

# INSIDE

## VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE TIMELAPSE VIDEO

**NHS**  
The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt  
Orthopaedic Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust



**VETERANS  
ORTHOPAEDIC  
SERVICE**

## VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE P.7

The UK's first dedicated orthopaedic centre for armed forces veterans



# ISSUE 1 CHIRON VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC NEWSLETTER



**ANTHONY J STABLES P.3**  
Chairman & Board Member of Headley Court Charity



## VETERANS' IN THE FIELD P.12

We take a look at what our veterans and service users are up to now

## MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER P.2

The UK's first dedicated orthopaedic centre for Armed Forces Veterans

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS P.5

Find out how VOS works, who can access it, and much more!

## INTRODUCING YOU TO OUR VOS FORCES P.10

A brief introduction to our specialist VOS team members

# A MISSION TO CARE

Veterans' Orthopaedic Service (VOS), Clinical Director, Lieutenant Colonel Meyer holds fast to his commitment and responsibility to military personnel and their families long after their soldierly service ends.

**A** serving army orthopaedic surgeon with twenty years of regular service, primarily deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, Lieutenant Colonel Meyer has proven leadership in his field achieving high rank and recognition. He was inspired by the medical care and welfare support provided for army veterans when he visited Walter Reed Military hospital in America and a seed was sown for a British mission.

In 2013, following extensive research and commitment, Lt Col Meyer accomplished victory by establishing the VOS. It is the first service of its type within the UK. Its home is The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (RJA), a national centre of orthopaedic excellence. Veterans are seen by a military led team who have a better idea of their experiences and expectations. Welfare concerns are addressed at the same time. This understanding of the mental and physical hardships encountered during military service makes VOS unique.

The constant demand for VOS is exciting and brings forward a new chapter alongside fresh financial challenges.



**THE ARMED FORCES COVENANT IS A PROMISE FROM THE NATION THAT THOSE WHO SERVE OR HAVE SERVED IN THE ARMED FORCES, AND THEIR FAMILIES, ARE TREATED FAIRLY.**





# AIR VICE MARSHAL ANTHONY J STABLES

## Forward from Chairman & Board Member of Headley Court Charity

**O**n behalf of the board of Headley Court Charity, (HCC), I am delighted to pen this forward. The work of RJAH, Carl Meyer and the Veterans Orthopaedic Centre, (VOS), with its associated team of supporters and volunteers is inspirational. HCC is very pleased to fund the build of this first centre of its kind, and proud for it to be named Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre (HC-VOC).

Some of you may enquire as to the significance of Headley Court. Over the years, it has beneficially touched the lives of tens of thousands of injured men and women of the armed forces. I was such a beneficiary and following a flying accident was an annual inpatient for 25 years, enabling me to complete 42 years of military flying. Headley Court remains close to my heart.

The success of Headley Court is founded in a bond which draws together serving and former members of the armed forces – ‘the band of brothers’ who together have faced adversity. HC-VOC is built on the same ethos. This new dedicated centre to support and address the orthopaedic needs of veterans, many of whom may have endured physical hardship and injury associated with their service life, wholly fulfils the remit of Headley Court benefactors.

The origins of Headley Court date back to December 1940, when the Auctioneers' and Estate Agents' Institute's Royal Air Force Pilots and Crews Fund was established to help beneficiaries' transition to civilian life and to educate the children of the fallen.

In 1949 the RAFPC fund, having purchased the estate at Headley Court, transferred it to the Air Ministry to establish a Rehabilitation Centre for flying personnel of the Royal Air Force. The Headley Court Charity was granted ownership of the estate and for the next 69 years facilitated the delivery of a world class rehabilitation service to all members of the armed forces.

More recently, following the creation of a new purpose-built defence rehabilitation premises at Stanford Hall, the charity disposed of the estate at Headley Court and has subsequently made a number of endowments to organisations with comparable purpose. A chance meeting, by one of my fellow Trustees, with Col Meyer at a Soldiering-On Award Ceremony in London, identified VOS as a project with legacy. It is ground-breaking to set into motion dedicated medical support to veterans within the NHS.

**HCC remains proud to have started the process. Now we look to you to step up and ensure that dedicated veteran orthopaedic services can be developed and sustained in the future. We owe it to those who have served their country.**

**AIR VICE MARSHAL ANTHONY J STABLES**



# HIGH PRAISE FROM THE LORD-LIEUTENANT OF SHROPSHIRE

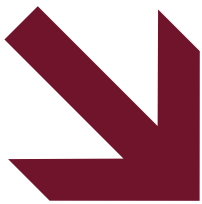
His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant of Shropshire  
Mrs Anna Turner JP, Patron to The League of  
Friends of The Robert Jones & Agnes Hunt  
Orthopaedic Hospital.

**I** am proud to share in the celebration of the new Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre at RJAH. The Shropshire Lieutenancy is committed to recognising and supporting hard work, success and innovation.

The holistic service of orthopaedic medical care with integrated welfare support and staff training at the centre, shines a beacon of light on Shropshire and our nation as the first of its kind dedicated to military personnel and their families. I extend sincere congratulations to the founding team, their supporters and everyone working so hard to provide such life changing facilities.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



## How does VOS work?

Patient problems are assessed with authority and precision by a growing military-led team who are well acquainted with the expectations of armed forces staff. This thriving team includes, serving, reserve and veteran medical staff, veteran volunteers, as well as civilian consultants. It is an NHS service and follows the same rules, regulations, funding, and staffing. If necessary; surgery follows at RJAH, the leading specialist hospital in the country.

## Who can access VOS specialist care and how do they go about it?

Access is only through NHS registered GPs who can refer to VOS in line with the NHS Choice Framework – [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk). We can assess people for most orthopaedic conditions except spines. (we hope to offer this service in the future).

## What is different about VOS patient care?

Importantly VOS draws no distinction between serving or veteran patients; as many patients are referred whilst serving, but remain under review following retirement. VOS offers continuity, which is vital for personnel transitioning into civilian life.

## What features of VOS make it more aligned to the armed forces?

VOS works within the NHS and has its own NHS management team. This enables mechanisms to allow assessment of patients throughout the UK and access pathways. VOS deals with welfare issues, with support from Veterans, the VOS Welfare Officer works with Shropshire Council and liaises with other veterans' charities. Inpatients receive support and pastoral care from the Veterans Volunteer Support Group, made up of former veteran patients who live locally.

## Is VOS an officially recognised medical service?

VOS has worked to strengthen The Veterans Covenant Healthcare Alliance (VCHA). The VCHA is group of NHS providers – including acute, mental health, community, and ambulance Trusts – who have agreed to be exemplars of the best care for, and support to, the armed forces community whether they are Regular, Reserves, Veterans, spouses or dependants.

## The feedback for VOS is overwhelmingly successful. What happens if VOS becomes oversubscribed?

The VOS service demonstrates how effective veterans' secondary healthcare services can be provided within the NHS. It provides a blueprint for how similar services can be developed to provide a network of veterans' secondary healthcare services across the country.

# MESSAGE FROM OUR FOUNDER

A success story with insatiable demand, "We are listening".



Lt Col Meyer in theatre

“  
**THE VOS CENTRE  
ENABLES VETERANS  
TO BE TREATED IN A  
FAMILIAR MILITARY  
ENVIRONMENT FOR  
THEIR SPECIFIC  
NEEDS.**



**W**hen I set up VOS over nine years ago it was impossible to imagine how important it would become. We have now seen over 25,000 patients and the demand for the service continues to grow.

Today, our services have expanded to include subspecialties such as sports knee, upper limb and foot and ankle with an ambition to make all the specialist orthopaedic services at RJAH available to veterans.

Referrals have increased every year, in fact, two years before the Covid-19 pandemic, 5205 patients were seen, including 669 joint replacements. We have treated patients from all over the UK and further afield including Saudi Arabia, Oman, The Falkland Islands and Cyprus.

Right from the start, it was acutely evident that a dedicated space just for veterans was urgently needed. Thanks to the vision of RJAH, faith from the team and the generosity of supporters who recognised our mission, we raised over £6.25 million to enable a bespoke Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre to be built (£6 million from the Headley Court Charity).

The centre enables veterans to be treated in a familiar military environment for their specific orthopaedic needs. The centre encompasses a Veterans' Hub so that welfare issues can be addressed at the same time. The centre is unique within the NHS.

As we emerge from the challenges of a global pandemic, VOS will continue with renewed vigour. We are now at the forefront of hospital Trusts, in the recovery from Covid-19. However, we do rely on national directives, who dictate

**25,000**  
patients and the demand for the service continues to grow.

▪

**2017**  
5205 patients were seen, including 669 joint replacements

▪

**£6.25 MILLION**  
raised to enable a bespoke Veterans Orthopaedic Centre

what work can be done. New Covid-19 variants and staff shortages still further constrain activity.

We sincerely connect with patients who have been suffering during limited NHS services. VOS patients are being seen on a priority basis and our team is working tirelessly to accelerate our support as we resume services. Patients will be kept informed through our communication channels including social media and the hospital website.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL CARL MEYER

# THE HEADLEY COURT VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE

£6 million charitable grant from Headley Court Charity builds UK's first dedicated Orthopaedic Centre for Armed Force Veterans at RJAH.

**T**he Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre (HC-VOC), provides the first dedicated veterans space within an NHS Trust. The ground-breaking construction supports bespoke care to veterans in an environment completely familiar to them.

In recognition of the multi-million-pound grant from the Headley Court Charity, the building is known as The Headley Court Veterans Orthopaedic Centre, or HC-VOC.

Headley Court formed the leading medical rehabilitation base for members of the Armed Forces before the transfer of their services to a new facility at Stanford Hall. The move resulted in reserves and the Trustees of the Headley Court Charity sought services with an aligned ethos to support in the form of charitable grants. The Veterans' Orthopaedic Service was selected as most appropriate to fulfil the Headley Court Charity's criteria.

The outstanding structure comprises a ground floor with an outpatient department, minor procedures room, and a dedicated Veterans' Hub. The hub will support all veteran welfare issues. The service is provided in partnership with Shropshire Council and veterans charities. The Veterans' Hub is the first to be located within an NHS hospital.

A training suite, on the first floor, including a simulation room and training facilities. Multidisciplinary team meeting, administration and research space is also available.



**WATCH THE  
TIMELAPSE VIDEO  
OF THE BUILD**



THE BUILDING IS KNOWN AS THE HEADLEY COURT VETERANS ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE.



# A DEDICATED VETERANS' HUB

## ARMED FORCES OUTREACH



Left: Sarah Kerr, Armed Forces Outreach Coordinator

### SARAH KERR

Armed Forces Outreach Coordinator

**T**he Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre (HC-VOC) dedicated Veterans' Hub, offers support five days a week and is coordinated through Shropshire Armed Forces Outreach team alongside service charities and associated agencies.

Quiet rooms are designed for veterans to relax during individual face-to-face meetings. Veteran volunteers with relatable experience offer information, advice and guidance for those attending clinics. A bespoke IT infrastructure supports the completion of enquiry and referral forms. Comprehensive out of hours information is always available to take away.

#### HOW IT HAPPENED:

Whilst Lt Col Meyer was providing outstanding clinical services to almost 2000 veterans a year, from around the country in 2018, essential welfare support was not readily available to them. Keen to transform services to veterans, he made an approach to Shropshire Council about providing an outreach session to tie in with veteran clinics. The aim was to offer a more complete wraparound service of care.

Armed Forces Outreach Coordinator for Shropshire Council, Sarah Kerr, is no stranger to military service, she spent 10 years as a QARANC, and accompanied her husband for 25 years on postings around the world before settling in Shrewsbury.



**OUR MOST IMPORTANT FUNCTION IS GIVING VETERANS THE RIGHT INFORMATION TO AID THEIR RECOVERY.**



Sarah came to post at the end of 2018. Familiar with military practices and recognising the quality of the service provided at VOS, she immediately set to work with service charities and agencies to provide welfare support to bridge the gap.

In June 2019, a transformational discussion of ideas took place between Sarah Kerr and Nicky Downing from Veterans UK and the first outreach support at RJAH was delivered. Sarah came away absolutely buzzing with the amount of connections they had established in just three hours. Nicky instantly had a file full of development work that she was keen to follow up. They created a holistic joined-up connection process which is the first of its kind in a Foundation Trust hospital.

Sarah continues to coordinate weekly outreach, supported by an unparalleled group of caseworkers from service charities and agencies. Veterans are given the right information for them to follow up in their local area. Paperwork is completed, claims set in motion and referrals made.

*"Our most important function is giving veterans the right information to aid their recovery. We have received lots of follow up emails thanking us for our support,"* said Sarah.

Veterans come from all over the country and many have remarked on the excellence of the wrap around service. They are pleased to find a vibrant and active hub of expertise where they can turn for help.

*"Hub presence means a veteran can go into surgery with a head clear of worries, which is essential for post-operative recuperation,"* says Sarah.

Sarah is excited to be part of HC-VOC.

*"There is nothing better than being able to sit with patients face to face when concerns are fresh in their mind and they can actually see who they are talking to,"* says Sarah.







## THE RV – REFRESHMENT AND SPACE FOR PATIENTS AND THEIR VISITORS

**S**et in the heart of The Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre hub is the RV, a café for patients and their visitors to refuel. Veterans will be welcomed and made to feel comfortable and relaxed amongst likeminded people. Run by veteran volunteers and charity staff the RV café is the perfect space to enjoy support and care. Essential for modern day living, the café includes mobile device charging points.

## CHARITY DESK

**A**s long as the need for the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service remains, fundraising will never cease. The VOS Charity Team will be based in the hub as we continue to raise the profile of benefits of the service. VOS recognises and owes sincere gratitude to the support and assistance from the core charities of RJAH.

Initially nurtured and encouraged by The Orthopaedic Institute, who contributed £50,000 towards the build. In partnership with RJAH League of Friends, who set fundraising efforts in motion for the dedicated centre by pledging £100,000, the RJAH Charity has guided the appeal process. These wonderful charities continue to work together for the benefit of veteran patients.



## ROYAL OPENING

**HRH THE DUCHESS OF EDINBURGH GCVO**

HRH The Duchess of Edinburgh GCVO, will open The Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre at RJAH on Tuesday 4 April at 10.30am.

**A**dditional information regarding the visit, including parking, facilities, royal etiquette etc. can be found by scanning the QR code.

**All veterans and supporters are welcome but please be mindful that this is a working hospital. Our staff and patients require easy access to the building at all times.**

**PLEASE CHECK OUR WEBSITE FOR FURTHER UPDATES**

# VOS FORCES

Each edition we introduce members of the veterans' team who tell us about their roles.



## BRIAN KILTY

### Veterans Support Volunteer

**B**rian Kilty joined the welfare team in 2018, during the launch of the appeal. Brian's 'association' with Oswestry goes back much earlier, to when he joined the Infantry Junior Leaders Battalion in 1963, based at Park Hall Camp, close to RJAH.

Under the direction of Lt Colonel Meyer and in conjunction with The League of Friends, for the new Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre, Brian continues to establish and expanded Veterans Support Group including a network of External Ambassadors around the UK.

### BRIAN'S ROLE WITH VOS

Finding himself just a stone's throw from where his own army career began, Brian's VOS role at RJAH has evolved to provide unprecedented "military aligned" support to veteran patients.

Brian works alongside ward staff to support veteran patients in their post-surgery recovery; mentoring and assisting them, in any way, to help their recovery. A former serviceman, Brian regularly offers modest daily support, but his career history gives him an in depth understanding of their real welfare needs. For many veterans, his knowledgeable support is indispensable. Brian dedicates considerable time to patients to help them towards speedy recovery, following their first days in hospital and he remains in touch when they go home.

Brian finds the role immensely rewarding and his experience with patients is made even more enjoyable when he receives "100% positive patient feedback on how much his support has helped them."

## LIZ REECE

### Nurse Manager and Outpatients lead

**A**s Senior Sister for Veterans Outpatients, Liz Reece works diligently to ensure clinical areas work effectively and efficiently for the veteran community's specific needs.

Sister Reece is responsible for the outpatient nursing team who have gained vital experience managing veterans since the service began. She feels professionally enthusiastic to engage as the VOS Centre doors open to improve service to patients, Sister Reece remarks on new opportunities ahead – "HC-VOC enables us to enhance our nursing team and extend their skills in new services for the department. Whilst the building primarily benefits veterans, it conveys a positive working environment for all outpatient amenities. High standards are delivered by the outpatient team and the new VOS building shines a spotlight on the exemplary level of care we provide."



**HC-VOC ENABLES US TO ENHANCE OUR NURSING TEAM AND EXTEND THEIR SKILLS IN NEW SERVICES FOR THE DEPARTMENT. WHILST THE BUILDING PRIMARILY BENEFITS VETERANS, IT CONVEYS A POSITIVE WORKING ENVIRONMENT FOR ALL OUTPATIENT AMENITIES.**



# THE VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC SERVICE IDENTITY

The provision of the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service is the first of its kind in the UK. The Chiron icon is a recognisable symbol crafted to signify the distinctive service available to military personnel.



VETERANS  
ORTHOPAEDIC  
SERVICE

**I**nspired by Greek mythology, the RJAH Medical Illustration team designed the Chiron icon to reflect the remarkable work and discovery process leading to the delivery of VOS in UK. The symbol will be recognisable for military personnel to associate with the reassurance of the VOS.

Chiron was known for his knowledge and skill with medicine, and credited with the discovery of botany and pharmacy, the science of herbs and medicine. The style of the icon was driven by the theme of Greek infantry warriors, Poseidon's trident and the wings of Pegasus to symbolise Land, Sea and Air. The resulting flag is an original design shaped to rest in harmony with British military flags representing all three services.



**THE MOTTO – FACTA NON VERBA – DEEDS NOT WORDS  
UNDERPINS VOS ETHOS**



## MAVERICK SURVIVAL SCHOOL

**S**ergeant Craig Harrison served for 23 years in The British Army, commissioned for ten operational tours including Bosnia, Kosovo, Iraq and finally Afghanistan. In 1997, Craig was selected alongside thirty soldiers to enter the rigorous training of an army sniper. Just four of them passed and his return to regiment secured his status as an A1 soldier. During the next 16 years of Craig's career on the battlefield, he experienced endurance beyond belief, facing the challenges of missions to secure the safety of others.

In 2013, his tank was blown up by 30 kilos of IED explosives. He miraculously survived the attack, but the severe impact broke both his arms and he suffered head injuries. After just six weeks, plasters removed, resilient Craig was back in action on the frontline in Afghanistan to complete the remaining three months of his tour. His eventual return home revealed his recovery was far from complete. Craig had serious PTSD and the explosion had caused him underlying mobility issues which ended his army career aged just 47 years old.

Frustration and depression followed Craig over several years as he attempted to cope with his life-changing disabilities and settle into civilian life. Watching Craig finding civilian support overwhelmingly different and difficult, a home visitor from the MOD suggested he contact Col Meyer at the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service. The experience was transformational.

*"Veteran to veteran spirit is second to none," remarks Craig, you're made to feel at home, at ease. Col Meyer has an upfront military style understanding, there's no messing around – it's what I can relate to."*

Craig's right hip operation took place in November 2021 and his left in November 2022. Craig is so thankful to have found VOS and feels he is finally getting his life and soul back together and is keen to help others to do the same.

Craig is ready to get back to work and the business he's created since leaving the army – The Maverick Survival School – offering trained support, one-to-one to veterans and civilians suffering from PTSD in over 75 acres of woodland.

At The Maverick Survival School, working in the familiar outdoors, Craig shares his own military experiences to provide his clients with bespoke survival training. As a sufferer himself, he engages in conversations to relax them after losing themselves in bush craft. Craig works alongside a Gestalt psychotherapist with almost 40 years' experience, and a full restorative session is given. Craig is passionate about the help he can provide to veterans and civilians whose lives have also been changed by trauma.

[www.themavericksurvivalschool.co.uk](http://www.themavericksurvivalschool.co.uk)

**Book: The Longest Kill – One of the World's Greatest Snipers**



**COL MEYER HAS AN UPFRONT MILITARY STYLE UNDERSTANDING, THERE'S NO MESSING AROUND – IT'S WHAT I CAN RELATE TO.**



# ROB FOX



## ANGLESEY RING-OF-FIRE A SHINING EXAMPLE OF “FACTA NON VERBA”

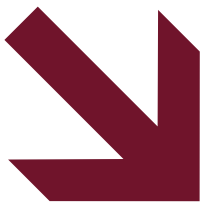
**R**

ob Fox is a senior physiotherapist who provides intensive inpatient physiotherapy for the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service.

Rob recently won the Anglesey Ring-of-Fire challenge – an ultramarathon with a colossal dropout rate. To finish it is incredible, to win it unthinkable. It is an amazing feat of physical endurance and mental strength. He embodies the ethos of VOS staff spirit – to provide excellence in all they do.



## HOW YOU CAN HELP



The Veterans' Orthopaedic Service continues to develop and grow in response to the needs of our patients.

Supported by the RJAH Charity, with a fund reserved especially for veterans.

The hospital is grateful to every individual and organisation that has contributed to the building of the Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre, built entirely with charitable donations. Sincere thanks to all involved.

To learn more about the work of the charity, to volunteer or if you want to support us you can contact:

**Email:** Victoria Sugden (Charity Director) - [v.sugden@nhs.net](mailto:v.sugden@nhs.net)

**Tel:** Central Office - 01691 404401/404527

**Web:** [www.rjah.nhs.uk/our-services/orthopaedic-surgery/veterans-orthopaedic-service](http://www.rjah.nhs.uk/our-services/orthopaedic-surgery/veterans-orthopaedic-service)

[www.rjah.nhs.uk/charity](http://www.rjah.nhs.uk/charity)

