



# ISSUE 2 CHIRON VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC NEWSLETTER



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A brief introduction to our specialist VOS team members, including Yannis Seferlis and Noel Harding



# MESSAGE FROM LIEUTENANT COLONEL CARL MEYER

This publication of the Veterans' Newsletter marks a year since the Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre was opened - I believe the last 12 months have been a resounding success.



**T**he core aims of the service are to provide Veterans with gold standard orthopaedics, in a centre of excellence, provided by a military led team with welfare support. This has been extremely successful. The Veterans' Orthopaedic Service treats more Veterans than any other hospital-based service. The service is provided completely within the NHS and receives no external support. It has the unwavering support of the hospital board, CEO and hospital staff at The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RJAH).

Many of our hospital staff have no direct military link but strongly support our military personnel. On many occasions their commitment has made the difference between "pushing on" or delay. This "can do" attitude is what makes RJAH special. It is an honour and a privilege to work with them.

Over 30,000 Veterans have been seen since 2013. Over 8,000 have benefited from the services of the Welfare team. The hip and knee team alone sees over

2000 Veterans a year. This number is set to increase significantly with the addition of Mr Seferlis, formerly of the Greek military. A further Veterans hip and knee consultant is planned for August. This will enable our hip and knee team to see over 6000 Veterans a year.

The Veterans Hub is functioning well. The welfare team, led by Sarah Kerr, is expanding its operations and ability to support Veterans both within the hospital and further afield.

We marked Remembrance Day with a service at the hospital. This gave staff, Veterans, and patients the opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices that have been made by members of the Armed Forces on our behalf. I am particularly grateful to the bugler Stan Wilkinson who added such poignancy to the occasion.

The coming year will bring new challenges for the NHS. Rest assured, the Veterans' Team will continue to work tirelessly to support their healthcare needs.

**Facta non verba**

## MESSAGE FROM STACEY KEEGAN, CEO OF RJAH

**W**elcome to the Winter edition of The Veterans' Orthopaedic Service Newsletter. What a difference a year makes! How quickly time passes, as The Headley Court Building is now celebrating its first anniversary and it has been a very busy 12 months – thanks to a great team and new appointments, the service has grown and is going from strength to strength. We are particularly proud to have maintained our Veterans' Awareness Accreditation.

It was an honour to take part in the Service of Remembrance and to be joined by so many members of the Armed Forces, currently serving and veterans, patients, staff and visitors to mark such an important occasion.

The Headly Court Veterans' Centre, the VOS clinics, and the Veterans' Hub and Volunteers are now an established part of the hospital community and, with plans for further expansion, I look forward to seeing what the next 12 months will bring.







# REMEMBRANCE COMMÉMORATION

The Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Service held a Service of Remembrance on Friday 10 November, with representatives of the Armed Forces, dignitaries, Veterans' volunteers, hospital staff and patients in attendance.

**H**ospital Chaplain Simon Airey warmly welcomed everyone and led the service with prayers, and readings were given by Lieutenant Colonel Carl Meyer, Chair of Directors Harry Turner, Chief Executive Officer Stacey Keegan and Enhanced Recovery Team Lead Rebecca Warren. The poignant commemoration included the traditional reading from the poem For The Fallen, and the bugling of the Last Post.

Lieutenant Colonel Carl Meyer, Clinical Lead for the Veterans' Centre said: *'At The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital we are proud of our links with the Armed Forces and of the services that we provide to veterans. Today we honour those who have fallen and all those who have served with the intent of preserving or restoring peace.'*

Veterans' Volunteer Tony Grogan lowered and raised the flag during the Last Post and Reveille, the congregation observed a two-minute silence, and three wreaths were laid by Veterans' Volunteers Brian Kilty and Nick Nicholson, and Veterans' Centre Physiotherapist Noel Harding. Wrexham MP Sarah Atherton was also in attendance. ►







After the event, refreshments were provided, including cupcakes adorned with poppy decorations.

Simon Airey, Hospital Chaplain spoke of what the day meant to him, saying: *'It means that we remember that we live with a debt to those who have kept our country free and at peace, it means that we remember other countries that aren't at peace, it means that we pray for those in the armed services, and it means that we are proud of our connections in this hospital with the armed services.'*

Advanced Recovery Team Lead Rebecca Warren said: *'It's a time to reflect on the sacrifices that people made for us today. I've completed a tour of Afghanistan, I lost quite a lot of people that I knew and trained with, so obviously they are always in my thoughts on a day like today, but also it makes you feel proud of what people have done for us to be able to live today really. It's a special day to remember all those who have sacrificed their lives for us.'*



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## ONE YEAR ON – CELEBRATION TO MARK THE FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF THE OPENING OF THE HEADLY COURT VETERANS' CENTRE

**T**he Remembrance Service also marks the first anniversary of the opening of The Headly Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Service building, and it celebrates a full 12 months in operation.

On Thursday 1 December the Veteran Volunteers enjoyed a celebration lunch to mark the first anniversary of the Veterans' Hub. Chief Executive Stacey Keegan attended, congratulating the volunteers on their work, and BBC Radio Shropshire also made an appearance, speaking to many of the veterans about why they chose to volunteer at the Hub.

Lieutenant Colonel Carl Meyer, Clinical Lead for the Veterans' spoke of how he felt about the last 12 months: *'I think it's gone very well! We are very much developing our services. We have just appointed Mr Seferlis, formerly of the Greek military, as another Veterans' consultant and as a result, overnight the volume of work has almost doubled. Looking ahead the next phase is very exciting and very busy!'*





# GORDON WILLIAMS

VETERANS' VOLUNTEER

## Gordon Williams spoke to us about why he is so proud to Volunteer in the Veterans' Centre.

### Military service

I served in the Welsh Guard Battalion 1967 – 1979.

### When did you join the military?

I joined the Military on 16th August 1967. My brother and I joined up on the same day and were posted to Pirbright in Surrey, where we completed 12 weeks of training, before I joined the Welsh Guard Battalion in Windsor. Throughout my military career I served in the Middle East with the Grenadiers and completed Queens duties at Bucks House, St James Park and at the Bank of England.

### When did you retire from the Military?

I retired in August 1979 and started a light haulage firm in Chirk. However, after 2 years the recession hit and I started working for British Telecom as a Contractor. I eventually retired at 66 years of age, having worked as a Chauffeur, Bodyguard and Butler for Lord Trevor and working for Arriva buses for 17 years.

### So what inspired you to Volunteer for the Veterans' centre?

I heard about the plans to create a Veterans' Centre and registered my interest in volunteering when I attended the open day, which was held to showcase the centre. I thought to myself, I like talking to people and I like to help people and most of all I like making people laugh. So I decided volunteering was for me.

### How would you describe the Veterans' centre to someone who has never visited the hub?

A God send. It's a place that we can help veterans with all aspects of life, whether its help with their finances, their health or their wellbeing. And if we can't help them directly, we can connect them to the people and organisations that can help. Everyone is welcome at the centre, even families of veterans and we want them to know we are here. It is difficult leaving the Military and I want Veterans to know they are not alone, that is so important to me.

### What do you enjoy most about Volunteering at the Veterans' centre?

I have made a lot of friends across the tri-services, and I love the military banter! I just enjoy being around people and helping them. Each day I am in the centre, I enjoy making people smile.

### You can meet Gordon, and all our volunteers in the Veterans' Hub, Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm.



# HEADLEY COURT VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE



## A MESSAGE FROM SARAH ATHERTON MP

Sarah Atherton, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Wrexham, shows her support:

**A**s the Member of Parliament for Wrexham and a former nurse and on behalf of those in Wrexham who have been treated by Lieutenant Colonel Meyer and the team, thank you for all that you do to help patients. I am fully supportive of their efforts to evolve the Veterans' Orthopaedic Hub into a national centre of excellence. The Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre has marked the beginning of a new era of bespoke care for veterans and members of the armed forces, also offering patients and their families a strong support system that otherwise they may not have had. The centre has a great reputation, and I will continue to champion this work in Parliament as part of my defence duties.



# VOS FORCES

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



## YANNIS SEFERLIS Orthopaedic Consultant

**M**r Yannis Seferlis is the latest appointment to the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service (VOS) team. Yannis is an Orthopaedic Consultant, and his sub speciality is hip and knee arthroplasty. He will be holding regular clinics and performing operations in the RJAH. Working alongside Lt Col Meyer, he will greatly increase capacity for delivering treatment to patients.

Yannis previously trained here at the hospital and has been on the UK GMC Speciality Register since 2018. This is his first position as a consultant in the UK. Yannis spoke of his reasons for wishing to join the VOS:

*'Mainly the fact that I am a part of a very special team. The Veterans' Department is unique in the UK and that is absolutely thrilling to me. It's a great opportunity to be part of something special and to be part of an expanding department.'*

A Veteran himself, Mr Seferlis served in the Greek Army as a medic, he is pleased to be working with UK veterans and excited by the new opportunities ahead:

“  
I WASN'T HAPPY JUST TO GET A  
CONSULTANT JOB – IT'S ABOUT  
BEING PART OF SOMETHING SPECIAL  
AND WORKING WITH PEOPLE THAT  
ARE MOTIVATED AND AMBITIOUS.”

## NOEL HARDING Lead VOS Physiotherapist

**N**oel has worked at the Orthopaedic hospital for over 23 years. The last 3 of these for the Veterans' service. He previously served in the RAF for 6 years as an Air Cartographer before starting University in 1995 to become a physiotherapist.

Noel Harding is the Lead Physiotherapist for VOS. Noel works alongside Lt Col Meyer and the Sports Injuries Team. He supports post-operative patients as well as those struggling with rehabilitation.

Noel assesses patients and guides them through their recovery process. He holds regular clinics from a veteran-equipped dedicated therapy room. The clinics forms part of the VOS Centre Outpatients Rooms, close to the Veterans' team services and provide continuity of care.

Noel is dedicated to monitoring patient progress. He has been involved in rolling out the MyRecovery App in its early stages. Keenly watching technology to improve patient services, Noel says: *'As we enter the digital age medical technology becomes commonplace. Although MyRecovery App is still in its development stage, it's already offering huge benefits to physiotherapy services.'*

He is father to 3 young children, keeping them occupied with lots of activities. He has played a lot of rugby in his early years playing representative for Strike command and the RAF U-21's, and continues to stay fit and active. Previously competing in many triathlons including IM Switzerland and Norseman, and several marathons including New York and The Everest Marathon in 2012. He loves his motorcycle racing and worked in the industry for 10 years.





# ALEX BAXTER

**A**lex Baxter is a veteran of 30-years, having served with the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force. A chance meeting with a member of the Veterans' Orthopaedic team changed his life.

In 2019 Alex underwent spinal decompression surgery, whilst the surgery was successful, he continued to suffer severe upper leg pain. He was diagnosed with issues to both hips. Unfortunately, the impact of COVID 19 resulted in suspension of routine procedures. The impact on Alex's health was severe. He suffered chronic pain, was unable to sleep, couldn't dress properly without assistance and could only walk with the aid of crutches.

*"I was in a terrible state physically and felt useless at home, unable to help with the simplest of domestic tasks," says Alex.*

A fortunate encounter with Lt Col Meyer, the head of the Veterans' Unit at RJA, resulted in Alex's application to the VOS clinic in November 2020. Alex underwent his first total hip replacement (THR) in April 2021. The surgery was successful, and his pain was considerably reduced. The second operation took place in

July of the same year. Despite his pain, Alex recovered well and was walking without crutches after just 6 weeks, his progress was remarkable. In just ten weeks he was taking regular exercise – swimming and walking – unthinkable activity in the previous three years.



**I CANNOT SPEAK HIGHLY ENOUGH OF THE PROFESSIONALISM, FRIENDLINESS AND CARE DISPLAYED BY THE VETERANS' SERVICE AND THE WIDER NHS TEAM AT RJA, THEY QUITE SIMPLY GAVE ME MY LIFE BACK**



## WHERE'S THE FLAG

**B**ecky Warren (Enhanced Recovery Lead), completed a 130-mile trek through the Mountains of the Sierra Nevada, Death Valley in California, The Grand Canyon in Arizona, and Zion NP in Utah. A maximum height of 14,496 ft (3,367m) was climbed on route in remote wilderness areas in demanding weather conditions.

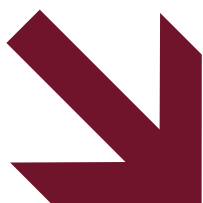
**If you're embarking on an epic journey, or visiting a fascinating location that would be perfect to feature the Veterans' flag in all its glory, please get in touch to find out more.**







## HOW WE WORK



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.

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he 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 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)

