



From the Secretary – Maj (Retd) PA Raison



# THE PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

Patron: HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS THE PRINCE OF WALES, KG, KT, PC, GCB, AK, QSO, ADC

## NEWSLETTER February 2021

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. Important Notice
- B. Veteran Support to Funerals
- C. Support to Vulnerable Members
- D. Affiliation Fees 2021
- E. Airborne Valentine's Day
- F. Winter Fuel Payment
- G. Covid-19 Fraud and Scams
- H. Royal Hospital Chelsea Veteran Receive Vaccine
- I. Pegasus Journal Subscriptions
- J. Welfare Process
- K. Regimental Charity Donation
- L. A Virtual Ball in memory of Pte Conrad Lewis and for Support our PARAs
- M. 4 Para Commanding Officers and Regimental Sergeant Majors
- N. Northern Ireland Historical Enquiries Update

### Events

- O. Diary Dates

### A. Important Notice

When notifying this office of the death of a Veteran, there are a number of questions that need to be asked. This provides the welfare team, as well as other departments with vital information to allow them to support the family during their time of need.

**Rude and abusive language either verbally or in emails to members of my staff will not be tolerated.**

The information we require is as follows:

Full Name  
Service Number  
Unit  
Date of Death  
COVID Related Yes/No

Thank you for your support.

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## **B. Veteran Support to Funerals**

During this difficult period, we have lost a number of veterans, many of whom are well known and respected members of our Association. In addition to this we have also been made aware of a large number of veterans who were not actively involved in the Association or were not even members.

In all cases and despite the restrictions in place, the Association has provided representation in some form at all the funerals that we have been notified of. I cannot express how grateful the families are of this support and we have received countless letters and emails, thanking the members for their support at such difficult times.

Often with very little notice the Branch Secretaries have mustered a small number of members and represented the Regimental Association. I would personally like to thank everyone who has helped support such events. We will continue to do what we can and give any Airborne Veteran the send-off that they deserve.

**I would like to add that in all such cases the safety and health of our members is paramount and no one should attend if the rules do not allow it or they are concerned about their own safety.**

## **C. Support to Vulnerable Members**

As we come out of Lockdown 2 and the country goes through a series of changes in regards to levels of protection in certain areas, it is essential that the help and assistance provided to vulnerable members of the Association by Branches continues. So far this support has been outstanding and thank you to all that have helped in any way.

Please remember that the Welfare team are here to help so please do not hesitate to get in touch with them if required on:

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

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

Please follow the rules in your local area and apply caution when outside your house or visiting public places. If you are in any doubt, please stay at home.

All Branches are asked to provide regular contact with those that do not engage in social media, as a short phone call could mean so much.

## **D. Affiliation Fees 2021**

Thank you to all those that have forwarded their affiliation fees to Julia for 2021. 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 cost of replacing Branch Standards. A full review was completed last year and we now have substantially better cover than in previous years.

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 21).
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.

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6. Receive Monthly Branch Newsletters and other correspondence.

It is requested that all Affiliation Fees are paid NLT 31 March 2021.

**E. Airborne Valentine's Day**

"Supporting our Paras in all the right places."

Looking for a unique Valentine's Day gift for that special Airborne soldier in your life? Then look no further!

We've teamed up with Oddballs to create some airborne undies with our unique SUPPORT OUR PARAS design Boxers for him, and bralette and briefs for her - everyone wins! Get yours now by visiting <https://www.airborneshop.com/>

Got yours yet?



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## **F. Winter Fuel Payment**

Winter Fuel Payment is an annual tax-free payment to help with heating costs. Most payments are made between November and December and should have been received by 13<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

In the financial year April 2020 to March 2021 the payment is:

- £200 if you're under 80
- £300 if you're over 80.

However, you'll usually get less if you live with other people who also qualify or if you live in a care home or nursing home and don't get one of the following benefits:

- Pension Credit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support.
- If you live in a care home **or nursing home and receive any of these benefits then you're not entitled to any Winter Fuel Payment.**

You may be eligible for Winter Fuel Payment if you meet all the following criteria:

- you were born on or before 5 October 1954 (to be eligible for the financial year April 2020 to March 2021 – the eligibility birth date changes every financial year).
- you lived in the UK throughout the qualifying week (for the financial year 2020–2021, this is 21–28 September 2020)

You usually get a Winter Fuel Payment automatically if you receive the State Pension or another benefit, such as Pension Credit (but not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Support or Universal Credit).

If you qualify, but don't get paid automatically, you'll need to make a claim.

## **How can I claim Winter Fuel Payment?**

If this is the first year you can claim, or if you've never claimed before, call the Winter Fuel Payment helpline on 0800 731 0160. You'll need to know your National Insurance number and your bank or building society details.

## **Useful Numbers**

The Silver Line is the only free confidential helpline providing information, friendship and advice to older people, open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

Need help? Call us ANYTIME on: 0800 4 70 80 90

## **G. Covid-19 Fraud and Scams**

Another Lockdown has once again brought with it a number of scams. It is important that you remain vigilant and guard against criminals using the publicity around coronavirus as a chance to target you with fraudulent emails, phone calls, texts messages or social media posts.

**It's important not to let the criminals rush or panic you into making a decision that you later come to regret.**

With fake news articles on the internet and in the press promoting remedies, cures and false advice around coronavirus, it's also important to only share articles from trustworthy sources. If you are in any doubt, then visit [www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus) or [www.who.int/](http://www.who.int/) for updates and information.

Criminals are experts at impersonating people, organisations and the police. They spend hours researching you for their scams, hoping you'll let your guard down for just a moment. Stop and think: it could protect you and your money.

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## General Advice

### Emails and text messages

If you receive an email, text or WhatsApp message purporting to be from the government, HMRC, the World Health Organisation (WHO) or a coronavirus-related charity, then **take a moment to think** before you part with your money or information.

**Never click on links or download attachments** as criminals may infect your devices with malware or ask you to enter your personal or financial information into fake websites. In some cases, this can lead to your identity being stolen.

- Sam received an email from a government department, letting him know that he could claim financial help if he clicked on a link. When Sam clicked the link, he was directed to a fake website designed to look like that of the genuine organisation but which was actually collecting his personal and financial information. Sam failed to receive a payment and was also unaware that his computer was infected with malware as a result of clicking on the link.

### Phone calls

If you receive a call offering you protective face masks, hand sanitiser, testing kits or medicine, be aware that they may not always be genuine. If you do receive a call, don't be afraid to **refuse, reject or ignore** their request. Only criminals will try to rush or panic you.

- Leon thought he was buying face masks and hand sanitisers that were sold out everywhere else. However, after completing his purchase, he failed to receive his order and his money was now in the hands of a criminal.

### Social media posts

With world markets currently under immense pressure, the chance to move your money to new investments with unusually high returns may sound like too good an opportunity to miss. Proceed with caution and make sure you check the [Financial Conduct Authority's register for regulated firms](#), individuals and bodies. It could be fraud or a scam if you're being pressurised to act quickly. **If it sounds too good to be true it probably is.**

- Steve saw an advertisement from a stockbroking firm which claimed that due to coronavirus investments weren't making the profits that they could be. It said that moving his investment to this firm would guarantee high returns with little to no risk. Steve moved his investment and only realised he had been scammed when he was unable to contact the company on their normal number or via email in order to get his money back.

### A knock on the door

You should always exercise caution when accepting help from an individual or allowing them access to your home in any capacity. You should only accept assistance or take visits from people well-known to you, or who you know have been sent by a government body or reputable organisation. If you are in any doubt about someone's identity, you should take steps to verify it – by directly contacting the organisation they claim to be from using a number you know to be genuine.

There are no cures or vaccines for Covid-19 at this time and medical or health professionals will not come to your home unannounced and without prior notification.

If anyone attempts to force or coerce you into handing over funds – in person or otherwise – always contact the police.

- Linda was particularly worried about contracting the virus as she was vulnerable and lived alone. She received a knock on her door from someone claiming to be a health and safety worker advising that they needed to enter her home to complete an assessment and that she needed to pay for this upfront. Linda handed over the money, but no assessment was undertaken.

**If you believe you've fallen for a scam, contact your bank immediately on a number you know to be correct, such as the one listed on a statement, their website or on the back of your debit or credit card.**

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## H. Royal Hospital Chelsea Veteran Receive Vaccine

Some 300 veterans living at the Royal Hospital Chelsea were offered the Pfizer jab on 23rd December. Aldershot Branch member, Bob Sullivan, a 98-year-old D-day veteran, said being vaccinated had put "a real spring in our step as we head into our locked down Christmas".

The average age of those living at the hospital is 82, which means that many are in the highest priority group to receive the vaccine. The vaccinations were carried out by Pippa Nightingale, chief nurse at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust. She described giving the vaccine to the Chelsea Pensioners as "a real honour". Ms Nightingale said: "They've fought to protect us and now we can return the favour and help protect them from coronavirus".



Bob said the pandemic had "changed life as we know it", but "getting vaccinated against coronavirus today is the best early Christmas gift we could hope for". Bob is happy and said he feels "lucky" to be one of the first to be vaccinated, and is looking forward to hugging his five children.

Normally the pensioners are also invited to all sorts of functions, but that has stopped, and I've missed that. But more than that, I miss my children. If I hadn't become a Chelsea Pensioner, I think I would have been really isolated, and I know a lot of people are experiencing that. I do feel very fortunate to be at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. I only became a Chelsea Pensioner in my 90s, and I am being well looked after in the midst of all this.

What I'm looking forward to most is being able to see my family, to have visitors, and maybe to get back to Windsor. I'm not at all nervous about the vaccine. I had so many inoculations and jabs when I first joined the army, for D-Day we had vaccines, so the needle doesn't worry me at all. I'm just pleased that I was one of the lucky ones to be vaccinated.

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All the members of the Aldershot Branch are delighted to see Bob looking so well and wish him and all our Airborne 'In Pensioners' the very best. Thanks to Stuart McLaren for the article.

### I. Pegasus Journal Subscriptions

The first Pegasus Journal Annual Yearbook for 2020 will be out shortly. If you wish to subscribe to the Journal, YOU MUST ACT NOW. The cost is £10 per year.

- Some single copies will be available to buy from The Airborne Shop [www.airborneshop.com](http://www.airborneshop.com) for £10 + extra P&P.

If you have not registered to receive the Pegasus Annual Yearbook, please contact Lisa Waller at [pjm@supportourparas.org](mailto:pjm@supportourparas.org) or call 07534 881066.

If you received a refund you have **six months** from the date of the cheque to bank the refund. If you prefer to **donate the refund to Support our Paras** for its vital welfare work, this will be much appreciated. Simply destroy the cheque and let me know at [pjm@supportourparas.org](mailto:pjm@supportourparas.org)..

### J. Welfare Process

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) Welfare Team for any queries.

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

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Lisa Stapleton, Welfare Cell 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 plus their families if eligible.

If you require financial assistance please contact either SSAFA 0800 731 4880 [info@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:info@ssafa.org.uk) 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.

During the current climate of COVID-19 the Welfare Team are working remotely and continue to offer assistance.

In January the PRAFC made 22 grants of £19,187.90. Grants that have been to provide assistance with mental health therapy, mobility aids including a riser/recliner bed and a specialist hoist, funeral support, assistance with household goods and hardship.

#### **K. Regimental Charity Donations**

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

#### **L. A Virtual Ball in memory of Pte Conrad Lewis and for Support our PARAs**

Please join our good friend Tony Lewis and charity 353 for a very special night. A Virtual Ball for his Para son Conrad, KIA Afghanistan deeply missed for 10 years but never forgotten.

After a year like no other, let's stand together like never before to mark a decade since Private Conrad Lewis of the Parachute Regiment made the ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan. Join 353 for a night of celebration, laughter, fun, fundraising and remembrance.

This year they will be hosting a Virtual Ball with a difference where they kick things off in the kitchen, make your sofa the stage and turn your dining room into the dance floor.

The restrictions aren't limitations as they can host an unlimited number of people in this Virtual Ball - so please tell all your family, friends and colleagues. (And, for the first time ever, pets can attend too!) 353 will be bringing everyone together in the best possible way, for the best possible cause.

The evening will be run from a professional studio with live music, a compere and surprises throughout the night. So let's stand together after a year of being kept apart, celebrate lives lived and raise funds to support those who need it most. Let's make this the biggest 353 Ball ever.

The 353 Virtual Ball for Conrad Lewis will take place on Sat 6 Feb 21 1930- 2230hrs  
Tickets are just £10. Click on the link to register: [353 Virtual Ball](#)

#### **M. 4 Para Commanding Officers and Regimental Sergeant Majors**

**CAN YOU HELP?** WO1 (RSM) Scotty Evans the current RSM of 4 PARA is looking for serving and former members to assist with several projects he is working on. Scotty was a 'Tom' in 4 PARA at Rifle Street, Oldham 1996 - 1999.

He would like you to look through old photos from your days in 4 PARA to see if anyone has any photos of previous CO's and RSM's from when the Bn was reformed in 1967, through the 70's,80's and 90's. This will enable a framed pictorial history of COs and RSMs, which will be displayed in Bn HQ.

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Photos can be sent direct to him by email to: [Scott.Evans188@mod.gov.uk](mailto:Scott.Evans188@mod.gov.uk)

Your support would be greatly appreciated

## **N. Northern Ireland Historical Enquiries Update**

### **NI Courts.**

The Northern Ireland court system has been further restricted by the imposition of the most recent 'lockdown' over the New Year period. Further delays to court proceedings are inevitable as all agencies involved return to 'working from home' limiting case preparation and delaying the start of legal proceedings. Only one Inquest has been completed since March 2020 and this was conducted at distance using Sight Link. This video platform enabled veterans to give their evidence securely on-line from their homes or an agreed safe location. It is planned to use this more widely until such time as restrictions are lifted, but lack of resources remains a limiting factor. Coroners are reflecting the reality of the situation with a recently delayed inquest being moved into the autumn when there is a greater likelihood of restrictions easing. It is possible that more cases will be delayed until later in the year.

### **Inquests.**

Ballymurphy Inquest (PARA, QUEENS). This legacy inquest was completed in March 20 and adjourned pending the handing down of the Coroner's findings. These are still pending with no time scale for a hearing yet given.

### **Criminal Cases**

Soldiers A&C (PARA). The Judge has adjourned the trial due to commence in January 2021. A revised timetable will now see the trial listed to start on 26 April 2021, however this has not yet been confirmed. A review will take place 12 Feb 21

### **Bloody Sunday (PARA).**

Soldier F is the only soldier to be charged with relation to events on 'Bloody Sunday'. He has been charged with 2 counts of murder and 5 counts of attempted murder. A date for his committal hearing has yet to be set. The PPS is still considering whether to bring charges of attempting to pervert the course of justice against veterans involved in the Saville Inquiry. A decision is pending. Madden and Finucane, solicitors representing some of the NOK, have submitted a Judicial Review against the decision not to prosecute against the five cyphered veterans involved in their clients' cases. This is to be expected and is their legal right.

### **Contact details**

If you have been affected by the current NI investigations or you know someone who is, please contact Lt Col (Retd) Paul Rodgers NI Legacy Officer, currently working from home, and can be contacted on Skype 03001657109, Mobile 07967492254 or email: [paul.rodgers694@mod.gov.uk](mailto:paul.rodgers694@mod.gov.uk)



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## Events

### O. Diary Dates

Event information for 2021 is available on the website so please take a look:

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

If you have any dates for 2021 please let me know at the earliest opportunity so that they can be added to the diary. Full details of events should be sent when available and updated accordingly.

26 June 21 Armed Forces Day

<https://www.armedforcesday.org.uk/blog/>

**Details of all these events and others are available on the Web Page at**

[www.theparachuteregimentalassociation.com](http://www.theparachuteregimentalassociation.com)

*Paul Raison*

### Veterans Railcard

The new veterans Railcard is now 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 - £21 until March 21, £30 from April 21

3 Year - £61 until March 21, £70 from April 21

#### By Post

Alternatively, you will be able to download and complete the [application form](#) (copy provided with this newsletter) 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) and payment to:

National Railcards  
PO Box 10776  
Ashby-de-la-Zouch  
LE65 9FA

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

Allow 15 working days\* for your Railcard to be delivered.

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