

The crew of a Royal Air Force Puma helicopter have kick-started the opening of the 2012 Paralympic Games by helping to unveil the official logo in Edinburgh.

Personnel from 33 Squadron arrived by Puma helicopter at The Mound in Scotland's capital city earlier today to present arrows to Team GB Paralympian Alasdair Hamilton.

Corporal Lindsey Allan from the RAF Regiment's 4 Force Protection Wing and Corporal Steven Evans from the RAF Regiment Training Wing performed a fast-rope drop from the aircraft to pass two arrows to Corporal Shaun Gibson who was waiting at the base of The Mound.

Corporal Gibson then delivered the arrows to Mr Hamilton, a member of the Paralympic Archery Team, who fired them at a target which revealed the London 2012 Paralympic official logo - the Agitos.

The unveiling of the Agitos climaxed in pyrotechnics and coloured smoke to mark the beginning of the Paralympic Games in a week's time.

Corporal Allan said:

"It was an amazing experience and I am very proud to have represented the Royal Air Force Regiment at this ceremony."

Officer Commanding C Flight, 33 Squadron, at RAF Benson, Squadron Leader Stewart Staudinger, said:

"It really is humbling to play a part in the Edinburgh Ceremony, and the Royal Air Force's motto of 'Per Ardua ad Astra' ['Through adversity to the stars'] shows that the men and women of the Royal Air Force share the same ethos as the men and women who will be performing at the Paralympics. We are proud to be associated with them."

The Puma Force routinely practises its fast-roping role to enable it to quickly insert troops into hazardous areas or into sites where a conventional helicopter landing is not possible.

The RAF is making preparations for the arrival of the upgraded Puma Mk2 which is due to enter service in 2013 and will see the Puma receive significantly upgraded engines and avionics that will allow it to enhance its capability - particularly in demanding hot and high conditions - and provide many more years of service in the RAF.

Elsewhere, the Paralympic Torch Relay began as four 'National Flames' were lit at the highest peaks of the four home nations: Scafell Pike (England), Snowdon (Wales), Slieve Donard (Northern Ireland) and Ben Nevis (Scotland). The Flames will now make their way to their final

destination - the Olympic Stadium in London.

The Paralympics will begin on 29 August with several ex-military personnel taking part, including former RAF technician Senior Aircraftman Jon-Allan Butterworth, who lost an arm while on operations in Iraq.