



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans

Unforgotten Forces Newsletter No. 2 - Summer 2018

Welcome to the summer 2018 edition of the Unforgotten Forces Newsletter. The project reached its 1st birthday on 1st July and celebrated the fact that in its first year alone it had already reached and helped 3,155 older veterans in Scotland aged 65 and above. Support provided has included free services of many types such as tackling loneliness and social isolation, advice, transport, assistance with hearing and eyesight loss, handyman help in the home, music, art at the Erskine Home and many other activities at Erskine's Reid Macewan Centre, comradeship, holiday breaks, help in the NHS pathway and more besides! Of these 1,300 (circa 40%) were supported during the three month period April to June indicating that service delivery grew exponentially over the first year as the various Unforgotten Forces partners hit their stride. You can read all about some of this great work here.



A group of older veterans enjoy carpet bowls and comradeship at the Erskine Reid Macewan Centre.

This edition of the newsletter includes the following features and news updates:

- **Art Adventures in Nature – A Luminate project providing creative art opportunities for older veterans with dementia.**
- **Poppyscotland’s Break Away Service update.**
- **Action on Hearing Loss “Hearing Forces” Project Launch Events**
- **Erskine’s Activity Centre for veterans goes from strength to strength!**
- **Legion Scotland’s Loch Ness Cruise Comradeship Event for older veterans**
- **Unforgotten Forces partners help Korean war veterans attend commemoration event in Bathgate**
- **Unforgotten Forces forms new Partners’ Policy Group**
- **Partnership Working – An Unforgotten Forces Case Study from Scottish War Blinded**
- **Live music since 1948 for veterans and the armed forces community**
- **Training Day for Unforgotten Forces Staff**
- **Age Scotland – A Guide for Veterans in Later Life**

Art Adventures in Nature



Luminate, Scotland's creative ageing organisation, is working in partnership with Erskine, Scotland's foremost provider of care for veterans and their spouses, on a 3-year artist-in-residence programme in Erskine's 4 care homes as part of Unforgotten Forces.

Artists James Winnett and Gill White are spending two days each week collaborating with Erskine residents on a wide range of creative activities; so far these have included filmmaking, sound recording, storytelling, creative writing, poetry reading, model making, sculpture, stone carving, painting and drawing.



There is growing evidence of the positive impact of creative activities on older people, including people living with dementia. Being a partner in Unforgotten Forces is giving Luminate the opportunity to bring their work to veterans at Erskine for the first time, and the team are excited to have the opportunity to work with residents and staff over a 3-year period. The extended length of the residency is giving James and Gill the opportunity to build a very strong relationship with Erskine residents and staff, and is enabling them to design activities that are personalised for each individual they are working with.



For the first few months James and Gill worked in Erskine Park Home at Bishopton, which is a purpose built home designed to care for people living with dementia. Residents created art inspired by nature, and over the summer months Erskine and Luminate are presenting an outdoor exhibition that shows some of the activities in action and shares some of the work created by

residents. You can find the exhibition located on the cycle route through the woods next to the home, which is regularly used by Erskine's trishaws.

Director of Care Derek Barron said: "I am inspired and in awe of the wonderful artwork along our cycle path, created by residents at Erskine Park Home along with our artists in residence."

Professor Brendan McCormack, Head of the Divisions of Nursing, Occupational Therapy & Arts Therapies at Queen Margaret University, visited the exhibition in early July and tweeted afterwards: "This is one of the most inspiring arts projects with people living with dementia that I have ever experienced."

In August, Gill and James will begin working in Erskine's Glasgow Home, and Luminare and Erskine are looking forward to more wonderful creative work!

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Action on Hearing Loss "Hearing Forces" Project



Donna McSwiggan and Angela Paton of Action on Hearing Loss at the Fort George event on 1st June.

Hearing Forces held three launch events across Scotland to raise awareness of their work in supporting older veterans with hearing loss and tinnitus. These launches were held in Dalkeith, Fort George near Inverness and Kilmarnock and were all supported and attended by a variety of Unforgotten Forces partners, elected representatives and service users. They were also covered by local and national media outlets, helping to raise awareness of the Unforgotten Forces partnership as a whole. In its first year the Hearing Forces project has provided support to no fewer than 475 older veterans experiencing hearing loss. The type of support provided includes maintenance of hearing aids and the provision of specialist equipment in the home such as hearing loops to assist with TV sound.

Poppyscotland's "Break Away" service update

A Caledonian Canal Cruise, an Arctic Convoy remembrance visit to Gairloch, a trip to London to see a West-End show, Torquay and the English Riviera... These are just some of the breaks that have been made possible for veterans through the Unforgotten Forces partnership.



Poppyscotland's Break Away Service

funds tailor-made holidays for veterans aged 65 and over, and the other Unforgotten Forces partners are often a big part of making these trips happen. This could be through making a referral for someone they are already working with, having leaflets in their building that an older veteran picks up, or even organising and taking part in the trip itself as happened in Gairloch.

In May, four Royal Navy veterans of the Russian Arctic Convoys, all in their 90s, travelled to Gairloch to attend a special annual commemoration ceremony to remember their shipmates who died on these convoys. Funded through Break Away, the trip was initiated by Dave Gibson of Fares4Free who arranged the 3-night stay and provided their transport to and from Gairloch. He was also accompanied by Andy Riach of DMWS, another Unforgotten Forces partner.



Royal Navy Arctic Convoy Veterans at Gairloch from left to right: Albert Lamond, 92, Edwin Ledbetter, 92, James Docherty, 92, and Bernard Roberts, 91.

The trip has had another added benefit for three of the veterans in that, since it was planned, three of them now meet every week for afternoon tea at a veterans' centre in Glasgow and all seem to have taken on a new lease of life.

As well as in connection with the Gairloch trip, Poppyscotland have had some lovely thank you messages, postcards and even photos from across the UK – the Cathedrals of Yorkshire, island-hopping in a wheelchair in the West of Scotland and the Isle of Man to name but a few! One older veteran told us he had been 'treated like a king' on his trip to Blackpool, and others said that they would never had had a holiday without Break Away. Feedback from other older veterans and their carers who have been on Break Away trips has included the following:

"Everything from applying to going on their break to Jersey was described as First Class including the assistance at the airport".

**The way we were looked after from start to finish was brilliant".*

"Been demobbed for 70 years and was not aware of the help I could get until now"

"A break from the day to day stresses of life was just what we needed"

"Our neighbours are commenting on how well we look"

"The best holiday we have had, island hopping up north who would have thought we could have done this"

"We would never have been able to go on this trip without the help we received"

In its first year Break Away has arranged holidays for 165 older veterans and their partners or carers. Ann Shepherd, Break Away coordinator at Poppyscotland, said: "It has been lovely to see the difference a much-needed break can make to some of our older veterans. Thanks to all our partners for their support!"

ERSKINE'S ACTIVITY CENTRE FOR VETERANS GOES FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH!

The Reid Macewan Activity Centre for veterans at Erskine is an important member of the Unforgotten Forces partnership and now been open for 8 months. It already has just over 80 members on its books and 50% of those are veterans over 65. They like to keep active: from cycling to speedboats to hillwalking, the Centre has a



The Centre's manager, Debs Dickson out hillwalking with some of the veterans

little bit of something for everyone. For those who prefer things a little more relaxed there is lots going on in the their model making, and woodwork classes, Genealogy sessions, artwork, holistic therapy, IT coaching as well as training sessions on a Wednesday

afternoon in Boccia Bowls which is in preparation for Erskine's Sporting Senior Games scheduled for 30th September.



A group of the Centre's older veterans enjoy tea, biscuits & banter on the terrace!

As well as the benefits gained from undertaking all these interesting and worthwhile activities, at the same time new friendships are made and members are able to enjoy the social company, banter and comradeship of their fellow veterans.

To make a referral contact Adele on 0141 814 4534.

LEGION SCOTLAND'S LOCH NESS CRUISE COMRADSHIP EVENT FOR OLDER VETERANS

In July seven older veterans, carers and Support Volunteers attended the comradeship day accompanied by Veterans Community Support Co-ordinator Highlands & Islands Roy Harrison and Stephen Baird Head of Veterans Community Support.

The day started with individual's travelling from areas such as Dornoch and Balintore in Sutherland, Garve, Inverness, Beaully and Edinburgh. Meeting up at the Inverness and boarding the Jacobite Queen,



All aboard the Skylark! The group prepare to board the Jacobite Queen in Inverness.

In glorious sunshine the three-hour tour meandered along the Thomas Telford's historic Caledonian Canal, passing through the Victorian lock gates at Dochgarroch, entering Loch Ness, with the very best views of the Highlands. Passing such sights as Aldourie Castle, Bona Lighthouse, and eventually stopping at Urquhart Castle where passengers left and joined the boat before returning to Tomnahurich Bridge. A good day was had by all and more importantly a number of older veterans made new friends with others in similar circumstances combating loneliness and isolation and demonstrating the importance of comradeship.

UNFORGOTTEN FORCES PARTNERS HELP KOREAN WAR VETERANS ATTEND COMMEMORATION EVENT IN BATHGATE

When Graham Fulton, Welfare Services Coordinator at Poppyscotland's Kilmarnock Drop In Centre, was asked by Korean War veteran John Scott if it might be possible to arrange for him to attend a commemoration event at the Korean War Memorial near Bathgate on the occasion of the 65th anniversary of that conflict's ceasefire, he was keen to help. At the same time Emma Gration of the Defence Medical Welfare Service

(DMWS) was also keen to help James McBreen, one of her older veteran clients and also a veteran of the Korean War, to attend the same event. Graham and Emma then teamed up and set about making this happen and contacted other Korean War veterans who might be interested. James Smith, an ex Argyll and Sutherland Highlander also signed up. Next, they contacted Unforgotten Forces partner David Gibson of Fares4Free



Emma Gration (left) and Graham Fulton (right) at the event with Korean War Veterans, James McBreen and John Scott.

and he readily agreed transport the veterans to the event and Emma's Mum even made a special poppy wreath for the veterans to lay at the commemoration event! (Pictured to the right here).

Organised by the Legion Scotland Bathgate Branch the event on 21st July involved a commemoration and parade and was very well attended and successful. Afterwards all enjoyed a lunch with old comrades at the Branch Club. All three veterans were delighted to have had the opportunity to attend and, rather poignantly, the older two said they felt it would be the last chance they had of attending given their age. They all met people they had either served with or knew people who had served with each other.

All in all a very worthwhile initiative by Graham and Emma, and a fine example of good team working by Unforgotten Forces partners in support of older veterans in Scotland.



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES FORMS NEW PARTNERS' POLICY GROUP

Taking advantage of the growing collaboration between the organisations that make up the Unforgotten Forces project, a Policy Roundtable Group was established earlier this year to ensure partners are aware of key public policy issues facing older veterans, and to also consider some joint actions that might be taken to contribute to wider policy work underway in this area. The group's meetings are attended by partners' staff working largely in the policy and public affairs sphere, and led by Usman Ali, Public Affairs and Campaigns Manager at Poppyscotland. As a result of these meetings, a joint Unforgotten Forces consortium response was submitted to the Scottish Government's recent consultation on social isolation and loneliness which highlighted the need for efforts in this area at a local level. Also, a strategy paper was accepted at the last Partners' meeting in July which committed the group to further action being taken on the policy themes of: social isolation and loneliness; sensory impairment; and the physical health and wellbeing of older veterans.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING – AN UNFORGOTTEN FORCES CASE STUDY FROM SCOTTISH WAR BLINDED

The Unforgotten Forces partnership launched a year ago with the aim of increasing the support available to veterans over the age of 65, and improving the co-ordination of the organisations to work together to achieve positive outcomes for older veterans.

Scottish War Blinded has supported Scots Guards veteran and retired train driver Gordon for a number of years following his sight loss. The difficulties which many face in adapting to sight loss, such as a loss of confidence, had been addressed with tailored rehabilitation support. This included provision of equipment such as an electronic magnifier in tablet form, so that Gordon could once again read his newspapers and correspondence at home.

Social opportunities afforded by regular visits to the charity's Hawkhead Centre in Paisley have enabled Gordon to meet fellow veterans who had also experienced sight loss. A real talent for music and singing has been shared and enjoyed alongside friends who have formed a lively music group, with many strong opinions on musical taste being shared.

For many years, Gordon had not been registered as visually impaired as his eye condition, Diplopia, whilst causing significant loss of sight, was not listed on the form of specific conditions. Registration of sight loss opens up a host of new options - particularly assessments to find out what advice and help is relevant to stay independent. It can make life more affordable by enabling someone with sight loss to claim concessions and makes it easier to claim welfare benefits.

Being unregistered meant that Gordon was unable to access the benefits, such as PIP, usually due to those with sight loss. Recently, Anne Garry, Outreach worker for Scottish War Blinded noticed that the certificate of visual impairment (CVI) form had been updated and now listed Diplopia as a condition eligible for registration.

Anne worked with Gordon to refer him to Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) team for advocacy to support the completion of the registration form. Emma Gration, one of the DMWS Welfare Officers in Ayrshire, provided Gordon with support at an eye clinic appointment to re-assess the impact of his sight loss, and assisted with completion of the CVI form. ASAP's local advisor then stepped in and provided assistance at the next stage, giving advice on how to access correct benefits entitlement and assisting in completing applications – a task which many with sight loss find particularly daunting.

The partnership work between the three Unforgotten Forces organisations together delivered a tailored support package. This contributed to Gordon commenting that he had begun to regain his confidence, and felt more secure amidst increased financial security, which has alleviated his concerns about continuing to lead an independent life.



SCOTTISH WAR BLINDED
FOR ALL VETERANS WITH SIGHT LOSS



LIVE MUSIC SINCE 1948 FOR VETERANS AND THE ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY



Since May this year, Music in Hospitals & Care (MiHC) have been delivering monthly music sessions to older veterans receiving care in Ward 1 at Woodland View Hospital and Redburn Rehabilitation Unit at Ayrshire Central Hospital. The sessions are a result of collaborative working and referral from Unforgotten Forces partner organisation Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS), who identified a potential need for regular live music for older veterans in their care at these venues after witnessing how patients "came alive when the music started and got really involved."

A staff member from Ward 1 reported after a live music session that there was "an overall sense of happiness and reminiscence amongst patients, particularly noticed amongst patients who are more introverted and appear low in mood. One female in particular who shows very little facial expression or communication smiled and sang along."

Another member of staff from the ward said, "Bringing music and singing into hospitals makes a great difference to patients and staff. It lifts morale and brings everyone together in a relaxed and enjoyable manner. Thank you so much. Deeply appreciated."

MiHC are delighted that the physical, emotional wellbeing and sensory benefits of its music sessions are being enjoyed and valued by hospital teams and Unforgotten Forces partners, and are looking forward to bringing more live music to veterans on these wards over the coming weeks.

This year is the MiHC's 70th birthday as a charity, delivering live music to healthcare settings UK wide. Interestingly, some of their very earliest live music concerts after WW2 were delivered to veterans and their families. It is therefore quite appropriate then that MiHC now have the opportunity to continue our long standing relationship with the Armed Forces community through the Unforgotten Forces initiative and a fantastic celebration of the joy of live music since 1948 supporting together veterans and their families and carers for their overall quality of life.



A spokesperson at the Erskine Home, Anniseland, commented: "Concerts mean a lot to our residents. At a time where their abilities to participate in other activities is reducing, they can still enjoy concerts. We try our hardest to provide as many concerts as we can but the cost implications mean this isn't always possible, so having a funded performance really helps."

The music session Ron and Grant led was a great success in the dementia specific house within the home, our residents participated in singing familiar songs, tapping feet, swaying hands and arms and smiling throughout. One resident who didn't sit for the performance and has difficulty in engaging in most activities stood and clapped his hands in time to the music, benefiting from the live musical stimulation. The mood of some of the residents who attended was noticeably different after the session, showing more alertness and more talkative, conversation triggered from the music and a shared experience promoting social interaction"

A Scottish War Blinded (SWB) staff member at their Hawkhead Centre in Paisley stated: "Our SWB members thoroughly enjoyed the project. The activity brought together members that might not have otherwise chosen to do the same activity and it taught some of the member's new skills". Comments from SWB members present included:

"Brilliant! First time I have ever been to a Burns supper. It was wonderful. Very good atmosphere. Can't thank everyone enough."

"It was really excellent. The music was lovely and suited the afternoon. You can't say anything bad about it."

Claire Bennet, Director of MIHC Scotland states: "We value the feedback through Unforgotten Forces partners relating to the impact that live music has for their older veterans and thank you all for letting us know how we are doing. If you feel there are members who could benefit from live music, please do get in touch."



Burns Supper Event for older veteran SWB members at the Scottish War Blinded Hawkhead Centre, Paisley, with musicians from Music in Hospitals & Care Scotland

As part of our project Play it again SAV, work is about to commence in collaboration with Research Scotland to really enable us to understand the impact that live music has for older veterans and our involvement in the Unforgotten Forces project has enabled resource for this work which will have huge value on the evidence we can gather to continue our work.

You can help us to celebrate our birthday and reach more people across Scotland with live music by supporting our Birthday Appeal, there are many ways you can help us to celebrate from dedicating a performance to gifting your birthday this year." Further details are available on the MiHC website via the following link:

www.mihc.org.uk/birthday



TRAINING DAY FOR UNFORGOTTEN FORCES STAFF

Almost 50 members of staff from Unforgotten Forces partners came together for a joint training day at the Scottish War Blinded Linburn Centre in West Lothian on 19th July. The focus was upon sources of mental health support for older veterans with presentations provided by Veterans First Point, Combat Stress and Veterans UK. Dementia Awareness training was also provided by Age Scotland.

AGE SCOTLAND – A GUIDE FOR VETERANS IN LATER LIFE

The Age Scotland helpline **0800 12 44 222** offers free and confidential information and advice on later life matters such as care and benefits. Thanks to Unforgotten Forces, the service is being boosted to better meet the needs of older veterans.

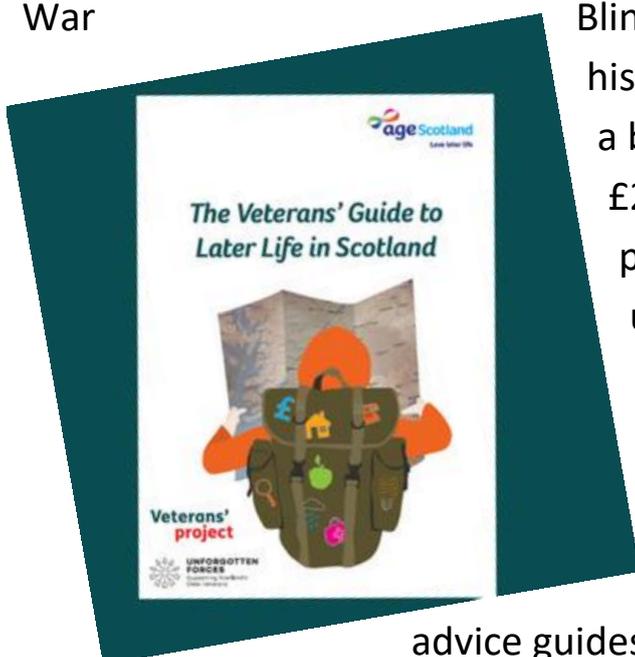


Veterans like Michael*. He was worried that Pension Credit had been wrongly paid for his wife who was in residential care, and that there might be a large overpayment to be made. A helpline adviser checked the rules and was able to reassure Michael that no repayment would be necessary.

With one in ten people in Scotland belonging to the veterans' community, and many of them older, assisting veterans is not new territory for the helpline. What is new through their Veterans' Project, is that every caller is now asked if they are a veteran, or a veterans' dependent. We're training our helpline team on specialist veterans' matters such as War Disablement Pensions, knowledge they put to good use whenever a caller answers 'yes' to either question. Through Unforgotten Forces we're also part of a web of support for veterans. Where they can't help, they will find someone who can.

It works both ways. Veteran Peter* was referred to the helpline from Scottish War

Blinded, who suspected he wasn't receiving his full welfare benefits entitlements. We ran a benefits check for him, and identified £2987 in additional annual entitlements—plus a £747 backdate. Peter's story is not unusual. Between January and June this year the helpline identified almost £25,000 in unclaimed benefits for veterans and their dependants.



Age Scotland publishes a library of free advice guides, and this is another aspect of their work they're enhancing for older veterans. Their new **Veterans' Guide to Later Life in Scotland** offers veterans a route map to embracing opportunities and

overcoming challenges that later life can bring, on topics including money, health, care, housing, planning for the future and getting out and about. It is available from the helpline **0800 12 44 222**.

Changes in later life, such as retirement, bereavement and failing health, can make someone more vulnerable to loneliness and social isolation. With



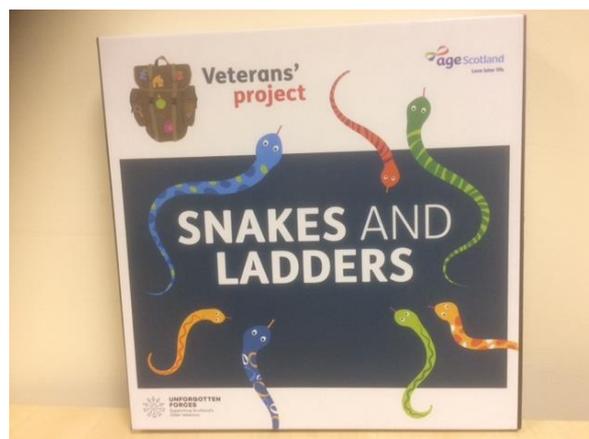
Participants at a networking event in Duns play Age Scotland's Snakes & Ladders board game which explores veterans' issues in a fun way!

almost half of veterans in Scotland aged 75 or older, they are disproportionately affected by these changes. Age Scotland plays a key role in tackling loneliness in later life, primarily by empowering community groups

and services that offer lifeline support to isolated older people. Through a road-show of free training days across Scotland we're enabling these groups to better identify, appreciate and support isolated older veterans. Dates and locations can be found online www.agescotland.org.uk/taster. They are also updating their popular [Community Connecting](#) guides, which list social and social support opportunities for older people in each area, to highlight groups and services that have made a commitment to offer older veterans a warm welcome.

www.agescotland.org.uk/veterans

* Names have been changed





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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, via:

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

We look forward to hearing from you!

