



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans



The Falklands revisited

Veterans look back,
and forward to later life.

p4
Erskine Centre
make-over

p6
Be hearing
loss aware

p8
Support
for ex-RAF

MAGAZINE

ISSUE FIVE: SPRING 2022

Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Foreword | 1 |
| Unforgotten Stories | 2 |
| Erskine: bigger and better ERMAC | 4 |
| Major refurbishment of the Reid Macewan Centre | |
| Be hearing loss aware | 6 |
| The early signs and available support. | |
| Support for the RAF community | 8 |
| Royal Air Forces Association projects | |
| The Falklands Revisited | 10 |
| Cover feature | |
| The knowledge | 15 |

Cover photo © Crown copyright. IWM (FKD 2028)

The Unforgotten Forces magazine is for older veterans living in Scotland, their families, and carers.

We welcome reader feedback: you can contact us by phone, email or in writing. You can also use the details below to let us know if you no longer wish to receive the magazine.

Email: veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk

Telephone: **0333 323 2400**

Write to: Veterans Project, Age Scotland
Causewayside House
160 Causewayside
Edinburgh EH9 1PR

Unforgotten Forces is a partnership of military and civilian charities, led and co-ordinated by Age Scotland, that have joined forces to boost the health and wellbeing of veterans in Scotland age 65 and older. This magazine is funded by a grant from the Scottish Government. Age Scotland aims to ensure information is accurate at time of production and cannot be held liable for any errors or omissions.

ISSN 2635-1242 (print)

ISSN 2635-1250 (online)

Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland. Registration Number: 153343 Charity Number SC010100. Registered Office: Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR.

Foreword

Welcome to Unforgotten Forces magazine.



In 1982 the UK fought a brief and successful war against Argentina for possession of the Falkland Islands. This year is the 40th anniversary of that conflict, a time to remember those who lost their lives, including 255 British personnel, and those who were injured. On page 10, Falkland veterans share their memories of the campaign, talk about their lives since, and reflect on what later life means to them.

In addition to the Royal Navy, Army and RAF, seafarers from the Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Merchant Navy were critical to the campaign to retake the islands. As well as support from Armed Forces charities, they can draw on dedicated support from seafarers charities such as Nautilus Welfare, contact details for which are included on page 12.

This spring renovations were unveiled at the fantastic Erskine Reid Macewen Activity Centre (ERMAC), which offers camaraderie and activities opportunities to ex-service men and women in west central Scotland. You can read about the new facilities on page 4 and hear from one veteran on how ERMAC membership has changed his life.

Veterans are around three and a half times as likely as civilians to experience hearing loss, particularly those who served before ear protection was given the emphasis it has today. On page 6 you can read about early signs of hearing loss and about support that's available for those living with it.

For veterans of the RAF, and their families, the RAF Association is a Swiss Army Knife of a charity, offering a multiplicity of support and opportunities. You can find out more on page 8.

If you enjoy this magazine, please pass it on to others in the ex-service community who would find it of interest and encourage them to subscribe. Both our electronic and postal editions are free, with three issues published annually. To subscribe call the **Age Scotland Helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** or visit **www.unforgottenforces.scot**.

Best wishes
Doug Anthony, Editor

Support during NHS treatment reaches more areas

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) works with ex-service men and women going through NHS treatment. While NHS staff meet medical needs, DMWS supports veterans and their families with their wider needs. Its professional and compassionate Welfare Officers help reduce anxiety, stress and social isolation, and assist with practical problems, before, during and after a hospital stay.

The DMWS service is well-established in Fife (Queen Margaret's Hospital, Dunfermline and Victoria Hospital, Kirkcaldy), Lanarkshire (University Hospitals Wishaw, Hairmyres and Monklands), Scottish Borders (Borders General, Melrose) and around the Vale of Leven.

Now it has expanded support in NHS Lothian (Western General and The Royal Infirmary in Edinburgh and St John's, Livingstone) and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde (Queen Elizabeth University Hospital, Glasgow). It also offers a Scotland-wide National Response Service and, in partnership with Fares4Free and the Scottish Veterans Wellbeing Alliance, provides an escorted patient travel scheme on a case-by-case basis.



For more information and to request support call **0800 999 3697** or email referrals@dmws.org.uk.

Highland Handyperson funding boost

The Veterans Highland Handyperson Service, run by Unforgotten Forces partner ILM Highland, does small jobs and small repairs in and around the home for ex-service personnel aged 65 and older living in Ross-shire, Sutherland, Inverness, and Moray. Now, after a two-year hiatus, Unforgotten Forces is again contributing to the service with funds from its Scottish Government grant: £18,500 for the 1st April 2022 to 31st March 2023 period.

Unforgotten Forces Coordinator Frank Gribben says: "Veterans Highland Handyperson has been part of Unforgotten Forces since we began in 2017. I'm thrilled that we are once more able to invest in this invaluable service."

Martin Macleod, CEO, ILM Highland said: "At ILM we're very proud of this service. Not only does it meet the needs of older veterans in Highland and Moray through the small jobs we undertake for them, but it surpasses expectation in the support it offers through friendship, comradeship and referrals to Armed Forces charities that could help them in many more ways through the Unforgotten Forces partnership. Long may this service continue."

Adam Davidson, Veterans Handyperson, ILM Highland: "Doing my job is a real privilege. The older veterans we support enjoy the banter while I help them with whatever the small jobs are that they need doing. As a veteran myself we share a bond, which has really helped my clients, especially in tackling loneliness and social isolation made even more acute during these Covid times."



For more information about **Veterans Highland Handyperson** service visit www.ilmhighland.co.uk, email handyperson@ilmhighland.co.uk or call **01349 884774**.

Maureen's story

Maureen is the widow of a National Serviceman. She has limited mobility due to a stroke, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and early-stage Parkinson's disease. Being fiercely independent she finds this very frustrating. A non-driver, Maureen used the local bus for shopping and to socialise, but this is becoming difficult, and she is reliant on family to take her to medical and other important appointments. "I don't want to bother anybody" she says. Maureen could no longer get her lawn mower out from her porch, so the Veterans' Handyperson added a large step and grab rail at the front door. He also repaired the back fence, which blew down in a gale, fitted a toilet seat, uplifted, and disposed of, an old mattress, and changed light bulbs.



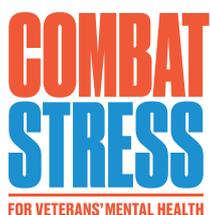
Maureen introduced the Handyperson to friends and family who were also eligible for the service. Her sister had a grab rail fitted and shelf organisers put up; a friend had a shed and fence repaired; and another had a garage door fixed. Maureen was one of the Handyperson's first clients. During an early visit, over a cup of tea, she mentioned that she didn't socialise much because of hearing loss. The Handyperson made a referral which has resulted in Maureen receiving new hearing aids from NHS Audiology.

Combat Stress services develop

Combat Stress provides high-quality intensive care and treatment for veterans with complex mental health issues. Jane Menzies, Head of Operations in Scotland, says: "We've developed a new clinical model with a stronger emphasis on pre and post treatment support. Treatment may comprise one or more of the following areas: 'building resilience', 'managing the consequences of trauma', 'trauma-focused treatment' and 'looking to the future', or a full three-week intensive treatment programme. Our teams include family support, peer support and substance misuse practitioners, as well as clinicians. Support can be in-person or through digital means."

Combat Stress, which is funded by the Scottish Government, has recently opened a west of Scotland Hub in Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. "We hope to announce soon our new HQ in Edinburgh, which will provide wider support to the East and to our residential provision," says Jane. "We've boosted our team in the Highlands and our reach is expanding in the Borders. We'd welcome opportunities to collaborate further with partners, within the veteran field and beyond."

Combat Stress aims for its support across Scotland to be accessible and fully integrated with other local services. It trains organisations such as Scottish Prison Service to better understand and respond to veteran needs. "Because our care and treatment is holistic and addresses issues important to the veteran, it makes positive and sustained recovery more likely," says Jane.



To contact **Combat Stress**
call **0800 138 1619** / Text **07537 404719** or
visit <https://combatstress.org.uk>.

A bigger and better activities centre at Erskine

This spring Erskine marked completion of a major refurbishment of its Reid Macewen Activities Centre (ERMAC), significantly boosting its capacity to include and support veterans living in the community.

The Centre, located on the Erskine estate at Bishopton, is a space where veterans can enjoy camaraderie, learn new skills, explore interests, and access support services. The Centre can now accommodate 40 veterans every weekday, up from 30 pre-refurbishment. Membership is free to anyone who has served with HM Armed Forces, including Reservists, National Servicemen and Merchant Marine who have supported a military operation.

Centre Supervisor Evonne McCord says: “The refurb has given us the space to offer more members and more activities to our already extensive timetable. The refurb has allowed for a more accessible area with the link corridor bringing the whole building together into one. The state-of-the-art wood workshop is an excellent space with accessibility, new tools, and the ability to be more creative. This also offers more opportunity to a wider range of members to come and take part in the woodwork.”

“There is also a new craft room which is used by our model makers and houses the kiln for our very popular pottery classes. We welcomed Gaynor our pottery tutor via zoom during lockdown and the popularity expanded and she is now a tutor doing face-to-face classes one day a week here. We are also in the process of developing a gym, and we will soon be fitting out the area with fitness equipment for the health and wellbeing of our members. The new look Centre is an excellent space and really does offer something for everyone. Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you are interested in coming to join us.”

To find out about Centre membership call **0141 814 4534** or email evonne.mccord@erskine.org.uk.



John's story

John served with the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy and travelled extensively during his service. He attends ERMAC every day, where he enjoys working with the woodwork group, takes part in the gardening and is involved in the Centre's bench project. "In fact, it was John that highlighted the need for a bench project where memorial benches from around the Erskine Estate are given some tender-loving-care and restored to their new condition to honour past residents and give enjoyment to folk using the estate," says Evonne. "He is a very active member and shares his thoughts and ideas. He is always willing to help and is highly valued within the Centre. John himself enjoys being part of a team and having purpose to his day with likeminded people."



Earlier in March, John was one of a group of ERMAC members who proudly unveiled bikes they had built, for their own enjoyment, or for that of family or friends. The Centre's **Build Your Own Bike** project ran through 2021 with the support of bike engineers from Glasgow charity Common Wheel.

"I enjoy anything to do with creating and fixing things. I wanted to be involved in a new project, to learn new skills and give myself a challenge," says John. He also wanted to show that, at the age of 85, age is not a barrier for trying new things. John didn't plan to use the bike himself. "I wanted to do something that I could hand back to ERMAC for someone's use," he says.

John really enjoyed the project. "Neil from Common Wheel was an excellent tutor and I enjoyed the teamwork with the other participants. We supported each other and helped one another to do our bikes," says John. "I discovered things about bikes I never knew, and I loved the social side of the project, with the rest of the participants and the Common Wheel team." John was also pleased that he was given some spare small wheels. "I've used these to build some wheelbarrow planters back at ERMAC," he says.



Be hearing loss aware

In Scotland around one in six people have some form of hearing loss. A report in 2014 by the Royal British Legion indicated that UK ex-service men and women under the age of 75 are about three and a half times more likely than the general population to report difficulty hearing.

Why so? In part, because many veterans were exposed to a level of noise during service sufficient to damage their hearing. Also, hearing loss increases sharply with age, and more than half of veterans in the Scotland are over 65.

Hearing loss can have a big impact on quality of life. You can feel more socially isolated. One study found that current and former service personnel with hearing problems were more likely to report poor mental health. Hearing loss is often accompanied by tinnitus, where you are aware of untraceable sounds, commonly hissing or ringing. You may also have problems with balance.

Research shows that on average people delay seeking treatment for ten years after they first experience signs of hearing loss. Yet early support can make a huge difference. Hearing aids fitted early avoid your brain having to relearn sounds not heard for many years. Studies have shown that people with mild hearing loss are twice as likely to develop dementia, but only if they haven't had timely support.

The early signs of hearing loss

You may have hearing loss if you:

- have problems hearing other people's speech
- need to have words or phrases repeated to you
- struggle to hear people speaking on the telephone
- listen to the TV or radio at a very high volume
- struggle to follow conversations in noisy environments
- become withdrawn from social interactions.



Getting your hearing checked

If you think you may need a hearing test, ask your GP to refer you to your local audiology department. Hearing tests (audiometry) last about 20 minutes and the results will be shown on a chart called an audiogram.

Digital hearing aids are available free from the NHS, or you may choose to purchase devices from private hearing aid companies. Hearing aids last, on average, five years. New batteries and other maintenance is free for NHS hearing aids. If buying privately, check the maintenance arrangements in the contract.

If you have NHS hearing aids you should be issued with a yellow booklet giving details of the type of hearing aid and how it works. Keep this booklet safe as you will need it for follow-up appointments. You should get your hearing tested every three years to check whether your hearing has deteriorated, and to see whether you can benefit from using updated hearing aids or other new technology.

Preventing an earwax build-up

Some people are naturally prone to earwax building up in their ears and may need frequent treatment to remove it when it becomes a problem. It's not clear if there's anything you can do to stop earwax blocking your ears, although some doctors recommend using eardrops regularly to keep your earwax soft.

Don't try to scrape out the earwax with your finger or an object inserted into your ear, as this can make the problem worse. Speak to your doctor for advice if earwax builds up in your ears regularly.

Support charities

RNID Scotland partners NHS audiology services in some areas to provide a hearing aid support service. This service, available in Greater Glasgow and Clyde, and Perth and Kinross, supports people to get the most out of their NHS hearing aids.

Tel. **0808 808 0123**

Website. <https://rnid.org.uk>

Email. information@rnid.org.uk

Hearing Link Scotland offers a helpdesk, group support programmes and one-to-one support through a network of volunteers.

Tel. **07564 916798**

Website. www.hearinglink.org/connect/hearing-link-scotland

Email. scotland@hearinglink.org

Deafblind Scotland: A combination of sight and hearing loss is more likely as we get older. Deafblind Scotland supports people with, or at risk of, dual sensory loss. Its services include booking of Guides/Communicators, highly skilled individuals, trained to be the eyes and ears of a deafblind person.

Tel. **0141 777 6111**

Website. <https://dbscotland.org.uk>

Email. info@dbscotland.org.uk

Hearing loss: a compensation minefield

There are two routes for compensation claims. For damage to hearing occurring before 6 April 2005 claims are through the Service Pension Order scheme. A direct link to service must be established; either a blast injury to one ear, or a hearing loss in both ears of at least 50dB at the point of leaving service. Neil Robinson, Head of Advocacy from Legion Scotland says: "You have a right to claim, but success is rare due to the UK Government Legislation."

Legion Scotland is aware of a solicitors firm with experience of raising civil claims against the Ministry of Defence on behalf of veterans with hearing loss attributable to deployments in Northern Ireland. "However, we don't hear back from veterans we've signposted to them on whether or how their claim was settled, either in or out of court," says Neil.

The Armed Forces Compensation Scheme can be used for service-related hearing loss arising on or after 6 April 2005. It allows for claims for 'acoustic trauma', injury to the inner ear caused by exposure to a single very loud noise, or from exposure to noises at significant decibels over a longer period.

You can call the **Legion Scotland Pensions and Advocacy Service** on **0131 550 1566** or visit www.legionscotland.org.uk/are-you-getting-the-right-pensions.

Support for the RAF community

The Royal Air Forces Association has, for more than 90 years, championed a simple belief – that no member of the RAF community should ever be left without the help that they need. The Association’s Marketing and PR Manager **Rachel Dalby** explains how it is fulfilling that promise today.



If you or your spouse served in the RAF, either full-time or as a reservist, for at least one day, then the Association is here for you. Our services provide practical, emotional, and financial support to tackle loneliness, isolation, worry and poverty among all generations of serving and veteran RAF personnel and their dependants.

Every year, we help around 85,000 people, many of whom live in Scotland. Our projects include:

Connections for Life

The RAF Association Connections for Life service aims to ease loneliness and isolation among older members of the RAF community by building telephone friendships between volunteers and isolated individuals. Among those benefiting from the project is Marie Findlay of Dundee, whose RAF veteran husband died shortly after they moved house in 2018.



Marie, who is 71, said: “Brian’s death was a real shock and, not having any local friends, I could have easily ended up alone if I hadn’t heard about Connections for Life.” Within a month of contacting the RAF Association, Marie was getting regular phone calls from volunteer Mal Hodgson, a retired RAF Chief Technician.

Mal, aged 74, who also lives in Dundee, said: “Volunteering keeps me busy and helps me to make a real difference to people’s lives. Since I started calling Marie, she has grown in confidence, and I have helped her to find ways to connect with her local community.”

RAF Association volunteers come from all kinds of backgrounds and, while an RAF connection can be helpful, it isn’t necessary for working with us.

Connections for Life Manager Sam Squire said: “The main thing is that our volunteers are happy to chat about a range of topics and use their conversations to brighten people’s day.”

Our volunteers are asked to give a regular commitment of at least a couple of hours per month, and online training is provided. Please get in touch with the RAF Association if you’d like to find out more about volunteering, or you feel you could benefit from a regular chat with someone like Mal.

Retirement accommodation

For people looking to start the next chapter in their retirement accommodation journey, we may have just the place! The RAF Association’s four beautiful independent-living complexes, situated in some of the UK’s most sought-after locations, enable tenants to retain their independence while living among like-minded people sharing an RAF connection. Each complex features self-contained flats, available for an affordable monthly rent to RAF veterans and their spouses, widows or widowers aged 60 and over.

Each flat comprises a bedroom, bathroom and sitting area, along with space for a fridge and microwave. With shared lounges, dining rooms and gardens, there's plenty of space to socialise, too. We have availability at our property in Moffat, Scotland, and at our English properties in Rothbury in Northumberland (due to open in May), Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire, and Storrington in West Sussex.

More information about our retirement accommodation is available on the RAF Association's website: <https://rafa.org.uk>.

Finding it Tough?

If you or someone you care about is struggling to cope with life's ups and downs, our *Finding it Tough?* mental wellbeing training could help. Specially designed for RAF veterans and their partners, along with the spouses, parents, siblings, and adult children of serving RAF personnel, our free online course will teach you the practical steps needed for building resilience. More details about the course are available on the RAF Association's website.

Navigating Dementia

Research has shown us that many members of the RAF community are experiencing the challenges of dementia, either as a carer or as someone living with dementia. Our Navigating Dementia website (dementia.rafa.org.uk) offers a wealth of information, and provides links to more specialist help and advice.

Holiday properties

The RAF Association runs several holiday homes where members of the RAF community can enjoy a low-cost break in pleasant and relaxing surroundings. Our properties include a mobile home on the Thurston Manor Holiday Park in Dunbar, East Lothian. More information about all our properties can be found on the RAF Association's website.

Casework support

We all face challenging situations from time to time, and occasionally we need a little extra help or advice from a professional. The RAF Association's casework team can assist with anything from applying for an emergency grant to sourcing and understanding specialist information needed to help solve a problem. Marie Crombie, the RAF Association's Regional Casework Manager for Scotland, oversees a team of trained volunteers, all experienced in providing support to people experiencing a range of difficulties. If you think we could help you, please drop us a line.

STAYING CONNECTED



As a membership organisation, we keep more than 70,000 members of the RAF family connected with each other and with the RAF through our local branch activities and the publication of Air Mail magazine. Although subscribing to the Association brings some additional benefits, membership is not required to access our services. So, if we can help you in any way – or you would like to help others by volunteering with us – please get in touch.

Email enquiries@rafa.org / call 0800 018 2361 / visit <https://rafa.org.uk>

The Falklands revisited

Forty years after the Falklands conflict we invited veterans of the campaign to look back, and to look ahead to later life.

On 2 April 1982, Argentinian forces invaded the Falkland Islands, a British overseas territory. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, a task force of warships and rapidly refitted merchant ships was assembled and dispatched. The Argentinian forces surrendered on 14 June. 25,948 British personnel served in the campaign, with an average age of 23. So, today, surviving Falklands veterans are in or approaching later life.

Lenny: A submariner's story

I enlisted in 1976 aged 16½. Getting to see the world with the Navy was fantastic. In 1982 I was a 22-year-old Leading Seaman working in the control room of nuclear submarine HMS Valiant. When the Falklands kicked-off we stocked with torpedoes and as much food as we could carry. We knew things were for real when before departure shore crew welded all hatches shut except one in the conning tower.

We made all haste. The submarine shuddered night and day; it was like riding a lorry down cobblestones at 60mph. It took us about two weeks. We picked up linguists who had to learn Spanish on the way. They spoke Russian - we had no idea we'd be at war with a Spanish speaking country.

One of our first tasks was to intercept an Argentinian submarine. Until their 'signatures' were identified, we had to be lucky. Once our captain told the sonar guys to 'listen better' as he could see the enemy close by on his periscope!

The Argentinian coast is like the Western Isles, lots of islets. We followed an enemy destroyer around it for four days. It was risky. Depth estimates in our charts were often made by whalers with lead lines.

There were close calls. An enemy jet returning home ditched its bombs in the sea, unwittingly nearly taking us out. After surrender, we kept watch on the Argentine fleet. Once they spotted us and their transmissions changed from search to attack mode, we ran!

We arrived home on an evening, but that didn't suit TV schedules, so we sailed around Arran and came in the next day. We were pale and skinny, on a ration of rolls and rehydrated soup. Seeing me, my parents said, 'oh my God!' I was happy to have survived without seeing serious action. It was scary enough being there. I've since wondered, did it matter? It did: you can't allow dictators to bully you.

I left the Navy in 1990, got an 18 month contract at Heriot Watt University and 25 years later I'm still there, about to retire. The military is a way of life, and you never forget. But I've not been involved with the ex-service community. Now I plan to see the world before I'm too old. I'll take things as they come.



1st watch TS and UCs



Valiant returning to Faslane, 1982



Lenny

Les: A soldier's story

I enlisted in the Scots Guards in 1962. I had a varied career which overall, I enjoyed. I guarded Buckingham Palace; was a medic; an outward-bound instructor and an Army Recruiter. I had postings in Malaya, Borneo, and Germany. In Northern Ireland I patrolled 'no-go areas', losing comrades to IRA attacks over a number of tours.

When the Falklands War was declared, I was 39 and Company Sergeant Major of Headquarter Company of the 2nd Battalion of the Regiment, based in London. On 12th May I embarked with the battalion on the QE2 Cruise Liner. On the way South, we were well looked after on ship and I organised 'homemade entertainment' in the Brigade Sergeants' Mess: the Gurkhas dressed up as girls on one occasion and gave us all a laugh! Morale on board was very good.



We arrived at San Carlos Bay, then moved to Bluff Cove to relieve the Parachute Regiment and manage re-supplies. There, we witnessed the Sir Galahad being sunk which was disembarking the Welsh Guards at the time. Unfortunately, we were not in a position to help.

I was part of a diversionary attack on Mt Tumbledown. On our approach, the lead Scorpion tank hit a mine, so we proceeded on foot. The enemy heard us and opened fire, so we went to ground and returned fire. In the process the assault groups took casualties, so my support group was ordered forward to help them. An enemy machine gun opened fire as we did so, hitting a comrade in the leg, but we made it and the enemy retreated after we enfiladed their position.

As the main assault on Mt Tumbledown began we withdrew, carrying our wounded and dead, but walked into a minefield, taking more casualties. We had to leave behind the two dead (one of them a friend) and get the casualties back to our lines. The Argentinians started to shell us, but in boggy ground the explosions were less deadly. We used torches to find mines, and eventually reached our lines. That night the Argentinians surrendered, so we returned next day to recover our dead. After a few weeks' rest we returned home, sad about our losses, but happy and proud of the job we'd done.

I left the Forces in 1985. My first wife sadly died in 1987 but later I met my now companion and Partner, Anne. I had a successful second career as a sales rep for regimental silver and corporate gifts with various jewellers, including Mappin & Webb and Hamilton & Inches; latterly managing security for the Crown Jeweller; G. Collins & Sons Ltd in Royal Tunbridge Wells. I retired aged 70, in 2013, to Duns in the Scottish Borders.

I currently chair the Scottish Branch of the South Atlantic Medal Association and am active with Legion Scotland. Helping-out keeps the brain and body active! Many service leavers today focus on settling with their families and lose touch, but 15-20 years later; start to return to the fold. Unfortunately, during this time, some have struggled on their own. I therefore strongly recommend that if you are experiencing any problems of any kind and there is a local Veterans Breakfast Club or Legion/Service Club nearby, go along and get involved. There's great banter and inter-service rivalry, which is what always keeps our morale high and ongoing.



John: A sailor's story

I joined the Royal Navy at 16½. Six months later the Falklands war started. My ship was in refit, so we had to rip scaffolding off her in the dockyard. We arrived the day HMS Coventry and the SS Atlantic Conveyor got hit. Age 17 you are full of bravado and don't really think about it.

I compartmentalised the experience. The following year I was back in the Falklands on patrol. A friend, who had been on HMS Sheffield, was in a bad way when we sailed over that ship's grave, so I comforted him. Only years later, seeing a picture of him in a care home with dementia, did it really register. Wee things bring back memories. That's when you need support from veterans with a shared experience.



I made a career of the Navy and thoroughly enjoyed return trips to the Falklands. The islanders are so grateful – I've never had to buy a pint in Stanley! I left in 2004 and cut my ties with the Armed Forces. 12 years later I was invited to an ex-service dinner, and from that got involved with Legion Scotland. I made new friends, even some from the Army! I was very happy.

I volunteer with Legion Scotland and thoroughly enjoy it. Talking with veterans makes it easier to reflect. The ex-service community will be a big part of my life as I get older as it's where I'm most comfortable. I had an issue with the demon alcohol. I'm doing alright now, but I need the support of the veterans community to keep me in a happy place.

40 years on, I still believe we did the right thing. During Covid, a woman from the islands started crocheting in Falklands medal ribbon colours and others, there and in the UK, joined in. More than 3000 of us Falklands veterans now have a scarf, a beanie or teddy bear. It raises funds for the Falklands Islands Veterans Association and shows support from the whole community. That means a lot.

SUPPORT AND CAMARADERIE FOR FALKLANDS VETERANS

Falklands Veterans Foundation

Assistance for Falklands veterans and their families, and information about Falklands scarves.
www.falklandsveterans.org.uk / 023 9251 1582

The South Atlantic Medal Association

Maintaining and promoting a sense of pride and comradeship among Falklands veterans.
www.sama82.org.uk / 01495 741 592

Unforgotten Forces

www.unforgottenforces.scot / 0800 12 44 222 (care of Age Scotland Helpline)

Nautilus Welfare – the seafarers charity

www.nautiluswelfarefund.org / 0151 346 8840

THE KNOWLEDGE

A round up of information and new opportunities

Parliament strengthens the Armed Forces Covenant

On 15 December 2021 the UK Parliament passed the **Armed Forces Act**. This enshrines in law the Armed Forces Covenant, the nation's promise that those who have served their country will not be disadvantaged when accessing public services. The Act puts a legal duty on public bodies across the UK to consider the welfare of serving personnel and veterans in certain aspects of housing, education, or healthcare provision. The new duty does not come into force straight away, and the UK Government is preparing statutory guidance that will accompany the duty.

A mental health action plan for Scotland's veterans

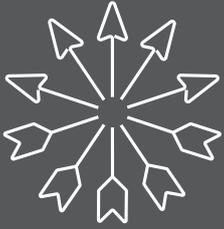
Last December a 5-year **Scottish Veterans Mental Health Action Plan** was launched, a document hailed by Scottish Veterans Commissioner as "hugely important and long-awaited". The Action Plan is based on three principles. First, that veterans will have equal access to appropriate mental health and wellbeing services, regardless of where they live. Second, that veterans should be able to access the right help at the right time. And third that the NHS, councils, and charities should be appropriately supported to meet the needs of veterans and develop and deliver Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Support and Services. You can read the Action Plan at www.veteranscarenetwork.scot and call the **Scottish Veterans Care Network** on **0131 275 7719**.

Ways to boost household income

With energy and other household costs rising steeply there's no better time to seek advice and support to maximise your income. In the Unforgotten Forces partnership, the Armed Services Advice Project (tel. **0800 028 1456**) and the Age Scotland Helpline (tel. **0800 12 44 222**) are both available to check benefits entitlements and tell you if you are missing out. ASAP has local advisers in many areas who can help with things like completion of claims forms. Age Scotland has an online benefits calculator and offers free postal and electronic guide publications for the main later life benefits. With many of these benefits now the responsibility of the Scottish Government it is vital that you get Scottish-specific information and advice regarding them.

Calculate your benefits online: www.age.scot/benefitscalculator

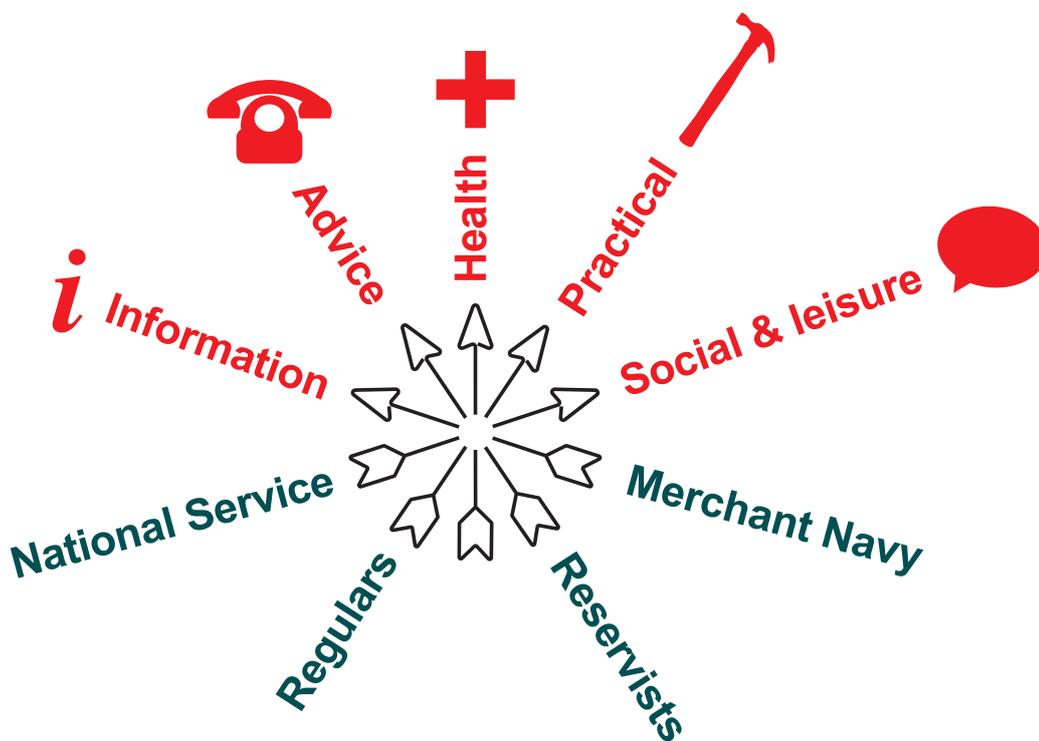
Age Scotland runs free online **energy workshops** in which you can learn more about your home energy use, and about support available for you to stay warm and save money on your bills. You can find out about these at www.age.scot/energyworkshops. Age Scotland also offers a free **Warm and Well** information guide, which is available from its Helpline **0800 12 44 222** and at www.age.scot/energy.



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans

If you are aged 60 or older, live in Scotland, and served in the British Armed Forces, Unforgotten Forces is your doorway to camaraderie and extra support, should you need it.



@UFForces



@UnforgottenForces

www.unforgottenforces.scot

0800 12 44 222

(The Age Scotland helpline can connect you with Unforgotten Forces services if you are unsure who to approach)

