

# MEDIA RELEASE

## Amputee Servicemen to Retrace Gruelling Heroes of Telemark Expedition



**16<sup>th</sup> March 2013 – 27<sup>th</sup> March 2012.** Charity Pilgrim Bandits (New Milton, Hampshire) is to take injured service men on a hazardous 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary expedition to honour The Heroes of Telemark, the world-famous sabotage operation that took part in Nazi-occupied Norway during WW2 between the spring of 1942 and winter of 1944.



The original Heroes of Telemark Operation comprised allied forces and members of the Norwegian resistance. In all six, treacherous missions were carried out over a two year period designed to prevent Nazi Germany developing Deuterium Oxide, known as 'heavy water' for Hitler's nuclear energy programme. The WW2 missions tested human endurance to the maximum. Conditions on the Norwegian, Hardanger Plateau are among the toughest on the planet with temperatures dropping to -30 and with prevailing 50mph winds.

Pilgrim Bandits has gathered a group of amputees and severely injured servicemen along with paying members of the public to honour the successful WW2 mission and at the same time 'push all participants beyond endurance'. The Charity, which aims to raise funds from the expedition to further its work encouraging a 'no sympathy' approach towards injured men and women from the Army, Navy, RAF, Police, Fire and Ambulance Services, is seeking a sponsor for suitable clothing. In providing a focus and extreme challenge for these highly trained individuals, Pilgrim Bandits can increase individual confidence and inspire those who take part in the trip and those who learn about the experiences afterwards through talks, presentations and visits. Pilgrim Bandits also works with young people and children to encourage an 'anything is possible' mentality and boost personal confidence by visiting schools and care homes.

Among the Pilgrim Bandits taking part is Lance Bdr Ben Parkinson MBE who is a double leg amputee and possibly the most injured soldier to survive the Afghan conflict having sustained a catalogue of over 40 injuries including brain damage that has affected his memory and speech. In the six years since his injuries, received in an armoured vehicle that was blown up by an IED in Helmand Province, Ben has confounded medical opinion by not only surviving, but walking, regaining his speech and continuing to improve week by week. Ben is a Patron of the Pilgrim Bandits and may be known to many for his amazing strength and determination when he carried the Olympic torch through his home town of Doncaster last year. Taking part also will be Rifleman Paul Jacobs GM who is the only injured serviceman to return from Afghanistan having completely lost his sight, he is joined by Sapper Karl Boon who sustained the loss of his right leg below the knee.

ITV has confirmed that it will run a programme from footage taken by Sgt Paul Randall from the Army Press Association which will also be making a video documentary. This will be broadcast on terrestrial TV, Military platforms, Internet channels and satellite channels (in that order) at times to be decided later this year.

Deborah Risbridger from the charity said, "This is the kind of operation our boys would have relished had they been in the Forces during the War. To retrace the steps and experience, in part, what those brave allies had to do will be an honour and a huge privilege. It will also give our injured boys a real focus. The terrain is demanding. The conditions will be extremely tough, everyone is training very hard and will need to be fully prepared."

The cost of the Heroes of Telemark Expedition is in the region of £50,000. This includes all support services, the building of specialist pods for amputees with double limb-loss, accommodation and flights to Norway. These costs are met by volunteer fund raisers paying for their place. To fund much-needed equipment and kit Pilgrim Bandits is hoping to approach apparatus and clothing manufacturers in a bid to secure either loaned or completely donated kit for the amputees in return for association and branding on the trip.

For more information about the Pilgrim Bandits, Heroes of Telemark Expedition visit [www.pilgrimbandits.org](http://www.pilgrimbandits.org) or for further media information, please contact: [media@pilgrimbandits.org](mailto:media@pilgrimbandits.org). Tel. 01425 461600. Mob. 07767 784295.

*Go as a pilgrim and seek out danger, and seek stimulation in the company of the Brave*

