

PXR - Operation "211 Lost Boys"

the boys who can fly and never grow up



211 Old Comrades Club Reunion - Felixstowe 8/10th May 2015

We have previously heard the stories about a special, that's "very special", group of men that have been on many secret and many not so secret training sessions over the past 23 years. These adventures have been daring, exciting and sometimes unbelievable, they have gone to the four corners of the UK and then there is next year, they will be having their first trip abroad (to Wales), well it may be independent by then – get your passports ready!



Well the PXR this year is one that starts off so sadly, the subjects of the story are very similar to numerous films and books all of us have seen. The films have a little boy in them called Peter, well our story is about one of our dear comrades who also thinks he's losing his marbles, sad but true that is what he thinks. Our story is about the adventures of our very own Peter Pan, John Hughes and his merry crew the "211 lost boys" (LB's), not to be confused with LB's lady boys.

We all know that when John gets on the bed he's often away with the fairies, we also know, give him 5 minutes and he will lapse into sleep mode, dreaming of times gone by and all his adventures, it can be anywhere, at the dining table in Pontins, in Weatherspoon's Lowestoft in the middle of the morning or anywhere else. When he was younger he had the same routine, he would drive his big Scammel sometimes to overseas shores and then do his best to stay unnoticed for two weeks, sleeping most of the time.



There is a happy side to this story for when John meets up with the "211 lost boys" everything changes and he instantly becomes 17 years old all over again. His fairy tale dreams of his times gone by and the adventure he hasn't even had yet start begin; of course he can't do this without his gang "the lost boy of 211". They all just close their eyes when they arrive for a weekend and for that one weekend a year these men become and act like little boys one more time!

There are standing instruction that state; there must be an advance party and they should make sure the fun starts early. This time it was to meet at Pontins at Lowestoft for the preparation of the formal 211 weekend. The lost boys including John himself, Dixie Dean and Ron the Do Ron Ron Hall arrived at the "adults" only midweek break. Dave Perry was later to arrive and went to join the boys in the mess hall for evening meal. As he entered on the first night he was approached as he wasn't dressed correctly - he was the only one without a Zimmer frame, walking stick, mobility scooter or walker, obviously the others blended in really well.

The excitement wasn't just at meal times, bingo, beetle drives and other such entertainment 3 times a day, what activity for the great adventurers.

On Tuesday they went to Lowestoft and boarded an LT412 Minicarlo ship, they stumbled across this as a living museum piece. Sea legs were required for the guided tour, a swash buckling time was had by all. John had been left to relax in Weatherspoons whilst the gang were away, on their return John said I'm going to the dogs, we replied you're not going to the dogs don't be silly you have your nebuliser and medication

you'll be fine. He said no you fool were going to the dogs, dog racing that is tomorrow night.

The night of the 5th May going into the 6th May was a full moon and as normal the lost boys were last out of the bar, this was after deciding tonight was going to be a dry night. The night of the full moon also brought with a terrific storm, winds and rain hammered the accommodation all night. It only stopped to let the boys get back from their adventure in the clubhouse back to their rooms.



On the 6th May was the day before the General Elections. The gang set off for Southwold, to the coast to attempt to fly, just like Tinkerbell. After a cup of tea they set off down the pier, the hurricane force gale added to the excitement of the boys trying to fly. They linked arms as they tried to stay upright and on their feet, they were hand in hand playfully giggling about the fun they were having. Oh they wished Wendy and the other lost boys were there to share their fun.

The boys returned to the car and started planning the next adventure, that evening there was to be a trip to the dogs. After some intense negotiation with the dog race stadium the boys booked the £13 dining deal. Then there was the real negotiation between them all, the Dixie's betting swindle was on. This went on until we returned for a siesta back at the camp.

But before turning in there was some, what can only be described as lively discussion. The subject was the general election and what the country needed. Strange as it might be the boys discussed and debated with each other, each one could pick an argument with themselves, they contradict each other's and their own arguments about what is best for the country. Déjà vu strikes, the same discussion as we had back in 2013 at the reunion.



That night they set off for the evening's race night adventure at 1600hrs, the 13 mile trip took on an adventure of its own and it took 2 hrs via the coast route to get there. When they were a couple of miles away they got lost again on the front at Gt. Yarmouth, where they saw 2 Harry Ramsdens chip shops so close together! This wouldn't be one as we drove down the front and the same one when we drove back up, would it Dixie?

There were winners and losers on the night, but most importantly the dogging was a great night out, afterwards they even managed to get back to the club for last orders.

The following morning was glorious sunshine, but blustery. Over breakfast the boys discussed the adventure for the day; Beccles and the swing bridge it was to be, big Ron had seen this on the TV on a program about railways.



Well what would you expect a simple road trip turns into more great adventure, off they set to Beccles. The talk started of Hancock's half hour and the funny stories, then the lack of good variety shows these days compared with those times? Britain's got Talent was discussed, but that was a show with cheats because the real dog who sang was nothing more than a real dog with a false mouth on it. "Cheats" big Ron declared, well the other boys joined in the debate, if the dog on BGT is a cheat what is Rod Hull and Emu and Orville the duck. Ron says there not cheats because they were not real and therefore not cheats.

When you're young, naive and having so much fun, isn't the banter so exciting!

The adventure continued, and they discovered that the bridge was not at Beccles but 9 miles away at Leighton, you won't be surprised about that would you, so off the "really lost boys" travelled to the next location. In the little village the party continued with their fun looking for the bridge, eventually finding it down a rough track. Just like the old days the boys marshalled the vehicle down the track and to the river where you could view the bridge from (miles away in the distance, surrounded by water you could just

about see what we were looking for). Today's adventure had been achieved; it was now time to return home for some well-deserved rest.

The advanced party were excited they had received a call from Gary Stewart, he had arrived on the "rear advanced party" and was already at Felixstowe for the start of his adventure. No drinking since his visit to Thailand at Christmas meant a busy night ahead for him and the bar staff in the hotel. Gary was sure to present a good image to the staff in the hotel, he always did.

Garry had always looked up to John and decided to wear his favourite Peter Pan gear while he had the opportunity, he knew this was his one opportunity because John wouldn't be happy if there were 2 Peters in the party.

Gary loved his outfit but just wasn't sure where he had left his shorts, he thinks the pan look could be a suitable future alternative.



Friday was coming around very quickly for the advanced party and they were excited to at last be meeting up with the rest of the 211 Lost Boys, it was a year ago when they last met up, new adventures and tales were ahead of them.

Late Thursday night into Friday there was a slight distraction, the result of the general election were coming in, after some heavy debate leading up to the vote the day before there was little noise to the election results, the Conservatives were back at the head of the British Government. We now have to wait to see if we stay in Europe or not.

All of a sudden it was his the start of the reunion adventure Gary Stewart was followed by Dave Clarke, Geoff White, Bob Willis, Dixie, Ron, Dave & John, Dave Woods, Brian Finland, Tom Start, Tom Fromson, Ken O'Gara, Ken Pepper, John Haley, Pete Dibble, Reg Day, Andy Porat, Gary Caswell, Bill Gilbert, Tony Blackburn, Jacko & Steve Terry - one by one, two by two, the 211 lost boys arrived and the gang was back together, oh and last and not least Albert Johnson arrived late in the evening.

We were all sad to hear that Stu Murdoch had not been able to attend the adventure, he had called in sick for the weekend, there will be other weekends and adventure in future years fear not.



In the bar we learnt that there may be a new secretary as Dave Woods was being groomed by Brian, not exactly sure what for, but Brian was heard to say "if you take down everything I ask you won't go far wrong young man".

Not sure how long Woody lasted but it sounds like it all came to a sudden and expected end quite quickly.

Woody commented "I gave up those fags after last year's reunion, I've used this electronic device for fun for the last 12 months, it really gives me the same buzz"

Bob Willis, told how he now lives the dream as a little boy all the time now, he has to grow up to act like a 17 year old when he meets up with the 211 lost boys.

He got his job on the Royal estate and now plays twice a week to his heart's content with a couple of other little boys. They are seen with their choppers out frequently waving them at each other, sometimes chopping wood, and sometimes just playing with them. The boys love to compare sizes, of the wood they have cut that is, only the best will do for the Royals.



The bar was used banter and stories during the afternoon, planning was going ahead for all the mischief ahead over the weekend.

Geoff told the story how he had to miss last year's weekend reunion.

He went on to explain that he was at the top of the ladder ready to fly off, he jumped singing just like Orville "I wish I could fly, right up to the sky ----- (oh shit)-----but I can't", landing with a great big thump, battered and bruised from his attempt last year, Geoff was back for another go this year with all his buddies to catch him.



After a lovely carvery meal in the evening, finger food to some, the guys settled in to the evenings reminiscing and catch up. There was talk of days gone by and the opportunities and excitement of the weekend ahead, there was also some talk of years to come. The lost boys of 211 have a very special bond, one of trust and love for each other, wherever and whenever they are to meet they will always be there from far and wide to enjoy each other's company.

The 211 reunion weekend coincided with the country celebrating the
70 anniversary of Victory in Europe Day



On Saturday morning after a fantastic breakfast the drivers were summoned to get there briefing and route cards, still all the activity was not known. The lost boys were allocated their vehicles and nominated drivers and to location 4 on the map they travelled to wait for further instructions. Our group with nominated driver Albert Johnson set off and followed the route card when we were close we passed a little waste land commenting it must be here somewhere, only to have to turn around because that what we thought was waste ground was the hidden location for the mornings event.



John was waving from a little hollow where there were some sheds.

He was smiling "come this way boys, if you go down in the woods today you'll surely have a surprise" he said.

Oh and we did have a surprise, we entered a tin shed where we were given the first hint of what was ahead - the Felixstowe shooting club.

Bows and arrows the boys though, even better it was real guns.

After having a safety brief of John Hayley we went to the second shed where we were to split into shooting details, 4 at a time we completed a rifle shoot and pistol shoot. The competition was serious stuff and the tuition was excellent, Bill, Monika, Rod, Dennis and thanks also to Clair on the tea, coffee & cakes.

The background activity was a assortment of more weapons which obviously interested the boys.



After the shooting the boys gathered to thank the shooting club and then have a group photo, it was more like Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels than Peter Pan. Our thanks go to the John and the Felixstowe club members for making the event and weekend so special and memorable.



At 1300 hrs we were called back to the vehicles and instructed to go in car convoy to location 3 on the map, a fish and chip restaurant on the sea front. Pre placed orders of Cod, Haddock & Eel were served by the waitresses. Small portions were order for everyone, we could only imagine what the large would have been like, another fantastic meal.

Near the end of the meal the waitress decided to entertain us with her party piece, the milk shake she was carrying on a tray fell off, the lid flew off and the shake went up in the air landing on some of us – as we turned around we saw the lady behind plastered from head to toe. Like true gents we told the girl not to worry these things just happen in life, it was only a bit of spilt milk.

After lunch the 211 Lost Boys were more like 211 fat boys, the drivers returned their cars to the hotel and

it was now free time. Most enjoyed a walk in the sun or a quiet pint, however there was still work for some of the boys to do as John completed his secretarial handover to Brian in the bar!

During the latter part of the afternoon some of the lost boys retired and spent some time in the company of the fairies, they were to return at 18.30 hrs for pre-dinner drinks.

The evening was glorious and we were able to have the drinks on the veranda before the official club photo. Spirits were high and there was a jovial atmosphere, the weekends adventures had been a great success and John should be proud of the standards he set.

After being seated for the meal John reminded us of our meal selections and then the meal was served, once again we were fed and wined well, another few extra inches on the waistline. The private function room was hot and the boys first instructed to remove jackets, then had fun and games with the fans before the challenge of opening the patio doors.

The toasts then followed "the Queen" and then "absent friends" before we had the mess meeting. John Hayley formally welcomed everyone to the 211 annual reunion at Felixstowe.

John Hughes completed the secretary's report before resigning the post due to ill health, the post of secretary was handed over to Brian Finland with Albert Johnson as his deputy.

The prize winners were announced

Smile with Kyle (The George Kyle Soldier) - John Hughes

The shooting completion

Best shot overall - Ken O'Gara (how can you go from wooden spoon in 2014 to champion in 2015!!!)

Runner Up - Dave Woods

Wooden spoon - Tom Start. (hope your boss at work never finds out)

The meeting was brought to an end and the boys returned to the bar. Albert set up his magic show and entertained the lost boys and guests for well over an hour - excellent as usual.

However there was some unrest at the end of the evening - the bar closed at 2300hrs - something you never see these days. This turned out to be a blessing in disguise:- the very next morning everyone was at breakfast all together, all at the same time, all looking bright and fresh - something else you don't see these days. *I guess even at our age it is good to be kept in order and told what to do.*

After the communal breakfast the boys bid farewell to each other and set off on the merry way back home, the adventure for most was over for another year. Time to recover and until the next time!!



Rear Party

Perry & Stewart had agreed to complete the rear party duties. Their day started with a bft along the sea front in the sunshine, from one end to the other they marched, returning to the pier for a tray of chips for lunch whilst watching the many people walking down the prom. After lunch they returned to the hotel to collect the car and start the cultural visit to the Felixstowe view point, including the docks and container ships, the Felixstowe museum and the Fort and Battery. The museum was excellent and the Fort was fantastic. They took an audio tour which took nearly two hours.

Soon Monday came around and the two remaining friends had to bid farewell and set off home.

The “211 Lost Boys” is a story that should warm your heart, it’s about the boys who won’t grow up, who have a never ending childhood and adventures on the island of Neverland. Well it is only for a weekend or so each year and it really is something to look forward to and to keep us young ---- I hope it goes on for ever.

211 on Tour



Looking forward to seeing you all next year in Wales where we can interact with more pirates, mermaids, fairies and occasionally normal people