### **Assistance.**

The Regiment remains aware that involvement in any legacy process, no matter how long ago, is difficult and, in some cases, extremely stressful. If we can be of any assistance to you or your family, please don't hesitate to get in touch with the RHQ Legacy Officer at [paul.rodgers694@mod.gov.uk](mailto:paul.rodgers694@mod.gov.uk). or by phone 07967492254, or with our Welfare Officer, Laura McPhilemy who can be contacted at [how@supportourparas.org](mailto:how@supportourparas.org) or on 07702190685. Please don't hesitate to get in touch.

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## **I. Regimental Charity Donations**

The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Charity (Support Our Paras) have a number of fundraising events planned. There have been a number of great fundraising events organised by individuals and groups to support our charity, which is outstanding. Your continued support to the Regimental Charities is vital to the direct support of Airborne Veterans and their families, now and in the future.

Anyone looking to raise money for Support Our Paras should get in touch as soon as possible to see how the team can help you. Check out the website at: <https://supportourparas.org/>

## **J. Veterans Railcard**

The new veterans Railcard is available and is valid from 5 November 2020. To apply online click [HERE](#):

To apply:

### **Online**

You can save yourself time by buying your Veterans Railcard online. The only things you'll need are:

- Evidence of your eligibility as a veteran
- A good quality digital passport-style photo ready to upload
- A debit or credit card

### **What happens next?**

**Digital Railcard:** if you opt for a digital Railcard, they will send you a download code once your application has been approved (which can take up to 5 working days) and once you download the Railcard app and upload the card onto your phone, you can start using it straight away.

**Physical Railcard:** they aim to dispatch your Railcard within one working day of it being approved (which can take up to 5 working days), but it's probably best to allow up to five working days for your Railcard to arrive. It'll be sent out free of charge by First Class post, but if you prefer, you have the option to pay for Special Delivery. You'll need to have your Railcard with you to be able to get a discount on your rail ticket, so be sure to leave enough time before your journey for the Railcard to reach you.

### **Cost**

1 Year - £30

3 Year - £70

### **By Post**

Alternatively, you will be able to download and complete the [application form](#) and you can then post it with a copy of your evidence of eligibility, passport style photo of yourself and your named companion (if applicable).

Please make cheques and postal orders payable to 'ATOC Ltd Railcard'

Allow 15 working days for your Railcard to be delivered.

## **K. Blue Light Card**

Blue Light are offering a discount service for the emergency services, which includes HM Armed Forces Veterans, NHS and the social care sector, providing members with thousands of amazing discounts online and on the high street.

For just £4.99, members of the Blue Light community can register for 2-years access to more than 15,000 discounts from large national retailers to local businesses across categories such as holidays, cars, days out, fashion, gifts, insurance, phones, and many more.

This includes Asda, who are currently giving card holders 10% discount on everything (Clothing, food etc) so there's a good chance for people to be able to save some money, especially with Christmas coming up. The link for the website to register is: [www.bluelightcard.co.uk](http://www.bluelightcard.co.uk)

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## L. Diary Dates

Event information is available on the website so please take a look:

<https://theparachuteregimentalassociation.com/events/>

If you have any dates for 2023, please let me know at the earliest opportunity so that they can be added to the diary. Information for events can be sent to be included on the website forecast of events. Full details of events such as date, time, outline of event, cost etc. must be provided and updated accordingly.

Month	Date	Event/POC Details	Location
Mar	10-12	2 Para Reunion Al Jones: <a href="mailto:allen.jones1@ntlworld.com">allen.jones1@ntlworld.com</a> or 07970415951	Blackpool
	16-19	1 Para Reunion Joe Bailey: <a href="mailto:joepara62@gmail.com">joepara62@gmail.com</a> or 07506069663	Blackpool
	24-26	3 Para Reunion Ray Larkin: <a href="mailto:raylarkin@virginmedia.com">raylarkin@virginmedia.com</a>	Blackpool
Apr	29	4 Para Reunion Les Ratcliffe: 07711 853103	Leeds
May	6	Coronation of King Charles III	London
	13	Hardwick Hall	Chesterfield, S44 5QJ
	14	Friends of the Tenth	Borough on the Hill, Leicester
Jun	3-8	Normandy 79	Normandy, France
Jul	8	Regimental Commemoration Day	National Memorial Arboretum
	8	Regimental Commemoration Dinner	Royal Court Hotel
	15	ABF North - Eden Camp	Malton, YO17 6RT
Sep	9	Friends of the Tenth 'Sundown Service'	Borough on the Hill, Leicester
	10	Leicester PRA Arnhem Service and Parade	Somerby, Leicester
	15-17	Arnhem 79	Arnhem, Netherlands
Nov	12	Remembrance Day	Whitehall, London

Details of all these events and others are available on the Web Page at  
[www.theparachuteregimentalassociation.com](http://www.theparachuteregimentalassociation.com)

*Paul Raison*

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