



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans

Unforgotten Forces Newsletter No. 5 - Spring Period 2019

Welcome to the Spring Period 2019 edition of the Unforgotten Forces consortium's newsletter - and what a very busy period it has been! In this edition you will find a report on our very successful conference held in Stirling in April, news of our winning the "Working Together" category award at the Soldiering On 2019 Awards in London and our nomination as a Finalist in the "Pioneering Project" category at the recent Scottish Charity Awards in Edinburgh, our SOPA "Voice of Veterans" Engagement event in Bathgate and much more besides. Far more importantly than any of that however, you will also find information about how exactly we have been supporting older veterans aged 65 and above across Scotland. Since the consortium began its work two years ago our 16 partner organisations have so far provided well over 7000 episodes of valuable and, in some cases, life changing support to older veterans in five keys areas:

1. Practical support
2. Advice & information
3. Countering loneliness and social isolation
4. Health and wellbeing
5. Arts engagement

You can read all about some of this great work and all our latest news here. This edition of the newsletter includes the following features and news updates:

- **Unforgotten Forces wins Soldiering On 2019 Award**
- **The Highland Veterans Handyperson Service**
- **The Unforgotten Forces Conference**
- **Volunteering To Help Older Veterans with Hearing Loss**

- **Unforgotten Forces Volunteer Award Finalists - Citizens Advice Scotland Conference**
- **Inverness Veteran Regains a Life Long Hobby**
- **Legion Scotland's Disablement & Advocacy Service**
- **Project Semaphore – iPads For Older Veterans**
- **Art Adventures in Nature Edinburgh Exhibition**
- **Unforgotten Forces and the Arctic Convoy Memorial Service**
- **The SOPA “Voice of Veterans” Engagement Event**
- **Age Scotland's Veterans Project Newsletter**

Unforgotten Forces wins Soldiering On 2019 Award

The annual Soldiering On Awards acknowledge and celebrate dedication and best practice in support to the Armed Forces community across a variety of individuals and sectors. Carol Vorderman, a passionate supporter of the Armed Forces, and ex-Serviceman JJ Chalmers, hosted the awards ceremony in London on 5th April.



Having been very pleased to be shortlisted as a “Finalist” for the Soldiering On Awards 2019 in the “Working Together” category, the consortium was absolutely delighted to be announced as the category winner on the night. Speaking on behalf of the Unforgotten Forces consortium, Mark Bibbey, Poppyscotland’s Chief Executive, said: “In just over a year there have been more than 6,000 instances of support for older veterans living in Scotland provided through the Unforgotten Forces

consortium. Each of the 16 organisations involved offer enhanced services for older veterans, but it is perhaps the seamless referral pathways that now exist between the Unforgotten Forces members that provides the greatest benefit. An older veteran reaching out to one organisation means they are, in effect, reaching out to us all.”



David Gibson, Fares4Free, and Gary Gray, Poppyscotland, (centre two) receive the award on behalf of the consortium.

Mr Bibbey added: “Poppyscotland is very proud to lead this ground-breaking collaboration. Collecting the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) ‘Working Together Award’ at the 2019 Soldiering On Awards represents a ringing endorsement of

the approach we have taken and inspires us all to continue building on this remarkable early success.”

The ‘Working Together Award’ was sponsored by the FiMT, and its Chief Executive, Ray Lock, said: “Forces in Mind Trust is delighted to recognise the outstanding collaboration shown by all our finalists. The efforts of Unforgotten Forces and Poppyscotland are particularly noteworthy, and offer a shining example that all of us in the military charities sector would do well to follow.”

The Highland Veterans Handyperson Service

ILM (Highland) The Highland Veterans Handyperson Service is a partner within the Unforgotten Forces consortium and provides help with small repairs and home maintenance, including home security and safety measures to older veterans in the Moray, Nairn and Inverness areas. This service gives veterans increased peace of mind and additional comfort in their homes, therefore enabling them to live independently for longer.



One recipient of their help has been Maureen who lives in Inverness and the widow of William, who served 2 years National Service as a private in the Army and first encountered the Highland Veterans Handyperson service whilst at a Scottish War Blinded lunch event.

Maureen had a stroke 4 years ago which affected her mobility, particularly her right side. She has also recently been diagnosed with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) and the early stages of Parkinson’s. Maureen finds this very frustrating as she is fiercely independent. She doesn’t drive and therefore used the local bus service to go to town for her shopping and to attend social occasions. She now finds this increasingly difficult and has to rely on family to take her to the most important appointments, such as to see her GP or attend hospital appointments. Maureen doesn’t like to ask; and in her words, she “doesn’t want to bother anybody”.

Maureen needed help with her front door as she could no longer get her lawn mower out from her porch to mow her lawn. A large step and grab rail was added at the front door. Alongside this, the Handyperson has made various

repairs to the back fence which blew down in a gale, fitted a toilet seat, uplifted and disposed of an old mattress and changed various light bulbs.

Maureen also introduced the Highland Veterans' Handyperson to various friends and family who were also eligible for the service, including her sister who had a grab rail fitted and shelf organisers put up in the garage; a friend had a shed and fence repaired and painted, as well as a bathroom painted and decorated; and another friend had a garage door repaired. These are good examples demonstrating the strength of word of mouth as a recommendation.



Maureen with Alec, the Highland Veterans Handyperson

Maureen was one of the Handyperson's first clients and during one visit, over a cup of tea, she mentioned that she doesn't socialise much these days because of her hearing. Upon encouragement a referral was arranged to Action on Hearing Loss and a visit subsequently undertaken. Through this referral, Maureen has now received new hearing aids from Audiology.

As a further example of the Unforgotten Forces consortium's collaborative working the Handyperson himself, Alec, also volunteers for Action on Hearing Loss's "Hearing Forces" Project and is now able to undertake routine maintenance on older veterans' hearing aids as well as around their homes!! The Highland Veterans Handyperson service can be contacted via:

ILM (Highland), Unit 1G, Teaninich Industrial Estate, Alness, Highland, IV17 0XS

Tel: 01349 884774 website: www.ilmhighland.co.uk

The Unforgotten Forces Conference

On 25th April the consortium held a one day conference in Stirling entitled



James Martin addressing the conference

"Unforgotten Forces – Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans Today and in the Future" attended by 120 key "movers and shakers" in the veterans support sector including NHS, Local Authority, Church Armed Forces Champions, senior managers from military charities as well as Service and Regimental Charities. A number of older veterans also attended. The

conference was opened by the actor and Royal Navy veteran James Martin, star of the TV series “Still Game” in which he played “Eric”, who warmed up the audience with a very lively, poignant and humorous speech, including poetic recitals, about his time in the Royal Navy and the importance of supporting our older veterans in Scotland.

The twin aims of the conference were to raise further awareness of the consortium’s services and collaborative approach in order to encourage referrals and to discuss the future demand for services in Scotland in support of older veterans and how the Unforgotten Forces consortium might be enabled to continue its vital work in future. In addition to a number of presentations, those attending had the opportunity to engage in one of five themed workshops run jointly by staff from the consortium’s partners reflecting the key areas of support provided through Unforgotten Forces.



ILM’s Highland Handyperson, Alec, describes his service in the Practical Support Seminar



Charlie Wallace expresses support for the work of the Unforgotten Forces Consortium

Speeches were made by the Scottish Veterans Commissioner, Charlie Wallace, and the Minister for Veterans, Graeme Dey MSP, both whom spoke very supportively about the Unforgotten Forces project, the exemplary nature of its collaborative multi-agency approach and its achievements to date in supporting older veterans. In his “Forward” to the conference magazine,

Charlie Wallace wrote: “Scotland is leading the way in many aspects of support for veterans and there is wealth of organisations doing exceptional work in this area. Unforgotten Forces’ pioneering approach enables these organisations to maximise the reach and effectiveness of their work, complementing their respective contribution to making things better for our older veterans and their dependents.”

When asked “What was the most beneficial aspect of the conference?” responses from attendees included:

- *“On both a personal and professional level, very worthwhile. Coming from an area with a very dispersed and small population, it was*



Veterans Minister Graeme Dey MSP takes questions from the floor.

thought provoking about how to get the best co-production possible for our population."

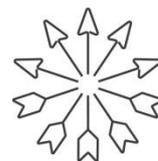


- *"Good opportunity to reflect on the Unforgotten Forces work to date and to hear about the strengths of the partnership."*

- *"Learning from the collective, consortium approach."*

- *"The important role that the 'arts' have to play in terms of engagement and communication both for older people and veterans alike."*

Volunteering To Help Older Veterans with Hearing Loss



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES
Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans

Meet Ann- she is one of Action Hearing Loss's wonderful "Hearing

Forces" volunteers making a difference to veterans and their families confronting hearing loss, deafness and tinnitus. Ann recently picked up a self-referral to Hearing Forces from 71 year old Army veteran George Geddes who was experiencing severe hearing loss in both ears. He used to attend a Royal British Legion Scotland breakfast club but was becoming increasingly isolated and frustrated due to his hearing loss and was struggling to hear his wife at home which was causing stress to both.

He was reluctant to take action but



encouraged by Ann that he should organise a hearing test, he contacted his GP and as a veteran was referred very quickly to NHS Highland Audiology. Following a full assessment he received hearing aids for both ears and encouraged by Ann got used to wearing them which has improved his hearing and put him back in touch with others. He is more confident again in group situations, recently having ventured back to the Breakfast Club to catch up with fellow veterans and can hear conversations at home more clearly.

If you think you could spare a few hours every month to volunteer with us and make a difference like Ann, please contact us.

Email: hearing.forces@hearingloss.org.uk or call 07388 227407

Unforgotten Forces Volunteer Award Finalists - Citizens Advice Scotland Conference

A huge congratulations and thank you to the two finalists in Citizens Advice Scotland's Unforgotten Forces volunteer award. The winner, Thomas Saveall, and runner-up, Graham Ealey, make a huge difference to the lives of older veterans in their communities through their volunteer work at their local Citizens Advice Bureaux. Both veterans themselves, they work closely with Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) staff in Motherwell and Nairn to provide support to veterans aged 65 and over through the Unforgotten Forces project.



'Without Thomas quite simply our bureau would not have been able to support as many Veterans over the years.' Thomas is a driver and home visit volunteer in Motherwell & Wishaw, now in his 8th year with the bureau. As well as acting as chauffeur to the Unforgotten Forces Adviser, driving her 'faithfully and reliably' to home visits across Lanarkshire, he accompanies her on

home visits, has represented the bureau at more than 40 veterans' events, has supported over 300 home visits, and has delivered food parcels to 15 people beyond working hours in times of crisis. On top of that, the local adviser described how his 'personality and humour' helped them deal with some challenging situations. His story also featured in his local newspaper.

'Graham's commitment to the work of the bureau, desire to help clients and in particular to older veterans in the armed forces community, is second to none.' Graham is a volunteer adviser in Nairn and has supported the bureau for almost 3 years. He provides face-to-face advice for veterans and their families, particularly around energy issues, and colleagues praise his

'flexibility and commitment', highlighting that he will see a job through to the end regardless of how late he has to stay. Graham often undertakes additional training at home too. An early advocate of the Unforgotten Forces partnership, Graham uses his fantastic knowledge to put older veterans in touch with other partners who can help them such as Action on Hearing Loss and Poppyscotland. He is also kept busy with events and home visits, where clients describe how his military background means he 'talks the same language' as them and 'understands what they have experienced'.



ASAP Unforgotten Forces Volunteer Thomas Saveally receiving his award from Anne, the Princess Royal

Inverness Veteran Regains a Life Long Hobby

An Inverness veteran who has significant sight loss after suffering a stroke is regaining his life-long fishing hobby with the support of Unforgotten Forces partner Scottish War Blinded

Del Tulloch (pictured right) , 75, was told he would not survive the night when his stroke hit in January last year – but after eight months in hospital the determined veteran is fighting back. The life-changing illness has left the talented fisherman in a wheelchair and with very poor sight, meaning he can no longer see to tie flies for



fishing. But with a variety of specialist equipment provided free of charge from charity Scottish War Blinded, including a CCTV reader which magnifies onto a large screen, the master fly-tier is getting to grips with his hobby once again.

The grandfather-of-three said: *“I’ve been fishing since I was four and I used to tie a lot of flies. I think it’s just being outdoors I liked. I miss that terribly. With the CCTV magnifier I can pass on my knowledge of fly tying to friends. I’ve started to do this again now.”*

The Royal Air Force veteran, who was also a dedicated golfer before his stroke and remains a regular at Inverness Golf Club, admits his “stubbornness” is seeing him through the challenges he faces.

“At first having a stroke made me angry. It’s taken a lot of the things I was used to away. It’s changed my life. I was told I would never walk again, but I’m starting to make inroads towards that and walk a bit. I’m determined. I think because I’ve been stubborn, that’s why I’ve got on so well. My eyesight is the one of the things I miss the most. It’s taken away my driving & a lot of other things”.

Del’s forces background made him eligible for support from Scottish War Blinded and he became a member while he was still in hospital last year. Del has since benefited from access to the charity’s partner Fares for Free to provide essential transport, via the Unforgotten Forces consortium.

Scottish War Blinded Outreach Worker Sheena Menzies, who supports the charity’s members in the Highlands, worked closely with Del and his wife, Phyllis, to establish what kind of specialist low vision aids and support the couple needed. When Del returned home, various specialist equipment – from talking clocks to magnifiers – was already there waiting for him, all provided by the charity free of charge. The CCTV reader is one of the latest pieces of equipment he’s received, as well as a Synapptic smartphone, which has specialist software for users with a vision impairment, and he describes as *“an asset”*.

And Del’s wife of 38 years, Phyllis, says it all makes a huge difference to life at home, as does the support of Outreach Worker Sheena.

“Before his stroke, Del would be out fishing all the time with his friends,” Phyllis said. *“He was at the golf course every day, every day of his life, virtually. His friends still see him all the time now, but his sight loss has been the biggest thing. It’s the simple things like using the remote for the TV, using the telephone – those kinds of things he struggles with because he can’t see all the numbers. But we have a big-button phone now, talking clocks, and his Synapptic phone. With the CCTV magnifier he can show others how to tie flies now because he has the equipment so he can see”.*

Del added: *“Sheena’s very supportive. She even helped dig out the information so that I could get my Malay Peninsula General Service Medal I was entitled to – I wouldn’t have known where to start.”*

The couple also attend Scottish War Blinded’s monthly Inverness lunch group at Inverness Golf Club along with fellow veterans with sight loss and their partners and carers. And as he steadily gets back into activities at the golf club and enjoys tying flies again, determined Del is hoping that a fishing trip will be on the cards soon.

“There are things that we’ve found out about now through Sheena and the lunch group that, if it hadn’t been for Scottish War Blinded, we’d never have known about. It makes me feel tremendous. It’s brilliant, the support I’ve had. It makes me feel like I’ve got somebody there if I need it.”

Rebecca Barr, Director of Scottish War Blinded, said: *“It’s wonderful to hear how Del is beginning to enjoy his much-loved hobbies again with the help of the specialist equipment we’ve been able to provide. We work closely with each of our veterans and can provide free, tailored support and training to maintain their independence despite their sight loss. We’re already working with a number of veterans across the Highlands and would be very keen to grow our community across the region. If you are a veteran with sight loss, or you are a relative, friend or carer of someone who is, we’d love to hear from you.”*

Scottish War Blinded gives free support to former servicemen and women of all ages, no matter if they lost their sight during or after service. Visit www.scottishwarblinded.org or call 0800 035 6409 to refer a veteran.



SCOTTISH WAR BLINDED
FOR ALL VETERANS WITH SIGHT LOSS

Music for Older Veterans – It Makes Them Feel Good!

Play it Again SAV! brings interactive live music to older veterans making them feel good, one tune at a time. And it is not only the veterans who benefit. The musicians of the charity Music in Hospitals & Care Scotland are inspired and delighted to be working on the project. Here are a few of their stories:

Honeysuckle Swing, Musicians - Erskine Reid Macewen Centre commented:

“When I left this concert I had to thank the clients for making my day. 8 men ranging in age from 88 to 95 joined in with singing, dancing (especially the eldest

gent!) and telling us tales of the last few years of WWII. It was a fabulous event”.

Charlie Gorman, Musician - Lothian Veterans Centre commented:



Veteran Charlie Gorman (right) jammin' at the Lothians Veterans Centre courtesy of the "Play it again SAV" project

“The enthusiasm of the Lothian Veterans Centre group for the music and sing song is really amazing, the centre was completely full today, not a seat and people lined around the perimeter walls, a great atmosphere, some really powerful, moving versions of Scottish songs by ex-servicemen, some I’ve never heard of (mainly

battle songs from the various battalions), it’s really an inspirational place to play with some of the most wonderful people I’ve met.”

Neil Sturgeon, Musician – Ward 5D Crosshouse Hospital commented: “The staff were outstanding, joining in with dancing and singing (one lady even played the spoons). The reactions to music were a joy to behold with patients and visiting family members really entered into the spirit of things. One of my favourite Music in Hospitals & Care experiences”.

This summer the charity will pilot song-writing sessions with veterans and looks forward to getting the creative juices flowing, capturing stories and sharing songs with Unforgotten Forces partners! Over the next few weeks their musicians will be touring to groups across the country with visits to the Coming Home Centre in Govan, Inverness Veterans’ Breakfast Club, Easter-Ross Veterans’ Breakfast Club and Cromarty Firth Men’s Shed, The RAF Association’s Dowding House in Moffat and many more.

They are keen to bring Play it Again SAV! to new groups and centres around the Scotland. To find out more please contact

Vina Oberlander, Tel 0131 556 5848, playitagainsav@mihc.org.uk



Legion Scotland’s Disablement & Advocacy Service

This service has been in existence since the start of the Royal British Legion Scotland in 1921 and arose from the original constitution that clearly states that



**Legion
Scotland**

*At the heart of Scotland’s
veterans community*

The Legion should ensure the prevention or relief of poverty amongst men or women who have at any time honourably served within any branch of the armed forces of the Crown along with the relief of ex-Service men and women in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage.

It is a principle that has held fast for almost 100 years and Legion Scotland continues to offer such support to veterans, serving members of the armed forces and their immediate families in respect of disablements that have or did arise whilst they were in service, and to widows who are seeking a pension as a result of an injury that their partners have suffered and resulted in their deaths.

Over the last 9 years the service has achieved an impressive and remarkable benefit to veterans of around 1 million pounds every year and this does not take into consideration many of the passport benefits that were subsequently granted over and above this both by way of military and civil benefits. Each year an average 240 cases are listed for hearing at a Tribunal where Legion Scotland has acted as a representative on behalf of the individual. A large number of these are given a final decision at their first hearing and the success rate has been 47% of all appeals heard. This service deals with around 93% of all cases heard at appeal and successfully covers the whole of Scotland.

Besides Tribunals the service also acts on behalf of individuals in many other areas such as assisting in the making of claims both for new conditions and the review of existing conditions together with War Widow Claims and many supplementary benefits. The team's aim is to guide and assist so that they may travel the journey with the individual from its beginning to its end, whatever that might be. All of these services are offered free of any charge whether the individuals concerned are members of the Royal British Legion Scotland or not and the only requirement is that they have served in one of the Armed Forces and that the injury claim in question can be related to:

War Disablement Pension (for injuries pre 6th April 2005 which can only be claimed following discharge)

- Armed Forces Compensation Scheme (AFCS) (for injuries from 6th April 2005 but where the condition or injury occurred within 7 years of the date of it happening)
- War Widows Pension (where the death can be linked to the principle cause of death)
- Supplementary Allowances (such as War Mobility, Allowance for Lowered Standard of Occupation, etc.)

Additional support, guidance and assistance can also be offered as the Royal British Legion Scotland is an accredited agent of the Free Legal Services Unit

(FLSU) of the Faculty of Advocates. Therefore in certain circumstances veterans may be referred to the FLSU for potential free legal advice and/or representation.

Further information of pension matters and support are available by either contacting the department on 0131 550 1566 or 0131 55 1565

E-mail to: pensionenquiries@legionscotland.org.uk

Project Semaphore – iPads For Older Veterans

As well as Unforgotten Forces another winner at the Soldiering On 2019 awards was the Royal Naval Association's Project Semaphore which is also funded via the MOD Covenant Trust's Aged Veterans Fund to help naval veterans realise the benefits of being online and to address issues of social isolation and loneliness. Eligibility criteria are that in order to receive an iPad, veterans must:



Be 65 years of age or older - have served in the Armed Forces; this is primarily a Royal Naval Association led Project however they are able to offer iPads to eligible former members of the Army and RAF too if they can be supported in a group along with Royal Navy and/or Royal Marines veterans. The Project has been hugely successful and over 700 iPads are now being used by

veterans exploring the Internet for the first time. The project team have engaged with over 50 organisations including Care Homes, Associations and armed forces charities: some collective iPad training sessions in RNA Branches has created the added benefit of community spirit and social gatherings.

What do eligible Veterans use the iPad for?

To keep in touch with family and friends using email, create Memory Books to capture stories from their service career and to research the ships they served in, learn how to use FaceTime to have video conversations with old shipmates and friends from the comfort of their own homes, explore Facebook and join groups to



interact, take up a new hobby (perhaps photography using the iPad camera), reading, puzzles or to access audio books. The options are endless! They have found that Veterans like to learn from each other and those initially not interested often engage when their curiosity gets the better of them!

Project Semaphore aims to combat loneliness and social isolation but also has financial benefits, providing access to considerable savings through energy deals, price-comparison websites, online shopping, paper-free banking and the like which are not available outside cyberspace.

Estimates available at the start of the project in 2016 indicated that an individual could be £1,000 a year worse off, if they did not have access to offers available online. A range of benefits and advice services are also most easily accessed through the Internet.

What do Veterans say about the Project?

Providing an iPad and exploring the Internet with the support of a fellow shipmate, oppo or family member is really making a huge difference to Veterans lives. Comments from veterans have included:

“I use the iPad to keep in touch with my grandchildren and daughter. Following a nasty fall, I am in hospital for the long haul. The iPad is invaluable, using Facetime to catch up with family keeps me included in family life. I love Words with Friends Scrabble too! “

“Truly, I would never have bothered with one of these things and now I am able to be in contact with friends and relatives all around the world – it is truly amazing”.

“I don’t know what we ever did before we got our iPad – we’re learning so much and researching everything – it’s absolutely great”

“Receiving the iPad as well as attending the training sessions has been great – coming here is a like a little oasis away from everything else that is going on in my life – it’s great”

Find Case Studies at the RNA website: www.royal-naval-association.co.uk/help

How can you get involved?

If you are supporting eligible veterans, and would like to apply for an iPad, please contact the Project Semaphore Manager, Sarah Clewes, for an Application Form (see contact details below here). The iPads are free of charge and for those without Broadband at home, they provide a model that takes a

SIM card; we provide the first SIM card and thereafter costs are met by the Veteran. All is explained in our short Agreement.

If you are IT savvy and can spare time to support others, the team would love to hear from you.

Please spread the word and help us to promote Project Semaphore in order to reach more eligible Veterans. The Project Semaphore team look forward to hearing from you!

Sarah Clewes



Project Manager – Project Semaphore. E mail: sarah@royalnavalassoc.com

Address: Project Semaphore, Room 29, Semaphore Tower HM Naval Base, Portsmouth PO1 3LT

Art Adventures in Nature Edinburgh Exhibition



A public exhibition at Erskine Edinburgh Home marked the end of the second year of collaboration between Luminare, Scotland's creative ageing organisation and Erskine, Scotland's foremost provider of care for veterans and their spouses. Artists in residence James Winnett and Gill White have spent the last few months in the Edinburgh home collaborating with residents to create a stunning exhibition which was presented as part of the Luminare Festival, a biennial



celebration of creative ageing across Scotland.

Since Unforgotten Forces began, James and Gill have worked in Erskine Park and Glasgow Homes, and they moved their residency to Edinburgh at the beginning of 2019. In each

Home, residents and artists have worked



together to create art inspired by nature. In Edinburgh, residents worked with James and Gill both in the gardens of the Home and also on a day trip to the Royal Botanic Garden. Together they have used a range of different art techniques including photography, filmmaking, storytelling, creative writing, sculpture, stone carving, painting and drawing, with the experience being personalised for each resident.

On Sunday 26 May Erskine Edinburgh opened the doors to the residents' exhibition. Visitors were greeted by staff and volunteers from Erskine, and a



tremendous spread of food and drink had been created in the Erskine kitchen using produce grown in their gardens.

The sun held out (for a while!), and visitors had the opportunity to view the exhibition, explore the gardens, and meet the residents and their artist

collaborators. Ceramics designed and created by residents were on display, as well as photos of the collaborative process that had led to their creation. And finally visitors could explore the Arts Adventures Shed – a mini artists' studio where residents, staff and artists work together. Free souvenir tote bags, posters and stickers featuring images of some of the work were provided to visitors as mementoes of the day.

The event was a fitting celebration of this Unforgotten Forces collaboration, showcasing the creativity and skill of Erskine residents and highlighting the positive impact that the artist residency is having.



Artist James Winnett (left) with visitors on the day

Unforgotten Forces & the Arctic Convoy Memorial Service

Working in close co-operation with partner charity, Fares 4 Free, Poppyscotland's Break Away service has again arranged a bespoke opportunity for four WWII Royal Navy veterans to attend the annual Russian Arctic Convoy commemoration at Loch Ewe to remember and pay tribute to their many shipmates who perished in the Russian Arctic Convoys. The veterans who made the trip were Frank Coyle (age 93), Jack Patterson (age 94), James Docherty (age 94), and Andrew Ramsay (age 96).

The event was attended by the Russian Consul General and for the first time the German Consul General also attended along with five veterans from WWII. The day began with the veterans receiving an escort to the event by the RBL Riders. During the service wreaths were laid by the Russian and German Consuls General and various local organisations. The veterans also received a gift of a flower from the wife of the Russian Consul General and this very poignant gesture touched the veterans greatly.



They were then taken to a local hotel for tea and cakes, where the spread available made their faces light up with joy and they met the famous Russian Sculpture, Leonty Usov who had travelled from Syria for the event. Mr Usov was commissioned to create sculptures of two sailors who had been part of the Arctic Convoy. The Russian sailor was Vadim Shamritsky the British sailor was Victor Walker who is still alive. This was a very touching experience while they told the story of the sailors in Russian and translated it to English. An emotional visit to the museum was next, where the veterans shared stories and reminisced about their Arctic Convoy experiences.

In the evening they all enjoyed a little birthday treat for veteran Andrew Patterson celebrating his 96th Birthday at which the Russian Consul General presented Andrew with gifts. Andrew said it was the best Birthday he has ever had! The highlight of the evening was when the veterans started to sing 'for he is a jolly good fellow' to the Russian Consul General. A couple of talented musicians were amongst the veterans resulting in a wee band playing with one veteran on the spoons and another on the tambourine.

The general feedback from the veterans was that they had a fantastic time and that they were well looked after and commented that the best part of the trip was spending time in the company of others, and in particular other veterans with shared experiences. A couple of the veterans even said that their lives have been changed for the better since being involved with the various members of the Unforgotten Forces consortium, and in particular, Erskine's Reid McEwan Activity Centre and Fares4Free.

The SOPA "Voice of Veterans" Engagement Event

Unforgotten Forces partners the Scottish Older People's Assembly (SOPA) and Poppyscotland worked together to arrange a very well attended and successful engagement event for a group of over 50 older veterans, and those who support veterans, at the Royal British Legion Club in Bathgate on 13th June. Firstly, a



presentation was provided to raise their awareness of the services available to them through the Unforgotten Forces consortium along with some splendid and much enjoyed musical entertainment performed by Jason Sweeney of Music in Hospitals & Care Scotland. The veterans were then invited to take part in a

number of syndicate discussions during which they were able to express their views about what it means to them to be veterans along with the particular concerns and opinions they have about the issues that affect their lives as older armed forces veterans in Scotland.



Musician Jason Sweeney entertains the veterans

SOPA exists to give a strong voice to older people about their concerns and experience of life, raises issues about age inequalities and identifies issues that worry the older population. It conveys messages direct to the Scottish Government and supports policy that has a positive impact on challenges in later life. Diana Findley, Chair of the Scottish Older People's Assembly, added: *"The Scottish Older People's Assembly was delighted to host this event in partnership with Unforgotten*

Forces. SOPA is arranging an annual assembly at the Scottish Parliament in October to ensure that the voices and experiences of older people are heard and acted upon by politicians and influencers. It is important that in the run-up to that event we engage with as many different voices as possible, and the event in Bathgate provided an opportunity for older veterans to share their views on what's important to them."

Among those in attendance was Jim Houghton, a Royal Navy veteran, who said: *"It was good to have the opportunity to put our views forward as veterans. Today's event was very successful and helpful, and there was a great deal of information given to us about the services available for older veterans through Unforgotten Forces"*. An added bonus for Jim was that he was also given information about his local branch of the Royal Naval Association and has since been along to introduce himself and has become a member!

Ozzy, a veteran who served with the Argyll & Sutherland Highlanders, added: *"This was a great day – very informative, welcoming and professional. It was very good, and, to be honest, very much needed."*

Glen MacDonald, Poppyscotland's Unforgotten Forces Co-ordinator, said: *"The Unforgotten Forces consortium is delighted to have jointly arranged and hosted this 'Voice of Veterans' engagement event along with its partner member the Scottish Older People's Assembly at the Legion Club in Bathgate today. The whole focus has been to gather the views, concerns and opinions of a representative sample of Scotland's older veterans on a range of local and national issues of relevance and interest to them. This has certainly been achieved and the event has been a great success"*.



A group of veterans clearly enjoying the SOPA engagement event!



For more information about SOPA click here:

[Scottish Older People's Assembly](#)

Age Scotland's Veterans' Project

Unforgotten Forces partner Age Scotland's Veterans Project has been very busy of late creating yet another useful guide pamphlet for older veterans, assisting local veterans' clubs and groups, planning an exciting new project to promote physical activity and wellbeing amongst the older veterans and much more besides. If you are reading this on screen you can find out all about this and get more information on their website via the following link:

[Age Scotland's Veterans Project](#)





UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's Older Veterans

For further information about the services available for older veterans via the Unforgotten Forces project and how to make referrals for support and advice to any of the partner organisations please visit the Poppyscotland website via the following link:

<http://www.poppyscotland.org.uk/get-help/unforgotten-forces/>

For any general and policy related enquiries about the project, or if you would like copies of our hard copy leaflet, a face to face presentation for your clients and staff team, or wish any further information please contact the Unforgotten Forces Coordinator, Glen MacDonald (that's not me on the right by the way!), via:

E mail: g.macdonald@poppyscotland.org.uk
or Tel: 07458 014362.



We look forward to hearing from you!

