

Freedom fighters to parade in town

PROUD soldiers are set to march through a North Wales town after coming back from one of the world's toughest war zones.

The Welsh Guards will be celebrating their return from Afghanistan with a freedom parade through Caernarfon next week.

The First Battalion undertook its second tour of the war-torn country last week and has been granted permission to visit the town on Thursday, January 24.

Decorated guardsmen will undergo a formal inspection on the Maes before parading around the castle with a military band and taking the salute in front of dignitaries.

The Welsh Guards received the freedom of the Royal town of Caernarfon in 2007 and will be marching next to exercise that freedom.

Caernarfon town council clerk Katherine Owen: "We hope that residents of Caernarfon and the surrounding areas will turn out in their droves to support them."

The Guards will leave the Barrack in Caernarfon at 10.30am and the parade will start on the Maes, Caernarfon at 10.45am



Nick Rees (left) and Ed Curtis will row non-stop across the Atlantic, taking two-hour turns for 60 days in the 2,600-mile Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge race

Wife's cancer fight inspires ocean ordeal

Rowers ready to grin and bare it in tropics

By OWEN HUGHES

A DAD-of-two will row across the Atlantic Ocean non-stop – facing 50ft high waves, whales and giant ships – possibly in the nude.

Ed Curtis, 37, says he will "enter the unknown" when he takes to the seas to row from La Gomera in the Canary Islands to English Harbour in Antigua – a distance of 2,600 nautical miles.

Ed, a sailing instructor at Plas Menai watersports centre on the Menai Strait, will be joined by close friend Nick Rees for the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge – dubbed the world's toughest rowing race.

They have been inspired by Nick's wife's battle with breast cancer and Ed suggested the idea after a glass of wine.

It will see them at sea in the 24ft rowing boat for around 60 days – taking it in turns to row across the mighty ocean.

With scorching temperatures expected the clothes may come off as this is recommended as the best way to avoid painful blisters.

Ed, from Penmaenmawr, said: "The fear is going into the unknown and leaving our families at Christmas (the challenge starts in December)."

"It is also the unknown about how tough it will be, how hard it

will be on our minds and bodies.

"Tropical storms are also a concern, the winds can be very strong and the waves can reach 50ft high but at least we will be out of the hurricane season.

"Whales and sharks have been known to take an interest in the boats but the biggest concern on the water will be shipping, the Atlantic is very busy with large ships and that is a danger."

He added that stripping off was "quite possible" as they make their journey.

The boat is completely self sufficient, even makes its own fresh water, and has solar panels for electricity. The rowers burn 8000 calories per day each and lose 20% of their body weight.

He added: "The race is non-stop, we take it turns on the boat, two hours on and two hours off.

"We don't want to hang around, we don't want this to take any longer than it has to.

"In terms of support there is one yacht that follows the last boat, but if we receive any outside help at all we are out of the challenge.

"We are basically on our own out there."

Nick's wife Ellen was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2009.

The pair are now seeking to raise £250,000 for Break-

through Breast Cancer.

Nick, 37, from Rowledge, Surrey, says: "It was devastating when Ellen was diagnosed with breast cancer and she showed incredible strength to get through it.

"She is our inspiration for wanting to take on such a big challenge for Breakthrough Breast Cancer. Knowing the money raised will help find new treatments and help save lives is our motivation for this unbelievably tough challenge."

Around 48,000 women and 300 men are diagnosed with breast cancer in the UK each year, with 12,000 dying of it. Breakthrough Breast Cancer is leading the fight against

the disease by developing life-saving treatments and bringing them to patients as quickly as possible.

Ed, who is married to Nicola, and is dad of Osian, six, and Betsan, two, said: "Nick wanted ideas to raise money for cancer research and after a glass of wine I came up with the idea of rowing the Atlantic.

"My previous experience had been in the 'good old days' when I rowed in a four-person Pembroke long boat but I am now training hard."

As well fundraising for the charity they are seeking corporate sponsorship towards the cost of the equipment.



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Nick Rees (left) and Ed Curtis will row over Atlantic



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