



VETERANS
ORTHOPAEDIC
SERVICE



The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt
Orthopaedic Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

HEADLEY COURT VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE

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on Monday 11 November 2024



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MESSAGE FROM LIEUTENANT COLONEL CARL MEYER, O.B.E.

In the last newsletter, I summarised the financial difficulties faced by the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service (VOS) as a result of NHS reforms. These resulted in VOS being underfunded by £1.4m for 23/24. The underfunding for 24/25 remains significant.



Representatives from NHS England have been in contact with the trust to help resolve these issues, and we are making some progress with improving the position. That progress would be quicker if Veterans' Healthcare was a national priority. Veterans' Healthcare is one of many challenges facing the NHS, but does not get the prominence we would like it to have. VOS is extremely grateful to Helen Morgan MP, and Veterans from around the country, for ensuring that Veterans Healthcare is represented at the highest level. Veterans should continue to make their voices heard to ensure promises made by successive governments are held to account.

VOS has several initiatives planned to improve services. The first is the appointment of two additional consultants to assist with the workload

and to reduce waiting lists. This is only possible through the staunch support of RJAH Trust, Shropshire Council and the local community.

VOS will continue to put Veterans' Healthcare first.

VETERANS' HEALTHCARE IS ONE OF MANY CHALLENGES FACING THE NHS, BUT DOES NOT GET THE PROMINENCE WE WOULD LIKE

MESSAGE FROM STACEY KEEGAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Firstly, I would like to offer our congratulations to Lt Col Carl Meyer, Clinical Director and Founder of our Veterans' Orthopaedic Service, who was presented the OBE by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal. It was bestowed in recognition of his service to the British Army and to the Veterans' Community, and is both warranted and very well-deserved.

In addition, I would like to offer our thanks to Veterans' Volunteer Peter Leech, who was awarded Hospital Volunteer of the Year 2024. He received this accolade for providing an exemplary standard of volunteering excellence, helping to support and improve patient experience, and we are very grateful to have him as part of the team.

Last year, we reaffirmed our commitment to the Armed Forces by resigning the Armed Forces Covenant and in November, during the Remembrance Service, we took time to reflect and acknowledge the sacrifices made by members of our Armed Forces community.

As we move forward through 2025, I would like to take this opportunity to renew our resolution to delivering a Gold Standard Service for all serving and veteran Armed Forces Personnel.



HEADLEY COURT FLAG RAISING CEREMONY

Members of the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC) Association were welcomed to the Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre, on Tuesday 29 October 24, for a flag raising ceremony.

The new flag was gifted by representatives of the RAMC and was accepted on behalf of the Headley Court Veterans' Centre by Lt Col Carl Meyer, who was very pleased to receive the new flag and exclaimed: "Our corps flag looked like it had been flying in the blitz. The local RAMC association kindly provided us with a high quality new one."

"In Arduis Fidelis" (Faithful in Adversity).

Following a rousing speech from RAMC Branch Chairman, Tony Jones, the flag was raised by Steve Bennett and Harry Johnson.



LT COL CARL MEYER RECEIVES HONOUR

We were delighted on Tuesday 5 November 24, when Clinical Director and founder of our Veterans' Orthopaedic Service Lt Col Carl Meyer was presented with the Order of The British Empire (OBE), by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal.

He received the honour in a ceremony at Buckingham Palace, in recognition of his service to the British Army and to the Veterans' community, after he was named in the King's Birthday Honours.



VOS REMEMBRANCE COMMEMORATION

Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Service (VOS) held a Remembrance Commemoration, on Monday 11 November 24.

VOS team members were joined by representatives of the Armed Forces, dignitaries, Veterans' volunteers, hospital staff, patients and visitors outside the Headley Court Veterans' Centre to take part.

Hospital Chaplain Simon Airey led the service with prayers, and readings were given by Lieutenant Colonel Carl Meyer, Chief Executive Officer Stacey Keegan, Non-Executive Director Martin Evans and Enhanced Recovery Team Lead Rebecca Warren. The poignant commemoration included the traditional reading from the poem For The Fallen.

Veterans' Volunteer Gordon Williams lowered and raised the flag during the Last Post and Reveille, the congregation observed a two-minute silence.

Four wreaths were laid by Veterans' Volunteers Trevor Foster for the RAF, Brian Kilty for the Army, Jonathan Murray for the Navy, and Julie McCabe for the Headley Court Veterans.



HEADLEY COURT VETERANS' CENTRE GARDEN OPENING

The Rotary Club of Oswestry have made a generous donation to support Veterans at The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RJA).

The club has generously donated planters, together with several benches, including wheelchair-accessible picnic benches, to the Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre.

The benches, now placed outside the Veterans' Centre, help to create a welcoming and accessible space for Veterans who visit RJA for care. The wheelchair-friendly picnic tables ensure that all visitors, regardless of mobility, can enjoy the outdoor area.

One of the benches holds special significance, being dedicated to the

memory of Rtn. Hazel Yates, a devoted member of the club, who passed away in January of this year – Hazel played an instrumental role in raising the funds for this project.

Members of the Former Rotary Club of Oswestry were welcomed by staff and volunteers to the courtyard garden opening ceremony, on the Thursday 12 September.

Hazel's family attended the garden opening and Project Chairman Mike Jones gave thanks and acknowledged Hazel's hard work helping to raise money for this project.

Mike said: "It's with great pleasure that we hand over these benches to RJA – we hope they provide comfort and create a peaceful space for Veterans for many years to come."

"A big thank you to the League of Friends and Lt Col Carl Mayer for their help getting this project over the line and their suggestions on how best to utilise the space".

League of Friends Charity Director Victoria Sugden said: "It's a wonderful way to honour Hazel's legacy and to support the well-being of those who have served our country."

HEADLEY COURT VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE



We spoke to Peter Leech about his Military service and why he is so passionate about the Veterans' Hub.

So why did you enter Military service?

I joined on September 9th 1975 as a boy soldier at 16 years of age in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) alongside Intelligence Corps and the ROAC (Royal Army Ordnance Corps) for recruits, for a year of Military training.

This was followed by a year of trade training at Bordon in Hampshire. I chose to train as an Armourer. My Grandfather and Father were both Armourers in REME, so it felt natural to follow in their footsteps. Three generations as Armourers, same trade, same Corps.

How long did you stay in service?

I was in service for 14 years. It took me all over the world: Germany, Canada, Gibraltar and back to the U.K.

Serving in REME you do 2 to 3 years in each posting. In my role as an armourer, I mended everything from a pistol to an 81mm mortar, but also compasses, cookers, binoculars. We did a lot, and those skills stay with you for life.

What happened after you left the Army?

Upon leaving the service I taught as an instructor at Princess Marina College, a junior soldier trade training establishment. It was like I had gone full circle. I did that for 3 years and then the government closed it all down.

Eventually I met Sheila my wife and we moved up to Shropshire and I completed a degree and taught design and technology at the Marches school in Oswestry. And then worked as an Assistant head teacher at a behaviour school in Wem. Later on I started up

my own business in gardening and maintenance. I finally retired in May of this year.

Why did you decide to volunteer at the Veterans' Centre?

I came into RJAH one day and spoke with some of the Veterans about Volunteering. It's strange even after 30 years away from the military, it felt like talking to family. And it inspired me to sign up. I wanted to be part of it.

So what do you personally do you get out of it?

It's total satisfaction, I like to help people. To talk to people in the military family, it means everything. We have things in common. And I want to help Veterans whether they need medical, practical or emotional help.

I think volunteering has helped me to blossom. My wife has said that I have never been so talkative to strangers since I have volunteered.

I have always been a softy, it's hard to believe isn't it, being in the Army and being soft. But being a Veteran volunteer is to have a great sense of empathy and we need to help each other.

What do you enjoy most about being a Veterans' Volunteer?

I volunteer in a wonderful hospital with wonderful people, all helping in a professional and supportive way. We are here for everyone. I never judge anyone, I just want to help them. And I enjoy making a positive difference to everyone's day.

Peter was voted by the Trust's staff and fellow Volunteers as the League of Friends RJAH Volunteer of the Year for 2024.

VOS FORCES

In each edition, we feature a member of the Veterans' team who shares insights about their role.



ALICE AYMES Simulation Technician

Alice Aymes is the Simulation Technician for the Simulation Suite, based in the Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre (HCVOC). Alice designs and develops simulated and interactive learning experiences for the Trust, aiming to make simulations as realistic as possible.

Her responsibilities include maintaining lab equipment and technology, providing technical support during simulations, researching and sourcing the best technology for the trust, and collaborating with other departments on projects by offering technical expertise. Occasionally, she also acts as a simulated patient.

Alice began working at The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in 2017 in TSSU. She later moving to Pharmacy, before transitioning into her current role as Simulation Technician, when the HCVOC opened in 2022.

Alice said: "I love every aspect of my job, but my favourite part is completing complex learning experiences and seeing the positive reactions from users. It's incredibly satisfying to solve challenging coding problems and make things work seamlessly."

By providing staff with access to technology-enhanced learning and simulation, Alice is able to create a safe environment in the Simulation Suite for practicing skills without the pressure of pass or fail. Mistakes in the lab are used as learning opportunities, fostering growth and ensuring no one feels discouraged. This approach ultimately improves patient safety by equipping staff with the confidence and skills they need to perform their roles.

Explaining her unique role, Alice added: "My work supports both clinical and non-clinical staff in their development while indirectly benefiting patients by helping staff achieve their full potential. As a technology enthusiast (nerd), I love working in a tech-focused role, exploring advancements, and finding innovative ways to integrate them into the trust to benefit others."

In the future Alice is planning to research how the lab's interactive elements can improve patient mental well-being during hospital stays. She believes our resources have the potential to make hospital experiences more positive and may even help reduce the length of stays.

RESIGNING OF THE COVENANT 2024

At the end of last year, the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RJA) Leaders signalled their continued support for patients, staff and volunteers who serve, or have served in military roles – by resigning the Armed Forces Covenant.

As well as representing a pledge of support, the Covenant also sets out how the Trust will demonstrate its commitment, including promoting its Armed Forces-friendly status and seeking to support the employment of veterans.

RJA first signed the Covenant in 2017 and has now refreshed its pledges to include a commitment to be an exemplar of the best care for Veterans and their families, and ensure a clear and supported transition process to enable veterans and other Armed Forces personnel to work at the Trust, at a level equal with their training and experience.



Stacey Keegan, Chief executive officer with Lieutenant Colonel Carl Meyer, O.B.E.



NEW VOS THEMED BENCH

A new Veterans' themed bench has been installed in the Main Corridor, at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital (RJA), outside the entrance to the Headley Court Veterans' Centre, thanks to a new scheme.

Oswestry Show Committee, the League of Friends (LOF) to RJA and RJA Medical Illustration, have been working in partnership to update the seating provision. The Veterans' bench is part of a wider project to create 7 new seating areas with themed murals, which could act as conversation starters and points of respite along the long main corridor, for patients, visitors and staff.

The RJA Medical Illustration team have worked closely with the LOF to create the graphics and imagery for the wall art. The Veterans' themed bench and artwork acknowledges the hospital's historical and long-standing links with the Armed Forces.

The mural backdrop features Seaman Gunner C J Purser (known to his intimates as "Popeye"), writing a letter home. He was wounded off Cherbourg when minesweeping, and was treated at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital in 1944.

LOF Charity Director Victoria Sugden spoke about the new scheme: "We would like to offer our sincere thanks to the Oswestry Show Committee for helping to fund this project, and to RJA Medical Illustration, whose input has been essential in bringing this plan to fruition.

Its completion will make a tangible difference to the wellbeing of the patients, staff and visitors to the hospital. We are delighted with the results, the fresh look of the colourful new comfortable seating, and the beautiful artworks that now bring such to joy and interest to previously blank spaces."

Where's the flag

One of our favourite photos yet. We were delighted to see that these wonderful canine companions were flying the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service flag, in Paris. Merci Claude and Keith!



Claude and Keith



HOW WE WORK



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

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

T

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:

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