



# UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's  
Older Veterans

## Unforgotten Forces Newsletter No.7- Winter 2020

Welcome to the winter 2020 edition of the Unforgotten Forces consortium's newsletter. By the end of last year the consortium's partner organisations had notched up an impressive 11,343 episodes of often life changing support for older veterans in Scotland across its five main service areas, namely: practical support, advice, health & wellbeing, countering loneliness & social isolation and arts engagement. Meantime our services continue to expand both in scale and geography and some key examples of this include the roll out of Age Scotland's new Veterans' Project initiative to encourage physical activity amongst older veterans and the expansion of Action on Hearing Loss Scotland's Hearing Forces project into Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, Falkirk and Stirling. Also, the need for the addition to the consortium's stable of a partner able to provide mental health support to older veterans has been recognised for some time. The

**COMBAT STRESS**  
**FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH**

consortium is therefore delighted that Combat Stress has very recently joined the project bringing the number of partners to 17. Meantime efforts are now well underway to secure a sustainable future for the project beyond the end of its current Armed Forces Covenant Trust LIBOR funding in June this year. This edition of our newsletter includes the following articles:

- **Hearing Forces now accepting referrals in Forth Valley, Argyll & Bute**

- **ASAP's Support for an Army Veteran in Fife**
- **National Service Veterans Battle Loneliness**
- **Poppyscotland's "Break Away" Holidays for Older Veterans**
- **Legion Scotland's Comradeship Trip to the North of Scotland**
- **WWII Veteran with sight loss reconnects with Royal Navy heritage thanks to rehabilitation support from Scottish War Blinded**
- **Music for Older Veterans - News from the Play It Again SAV! Project**
- **News From The Erskine Reid Macewan Activity Centre (ERMAC)**
- **SSAFA's Key Role in VE Day Plans For May**
- **Unforgotten Forces Policy Round Table Impact Report**

## **Hearing Forces now accepting referrals in Forth Valley, Argyll & Bute**

Action on Hearing Loss Scotland's Hearing Forces service recently expanded into four further local authority areas – Stirling, Falkirk, Clackmannanshire and Argyll & Bute – bringing the total coverage in Scotland to 29 of the 32 areas.



The team have consulted with other UF partners who operate in these areas to gain an insight into the veteran communities, to identify opportunities for joint working and to locate possible venues for drop-in clinics.

Stirling and north Argyll & Bute is covered by Project Manager Angela Paton, who has been supporting veterans from Stirling since the end of November 2019. Following a visit to Argyll & Bute by our Hear to Inform and Connect Service, Angela will be following up with various organisations to visit and promote Hearing Forces.



**Angela Paton, Hearing Forces Project Manager**

Falkirk and Clackmannanshire is covered by the Project Officer for East Scotland, Derek Clark. Derek has already received referrals for both areas and will be carrying out house visits in February 2020. He is also looking forward to

attending the Falkirk Council Sensory Team training day and to Scottish War Blinded's monthly lunch clubs and walks.

South Argyll & Bute is covered by the Project Officer for West Scotland, Caroline McDonald. Caroline has been active in the area attending a recent Scottish War Blinded Coffee Morning in Helensburgh and a Brunch meeting held by the Garelochhead Station Trust in Garelochhead, where she was able to meet and support several veterans. Visits to groups in Arrochar and Dunoon are also being arranged.

If you would like to refer an older veteran for support with hearing loss or Tinnitus, please complete our referral form and email to:

[hearing.forces@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:hearing.forces@hearingloss.org.uk)

To continue our work in these and other areas, we welcome the support of Volunteers. If you have a few hours to share and would like to help us provide free support and advice to older veterans with hearing loss or Tinnitus, please email [hearing.forces@hearingloss.org.uk](mailto:hearing.forces@hearingloss.org.uk) to find out about our current volunteering opportunities.

## **ASAP's Support for an Army Veteran in Fife**



The Armed Services Advice Project (ASAP) supports people with information, advice and much more. Bruce, an Army veteran who served with the Royal Scots for 25 years and now lives in Fife, is used to helping other veterans to access advice, and hadn't had to ask for help himself. This changed when he was asked to change the benefits he claimed, and had the forms to complete.

*"The hardest bit is admitting to yourself that you do have problems and need to ask for help. The paperwork can be a nightmare, especially with medical conditions and having to repeat yourself. It's heavy work, and it can stop people claiming.*

*My ASAP adviser understands the conflicts I talk about, and she can make sense of what I say and put it in the right language for the forms. Her professionalism, courtesy and understanding puts*



*things in perspective, and takes a weight off my shoulders.*

*All the organisations coming together in Unforgotten Forces makes it easier. The welfare support available is huge. I didn't know how much existed. The welfare and support helps the individual but also is a very substantial help to their families, which helps relieve the stress and pressure. When I was younger I thought the Legion was just for a cheap night out, now I know I can connect in to support from different places- thank you!"*



## **National Service Veterans Battle Loneliness**

Oliver Chisholme remembers the day he was called up to do his National Service. The trainee accountant from Hawick received a letter just after his 18th birthday on March 9, 1947, telling him to go to the Assembly Rooms in Edinburgh for a medical check-up. A money order for 4 shillings and sixpence was enclosed. "You could get a good meal for that in those days," Oliver recalls.

Oliver, now 90, is sharing his story at Lothians Veterans Centre in Dalkeith, where he enjoys reminiscing with fellow ex-servicemen. He was among the first wave of young men called up to do 18 months of National Service two years after the end of World War Two. All able-bodied men between the ages of 18 and 30 were called up. Initially they served for 18 months but in 1950 at the start of the Korean War, this was increased to two years. Between 1947 and 1963 more than two million young men were conscripted to serve in the British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and Royal Marines.

Now in their 80s and 90s, the National Service generation is largely forgotten.

The National Servicemen played a vital role in post-war Britain, both in boosting garrison troops and peacekeeping forces. In Scotland, National Servicemen now make up a quarter of all veterans. But many do not regard themselves as part of the ex-service community, and are unaware of the benefits and support available to them and their dependants.

Another regular at Lothian Veterans' Centre is Douglas Carter, 88, from Newtongrange. Like Oliver, he did his National Service and until recently did not regard himself as part of the veterans' community. "I had a medical and an



*Oliver (left) & Douglas (right) enjoying company at Lothians Veterans Centre*

interview because I wanted to go into the Navy, but I got the Marines instead," he says.

Douglas finished his National Service in September 1953. "I had my doubts before I started but it wasn't a bad way of life. I enjoyed being in the desert and seeing different places. I think some form of National Service is a good thing. I would never have got the chance to go to other places without it.

Age Scotland, the national charity for older people, runs a veterans' project which is working to highlight the role of those "hidden veterans" who did National Service and ensure they are given the support to which they are entitled.

Doug Anthony, the charity's project leader, said: "We've been privileged to work with Lothian Veterans Centre in enhancing later life for National Service veterans such as Oliver, who we helped to use the free iPad he was given by the Royal Naval Association. And Douglas attends the Centre's Wednesday activity club, where we recently gave him a Functional Fitness MOT check to help him boost his wellbeing.

Many of our partner charities in the Unforgotten Forces consortium have also contributed, such as Music in Hospitals and Care which gives Oliver, Douglas and their friends at the Centre fantastic music-making experiences.

"The centre is a great example of the warm welcome that awaits National Servicemen across Scotland who re-connect with the armed forces community.

A year ago, Oliver made his first visit to the Centre. Despite living nearby, he had never thought about attending until his grandson encouraged him to give it a try. "I am basically housebound and do not go out. My daughter brought me along to the veterans' centre the first time. It gets me out of the house every Friday and I have a good chat with the other people there. It has been a good thing for me."

Like Oliver, Douglas was unsure about visiting the Centre as a former National Serviceman. "I used to walk past the window and think, no I'm not going in there. Then my wife died in February. I had looked after her for a long time. My family thought I should come along here because it was getting to the stage that the only place I was going was Tesco.

"At first I found it a wee bit strange. I think Oliver and I are the only ones who did National Service. But I'm used to it now and look forward to coming and having a chat with everyone. It gives me something to look forward to again."

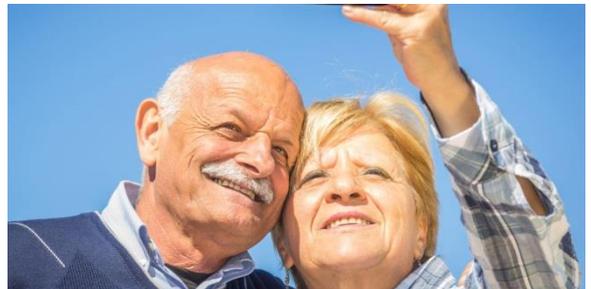
**Poppyscotland's "Break Away" Holidays for Older Veterans**

With Christmas and Hogmanay now well and truly behind us many



people's thoughts turn to holidays for the coming year so this may be a good time to remind readers about Poppyscotland's Break Away service which provides free holidays in the UK to older veterans (plus an accompanying spouse, partner or carer) who perhaps, for whatever reason, may have not been able to enjoy a holiday for some time, or no longer feel confident about holidaying by themselves or perhaps are simply unable to afford a holiday. Poppyscotland is therefore accepting applications for this service at present and the charity is keen to get the best possible Break Away holiday or respite break booked for its beneficiaries. The winter period is quiet with few people travelling but it is a good time to get a break booked and have something to look forward to. All breaks are tailor-made to suit the older veteran client. In the past, the types of breaks enjoyed by older veterans have included:

- Cottage with a view of Balmoral Castle
- Spa Breaks to Peebles Hydro
- Adapted cottages with hot tubs
- Spring time in Jersey
- Island hopping in Scotland
- Anywhere in the UK to visit family and friends
- Glenton Travel Coach trips, where everyone is so well looked after by the organisation from start to finish.



For more information and/or to make a referral contact Poppyscotland's Break Away Coordinator, Ann Shepherd, via:

E mail: [A.Shepherd@poppyscotland.org.uk](mailto:A.Shepherd@poppyscotland.org.uk)

Tel: 0131 550 1589

### **Legion Scotland's Comradeship Trip To The North of Scotland**



In October Legion Scotland carried out its Unforgotten Forces Annual Comradeship event with 31 veterans heading north for 3 days to visit historic military sites including The Black Watch Museum, Ruthven Barracks, Fort George, RAF Lossiemouth then on the way home the group took the long route to visit the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge. The total age of those veterans on board the coach was 2,136 with all arms of the veteran's community represented and veterans joining from Aberdeen, Perth, Dundee Edinburgh, Dunfermline etc.

Special thanks should go to Lt Col Hugo Clark, Edinburgh Garrison Commander, for his highly informative and engaging talk to the group at Ruthven Barracks. Col Clark actually used a day's leave so he could brief the group on the Barrack's history. Those present were also very well hosted by 3SCOTS while in Fort George and 1Squadron at RAF Lossiemouth.



The time away was challenging for some, interesting for others but never a dull moment for anyone, after each visit a quiz was held to find out who was paying attention with prizes on offer for those who also cheated the most.....!!!! It would be fair to say it was a good trip away for all with friendships renewed or in some cases a new friendship started with one commenting that *"after being housebound for a number of years this trip has given me the confidence to try new things and a new found freedom"*, another was heard to say that the visit to RAF Lossiemouth allowed him to see his Granddaughter, who is attached to 1 Squadron, for the 1st time since she joined 16 years ago.



The role of the Legion Scotland Veterans' Community Support service is to help veterans aged 65 and over living with Isolation & Loneliness and, among other issues, to integrate them back into the community. With this in mind the purpose of the annual comradeship event

organised by Legion Scotland is to assist veterans take that one step more and venture further afield whilst still being supported by volunteers and staff. A full timetable of events will appear in the next issue of the Legion Scotland magazine. If you would like a copy then contact Legion Scotland's Veterans' Community Support Manager, Tommy Douglas, on 0131 550 1560.

## WWII Veteran with sight loss reconnects with Royal Navy heritage thanks to Rehabilitation support from Scottish War Blinded



**SCOTTISH WAR BLINDED**  
FOR ALL VETERANS WITH SIGHT LOSS

A World War Two veteran with sight loss has reconnected with his Royal Navy heritage thanks to a specialist video magnifier from the charity and Unforgotten Forces partner Scottish War Blinded. Jim Thompson, 96, has the eye condition age-related macular degeneration, which has left him struggling to read.

Jim served in Gibraltar working on the signalling tower and then in contraband control with the Royal Navy Patrol Service for two-and-a-half years. He then undertook minesweeping duties in the Bristol and English Channels until he was demobbed in 1946.

The father-of-two has always kept in touch with his Navy roots, and was frustrated to find his sight condition was making it difficult to read his monthly Navy News magazine. But since becoming a member of Scottish War Blinded last year, Jim has been receiving expert support from the charity's rehabilitation team.

Now kitted out with an Optelec Traveller HD video magnifier – a portable, lightweight device that can zoom in on text and change colour contrast to suit reader requirements – Jim is delighted to be enjoying his Navy News once more.



Jim said: *"I have a black spot in the centre of my eye that I can't see with, but I can get a picture in my peripheral vision. In my right eye I have cataracts.*

*"I get the Navy News magazine which I like reading, I like keeping up to date with what's going on. But I was trying to use a handheld*

*magnifier to read it and I was struggling for ages until it ended up tiring my eyes. "Now that I've got the Traveller with the stand I can read it again. The*

*magnifier's perfect for me, I'm enjoying it. It's been a lifesaver. I get a lot of letters so it helps me to read those too."*

Scottish War Blinded Rehabilitation Officer, Fiona McCormick, assessed Jim at home, and worked closely with him to establish the ideal specialist equipment to help him maintain his independence – including the Traveller HD and specialist portable lighting. All provided free of charge by the charity.

Jim said: *"Fiona's been very good. She came to visit me at home with a range of pieces of equipment to try out and the support I've been receiving from her has been lovely. I can't fault it.*

*"Scottish War Blinded have also set me up with the Freedom LED lamp, I think it's brilliant. The brighter it is, the better it is for my sight. I have a smaller one too. I use that for smaller work, it complements some handheld magnifiers I have. The charity also gave me suitable anti-glare glasses as well to help when the sun is out. I just think all the help I'm getting is brilliant. Some of this equipment can be quite expensive, but there's Scottish War Blinded helping me with it for free. I hope my sight doesn't get worse, but I know Scottish War Blinded will have things to help me if it does".*

Jim said: *"The support and access to specialist equipment is important because it gives you more interests in your life."*

Jim hopes getting to grips with new specialist equipment will also help him to carry on engaging with some of his other interests, such as natural history.

As well as expert advice from Scottish War Blinded's rehabilitation team, the charity's free support also means that he has support from one of its two outreach workers for Fife, Stephen Greig.

The veteran also enjoyed a reunion lunch at the Balbirnie House Hotel, Markinch, for the charity's Fife-based veterans with sight loss last year. He says he is looking forward to getting involved with more Scottish War Blinded events.

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](http://www.scottishwarblinded.org) or call 0800 035 6409 to refer a veteran to the charity.

## Music for older veterans - news from the Play It Again SAV! project



It was a busy end to 2019 for Unforgotten Forces partner Music in Hospitals & Care's (MiHC) Play it Again SAV! project with musicians performing all across Scotland. As well as our regular live music sessions we also ran special projects with veteran groups.

**The Vetrobates on tour!** Since November 2018 the Lothian Veterans Centre in Dalkeith have been hosting popular monthly "Jammin' and Bacon Roll" sessions. Veterans and family members sing and play along with MiHC musician Charlie



Gorman and over time they have developed a fabulous repertoire ranging from traditional songs to Elvis Presley and beyond. The idea of forming a band, with a wonderful name "The

Vetrobates", grew from the veterans' enthusiasm for making music together. Every band needs an audience so The Vetrobates entertained residents, visitors and staff at the Erskine Home. They were in great voice and there was real emotional power in seeing veterans entertaining veterans. Tea, cakes and chat followed and a great day was had by all involved. Wayne Large, Activities Assistant at Edinburgh Erskine Home said afterwards:



*"There was an air of excitement in the room and our residents reminisced and joined in with the songs. People were clapping and moving in their chairs to the beat of the music. It was lovely to see people enjoying themselves and we cannot wait to have them*

*back at Erskine.”*

*One of the band commented: “As well as it being a brilliant afternoon out where we met other veterans and enjoyed their company, it gave us an opportunity to provide a valuable service which was fun and different, and it was very gratifying to see the residents’ reactions to our songs and music. When can we do it again?! Perhaps we could return for a summer concert in the gardens.”*

The Vetrobates are planning future “gigs” so watch this space!



**Songwriting Pilot** The Play it Again SAV! music sessions spark conversation and reminiscence and an idea formed wanted to capture veterans’ stories and ideas in song. Last autumn the project therefore asked MiHC musician & singer songwriter Jason Sweeney to work with four groups to pilot a songwriting project. Over a series of

sessions, Jason visited the Scottish War Blinded Centres at Linburn and Hawkhead, the Erskine Reid Macewen Centre at Bishopton and the Royal British Legion Scotland Saltcoats, Ardrossan and Stevenston branch to gather lyrics and explore musical styles with the veterans.

Sessions were really interactive with wonderful word play and creative input from veterans. The result is four brand new songs! The songs are all very different in character with inspiration taken from memories of heading out to the Paisley dance halls, the history of Erskine Bishopton, a veteran’s journey from signing up to returning to civilian life, and the importance of friendship and coming together at Linburn.

Feedback on the sessions has been very positive - *“At the start of this group I was full of trepidation, now I feel like a “songwriter”. Great to be part of this experience!!”* Royal British Legion Scotland member.

You can hear the veterans’ thoughts on the process and listen to these special songs here: <https://mihc.org.uk/sav-songwriting>

## News from the Erskine Reid Macewan Activity Centre (ERMAC)

ERMAC's 2<sup>nd</sup> Birthday! On the 15th January 2020 our members came together to celebrate our second birthday there was cake, nibbles and an ERMAC quiz, the celebrations were thoroughly enjoyed by all. Over the two years that the centre has opened its doors to veterans living in the community we have provided meaningful support for almost 200 members (including spouses and carers), 51% of those members are 65 years of age and older. It may also be a point to note, considering the ethos behind Unforgotten Forces is partnership working, that a recent review of our collaborations has established that since opening ERMAC has partnered with 50+ organisations, this has definitely been key to enhancing our provision and cementing our goal of becoming a hub where veterans can access many service delivery organisations each with their own area of specialism.



**THE VETERANS WORKSHOP EXHIBITION**

**10th to 21st February**  
Opening event 11th February at 2pm. Refreshments served.  
Cass Art, 63-67 Queen Street, G1 3BZ

**FREE ENTRY**

Veterans designs are developed and crafted within our activity centre on the Erskine estate in Bishopton.

*Come along and show your support*

**CASS ART** EST. 1984

**ERSKINE**  
Caring for Veterans since 1916

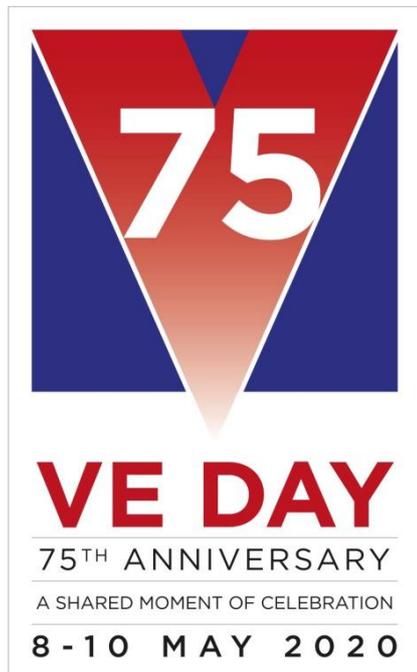
Refurbishment. Mid-February will see the start of our long awaited refurbishment works. The aim of the refurb is to improve accessibility and increase capacity, whilst no one will argue our building is stunning it was not built for the purpose we now use it. The works will allow those with disabilities to navigate a user-friendly building as well as support the aims we have of increasing our daily numbers to working with 40 veterans per day. The contractors will be onsite for six months and whilst it will be a fair bit of upheaval for us we all know the end goal will enhance what we already have.



The Veterans Workshop. The 'Veterans Workshop' launched in October. The aim of the project is to raise the profile of ERMAC, provide meaningful activity for members and generate sales of veterans produce which will cover expenditure. The first product 'Heart of Erskine' is available on Erskine website and larger more bespoke pieces are available from our wood workshop and display cabinet in the Erskine Bishopton Home. Without much of advertising in the first four months our sales have reached almost £2000, funds which will go straight back into running the centre.

## SSAFA's Key Role in VE Day Plans For May

SSAFA is the official charity for a series of events to be held over the first May Bank Holiday weekend organised by Pageant master Bruno Peek LVO OBE OPR to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) as well as the partner charity for a VE Day concert in the Royal Albert Hall on Friday 8th May.



There is an official website via which organisations can register interest in organising or hosting an event over the three days the website address is: [www.veday75.org](http://www.veday75.org) and key events to note are:

- Friday 8th May 3pm- The Nation's Toast to the Heroes of WW2. This will be a national moment encouraging all to raise a glass in tribute to all those who sacrificed so much for our freedom. It is being held in local pubs across the nation. Communities, schools, towns and villages are being encouraged to hold their own events in the afternoon to coincide with the 3pm toast, in the hope that during the celebrations/parties a moment will be taken at 3pm to raise a glass and say the wording of the official Nation's Toast. Wording is also available to download from [www.veday75.org](http://www.veday75.org).
- Also at 3pm pipers across the country are being encouraged to pipe two tunes: Battle's O'er and the specially composed tune VE Day 75. The music for both these tunes is available to download from [www.veday75.com](http://www.veday75.com).
- At 6.55pm A Cry for Peace around the world, will ring out with town criers and members of the local community being urged to undertake 'The Cry', at this time in the UK. The wording for the cry can be downloaded from [www.veday75.com](http://www.veday75.com) and for community events that are taking part in the afternoon to incorporate the Nation's Toast this maybe a nice way to draw your event to a close.

There are also other events such as street parties, fetes and church services taking place over the Saturday and Sunday and I would encourage you to take a look at the official website [www.veday75.org](http://www.veday75.org).

SSAFA has fundraising materials which can support organisations in this endeavour. Not only can they offer posters, fundraising toolkits, collection boxes and literature explaining SSAFA's role in World War II as well as an archive of images. For more information about SSAFA's role in VE Day follow this link: [www.ssafa.org.uk/veday75](http://www.ssafa.org.uk/veday75)

# Unforgotten Forces Policy Round Table Impact Report

An infographic summary of the work of the Unforgotten Forces Policy Round Table taken from a recent impact report to illustrate its work in the field of policy, public affairs, influencing and political engagement is shown here.

Directly engaged **76** MSPs, **33** MPs and **11** Councillors

**13**

Briefings for MSPs about or referencing Unforgotten Forces



**3**

Joint responses to Government policy consultations



**3**

Parliamentary Questions initiated ...



... and one focused Parliamentary debate

**471.342**



Reach of our Sensory Impairment guide news release

**3**



Policy led achievements by way of raising awareness, influencing government, and supporting service delivery

**4**

Policy development areas influenced: **social isolation**, **transport**, sensory impairment, and **health and wellbeing**.



**1,795**



Uptake from advertising of Veterans' Guide to Later Life



Elected members news releases in support of Unforgotten Forces: **9** MSPs, **3** MPs, **1** Councillor.

**5,578**



Unforgotten Forces web-page views



Hosted visits by Ministers and Scottish Veterans Commissioner



# 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 members, clients or 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](mailto:g.macdonald@poppyscotland.org.uk)  
or Tel: 07458 014362.



We look forward to hearing from you!

