



**Veterans & Families – Listening Project**

**email: [veteransnfamilies@yahoo.com](mailto:veteransnfamilies@yahoo.com)**

**[www.vflp.org.uk](http://www.vflp.org.uk)**



# Welcome to Our December Newsletter 2023

Well, 2023 is almost coming to an end and what a year it has been... With birthdays, anniversaries and celebrations, as well as the Coronation of King Charles III.

However you intend to spend your Christmas, we wish you all the best.



...IT'S TIME FOR...  
**HOT TOPICS.**  
So, grab a snack & come-on BACK

WWW.ANDERTOONS.COM



"I don't know, have a sandwich, make some soup or something. It's just not that hard."



The following articles are from the  
**SOLDIER MAGAZINE**



## TRIBUTE TO MILITARY ASBESTOS VICTIMS

■ A MONUMENT honouring past and present Armed Forces personnel suffering from asbestos-related cancers has been unveiled at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

The sculpture – commissioned by charity Mesothelioma UK and funded by private donations – is made up of more than 60 stone pieces representing the building blocks of life and public service.

Artist Graeme Mitcheson, who produced the piece, said it had been an honour to create a focal point that also recognised “those who have and are continuing to suffer from this awful disease”.

## CODE FOR CARE HOMES

■ AN INNOVATIVE programme that supports care home staff responsible for looking after ex-military personnel is being rolled out across England.

Under the Veteran Friendly Framework – a collaboration between good causes Royal Star and Garter, The Royal British Legion and NHS Veterans’ Covenant Healthcare Alliance – carers must prove themselves in areas such as drawing up bespoke care plans and combating social isolation.

Ten homes are accredited to the initiative with another 20 in the pipeline.





Picture: Graeme Main

# Lasting connections?

**N**EARLY six in ten veterans would like to spend more time with former military colleagues but rarely take the opportunity to do so, a study has revealed.

A survey of 5,000 ex-military personnel found that 58 per cent of them wanted to meet up more often with old comrades.

But a third only met up on the likes of Remembrance Day once a year and nine per cent had no contact at all.

The findings come from the organisation behind the Veterans' Railcard. They also flagged that half of leavers felt lonely or isolated after departing the military.

Former Royal Marine and television presenter JJ Chalmers encouraged ex-Servicemen and women to keep up with their old colleagues after seeing the research.

"It is imperative we embrace our

exceptional community and ensure connections last," he added.

"The extraordinary experiences we undergo during our time in the Forces shape our lives." ■

## View from the GROUND

"There's wanting to see old comrades and then there's getting round to doing it. It took me years to re-engage after leaving. It was only after meeting up with two ex-colleagues at the funeral of a friend that I started properly seeing the veteran community. After a few minutes of talking, it was as if we had never been apart."



**Steve Davies (ex-RGJ),  
Founder, Cranbrook Breakfast Club**



The following articles came from the  
ROYAL NAVY NEWS & EVENTS page



**More than 2,000 friends and family today gave the biggest welcome to Britain's biggest warship as HMS Prince of Wales returned to Portsmouth.**

The aircraft carrier enjoyed the largest homecoming the Hampshire Naval Base has seen in several years as she completed a three-month deployment to the United States.







**A young sailor from HMS Collingwood has been honoured by the Polish Government for his – and his family's – efforts to bring a wartime Spitfire back to life.**

Jack Booth is one of six family members involved in the ambitious Łaguna Spitfire Legacy which hopes to build a full-size replica one of the legendary WW2 fighters as a tribute to Polish aviators – more than 80 years after it plunged into a field in Coquelles on the Pas de Calais, not far from the present-day Channel tunnel terminus.





The huge task was sparked when Jack's uncle Scott Booth bought a Rolls-Royce Merlin engine which he planned to turn into a coffee table at his home in Gloucestershire.

With the serial numbers on the engine still legible, Scott decided to look into the engine's history - leading him to the actual aircraft, Spitfire P8331 RF-M, and the men who flew it.

The last man to climb into her cockpit was Major/Wing Commander Piotr Łaguna, a 35-year-old Pole who had flown in defence of his homeland in September 1939, then fled it when it was overrun by the Nazis, fought in France and when it too fell to the jackboot, he came to the UK and fought alongside fellow Poles in the Battle of Britain.





One of the many reasons that V&F-LP came about, was due to the lack of support for the Veterans & Families of our Armed Forces; like many other 'Grass-Roots' drop-ins for Veterans & Families really... As an observation, over the years of running V&F-LP, we've noticed that even though there has been some new, funded initiatives & projects to

support Veterans (that often overlook the family!!), these initiatives could be administer better i.e. at national, local 'Grass-Roots' level. It's good to hear of Operation Restore: Supporting Veterans that have physical injuries. Operation Fortitude: Help and support of homeless veterans & Operation Courage: Supports Veterans with mental health issues. However, posing behind a podium promoting these to the usual representatives seems to be failing the Veteran, as it doesn't appear to be going any further than that; as the veteran isn't always made aware of it.

We wondered what could be done!! Perhaps those promoting these funded initiatives & projects, could be more pro-active and liaise better with local (independent) Armed Forces Veterans' Drop-ins. Instead of maybe facilitating the same old, same old routes. May be it's time to address how these funded initiatives & projects are actually promoted. Let's make 2024 a year to share the care, and get the #Conversation\_Started...





## thewarriorprogramme

Our programme enables individuals to manage their emotions and to develop the resilience, focus and motivation to succeed in today's world. The programme has been developed over the last fifteen years to meet the demands and challenges experienced by past and present members of the armed forces and their families.

**ENQUIRIES@WARRIORPROGRAMME.ORG.UK +44 (0)808 801 0898**



Mental health help & support for UK armed forces veterans, reservists, families. Free, prompt, local, effective.

Call 0300 302 0551 or [Email us Here](#)

# COMBATSTRESS

## FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

The first step to access our services is to contact our free 24-hour confidential mental health Helpline. You can call, text or email our Helpline. Family members, friends and carers can also contact us for help and advice. Our specially trained team will provide advice and support about how we, or other organisations, can help.

**0800 138 1619**

You can also text on [07537 173683](tel:07537173683) or email [helpline@combatstress.org.uk](mailto:helpline@combatstress.org.uk)

Standard charges may apply for texts, please check with your provider.

Combat Stress and our helpline are not a crisis service. If you are in a an emergency situation and need urgent support please call the emergency services via 999 or the Samaritans via 116 123.



Wondering if there is a Veterans' Drop-in in your area, you could check-out ADIC's website to find out more....



Association of Service  
Drop-In Centres

[www.asdic.org.uk/member-directory](http://www.asdic.org.uk/member-directory)

WWW.ANDERSTOONS.COM



Pavlov's cat.





# Veterans UK helpline

The Ministry of Defence's Veterans UK helpline provides assistance on many issues including benefits, housing and welfare.

Email: [veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk](mailto:veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk)

Freephone (UK only): 0808 1914 2 18

Telephone (overseas): +44 1253 866 043

Normal Service 8.00 am to 4.00 pm Monday to Friday

When the helpline is closed, callers in need of immediate emotional support will be given the option to be routed to The Samaritans 24 hour helpline.

## Veterans UK Postal Address:

Veterans UK helpline  
Veterans UK  
Ministry of Defence  
Norcross  
Thornton Cleveleys  
FY5 3WP



# Veterans Welfare Service

How to get help from the Veterans Welfare Service.

The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides a professional help and advice service to veterans or anyone supporting a veteran, their families and dependants.

WWW.ANDERZTOONS.COM



"Hey, Tom. The exterminator came by again, but, as you can see, it's still not working. Also, you got a package."







## Help and support for when a veteran or service person dies

Information about bereavement compensation as well as support and guidance for the families and dependants of deceased armed forces personnel and veterans.

WWW.MINDKIDTOONS.COM



"Everyday he just stands there and looks. Never comes in, never so much as touches the door, just... looks. I mean, come on! Do something! Or don't! But for crying out loud, end this!!!"





Take care  
From the team V&F-LP

All information is correct at the time of going to press & PDF  
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\*Subject to change