

Newsletter- May 2014

A London Marathon In Loving Memory

By Vicky Calver

So, 13th April 2014 - not a date I will forget for quite some time! Why?? Because I run the London Marathon. "Why would anyone want to run 26.2 miles" I hear you ask - well, let me tell you all about it. It started when Fran Luxton talked me into running the Colchester half marathon in 2013.....from being a total non runner. I then got the running bug and carried on taking part in races of all distances up to half marathon and even joined a running club. Just before Colchester half marathon, my dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and he sadly passed away on 28th June 2013, just 4 months after diagnosis. We knew he only had a few days left and as I knew he had always wished he could have run the London marathon and did try for a good few years, I promised him I would run this for him, to fulfil his dream. After his passing, I applied to the Pancreatic Cancer Research Fund for a charity place and got accepted - so that was it - the start!!!

The training took over my life between January and April, I even started seeing a personal trainer to help build my "core" strength and I lost one and a half stone and over 16 inches of body fat. I completely changed my diet and really started looking after myself. Every weekend, with the next "long run looming", I would question why I was doing this and could I do this - but every week, I got round whatever distance was planned, my furthest distance being 20 miles in training.

Before I knew it, the day was here and I was up at 5.30am to get ready, attempt to eat breakfast (nerves weren't letting me eat as much as I should of) and get to the coach for 7am.....then we were all off. I couldn't actually believe I was about to run a marathon - it really wasn't sinking in - either that or I didn't want to think about the distance - not quite sure. Once there, off we all went to our start zones (blue, red or green start) - I was red - the furthest walk away...grrr. Bags were dropped off at the lorries, all well organised in running number order, then off to the ladies "urinals" as loo queue was too long . WELLLL.....the urinals were a whole new experience and I'm not sure I can even begin to explain them - some things are better left unsaid - needless to say, I couldn't use the contraption given to me - so I just went and pee'd on the grass in the corner - along with numerous others who got pee freeze (I'm not selling this am I Hahahah). Before I knew it, we were being called to our "pen" - based on predicted finish time - I was in pen 9 - the biggest as it is the last one. I was with the "rhino's"!!!! Then, it was time....10am, the gun went off and we started the walk to the start line. This only took about 15mins - quicker than you might expect when you look at it on the telly.....the start line was right there in front of me.....I was about to cross the line - oh poo - no turning back now.....and then I was running, people cheering and feet everywhere. I couldn't look up, I had to concentrate on the feet in front of me, so not to catch the back of anyone's feet or trip up - it took a while to spread out a bit - but I think I only saw road for the first 2 miles at least. Just before the 5km mark, we merged with the blue and green starters - I have never seen so many people running at any one time. The crowds weren't too vast in the first few miles but still plenty of sweets on offer (jelly babies are the best for the marathon).....although I didn't need any in the first few miles. I just carried on running and I recall running a loop - somehow, I totally missed the huge great big ship we were "looping" around - how do you miss the cutty sark???? On I went and before I knew it, there was tower bridge. The first time I think I finally realised I really was running the London Marathon - you feel like a celebrity. The noise was out of this world. The bridge was over far too quickly and within minutes, I was over the half way line. The second half was much harder and I started really taking advantage of the offered sweets and was running through the "showers" on route - it was a flipping hot day! Before long, I had to start walking - NO NOT YET I kept telling myself - if you walk now, it will be soo hard to start running again....but I just didn't have enough fuel in me to keep running, so it was walk / jog the rest of the way. I had no clue where I was half the time but apparently I was running round the Isle of Dogs and soon enough I was at Canary Wharf and saw some friends in the crowd - god did I need to see them!! I went over for a big hug (as everyone does when you see friends / family) and then off I went again - c'mon Vicky, just 8 miles to go!! I was so happy to finally see the 20 mile marker and even happier to see some hunky fireman cooling us all down with their hose....but I couldn't stop there!! I was sick of sweets by this point and the only thing I ate in the last 6 miles was a piece of orange

that was offered to me. I saw some more friends / family at 22.5 miles, 23 miles and then 24 miles. The noise along the embankment was crazy - but so needed by that time - I was in my last 5k and my ankles were really hurting. I don't think I really took in miles 23 and 24 but before I knew it, I saw the mile 25 marker and I knew I could finish. I could see the 600metres to go sign - OMG, this is it, I am soooooo nearly there....and then I rounded the corner off of birdcage walk on to the mall, past Buckingham Palace....the 200 metre to go sign and then there it was in the distance - the finish line. It was nearly all over - all those months of training, the nerves, the excitement, the doubt, the carbs.....I started to run as fast as my legs would carry me at that point.....here goes, which finish funnel to go through?? Decisions, decisions - and then I went over the finish mat...it was over....5hrs 40 mins and 50 secs. The short walk to the marshals who were cutting off everyone's chip timer and then, there they were....the medals!!! It was put over your head like a gold medal winner and my lord, it was heavy. Then off to have your photo taken and collect a goodie bag....then just the walk to the lorries to collect your personal stuff. I forgot about that - it was soooo heavy...I'm sure it wasn't that heavy this morning when I set out. What a day - what an experience.

I expected tears pretty much all the way round, thinking of dad, but I only cried at the end and when I was feeling like I couldn't go on, I touched his picture on my shirt and asked him for the strength to carry on.

It was seriously one of the best days of my life and I cant wait to enter the ballot for next year - who knows, maybe I will see YOU there!

The Two Worlds of Charlie F preview

By Kirsty Downham

Taken from the personal experience of wounded, injured and sick service men and women, this new play by Owen Sheers is a darkly comic, authentic and uplifting tale of survival. The Two Worlds of Charlie F tells the story of Charlie Fowler from the war in afghanistan through the dream worlds of morphine hallucinations to the physio rooms of Headly court It was originally performed at the Haymarket Theatre in January 2012 and sell out performances at Edinburgh. The story is more real as its played by serving and ex service men making you connect with the reality of war.

It was originally set up as part of the first Theatre Recovery Project, and was a hit it sold out both in the west end and at the Edinburgh Festival resulting in a new tour. I was so happy to hear it was coming to Newcastle as soon as tickets were available I was in to buy. I was lucky to be able to buy the "meet the cast" option. So come 1900 on the 28th april Ill be in my seat waiting for curtain up.

To say Im excited is an understatement however I plan on taking a box of tissues as i feel ill be sob fest, Ill pop back with a Review next month.

Young Gregor Airborne for our Fallen Paras

By Donna Armstronge

In last month's newsletter there was an article about my 14 year old son Gregor Armstrong's upcoming 160ft sponsored Bungee Jump for the Parachute Regiment's Afghanistan Trust.

Gregor was raising funds for this charity which helps support our injured Paras and the families of the fallen, in honour of his cousin, Private Kyle Adams who we lost in Afghanistan in 2009.

Sunday 30 March, "B" (for bungee) Day was full of surprises for Gregor, his Aunt and Uncle - Kyle's Mum and Dad secretly travelled up from South Wales to Glasgow to support Gregor at his jump. They gave him a beautiful T-Shirt with Kyle's picture on it to wear during the jump.

When he arrived he did not have a chance to be nervous as around 50 of his school friends turned up to see him, and that was not all – two representatives, including the Vice Chairman of the Central Scotland Parachute Regiment Association arrived at the venue to support our brave young lad. They persuaded the Bungee club to display the Parachute Regiment Banner and turned the event into a real Airborne occasion.

When Gregor reached the top of the crane there was absolutely no hesitation as he launched himself off the platform.

Afterwards he was presented by his “wings” a small badge depicting the Parachute Regiment winged emblem and was loaned a Paras beret for some pictures.

Gregor’s target was £500 – thanks to the generosity of so many friends, family, neighbours and school friends as well as donations from some of my fellow AABS members, Gregor raised an incredible £1000.

Thank you so much for your support !

Fun Stuff To Send

By Pips Jarvis

I know we all have those moments when we can’t think of things to send to our adopted Squaddies, otherwise known as a ‘D’oh’ moment, so I decided to ask members what they had sent for their Squaddies to have fun with. The list is to help new members as well as existing members (who may not have thought of a particular item before). Please find the list below and enjoy the shopping!

Bouncing Balls Whoopie Cushion Frisby

Tennis Balls Flick Back Balls Yoyo

Chess Set (travel size) Snacks & Ladders (travel size)

Mini Pool Table Table Football Mini Bowling game

3 in 1 Rustic Cubes Colouring Pencils and Pens Tutu ’ s

Colouring In Paper/Book Racing Grannies

AABS Shop

We do have a shop on the website that have some wonderful items for sale. So instead of popping into a supermarket for a mug, why not get an AABS one?!

Armed Forces Day 2014

By Pips Jarvis

Armed Forces Day is on Saturday the 28 th June. The website has more details on events around the country. From previous years that I’ve attended, it’s been a great day out for the whole family, so for the kid in every adult- it’s worth going to and to the kids- convince your folks to take you.