

THE

PARACHUTE

REGIMENTAL

ASSOCIATION



The Association for all

Airborne Forces

NEWSLETTER - October 2025

Greetings from Colchester

As we head into the quieter period of the year for many I would like to thank everyone for their contributions to the monthly newsletter over the past few months. We reached a record 23 pages last month keeping up to date with the variety of branch activities that are taking place. Well done to all involved in making it happen.

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What's On:

Month	Date	Event	Location
October	3	Pass Out Parade	ITC Catterick
October	24	Gen Peter Chiswell Memorial	London
October	25	WO & Sgts Mess P & P	MOD St Athan
October	31	Pass Out Parade	ITC Catterick
November	7	St Lawrence Jewry	London
November	9	Remembrance Day	Whitehall
December	10	Pass Out Parade	ITC Catterick
March	TBC	1 Para Reunion	Blackpool
March	TBC	2 Para Reunion	Blackpool
March	TBC	3 Para Reunion	Blackpool

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE SEE THE EVENTS PAGE ON THE WEBSITE

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Arnhem 81st Commemorations

A selection of photographs from the Arnhem 81 Commemorations that incorporate the Friday events at The Stone of Friendship and John Frost Bridge. Saturday at Ginkel Heath, RAF memorial at the Hartenstein and Sunday at the remembrance service at Oosterbeek CWGC:



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Arnhem Continued ...



Award Winning Beer

This years Arnhem 81st Commemorations were very successful and a large number of people attended the main events of the weekend.

One of those that attended was Claire Anderson who was traveling with her husband Alisdair and a group from the Glasgow & West Branch. She got in touch in memory of her late father, Private Robert "Bobby" Esplin (1938–2024). He joined the 15th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment after completing his National Service with the Black Watch in 1961. Her father carried his time with





The Parachute Regiment with immense pride throughout his life. In 2023, at the age of 84, he helped them build a small brewery in the Netherlands, called Spectrum Bier's.

Last year, the brewery created a Black IPA, which they named Hielan' Laddie in his honour. Hielan' Laddie went on to win the 2024 Cannibale Royale Home Brew Competition in the Netherlands.

Claire recently made a very generous donation to the association in memory of her father and the Secretary had the honour of meeting her on John Frost bridge on the Friday before the parade.

Op VARSITY 80th Anniversary Battlefield Tour

The 80th anniversary of 'Operation VARSITY' was celebrated and commemorated this year by a group of 32 people, including 99 year Philip Aucott, veteran of Op VARSITY, who landed over the Rhine in a Horsa glider with 2nd Bn, Ox and Bucks Light Infantry in 1945. After everyone had been collected by the coach, the journey began and they headed to the hotel in Wesel, Germany. This was a great time for everyone to get to know each other, especially as they had people joining them from the USA and Australia. Most of the group were relatives of 6th Airborne men who were there in 1945 and individual stories and photos were shared amongst the group.

A full report is attached to this newsletter. Any branch wishing to conduct a commemorative trip should get in touch with Alex Collins through this HQ.





Ilford 84 Branch

British Parachute Regiment Veterans on Parade in Paris

Over fifty British Airborne veterans of the Parachute Regiment, the Special Air Service and attached arms and a Member of Parliament, paraded in Paris at Les Invalides at 09:00 hours on

Saturday, September 27th 2025, as guests of French Airborne Forces to mark Saint Michael's Day.

Saint Michael is the patron saint of paratroopers and nowhere is his feast day, which falls on September 29th, taken more seriously than in France where pride in the nation's armed forces is encouraged. For some years, the *Union Nationale des Parachutistes* (UNP) have invited their British comrades of the Parachute Regimental Association (PRA) to parade with them in Paris.

The British and French paratroopers attended a mass for the fallen in the *Cathédral Saint-Louis* in *Les Invalides* followed by lunch in the *École Militaire* before marching up the *Champs d'Élysées* to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier under the *Arc de Triomphe* where they will oversee the rekindling of the Eternal Flame.





Bayo Alaba MP (Lab, Southend East and Rochford), a Parachute Regimental veteran, layed a wreath on behalf of the House of Commons and Major General (Ret'd) (AVM) Ranald Munro CB CBE TD DL and Brigadier (Ret'd) Ian McLeod CMG OBE MC MA, seen as The Parachute Regiment's Elder, will also lay wreathes at the tomb.

This tradition is rooted in the longstanding relationship between the Ilford 84 branch of the PRA and the Orléans branch of the UNP. Over the years, the Ilford 84 PRA extended the invitation to any Parachute Regiment, Special Air Service and Airborne Forces veterans wishing to attend.

In recent years, circumstances had led to a decline in the numbers attending with just five British veterans parading in 2023. When the French General commanding the UNP asked them where the rest of the English were, the Ilford 84 PRA decided to make a serious effort to revive the tradition.

The Parachute Regiment takes its shared history with France and French Airborne Forces very seriously as articles published in the PRA journal *Hermes* remind us: A full report on this in next months edition.



Christmas Hampers 2025

'Support Our Paras', The Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces Charity, will once again be providing Christmas hampers this year. These will be distributed to **proven Airborne veterans**, **widows**, **or dependants** in genuine need. The aim is to bring comfort and support to those who may be alone or struggling at Christmas time; the hampers are **not** intended as a reward for service or recognition of past contributions.

Branches are invited to nominate a veteran or dependant in need via the following link; <u>Microsoft Form.</u> Nominations must be submitted no later than **Friday 14 November 2025**. Please note the form must be completed and submitted online; it is not available to print and post.

Hampers are delivered directly to recipients by our supplier and can only be sent to addresses within Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Please ensure the addresses and postcodes you provide are accurate and up to date.

If you are aware of a veteran or dependant in need who resides in a nursing or care home where a hamper may not be suitable, please still include their details on the form. In such cases, complete Section 14 – Reason for Nomination with the relevant explanation.

This year we are also asking for your support to help us continue providing these much-appreciated gifts. Any donation, large or small, towards the cost of the hampers will be gratefully received. To contribute, please visit our **Airborne Hamper Appeal 2025** page at: https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/airbornehampers2025

We would also be most grateful if you could share this link on your branch's social media channels to help spread the word.

A separate letter is attached to this newsletter for wider distribution.



Eastbourne Branch - Dieppe Raid Memorial Visit

On 18 August 2025, four members of the Eastbourne Branch travelled to **Dieppe, France**, to attend the **Dieppe Raid Memorial Service**.

This was a special occasion for **Stewart Henderson**, marking his final trip as Standard Bearer after 25 years of dedicated service. He was accompanied by Branch members **Frank Holland**, **Paul Leach**, **and Andy Rolston**.

The visit included a sunset vigil at the Canadian War Cemetery, followed the next day by wreath laying ceremonies at the cemetery, Puys Beach (Royal Regiment of Canada memorial), Canada Square in Dieppe, the American Ranger Memorial, and the Belgian Memorial. It was a full and demanding schedule for the Standard Bearer, but a proud tribute to those who fell.

The group also enjoyed the hospitality of the reception in Dieppe and shared moments with French Airborne Standard Bearers before returning home via ferry to Newhaven.





Eastbourne Branch - An Epic Swimming Challenge

This year, **Andy Geoghegan**, a member of Eastbourne PRA, undertook an incredible personal challenge — swimming **150 miles of open water** to raise funds for *Supporting Wounded Veterans*.

His swims included the Epic Triple Crown Chill Swim across the three Great Lakes of the North of England — the full length of Windermere (11 miles), Ullswater (6 miles), and Coniston (5 miles). Andy also completed the Beachy Head to Eastbourne sea swim (6 miles) and the Henley Thames Marathon (9 miles).

Through this effort, Andy has raised nearly £18,000 (including Gift Aid).

His full story can be read on *JustGiving*.



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Eastbourne Branch cont - 10 PARA Memorial Services

On 13 September, the Eastbourne Branch Standard was paraded at the **10 PARA Memorial Service** at Burrough on the Hill. The following day, members also attended the **Leicester PRA 10 PARA Memorial Church Service** in Somerby.









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Teesside Branch - Honorary Membership

At this month's meeting, members of Teesside PRA voted overwhelmingly to appoint **Captain George Sinclair**, Swedish Armed Forces Reserves, as an honorary member of the Branch.

Captain Sinclair is a highly acclaimed neurosurgeon and oncologist, as well as an active serving reservist. With Sweden now a full NATO member, George recently completed the gruelling *Marche de Diekirch* in Luxembourg, where he proudly carried the Airborne flag. He paraded it at several points along the route, including General Patton's memorial and the American cemetery.

At the meeting, Captain Sinclair formally presented the flag to the Branch, where it was gratefully received by Chairman JJ Wilson.





Memorial Service - Major General Peter Chiswell

The Memorial Service for Major General Peter Chiswell CB CBE DL, will be held at St Lawrence Jewry church adjacent to the Guildhall in London (EC2V 5AA) at 11am on Friday 24 October 2025.

There will be a reception after the Service, details to follow. All are welcome.

To help with tracking numbers, those planning to attend are asked to inform Alice at RHQ PARA by using the following MS Forms Link: Maj Gen Chiswell Memorial



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South Devon Branch - AGM & Arnhem Commemoration

The South Devon Branch held its **Annual General Meeting** on 7 September at Torquay Athletic RFC. All committee members stood down and were re-elected, with the exception of **Mr Gresham Williams**, who retired after 16 years as Branch Treasurer. He was presented with a Pegasus mounted in granite by Branch President **Mr Trevor Ferrand** in recognition of his long and distinguished service. **Mrs Alison Morgan** was elected as the new Treasurer, and we wish her every success in the role.

Further presentations were made by the Branch President:

- Mrs Debby Cox received the Nick Nicholas Trophy for her outstanding work throughout the year, including support at Armed Forces Days in Paignton and Plymouth, and her continued efforts as Almoner and raffle organiser.
- PRA Medals were awarded to Mr Angelo Montini
 for his long service as Assistant Chairman and
 Standard Bearer, and to Mr Jim Pittman for his long
 service and dedication as Standard Bearer.

On **21 September**, seven members of the Branch, supported by partners, gathered at the Branch Memorial in Paignton to mark the **81st anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem**. A short but poignant ceremony was conducted by Branch Secretary **Mr Brandon Smith**, including the Last Post, two minutes' silence, prayers, and wreath-laying by **Mr David Morgan** and Mr Smith.



L to R: Jim Pittman, John Watkins, Ian Cox (Chairman), Angelo Montini, Kevin Durn, Trevor Ferrand (President), Ivor Short, Gresham Williams, Alexander Eltringham, David Morgan, Brandon Smith (Secretary).



Branch Memorial 2025. L-R: Angelo Montini (Standard), David Morgan, Jim Pittman, John Watkins, Brandon Smith (Secretary), Bernard Wills, Gresham Williams.

We will remember them.



Mr Jim Pittman and Mr Trevor Ferrand (President)



Mr Gresham Williams and Mr Trevor Ferrand (President)



Mr Angelo Montini and Mr Trevor Ferrand (President)



Mrs Debby Cox and Mr Trevor Ferrand (President)

Shropshire Branch

On Sunday 14th September, 62 people attended an 81st anniversary Arnhem lunch at The Shropshire Golf Centre. Telford.



The meal was excellent and enjoyed by everyone. We were lucky enough to have our 8 PARA WW2 veteran, Danny Mason in attendance.

A big thank you to Annette Burgoyne for providing the taxi service. Also present was our 2 PARA Falklands veteran, Spanner Spencer.

We also had the pleasure of having friends from the Wolverhampton & Bedworth branches come along to share the occasion [and do very well on the raffle!].

In addition to the raffle, we also held an auction to raise money for the funding appeal for Ewan Fleming,

ex 2 PARA, to help pay for some treatment for him. Thanks to a generous donation from Bill Frew, ex 2 PARA, [3 bottles of single malt] we managed to raise £100 to go with the £100 donation the branch is making.

We also auctioned 3 paintings donated by Jim Hillman, ex 9 Para Sqn RE, to raise money for the branch. The paintings made £60 - thank you Jim!



The icing on the cake of the lunch was the chance to present Geoff Sproston with a richly deserved Colonel Commandants Commendation for services to the PRA. Geoff along with the late Stan Beck, helped keep the Shropshire branch going when membership was falling. He arranged fund raising events



plus was the branch standard bearer and also trained other standard bearers. For the past 13 years he has been the branch treasurer and kept us in the black. He was always willing to put himself out attending events in the Telford, Shrewsbury and Wales areas in response to requests from families/branches, to support funerals.

The photos attached show The Guys, The Girls and Geoff being presented with his commendation. Thanks to Paul Raison and Jean-Marc Bazzoni for their help with the commendation.

Words and pictures from Peter Bedford

Lothian Branch - Supporting Ukraine & Bold Guard Memorial

On Monday 8 September, members of the Lothian Branch — Peter Hart, Tony Rogers, Bob Brines, Ian Spence, Arthur Evans, Mick Sweeney, and Brian White — were welcomed to the Consulate of Ukraine in Edinburgh.

The Branch made a presentation to **Mr Patrick Addison**, who volunteers as a surgeon in Ukraine. Along with a cheque, the Branch also presented Patrick with a **table cover/banner** to be displayed in the hospital in Lviv, where he operates on the wounded.

Funds raised through the Branch's "can collection" were used to purchase a **micro-surgical kit** from the **Mercian Surgical Supply Company**, who generously contributed by reducing the price of the kit by a considerable amount. This vital equipment will directly support Patrick's reconstructive surgery work in Ukraine.

The Branch has also gained permission from **Edinburgh Council** erect a **bench in West Princes Street Gardens**, close to the War Memorial, in memory of those killed on **Exercise Bold Guard** at the Kiel Canal on 11 September 1974. A fundraising function and JustGiving page will be arranged in due course to support this initiative. The project has already attracted strong interest from **15 PARA veterans**, and further details will follow after the Council meeting in January 2026.



L-R Patrick Addison, Peter Hart (Chairman) Cheque Presentation.

Special thanks go to **Peter Hart**, Chairman of Lothian Branch PRA, for his leadership on both of these important ventures.



L-R Peter Hart (Branch Chair), Brian White, Bob Brines, Andrii Madzianovskyi (Consul), Ian Spence, Doug Harris & Mick Sweeney.

Andrii Madzianovskyi & Doug Harris





L-R Brian White, Bob Brines, Arthur Evans, Andrii Madzianovskyi (Ukraine Consul), Patrick Addison, Doug Harris (Branch Sec), Tony Rogers (Branch Treasurer),lan Spence & Mick Sweeney.



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Dover Branch - Summer Ball

Over 50 members and guests attended the Dover Branch **Summer Ball**, held at the local Masonic Hall. A great time was had by all, with special thanks to **Kev Eaton** for organising the evening. Entertainment included a magician who moved from table to table performing amazing and baffling tricks.

The Branch always welcomes new members. Meetings are held on the **last Friday of each month at 1930 hrs** at the Cricketers Pub, Crabble Avenue, Dover (CT17 0JB). Dress is casual, and business takes around 30 minutes before members retire to the bar to catch up.

Norfolk & Waveney Branch - Shooting Competition Success

On Sunday 21 September, four members of the Norfolk & Waveney Branch took part in a friendly shooting competition against the local Royal Marines Association at the Norfolk Showground.

The RMA, who operate a travelling pipe range to raise funds for their Association, issued the challenge. Branch members **Tony Coxall, Steve Burn, Darren Minns, and Sean Baker** took it up enthusiastically — and, despite being new to the range, emerged as winners on the day!





Isle of Wight Branch – Annual Range Day & Pete Grundy Memorial Trophy

On Sunday 31 August, the Isle of Wight Branch held its Annual Range Day at Downend Ranges. This year marked the introduction of the **Pete Grundy Memorial Trophy SLR Competition**, honouring Private Pete Grundy, who was killed in 1979.

Nine members competed, each firing five rounds from 50 metres in the standing position. Results were:

1st Place: Terry Guildford

2nd Place: Russ Bishop

• 3rd Place: Paul Culshaw

The new trophy, assembled by Paul Culshaw, incorporates a piston from an Avro Anson, mounted on a turned oak base by Jeremy Murton, with engraved plaques completing this lasting tribute.

The day was organised by Dave Lewis, who ensured smooth running and gave members the chance to fire a variety of firearms, from SLR and No.4 rifles to shotguns and black powder handguns. Around 900 rounds were fired in total.

No branch gathering would be complete without good food, and the barbecue was ably managed by Bob Cole, Paul Culshaw, and helpers — with the bonus of more than one sausage each!

Thanks also go to Michelle for photographing the event and updating the branch website.

Despite heavy showers, the day was well attended by members, families, and friends, and was a fitting tribute to Pete Grundy — combining competition, shared memories, and camaraderie.



L-R: Bob Cole, Clive (Spiney) Norman and Paul Culshaw





Isle of Wight Branch - First Arnhem Commemoration

On Sunday 21 September, the Isle of Wight Branch held its **first Arnhem Commemoration Ceremony** at Mount Joy Cemetery, Carisbrooke, marking the 81st anniversary of the Battle of Arnhem.

The service, led by Branch Padre Rev. David Morgan, included an account of the battle read by Russ Bishop MBE, Branch President. The Last Post and Reveille were sounded by Bob Cole, with the Branch Standard carried by Terry Guildford. A wreath was laid on the grave of Thomas Geoffrey Burge (12th and 1st Battalions PARA) by Spence Cave, while the Exhortation and Kohima Epitaph were recited by Dave Lewis.

Among those attending were the sons and granddaughter of Arnhem veteran **Joseph (Joe) Sibley**, representing families of those who served.
Following the main ceremony, wreaths were also laid at the graves of Joe Sibley (Royal Engineers, 2 PARA) and his close friend **Frederick Smith (3 PARA)**, **Desmond Alec Payne (16 Para Bde)**, and **Raymond Peck (PARA)**.

Afterwards, members and guests gathered at the Waverley Pub, Carisbrooke, to share memories and comradeship. Special thanks were given to **Michelle Walton** for capturing the day on photo and video, and to all members for their strong turnout.

This moving event marks the beginning of what is hoped will become an **annual commemoration**, ensuring the sacrifices at Arnhem, and of Islanders who fought there, are never forgotten.











Tyneside Branch – Autumn Activities

On 14 September, members of the Tyneside Branch, together with the Branch Standard, attended **Newcastle Cathedral** to mark **Battle of Britain Day** and witness the Diocese of Newcastle signing the **Armed Forces Covenant**. The Lord Lieutenant of Tyne and Wear and the Bishop of Newcastle were present, supported by the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers with their Standards and the Band of 5th Battalion.

The Branch will next be on parade at the **Eldon Square Cenotaph, Newcastle, on 9 November** (1000 for 1100). All are welcome to march, with members gathering afterwards at the Lady Grey pub.

Looking ahead, the **Annual Christmas Social** will take place on **29 November (1300–1800)** at the PTE Club, Millers Road, Newcastle upon Tyne (NE6 2XP). As in previous years, the afternoon will feature raffles, entertainment, and food. All Paras, partners, and friends are warmly welcome.



Photo: Members of the Branch at Newcastle Cathedral: L-R Jim Davey, Gary Wilson and John Osborne.

Durham Branch—Remembering Bob Wheatley

The On 17 August, exactly one year after his passing, members of the Durham Branch gathered with family and friends to honour the memory of our late Chairman, **Bob Wheatley**.

Bob's ashes were spread at a skydiving club near Peterlee, Cleveland, Teesside, with a parachutist carrying out the release in a fitting tribute to his Airborne spirit.

Bob served with **2 PARA** and was our Branch Chairman for 30 years. Well known and highly respected throughout the PRA, he gave decades of dedicated service to the Association and remained a true Airborne comrade to all who knew him.

The second photo shows those who came together to pay their respects — friends, family, and members of the Branch united in remembrance.

Bob's contribution and legacy within the PRA will never be forgotten.





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Durham Branch—Recent Events

The Durham Branch recently took part in two events of note.

The first was the annual **Falklands commemorative ride**, when bikers from across the country visited key locations in remembrance. One stop was at the grave of Andy Lang in Lanchester, Co. Durham, where Branch Chairman **Alfie Golightly** (pictured in maroon shirt and beret with a young Newcastle supporter) joined in paying respects.

The second was a **Pass Out Parade at Catterick**, where Durham Branch members were, as always, proudly in attendance. Among them was Vice Chairman of the Executive Committee **JJ Wilson**, pictured at the end of the line.







Airborne Forces Day 2026 - Scotland

Save the Date: Saturday 18 July 2026

We are pleased to announce that *Airborne Forces Day Scotland 2026* will be hosted by the Tayside Branch PRA in Dundee on Saturday 18 July 2026.

A Welcome Reception will be held at St David's Veterans' Hub on the evening of Friday 17 July 2026.

Further details will be shared as plans progress, but in the meantime, we warmly encourage members and their families to join us and take the opportunity to enjoy the many attractions that Dundee has to offer.

For enquiries, please contact the branch by email. To register for the event, please visit our page via the following link: Airborne Forces Day 2026 Scotland - Save the Date

The Not Forgotten

THE NOT FORGOTTEN RUN A LARGE NUMBER OF EVENTS AROUND THE COUNTRY. TO SEE WHAT IS GOING ON PLEASE CHECK OUT THE EVENTS PAGE ON THEIR WEBSITE: https://thenotforgotten.org/events/



466 Platoon Reunion

Calling all members of Depot Para 466 Platoon (1980) Aldershot.

The platoon is having a reunion in Aldershot on the weekend of the 21st - 23rd November 2025.

This will include a short service at Aldershot Military Cemetery on the Sunday morning.

Please contact Terry Wood: Email: <u>eltel09@gmail.com</u> Mobile: 07469 963536

Or Yanto Evans:

Mobile; 07971 123359

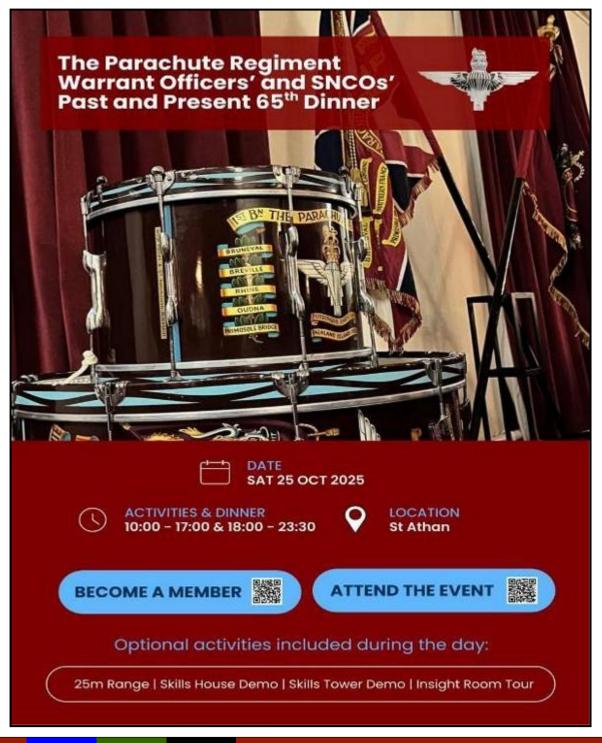
The Parachute Regiment Warrant Officers & SNCOs Dinner Club

The annual dinner will be held on Saturday 25 October 2025 at the WOs & SNCOs' MOD St Athan. The RSM is trying to reach out to past members in order to boost attendance.

Details of this years event are below so please register your interest now.

If you have any issues with the form or becoming a member, please contact the Dinner Club secretary: Jennie Pitt MBE – Hon Secretary. Email: jennie.pitt163@mod.gov.uk or by post to:

The Parachute Regiment Warrant Officers and Sergeant's Mess (Past & Present) Dinner Club. J1 Office, Churchill Lines, MOD St Athan, BARRY, CF62 4NX



SUPPORT OUR PARAS

Welfare Process



It is very important that PRA Branches use the SUPPORT OUR PARAS welfare team for any cases that are reported to them.

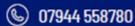
The Welfare Team are trained to deal with these cases and will be able to identify the most suitable course of action for an individual in need.



Serving Personnel, please contact your Unit Welfare Officer (UWO) and/or Medical Officer (MO).

Serving Personnel, for those needing career advice contact: Nick Thorogood, Careers Transition Officer (CTO)

CTO@supportourparas.org



Veterans, please contact: Lisa Stapleton, Welfare Manager

WM@supportourparas.org

© 07340 347136

Mental health support and advice please contact: Laura McPhilemy, Head of Welfare

☑ HoW@supportourparas.org

© 07702 190685

Financial Assistance Process:

Step 1: Contact SUPPORT OUR PARAS Welfare Team

Step 2: Once needs are established a referral will be

completed to a case working organisation, RBL or SSAFA.

An allocated caseworker will start an application for assistance, known as 'Form A'.

Step 4: Completed Form A, and any attachments is sent electronically to military charities, including SUPPORT OUR PARAS, for consideration.

Step 5: Successful grants are issued swiftly back to case working organisations for onward payment.

Step 6: Urgent grants can be made on the same day if required.

Step 7: The process is both confidential and transparent, providing an audit trail.