

BRAVE , STUPID OR WHAT?

If any member of the General George Patton Appreciation Society wants to partake of an interesting experience, i.e. a challenge or new adventure – call it what you will, or a means of collecting money for a charitable cause they could do a lot worse than enter the Royal Marine's Assault Challenge.

To start at the beginning, my friend, whose wife suffers from Alzheimers disease decided to raise money for the sufferers and also the carers by attempting a tandem parachute jump which he duly did and we went along for encouragement. From then on the idea was born for both of us to carry on the good work. The next event was a sponsored walk of 15 miles round Langstone Harbour in May.

The next idea he dreamed up was to attempt the Assault Course at Lympstone. He eventually arranged for us to do this in October and we both assumed we would be doing this on our own with, of course, a Royal Marine or two for the 'health and safety' aspect. However, several days before the event I asked my son for any information which we would find helpful he being a WO1 in the RM. He then explained that this was a yearly challenge and this year there would be 4,000 competitors! How niaive can one be? On our way to the west country we passed several large signs pointing to the Challenge and that was when I became a bit apprehensive. From the literature which my son had taken from the Internet they advised all competitors to wear old clothing and to make sure to wear long sleeves and long pants. We were taken in lorries from the registration area to the course and our first taste of what was before us was from the lorries which were covered in mud and filth from the finished competitors who were lorried back. Each team started at four minute intervals having been taken through warming up exercises by Royal Marine PTIs. , then ran 500 yards and proceeded to do 6 sit-ups and 6 press-ups in two feet of thick mud. The course of three miles consisted of several runs through a stream;, four pitch-black tunnels which required negotiating on hands and knees, (hence the long sleeves and pants), wading through pools up to our chests and scrambling through thick black mud, finally going through a fully submerged tunnel. Mud was everywhere and because of the terrain most of the spectators were congregated round the submerged tunnel cheering their teams. Photographers were everywhere and we completed the course in 48 minutes which put us in 69th position over approximately 1000 teams. Some teams had as many as six entrants.

We returned to the base camp again by lorry, showers were available but as our team (2) took part about half way through the competition the showers had more mud than hot water. We washed at our Motorhome, threw most of our clothes in the skips provided (7 in all) and then had a meal. A most memorable day but when I was asked if I would be interested in taking part in 2008 I am afraid it was a definite NO. At 72 years of age I think I will retire from taking part in such a strenuous pursuit at least. It was printed on the programme that our team were the oldest competitors.

One lasting memory of the day was that everyone, players and spectators, were in such high spirits when they had completed the 'Mud Run' but there was one chap standing in the queue for the lorry wearing a crisp white shirt, white trousers and blue tie. When we asked him about his manner of dress he responded that he must look the part!

PS

Each team was expected to have a name. As we both hail from Lincoln we decided that "The Imps" would be appropriate then as we are 72 years young we decided on "The Old Imps" but then changed it again to "B'old Imps". The Lincoln Imp is actually in Lincoln Cathedral and is reputed to look after all people of Lincoln wherever they may be. He certainly had his work cut out that day!

Bob Ellis

