



From the Secretary – Maj (Retd) PA Raison

Ad Unum Omnes

THE PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION

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

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THE 100th MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL ASSOCIATION FRIDAY 4 OCTOBER 2024

RECORD OF DECISIONS

Present	Lt. Colonel L Cradden MBE Mr JJ Wilson Maj (Retd) P Raison Mrs E Smith Mr P Bryant Mr D Smart Mr D Singletary Mr T Wood Mr M Farrington Mr C Jackson	Chairman Vice Chairman and Northeast Region National Secretary Assistant to the FD Anglia Region Southeast Region Wales Region London Region Northwest Region Yorkshire Region
Apologies	Mr B Black Mr A Ellis Mr V Thorn Mr C Brooksbank	Scotland & N I Region Southwest Region South Region Midlands Region

Item 1 - Chairman's update & Regimental news.

1. The PRA Secretary welcomed everyone, and introductions were made around the table welcoming Chris Jackson as the new Secretary for the Yorkshire Region.
 - a. The Chairman delivered the Regimental Update. The Chairman first covered the handover of Lt Gen Andy Harrison to Maj Gen Ollie Kingsbury who will be operating from Poland in his new role. He then outlined the next stage of the strategic defence review and how the changes may affect us as a

regiment and Airborne Forces in general. He then briefed on manning within RHQ Para and units, recruitment and Operations the Battalions will be undertaking. The key points were:

- a. Retention of serving soldiers. Important and key to manning.
- b. Training opportunities for units in foreign countries including Japan and Falklands.
- c. Parachuting and the relationship with the RAF.
- d. BG deployments and overseas opportunities.
- e. 4 Para's excellent performance on Op TOSCA (UN Cyprus).

The Secretary and the Chairman outlined the option for merging the PRA with the PRAFC. This was something that had been looked at before but was dismissed as a poor option. There may now be a requirement to revisit this due to our ongoing financial situation regarding increased staff costs and low investment returns.

There was a detailed discussion on the various aspects of this which included raising funds directly for the PRA and not the PRAFC to increase our income.

It was suggested that the Regional Secretaries go back to their branches and gather support for PRAHQ, which was agreed. This will be advertised in the monthly newsletter and highlight the ongoing issues we are facing.

Item 2 – Record of last meeting and Matters Arising

2. The Vice Chairman summarised the previous record of decisions. Points arising:
 - a. Incorporation – Change of Charity Status. The final decision was that we will not go ahead and change the charity status and confirmed that we have adequate insurance through Howdens to cover any potential liability and risk to our trustees. The Secretary thanked all those that were involved in the process.
3. Vote. The proposal that the previous minutes are passed as read:
 - a. Proposed by: David Singletary
Seconded by: Terry Wood

CARRIED

Item 3 – Financial Report Update – Emma Smith

4. Emma Smith, Assistant to the Finance Manager, gave a detailed presentation of the Quarter 3 budget versus actuals for the period March to October 2024. The following should be read in conjunction with the Budget v Actuals spreadsheet used at the meeting.
 - a. Emma advised that her spreadsheet showed actual income and expenditure for the Quarter 3 period, actual v budget.
 - b. Income
In Q3 PRA received total income of £7,703.79 which is 10% higher than budgeted for. This is mainly due to the higher dividends received (£6425.90 compared to £5,500 in the budget).

Donations in Q3 were down on budget by 27% and down if you compare it to the same period last year, Q3 2023 (£2180). The main difference being that there were £1000 in donations made to the PRA at the AGM in 2023 and this year donations at the AGM were all made to SOP.

Affiliation fees, you will notice that there was no income in Q3 aligned to this account and there was no budget. This is because at the end of Q2 the PRA had fulfilled the anticipated income for 2024 of £3945. There are 6 branches that are still outstanding payments for 2024 Barnsley, Coventry, East Lancs, East Riding, Gwynedd, Newport. Barnsley has paid in previous years however the others have not.

Anticipated income for 2024 when the budget was agreed was £36,902, so far, the PRA has received £28,045.93 (76%).

c. Expenditure

In Q3 PRA spent a total of £20708.19 which is 15.6% lower than budgeted for. This is largely due to the commemorations exp and regional secretary exp being less than anticipated. Combined the two were under budget by around £3.5k.

The grant expenditure was as anticipated and included funding towards a new standard for IOW branch, PRA Oxford and West Berks to support the production of the Silhouettes and PRA Portsmouth to support the Chilbolton event.

As mentioned, Commemoration funding was under budget. The proportion of funding towards NMA was reduced to 1/3 therefore the total grant paid to SOP was reduced. Arnhem expenditure was also 50% less than anticipated.

National Running costs were as anticipated overall however you will see some variations between individual account lines. The annual audit costs sat 100% higher in Q3, there are two reasons for this. The first being that in 2023 we did not accrue enough throughout the year to cover the final bill, the second is that in Q1&2 of 2024 we did not accrue enough for the 2024 bill. The increase to cover these costs have been aligned to Q3, in Q4 they will reduce to £375. The estimate for the bill from the new auditors is £1500 which is £500 more than 2023.

The monthly computer and internet expenditure has also now decreased since the departure of Julia and this will remain reduced as the charge from Heron is only to support one employee.

As mentioned, regional secretary expenditure for Q3 was lower than anticipated and was mainly attributed to travel to the NMA/AGM and visits to PRA branch meetings/events throughout the Qtr.

The anticipated expenditure budgeted for in 2024 was £72,661, so far, the PRA has spent £42,512 (59%).

d. Surplus/deficit

The deficit for Q3 is £13800 which is less than anticipated by just under £4k. This is a result of both income being higher than anticipated and expenditure being lower.

In Q4 the PRA have budgeted to receive an income of £11600 which is primarily made up of dividends of £5.5k and donations of £5k. £5k does seem quite ambitious for Q4 so we do predict donations to be under budget. If however, Q4 figures do align to the budget the PRA total income will be just under £40k.

In Q4 the PRA have budgeted an expenditure of £18,416, of which £5k was for incorporation which can be removed and the budget reduced to £13,416. Of the total £9k is national running costs, £2k for regional secretary expenditure and £1600 towards the Open day at 1 PARA. Commemoration and grant expenditure is anticipated to be around £600 (Leicester Arnhem Parade and Field of Remembrance).

If Q4 expenditure figures align to the budget the PRA total expenditure should be around £56k which would at this stage forecasts an annual deficit of £16k for 2024 compared to a forecasted deficit of £35,700.

The PRA portfolio at the last meeting was valued at £791,000 and the latest valuation from JM Finn is £808,000. A small increase of £17,000.

With all this in mind the Chairman spoke on funding to find a replacement for the PRA Admin assistant. The outline cost to the charity was discussed while the civil service ban was in place. There was also mention of the PRAFC supporting the post as they already had the systems in place for employing staff. More work is required on this and a decision will be made later on the way forward in this matter.

The Vice Chairman asked for a vote of thanks to be recorded for Emma Smith the new Financial Assistant for the work she had put into the accounts and her report.

Item 4 – Regional Secretaries Verbal Reports.

7. The Regional Secretary's provided a summary of their areas of responsibility:
 - a. Midlands. Chris Brooksbank was unfortunately unable to attend.
 - b. London. The Croydon branch have a number of people traveling to the 1 Para/SFSG visit as have the Eltham and Chislehurst branch. They have a good link with Millwall FC and are holding regular collections. Hertford & District are growing slowly. The London Branch had 39 in Arnhem moved its meetings to 4 Para in White City, which was not popular with everyone. The idea is to bring all

branches together for a regional event. Surrey & Sussex is quiet but no response from them recently. Ilford 84 may or may not go across to the London region once they complete their change of committee.

London branch is in touch with B Coy 3 Para on a regular basis. There is another company that is keen to form an affiliation (C Coy).

- c. Southwest. Tony Ellis was unfortunately unable to attend.
- d. Northwest. Mike Farrington stated that he had written to all the branch Secretaries in his region. He was looking to bring them all together in late October but the response was very poor. There may be several branches that are not operating and functioning in the manner they should. The Wirrel branch were recently contacted about an important funeral but received no support from them. Mike has a meeting planned with Col Andy Waring. The region had 40 people on their Arnhem trip, which was very good. They also raised a large sum of money for SOP at the Commando Speed March. The Tatton Park history book is doing well and they have been in touch with ITC Catterick to try and get the recruits down for a parade. This may prove difficult due to the changes in the training process and funding.
- e. Wales. The Swansea branch is now firing on all cylinders. The Bridgend branch is doing well. Newport members travelled to Arnhem with them and it went very well. Cardiff is running steadily but not a lot heard from them. There is still no contact with Brecon and despite initial signs nothing has been heard from them. The 1 Para/SFSG open day is happening shortly and that is very popular. Regular links with 1 Para/SFSG are continuing at meetings throughout the year. The Regional Secretary made some comments on the Arnhem trip and the organisation by the Dutch.
- f. South. Vic Thorn was unfortunately unable to attend.
- g. Southeast. Hastings and Eastbourne are small branches and they are difficult to get to for the Regional Secretary due to the night time meetings. Hastings branch is likely to close in the near future. Maidstone Branch is doing ok. Dover Branch is doing well and charges their members £60 a year, which they get without any issues.
- h. Anglia. Colchester doing really well under the new Chairman. Good regular attendance at the Pegasus Club. A team is working on the Dakota and they have recruited a couple of new Standard bearers, which is great news. Norfolk and Waveney is another strong branch who are very active. The branch has asked for guidance on 'Walter Mitty's' which will be addressed by the National Secretary. Southeast Essex is strong and holds regular meetings with good attendance. Ilford 84 are assisting with the London branch collections. They are undergoing a change of committee which will fall to a vote at the forthcoming AGM. Chelmsford is deteriorating and sadly looking to close due to lack of members. Cambridge is possibly doing the same and the National Secretary will be speaking to Tom Brown on the matter. Spalding branch has no communication with the Regional Secretary and so he will be contacted to find out what is happening.
- i. Northeast. Two branches are low in attendance, Sunderland meet regularly but suffer with low numbers. Durham Branch are looking to replace Bob Wheatley who sadly passed away recently. Tyneside have been moving around but have now finally found somewhere else to meet. They are otherwise active and contribute to the monthly newsletter. The Teeside branch is active and pleased to have the assistant Col Comdt at their recent meeting, his speech was very well received. Many of the branches regularly support the pass out parades at ITC Catterick.
- j. Scotland and Northern Ireland. Brian Black was unfortunately unable to attend.
- k. Yorkshire. We welcomed Chris Jackson who recently took over. Hardwick Hall under Lisa Turner was a real success. They had approximately 6 Standards and 90 veterans on parade. Lisa is congratulated and thanked for her hard work in making this happen. Information boards would be a great addition to the Hardwick Hall and it may be possible for the museum to assist. Funding for this may be an issue but worth looking into. At the Airborne Forces Day (North) parade held at Eden Camp, the Bradford Branch and the Wakefield Branch were amalgamated and their Standards were laid up to be kept at Eden Camp. A new branch, the West Yorkshire Branch, was created and had its new Standard blessed by the padre. The event was well supported this year with approximately 90 people on parade. Many were accompanied by their families on the day. The owners are on side and one of the managers (Nick Hill) is extremely helpful. There has been an issue with the free entry system where members were taking advantage of the goodwill, this was offset by a donation of £200.

The assistant Col Comdt Col Andy Waring is working his way around the branches and has arranged a meeting with the regional secretary. Members of the branches also attend the pass out parades on a regular basis.

The Vice Chairman thanked Chris Jackson for taking on the role.

Item 5 – PRA Secretaries Report.

8. Discussion Points/Decisions.

- a. Fundraising. Fundraising directly for the PRA is required. Collections directly for the PRA central fund as this would assist greatly in the running of the association. This could include auctions that seem work well within the reunion clubs. Another option is to raise the Affiliation Fee (AF). Raising the AF to £250 would raise in the region of £20k. Raising it to £100 would raise £8k. It is worth noting that the AF at the new rate of £60 barely covers the annual insurance costs of around £4,000, especially as a few branches do not pay. Any ideas or options would be appreciated and branches will be approached for support in the newsletter. Sponsorship may also be an option that has not been explored.
- b. Subscriptions. Dave Smart put forward a suggestion that we start charging an annual subscription to our members. Emma Smith has done some considerable amount of work on this. Emma looked at the options available and how we could manage this. This would see an increase in the joining fee. New members paying an annual fee of £10 to be part of the association. Dave Smart provided some figures using the numbers of members that have joined so far in 2024. This includes past members only as membership is free for serving soldiers. This was borne from the staff at ITC Catterick not being willing to process the applications for recruits while there was a cost. The subscription fee would have to be managed through the branches. It may also produce a two-tier branch where some are paying £10 per year and others have their life membership from when they joined. There are a number of companies that could process these applications but it would not remove the admin burden of chasing payments and keeping databases up to date.
- c. Workload Manning. The Secretary has been asked to absorb 37hrs a week since the admin assistant left. This is extremely time consuming with answering calls and processing membership applications being the main activities. Calls and messages are coming through all social media and messaging applications at all times of the day and night, including weekends. This is not sustainable.
- d. Financial Support to Events. There is a trend now that RHQ Para pays 100% of events. An example of this is Hardwick Hall. Applications for financial support to events come in all the time and a recent one asked for £3,200 for the full cost of the event. A Business Case (BC) has been produced with the help of Mike Farrington. This will be used for all events that request central PRA funding. Members attending events must be prepared to pay some or all of the cost.
- e. Expense Policy. The expense policy has now been considered and agreed by the EC. Anything outside of the laid down costs should be cleared through the Secretary before booking.
- f. Weekday Meetings. Weekday meeting work well for the staff at RHQ Para and we may look to do this in the future. This will be done on a case by case basis and dependant on expected attendance.

Item 6 - Funding for Regional/Branch Events.

9. Discussion Points/Decisions.

- a. Armed Forces Day. No funding required as many share with local councils.
- b. Eden Camp. Not supported by the Heritage and Commemorations Committee (HCC) as it has no historical significance. PRA funding may be required to keep this event going. Accurate costings are required.
- c. Hardwick Hall. Chris Jackson provided a detailed breakdown for the 2024 event. Request for funding from HCC will be submitted to support this event due to the historical significance. 2025 would be the 80th anniversary of it closing and therefore it may not be covered after that by the HCC.
- d. The requests for funding for 2024/2025 are as follows:

- e. Regimental Families Day. £5,000 requested. Not supported due to it not being good value for money for the PRA.
- f. 1 Para/SFSG Veterans Day. £1,500 projected spend if feasible depending on 1 Para/SFSG Catering costings and contribution by those attending.

Proposed by: David Singletary
Seconded by: Terry Wood

CARRIED

Note: The actual cost for this event in October 2024 was £555.54. Of this, £265 was recovered from those attending. Total cost of this event was therefore £290.54.

- g. Colchester Veterans Day. This is dependent on one Colchester based battalion sponsoring it. Date around May TBC
- h. Northants Annual Event. Midland Region should be able to fund and more advertising is required.
- i. Toot Baldon. 2025 is the 60th anniversary of this crash and there may be a plan to conduct a larger than normal service. More details to follow.
- j. Swansea Airshow. Dave Singletary spoke on this event and asked if this could be turned into an ABF Wales. 1 Para/SFSG participation would be unlikely but should be explored.

Item 7 – Any Other Business

- 10. Discussion Points/Decisions.
 - a. Paul Bryant asked about Assistant Col Commandants. Col James Loudon has now moved on and the new list requires updating. He could not be replaced by the new Deputy Comd 16AABCT.
 - b. Paul Bryant asked if the Airborne Forces riders should come under a Regional Secretary. As Vic Thorn is a member of the Airborne Forces Riders he may be the best option. Vic will be asked if he is happy to do this as he is not present.
 - c. Paul Bryant asked if the newsletter could be sent out earlier. This was easier said than done and would be dependant on other monthly activity. It may be possible to send it out slightly earlier to allow the members to be briefed on its content.
 - d. Mike Farrington noted that certain parts of the constitution were out of date and required updating. This was acknowledged by the Secretary and would be addressed.
 - e. Mike Farrington asked about the Christmas hamper allocation to the Regional Secretary's. This allocation of three is over and above the branch nominations.
 - f. Christmas Hampers. It was suggested by Terry Wood that instead of hampers we should issue food cards. This was seen as a good option and would be suggested to the PRAFC team.
 - g. Clerical Support. The Chairman spoke on the replacement to cover the admin support position. In terms of costs, this may have to be covered by the PRA. With a saving on costs for events that will be covered by the HCC, this should not have a big impact on the PRA finances. It is thought that this needs to be a minimum of 3 days per week but ideally 5 days per week at a cost of approx £20k.

There are a number of issues within the Civil Service and it is unlikely that the post will ever be filled by them again. One other option is that Grant In Aid may be available to pay for the post. This is how the staff at the museum at Duxford are funded.

Vote. The proposal that the PRA recruits an administrator for a minimum 3 days per week and that they cover the approx. £20k cost:

- i. Proposed by: David Singletary
- ii. Seconded by: Terry Wood

CARRIED

Item 8 - Diary of Forthcoming Events

12. Discussion Points/Decisions.

- a. All dates are published on the events page of the website. Any changes should be sent to the Secretary.
- b. Key Events for 2025 are below. The events that are known have been uploaded onto the website with as much information as is known. Please advise of any additional events and dates ASAP:

Events:			
Month	Date	Event	Location
March	14-16	2 Para Reunion	Blackpool
March	20-23	1 Para Reunion	Blackpool
March	28-30	3 Para Reunion	Blackpool
May	10	Hardwick Hall	Chesterfield
June	5-8	Normandy 81	France
June	14	Regtl Commemoration	NMA
July	6	60 th Anniversary of Toot Baldon Crash	Oxfordshire
July	19	Eden Camp	North Yorkshire
July/August	TBC	Regimental Day	Colchester
September	19-21	Arnhem 81	Netherlands

Item 9 - Dates of next meetings.

- a. 77th Annual General Meeting, National Memorial Arboretum, Saturday 14th June 2025
- c. 101st Executive Committee Meeting Friday 11 April 2025, Location: Colchester. Subject to agreement by EC and could possibly be Saturday 12 April.

The meeting closed at 14:57hrs.