



## HEALING THROUGH ENDURANCE P.3

Former British Army soldier Sarah Newey is taking on a yearlong fundraising challenge

# ISSUE 8 CHIRON VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC NEWSLETTER



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Gurkha veteran and double amputee, Hari Budha Magar has completed a remarkable world-first achievement



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

The Veterans Orthopaedic Service continues to make progress. I am pleased to welcome Mr George Orfanos and Mr Kevin Syam as fellow Veterans arthroplasty consultants. They have both trained at RJAH and have a good understanding of Veterans and their requirements.



**M**r Orfanos served with the Cypriot military before starting his orthopaedic career. Mr

Syam worked with me during his training and helped develop the service. They are driven, highly skilled surgeons and bring many additional qualities. They are both enthusiastic educators who will train and mentor future Veterans surgeons. They are outstanding additions to the team.

The Prehabilitation and Enhancing Potential study (PREP) is due to start this May. This study aims to provide Veterans with focused rehabilitation, with the aim of improving outcomes, following knee replacement surgery. There is little Veterans' orthopaedic research in the UK. This is the start of several exciting initiatives. Research is essential for confirming that what we do is effective and worthwhile. Subsequent editions of Chiron will have more detail on this.

We have also appointed Mrs Lucy Law as our Defence Medical Welfare Officer. This was a highly contested field with many well-qualified applicants. She will support our Veterans volunteers and develop our existing Veterans welfare programme. She has served with Defence, working in a tri-service environment, in both regular and reserve roles. She has worked with all three emergency services and is a fully qualified councillor and therapist. This should stand her in good stead for her new role.

We now have several Veterans social media platforms (the links are on page eight). It is a way of letting you know what we are doing and of gaining support. This is necessary to develop our services. **I would be grateful if you would follow us – services with wide support are harder to ignore!**

## MESSAGE FROM STACEY KEEGAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**D**uring recent months, we have continued to see the strength of our veterans' community reflected in the stories shared throughout this newsletter. From inspiring personal journeys to pioneering developments in care, each reinforces the vital role of the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service.

Initiatives such as Sarah Newey's Op Endurance challenge, alongside the introduction of a new veteran-specific rehabilitation pathway at the Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre, highlight our shared commitment to recovery that extends well beyond treatment alone.

We have also been proud to welcome visitors and supporters who have taken time to understand the impact of this service, and to celebrate the achievements of veterans such as Hari Budha Magar, whose remarkable accomplishments continue to inspire. As part of a dedicated and compassionate community, our staff, partners and volunteers remain focused on delivering bespoke, gold-standard care that meets the unique needs of Armed Forces personnel.



# HEALING THROUGH ENDURANCE: SARAH'S YEARLONG MISSION TO SUPPORT VETERANS

Former British Army soldier Sarah Newey is taking on a yearlong fundraising challenge that will push both her physical and mental endurance, all with the goal of giving back to the Veterans' Centre that supported her when she needed it most.

**A**fter a medical discharge and a diagnosis of PTSD, Sarah faced the uncertainty that so many veterans experience when leaving the Forces. During some of her most isolating moments, she found vital support at The Veterans' Orthopaedic Hub at The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital. Alongside clinical care, volunteers offered life changing understanding, community, and stability, helping Sarah rebuild her confidence and her health.

To pay that support forward and raise essential funds to ensure the Veterans' Hub can continue helping others like her, Sarah is embarking on an extraordinary year of challenges through her fundraising campaign, Op Endurance.

Throughout 2026, she will take on a demanding series of physical and mental tests, from an Arctic expedition to iconic UK events such as the Three Peaks Challenge, along with multiple triathlons including the Outlaw Half Ironman, Slateman Snowdonia and Alderford.

Every donation made towards her incredible journey will help ensure the Veterans' Orthopaedic Service can continue providing veterans with the rehabilitation, care, and long-term support they deserve.



## MP HELEN MORGAN VISITS VETERANS' ORTHOPAEDIC CENTRE

During a recent visit, MP Helen Morgan reflected on the quality of care and the overall experience provided by the service, highlighting the importance of creating an environment that supports patients as people

**W**hen asked about her impressions, she emphasised the balance the service strikes between clinical excellence and compassion. "Of course it's professional," she said, "and of course it's where you want to have your treatment done." But what makes it stand out, she noted, is how reassuring it feels from the moment you arrive.

The service is designed to deliver high-quality treatment in a setting that feels calm, welcoming and safe. Every detail, from the way patients are greeted to the atmosphere within the space, contributes to reducing anxiety and helping people feel confident they are in the right place for their care.

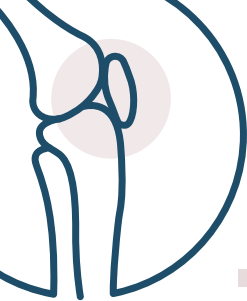
Helen also acknowledged the role of those who support the service day to day, including veteran volunteers, who help

reinforce that sense of ease and familiarity. Their presence adds to a feeling that the centre is not just clinically effective, but genuinely caring.

**Full access to the interview with Helen Morgan MP can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/1163592893/ca4156a393?share=copy&fl=sv&fe=ci#t=0>**



Credit: photography and filming by Medical Illustration, interview by Julia Morgan, RJAH League of Friends



# GOLD-STANDARD PATHWAY BOOSTS KNEE RECOVERY FOR VETERANS

Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Centre is piloting a veteran-specific rehabilitation pathway to improve knee replacement outcomes, addressing evidence that veterans often experience higher pain, reduced mobility, and lower satisfaction after surgery compared to other joint replacements.

**T**he new pathway has been designed as a gold-standard model of care, recognising the unique physical, psychological and social challenges faced by veterans, including cumulative occupational strain, geographic isolation and limited access to support. Rather than focusing solely on surgery, the service provides structured support from pre-operative preparation through to 12 months post-operation.

Patients receive enhanced health screening, an individualised prehabilitation programme delivered remotely before surgery, and an intensive five-day residential rehabilitation period after surgery. This is supported by digital tools to track progress and outcomes, alongside coordinated multidisciplinary care and welfare support from the Defence Medical Welfare Service.

By collecting detailed clinical, functional and patient-reported data, the project aims to demonstrate improved recovery, reduced complications and better long-term outcomes. Crucially, it also seeks to build a scalable, evidence-based model that could transform knee replacement rehabilitation for veterans across the NHS.

This 18-month pilot project is fully funded by the Headley Court Charity, which exists to support veterans through enhanced rehabilitation and recovery, helping them achieve the best possible outcomes following injury or surgery. The Veterans Orthopaedic Service is hugely grateful for the continued support of this national charity.

## VETERAN ORTHOPAEDIC SERVICE: UNDERSTANDING WAITING TIMES

Our hospital provides specialist orthopaedic care for patients from both England and Wales. While this helps us support a wider community, it can sometimes be unclear why waiting times differ between patients.



**A**lthough we are one hospital, the NHS in England and Wales operates under separate national systems, each with its own waiting-time targets and funding arrangements. England works to an 18-week referral-to-treatment standard, while Wales has a 26-week target and a focus on reducing very long waits, particularly those over 104 weeks. These targets are set nationally and are outside our control.

As a result, two patients with the same condition, seen by the same consultant, may experience different waiting times depending on whether their care is funded by NHS England or NHS Wales. While this can understandably feel unfair, we are required to follow the rules and funding frameworks set by each system.

For patients in Powys, waits may sometimes be longer due to how care is commissioned. Powys Teaching Health Board does not run its own hospital and purchases care from English providers, but this is funded under Welsh policies, priorities and financial arrangements, which can limit capacity.

We recognise this can be frustrating for patients and families, and we remain committed to being open and transparent about these differences. The addition of new specialist consultants will increase capacity and help reduce waiting times, ensuring we continue to deliver high-quality care to every patient.

# JULIE MCCABE

HEADLEY CO  
VETERANS'  
CENTRE

Former Royal Naval nurse Julie McCabe, reflects on her time in service, the lifelong bonds it created, and how those experiences continue to shape her commitment to supporting fellow veterans today.

## Can you tell us about your time in the Armed Forces?

I served for four years in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service. I joined because I'd always wanted to be a nurse and completed three years of general nursing, qualifying as an SRN, followed by a year as a staff nurse. It was a very formative experience and quite different from civilian nursing.

## What are you most proud of from your time in service?

Without question, the camaraderie. It stays with you for life. Even decades later, you can meet someone you served with and pick up as if no time has passed. We lived and trained together, supported one another, and that sense of belonging is something I still value.

## What skills or values have stayed with you?

High standards, adaptability, and empathy. The Forces taught me organisation, professionalism, and teamwork. Moving into civilian nursing was a real culture shock – the discipline and standards I was used to weren't the same, and the Forces encourage you to embrace change and new challenges.

## How did you get involved in volunteering within the Veterans' Hub?

Lt Col Meyer performed my hip replacement at a time when the veterans' service was still relatively new. Back then, even local GPs didn't often recognise that women could be veterans, so my GP admitted it hadn't occurred to him to refer me. The surgery went extremely well, and after my recovery, I started to lend a hand – initially by writing thank you letters and later by supporting the Vaccination Centre during the COVID pandemic. I've now been volunteering for nearly eight years.

## What keeps you motivated to continue volunteering?

The sense of purpose and community. Spaces like the Veterans' Hub offer safety, connection, and understanding – sometimes it's just about being there and having a cup of coffee. I'm proud of what we've built, of thinking differently, and of the impact small, thoughtful actions can have. We're as supported as the veterans who come through the door, and that's what keeps me coming back.



MR

# GEORGE ORFANOS

**G**eorge joined RJAH following a distinguished orthopaedic training pathway, which included higher surgical training on the Oswestry/Stoke rotation and specialist fellowships across the UK and Switzerland – covering trauma, oncology, infection, hip arthroplasty, revision surgery and pelvic reconstruction.

He also brings unique experience from his early service in the National Guard of the Republic of Cyprus, where he served with the 181 Regiment, Heavy Artillery & Air Defence Unit, specialising in Tor-M1 missile systems. This military background fostered discipline, teamwork, and resilience – qualities that continue to influence his clinical practice today.

Reflecting on his role, George said: “I enjoy working with patients where there is a clear solution. Orthopaedics is a practical, hands-on specialty, and when surgery is indicated it allows me to be technical while also improving patients’ recovery and overall quality of life.”

He added that one of the most rewarding aspects of his work is supporting veterans: “They have chosen to serve our country and can sometimes feel overlooked. Being part of a service that helps them is something I am very proud of.”



**THEY HAVE CHOSEN TO SERVE OUR COUNTRY AND CAN SOMETIMES FEEL OVERLOOKED. BEING PART OF A SERVICE THAT HELPS THEM IS SOMETHING I AM VERY PROUD OF**



Although George has only recently started at RJAH, he already highlights a proud moment – performing a total hip replacement on a former RJAH staff member following a hip fracture. He explained: “It was a high-pressure situation, but very rewarding. It felt like a meaningful way to give back.”

Outside the theatre, George enjoys the detective-like aspect of orthopaedics – understanding each patient’s history, identifying underlying issues, and finding the right solution, surgical or otherwise. He describes the work as much about listening and problem-solving as it is about operating.

Georges’ approach to medicine combines technical skill with practical thinking, driven by a constant desire to improve patient outcomes. For him, the ultimate motivation comes from seeing patients regain their independence and quality of life – a reminder of why he chose this path.

# FROM HEADLEY COURT TO THE SEVEN SUMMITS

Former Headley Court patient and Gurkha veteran Hari Budha Magar has completed a remarkable world-first, becoming the first double above-knee amputee to climb the highest mountain on all seven continents.

**E**arlier this month, Hari successfully summited Mount Vinson in Antarctica, completing his 'Conquering Dreams - 7 Summits' mission after a gruelling ascent in temperatures as low as -25°C and extreme Antarctic winds. The achievement places him among fewer than 500 people worldwide to have completed the Seven Summits, and the first to do so with double above-knee amputations.

Hari lost both his legs in 2010 following an IED explosion while serving with the British Army's Gurkha regiment. He spent nearly four years rehabilitating at Headley Court, which he describes as the place where he rebuilt not only his physical strength, but his confidence and belief in what was still possible.

Today, the legacy of that care continues through the Headley Court Veterans' Orthopaedic Service at RJA, which Hari proudly acknowledges as part of his journey.

Reflecting on his achievement, Hari says his mission is to "inspire others to climb their own mountain" and to challenge perceptions of disability. His story stands as a powerful reminder of what specialist veteran rehabilitation can make possible - long after treatment ends.



## Veterans' Plaques



Visitors to the Veterans Hub at Headley Court, enjoy browsing through the many military plaques that are on display in our Veterans Hub. The plaques have been donated by Veterans from all over the UK and each has a history and fascinating story to tell.

This Welsh Guards plaque has been donated by the Welsh Guards Headquarters in London and can be seen on our Plaque Wall. Founded in 1915, the Welsh Guards was established during the First World War by Royal Warrant of King George V.

Its formation reflected the desire for distinct Welsh representation within the Foot Guards, recognising Wales's significant contribution to the war effort. The Welsh Guards became the fifth and last of the Foot Guards regiments to be created.

The plaque features a golden leek, a traditional emblem of Wales, within a banner bearing the words "Cymru Am Byth", which translates to "Wales Forever", surmounted by a royal crown. It serves as a symbol highlighting the regiments deep heritage and commitment to the Welsh identity.



## 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.

**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:

**Email:** Victoria Sugden (Charity Director)  
v.sugden@nhs.net

**Tel:** Central Office – 01691 404527

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



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