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**VETERANS' CENTRE
VOLUNTEER INTERVIEW**



**VETERANS
ORTHOPAEDIC
SERVICE**

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

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Lord Lieutenant Anna Turner joined staff in the Veterans' Hub to celebrate the day



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MESSAGE FROM LIEUTENANT COLONEL CARL MEYER

NHS waiting times for joint replacement surgery remain high. It is estimated the recovery from COVID will take over 7 years.

The Veterans' Orthopaedic Service has risen to this challenge. In under a year the waiting time for an outpatient appointment has reduced from 30 weeks to 10 weeks. This has only been possible through a huge effort from all staff, particularly the clerical and performance staff whose work often goes unnoticed.



Our next challenge is to reduce our waiting times for joint replacement surgery. The appointment of Mr Serfelis, as a Veterans' Consultant, has contributed to reducing the waiting time from 85 weeks to 60 weeks.

Our target is to have this reduced to 40 weeks by the end of the year.

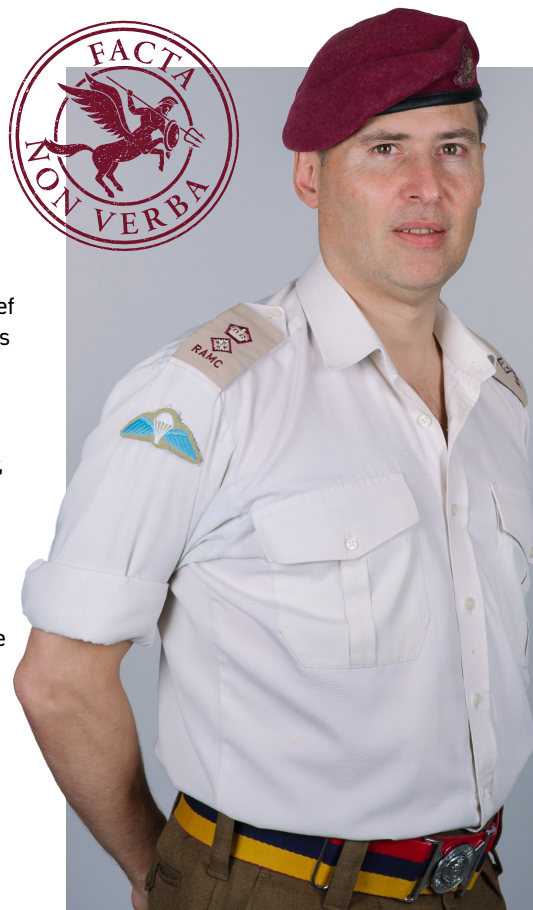
By the next newsletter I hope to show evidence of our progress.

The 8th March marked International Women's Day. The Veterans' Orthopaedic Service has many inspirational women, both staff and volunteers. There are too many to mention everyone but they all contribute to its success.

I would particularly like to thank: Our Chief Executive Officer Stacey Keegan, Veterans Managing Director Dawn Forrest, Sister Liz Reece Veterans Outpatient Manager, W02 Rebecca Warren the Enhanced Recovery Team Lead and Mrs Sarah Kerr, our Veterans Welfare Officer. Of special mention is Manon, supervisor of the RV coffee shop, who provides both excellent coffee and welfare advice

Waiting times are important, however, the primary reason for attending the VOS is to receive high-quality care, by a military led team, at a centre of excellence, with welfare support. The service continues to progress despite the ongoing NHS challenges and without any external support.

Facta non verba



MESSAGE FROM DAWN FORREST MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE SPECIALIST DELIVERY UNIT

Spring is traditionally a time of bustling activity and that certainly has been the case at The Headley Court Veterans' Centre, which has been a positive hive of events.

I was delighted to learn that that our Veterans' Volunteers have received an award. It was wonderful that they have been recognised by the public for their tireless hard work and commitment to their roles. Veterans' Volunteers play a vital part in helping to deliver services in the Veterans' Hub, across the hospital and the wider community. Their contribution is greatly appreciated and my sincerest congratulations to them all.

In addition, I thoroughly enjoyed taking part in the Veterans' Hub coffee morning for International Women's Day. It was a great opportunity to get together and meet some inspirational women, hearing their stories, recognising and celebrating their achievements.



THE VETERANS' HUB CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Veterans' Hub Volunteers were pleased to be joined by Shropshire's Lord Lieutenant Anna Turner and staff from across RJAH to celebrate International Women's Day, with a coffee morning on Thursday 7 March.

The event was aimed at recognising the vitally important contribution that women make to the military and to the Headley Court Veterans' Centre.

Veterans were invited to bring along medals and photos to talk about their roles, share their achievements, and explore how opportunities and careers in the Forces have evolved for women over the years.

Veterans' Volunteers Julie McCabe and Diane Curley brought along a selection of photos and shared their adventures, Diane said: *"It has been really interesting listening to everyone else's experiences in nursing and it has been great fun sharing in their stories."*

RJAH Communications Apprentice Jenny Evans commented: *"It is important to celebrate all the inspirational women linked to the Military. As a Military spouse I see firsthand the challenges women affiliated with the Military have overcome. Opportunities to come together and share experiences are welcomed and can be therapeutic. Plus, it's a perfect excuse to indulge in a slice of cake."*





VETERANS' VOLUNTEERS AWARDED TOP AWARD

The Veterans' Volunteers were overjoyed on 19 Feb 24, as they celebrated winning the Volunteer of the Year Award category, in the Oswestry Life Magazine Local Hero Awards.

Nominations were received by the magazine from the local community and the Volunteers received prizes, including a gift of cakes and a certificate recognising their efforts.

David Lee-Birch from Oswestry Life Magazine said: *"The Oswestry Life Local Heroes Awards honour and celebrate the person or persons who are and have been making significant contributions to our community, through their time, actions, talents and dedication. These awards are to celebrate the amazing things that local residents of all ages have done or are still doing to help make Oswestry a better and safer place to work and live."*

Lady Kenyon attended the event as President of the League of Friends, who are responsible for all Volunteers at RJAHS. Lady Kenyon congratulated the volunteers on their success, saying: *"I would just like to say how proud I am of you all, you are the most special group of volunteers, unselfish, willing and hugely appreciated. And without you, where would the Veterans' be, without a friendly welcome and a smile, you make everybody's day so much better. The time you give freely is hugely appreciated. So, thank you very much indeed."*

Veterans' Volunteer Peter Leech said: *"I think it's very nice actually that we've been recognised for what we do because I think people go over and above, lots of*

things we do aren't seen, we don't talk about it, we don't shout about it, we just get on and look after people."

Veterans' Volunteer Julie McCabe commented: *"We deserve this, they all deserve this because they put themselves out. We don't know what's going to come through the door, most of the time it's happy, sometimes it's less happy and then we support each other through the bad times as well as the good times."*

Sarah Kerr, the Veterans' Volunteers Co-Ordinator added: *"I think it is lovely recognition for what the volunteers do here supporting veterans, the Veterans Centre is an amazing place and I think for veterans to come in and to be greeted by other veterans, who are volunteers but actually they get so much from it as well, I think its lovely and that recognition is great."*

I THINK IT IS LOVELY
RECOGNITION FOR WHAT
THE VOLUNTEERS DO HERE
SUPPORTING VETERANS





RAF Stornoway, 1982



TREVOR FOSTER

VETERANS' VOLUNTEER

Trevor Foster spoke to us about why he is so proud to Volunteer in the Veterans' Centre.

Military service

RAF from 1956 to 1989.

Why did you join the Royal Air Force?

My family has a long history with the Military. My Grandfather was killed in the first world war, serving with the Royal Irish Rifles and my father fought with the Royal Navy in the second world war. As I grew up I became interested in the military, having joined the Air Training Corps. I joined the RAF in 1956.

Tell us about your career

I started my training at RAF Hereford and completed 18 months training there and then once I'd passed out, I went to my first operational station in RAF Gaydon, Warwickshire, where they were flying the V Bombers. Then from there I was posted to Norway for two years at the NATO headquarters.

I met my wife when I was based at RAF Kenley. Shortly after we were married, we were located to Singapore, where we started a family. Throughout my military career, we were located throughout England, Russia, Scotland, Cyprus & the Falklands Islands.

I retired to civilian life in 1989, after serving 34 years in the RAF. I worked in the personnel department at the Raigmore hospital in Inverness and I also worked as Health & safety officer at a Cheese factory in Oswestry, then eventually worked in training at colleges including Walford college, until I eventually retired.

What inspired you to Volunteer at the Veterans' Centre?

I heard about the hub through the Oswestry Veterans which is held at the Cricket Ground and heard about the opportunity to Volunteer through Sarah Kerr, the Armed Forces Outreach Support Coordinator. I was given a lot in my Military Career, and I felt that I should give back.

How would you describe the hub?

The Hub is there for a purpose. It's here to help Veterans who may have difficulties in their life when they've come out of the service or are receiving treatment through the hospital; they come into the Hub and we can offer advice and support to Veterans who have difficulties whether it be medical, financial, homelessness, anything like that. We can signpost them to the service and support they need.

What do you enjoy most about volunteering in the Veterans' Hub?

Well, first of all, I'm working with fellow veterans. We all speak the same language, which is very nice. And we've got a good team here, made up of different ages and experiences.

I enjoy the camaraderie and working with like-minded people who have come into the Hub to seek help. It's a genuine pleasure to meet them all.

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



TO VIEW THE EXTENDED INTERVIEW FROM TREVOR, [CLICK HERE](#)

VOS FORCES

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



MR IBRAHIM ROUSHDI Hand and Upper Limb Consultant

The Minor Procedures Suite in the VOS Centre facilitates efficient service for awake patients requiring surgery under local anaesthetic. This premises enables a much-improved patient experience, allowing them to be given a fixed appointment for their procedure. Patients can be treated quickly and efficiently and waiting lists are consequently reduced.

"They can be in and out within a couple of hours, rather than spending the whole day in the hospital," comments Mr Ibrahim Roushdi.

For veterans with selected conditions, we are currently trialling a service where patients will be given appointments to be seen and operated in the same day.

“**THEY CAN BE IN AND OUT WITHIN A COUPLE OF HOURS, RATHER THAN SPENDING THE WHOLE DAY IN THE HOSPITAL**”

MANON KILPATRICK LOF Coffee Shop Supervisor

Manon Kilpatrick is the League of Friends Coffee Shop Supervisor in the Veterans' Hub and has worked there since it opened in 2022.

Offering a bright, warm welcome, Manon serves up hot and cold drinks, cakes and snacks, and is a firm favourite amongst the patients, staff, visitors and volunteers.

Veterans' Volunteers, Husband and wife team Jenifer and John Murray, spoke about the important role Manon plays in the Veterans' Hub.

Jennifer said: *"Manon is an absolute asset. People come in and she is so good with them, nothing is too much trouble. You know if we are busy and she sees somebody, she will bring them their tea or coffee".*

John added: *"She is also very useful because she is a Welsh speaker, so if you do get someone who prefers Welsh to English, and we have had, then we get Manon in. She is very, very good."*

Manon really enjoys her role in the coffee shop: *"I love the job that I'm in because I work amongst Veterans' Volunteers and meet a lot of veterans, the public and I have chance to hear their stories and serve wonderful coffee."*



MARK EMPTAGE



Veterans' Shed

In his early 20s, Mark Emptage was forced to retire from The Welsh Guards in 1979 due to a spiral fracture to his left tibia-knee joint. Over time Mark's discomfort caused pressure in compensating areas of his body and resulted in the need for a hip replacement in 2014.

Over the years, Mark's agony persisted. As a young ex-serviceperson, Mark's expectation of his limb function was innately different from a civilian whose problems may have been due to a lifetime of wear and tear. Mark's former energetic self was depleting, his active mindset frustrated and his mental well-being suffering.

The Veterans' Orthopaedic Service at Gobowen was recommended to Mark, so he applied and was accepted. Between 2018-19 Col Meyer completed successful knee operations and Mark can now get down to business with vigour.

"I owe a debt of gratitude to Col Meyer and his Team, to RJAH and their amazing project. A service that is a perfect fit for a veteran's purpose. I cannot speculate how I would have fared with my arthritis and pain without their help."

VOS left a lasting impression on Mark, his daily work is now at Veterans' Shed Gwynedd, a pop in destination for local people and veterans to visit and tarry a while. Its aim is to help to integrate former army servicepersons back into civilian communities. They are working towards a strong link with Help for Heroes (H4H) and Guitars for Veterans (G4V).

Tea Haf is a meeting room with where tea is drunk beside the glow of a woodburning fire. "Edward Woodshed" is a woodwork shop where bird boxes and bug hotels are crafted for the Wildlife

Trust, repairs and restorations happen without the disruption of commercial pressures. "Harrison Forge" is a metal workshop in the process of being commissioned. "Cycle Ops" is the gallery and layout space, local Artist Deanne Doddington Mizen has their studio on site in "Annie Lennox" which is the annex to the woodwork shop, and "Gallt y Mwg" an engine workshop built from a concrete sectional garage. The Veterans' Shed has offered a reduced service since my challenging hip revision in August 2023 at VOS.



I OWE A DEBT OF GRATITUDE TO COL MEYER AND HIS TEAM, TO RJAH AND THEIR AMAZING PROJECT.



The supported creative workshops with a brew and a chat as part of the package, offer a genuine welcome for serving and ex-service men and women and members of the community with interesting projects on the go to upcycle or repurpose materials otherwise destined for landfill.

Thanks to VOS for reengineering Mark, with additional mobility support, he is able to continue to run the Veterans' Shed Gwynedd. He remains a great advocate for ex-military and community groups to continue to connect and share a positive understanding to help them thrive and enjoy rejuvenating challenges in unison.



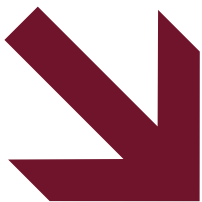
WHERE'S THE FLAG

League of Friends Charity Director Victoria Sugden was joined by the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service Standard for a cruise along the German waterways.

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.

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

Tel: Central Office - 01691 404527

Web: www.rjah.nhs.uk/veterans
www.rjah.nhs.uk/charity

