

Chimpanzees at Edinburgh Zoo train the Marines

✘ The chimps at Edinburgh Zoo's Budongo Trail showed off their climbing techniques yesterday to give Sam Sheriff, a Physical Training Instructor (PTI) in the Royal Marines, some tips in preparation for his world record fundraising challenge.

On the 14th December 2010, Sam will attempt to climb 3000ft on a 30ft gymnasium rope to set a new world record and raise money to build a memorial garden at the 45 Commando in Arbroath, Angus. He is hoping to help his unit reach the £150,000 target needed to build the garden, which has been designed by gardener and BBC Gardeners' World presenter, Toby Buckland.

Sam said, 'The whole Unit are really getting behind the challenge of raising the £150,000. There have been some great challenges, from a sponsored wing walk to completing our grueling 30 mile Commando Test in a record breaking time. As Royal Marines we all love a challenge!

'Rope climbing is something which all Royal Marines must be able to do in order to progress in Commando training. This ensures they have good upper body strength and are physically capable of any task which is asked of them. As a Royal Marines PTI my job is to teach new recruits how to climb ropes, so I thought this would be a fitting challenge. I have never seen a fundraiser like this before and there is no world record for rope climbing endurance, so I thought I would see if I could set one at the same time!'

Sam is currently awaiting confirmation that his challenge can be officially recognised by Guinness World Records and hopes to complete his ascent in less than nine hours. To thank the

chimps at Edinburgh Zoo for their rope climbing tips today, Sam and 45 Commando have donated 70ft of ropes to Budongo Trail.

Joanne Richardson, Head Keeper for Budongo Trail said, 'Obviously the chimps in Budongo are expert climbers, especially when it comes to ropes. They can make it to the top of the 10ft ropes in their enclosure in seconds, but unlike us they are able to grip the rope with their hands and their feet, so they do have an advantage!

'Chimps' bodies are perfect for climbing with long arms and incredible upper body strength, and when they are active they also use ropes in displays to one another. I'm sure they will thoroughly test out the ropes Sam has donated today!'



Sam continued, 'I have been working hard to prepare for the challenge and perfect my climbing technique, and the chimps have given me some interesting tips! However, my technique will be more traditional than the chimps' – my upper body strength is no match for theirs, so I will make the most of my legs to push me up the rope as well.'

Lt Col Oliver Lee RM MBE , Commanding Officer for the 45 Commando said, 'By building a memorial garden we wanted to create a place of reflection for injured Royal Marines, as well as a place for friends and loved ones to remember those who sadly may not return home from operations.

'Fundraising efforts for the garden so far have been fantastic and I'm looking forward to seeing Sgt Sheriff complete his own challenge. We hope to complete the garden in time for the Units return from Afghanistan next year, and thanks to the commitment the unit has shown so far, I'm confident we will reach our target.'

If you would like to support Sam's challenge for the 45 Commando Memorial Garden, you can donate online at

www.bmycharity.com/100ropes Any donations would be gratefully received.