



**UNFORGOTTEN
FORCES**

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans



Behind the scenes at the museum

The man who built
a military archive

p2

Reader
survey
results

p8

Spotlight on
Orkney Veterans'
Breakfast Club

p10

Help for
veterans
in prison

MAGAZINE

ISSUE ELEVEN: SPRING 2025

Contents

Unforgotten Forces Gatherings	2
The story behind Scotland's biggest military archive	4
Technology helping older veterans live independently	6
The rise of the Orkney veterans' breakfast club	8
Support for older veterans in the prison system	10
The Knowledge	13

Cover image: Ian Inglis by Mike Wilkinson

The Unforgotten Forces magazine is for older ex-Armed Forces men and women living in Scotland, their families, and carers.

We welcome reader feedback: you can contact us by phone, email or in writing. You can also use the details below to let us know if you no longer wish to receive the magazine.

Email: veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk

Telephone: **0333 323 2400**

Write to: Unforgotten Forces
Age Scotland
Causewayside House
160 Causewayside
Edinburgh EH9 1PR

Unforgotten Forces is a partnership of military and civilian charities, led and co-ordinated by Age Scotland, that have joined forces to boost the health and wellbeing of veterans in Scotland age 60 and older. This magazine is funded by a grant from the Scottish Government. Age Scotland aims to ensure information is accurate at time of production and cannot be held liable for any errors or omissions.

ISSN 2635-1242 (print)
ISSN 2635-1250 (online)

Age Scotland, part of the Age Network, is an independent charity dedicated to improving the later lives of everyone on the ageing journey, within a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in Scotland. Registration Number: 153343 Charity Number SC010100. Registered Office: Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR.

Foreword

Firstly, we want to apologise for the non-appearance of our autumn 2024 edition of the Unforgotten Forces magazine. This was largely the result of reduced capacity on the Age Scotland veterans team. All in the veterans team want to say thank you and good luck to our colleague Doug Anthoney who has moved on to a different role at Age Scotland. Doug has edited all ten previous editions of the magazine, and we will do all we can to maintain the high standards he set.

Looking ahead, we are pleased to welcome Laila Henke, who joined our team in November. She will soon be delivering training sessions for staff and volunteers in services and groups that support older ex-Armed Forces women and men in Scotland. She will also be involved in the production of future editions of our magazine.

We would also like to thank everyone who took the time to complete our readers' survey and give us valuable feedback on the magazine. You can read more about readers' thoughts on page 15.

Inside we talk to Gavin Phillips, who leads SACRO's Veterans Mentoring Service, which offers a lifeline to veterans caught up in the criminal justice system, and Brian Kelly, a veteran who struggled after leaving the Army and ended up with a criminal conviction. Thanks to support from SACRO's service, Brian turned his life around and is now one of six mentors helping veterans in prison. Read their story on page 10.

In West Lothian, Sight Scotland Veterans' workers are helping older veterans with sight loss access the latest technology which can allow them to live independently, pursue their hobbies and feel safe. Read about gadgets that transform lives on page 6.

January 2025 marked the 25th anniversary of the lifting of the gay ban in the UK military. It also marked the opening of the UK Government's LGBT veterans financial recognition scheme for those who were dismissed, or suffered harm, during the period of the ban from 1967 to 2000. You can find out more about the financial recognition scheme on page 12.

And on page 4, we feature the story of one man's childhood obsession with military memorabilia which led to him creating Scotland's largest collection of military artefacts.

Frank Gribben,
Unforgotten Forces co-ordinator



Unforgotten Forces Gatherings

Spring 2024 Gathering

We held a highly enjoyable Spring Gathering on 15 May at the Norton Park conference centre in Edinburgh.

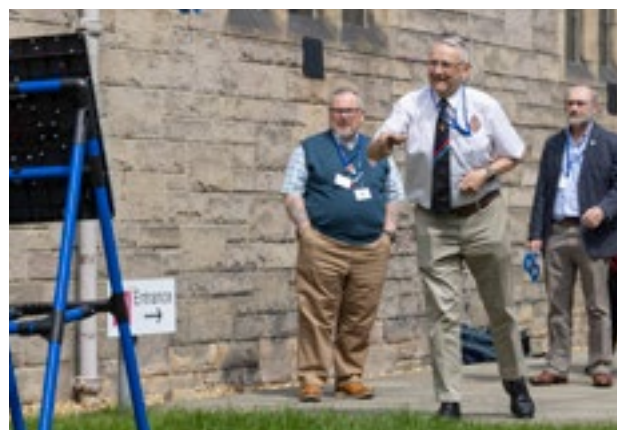
The 70 delegates participated in workshops on diversity & the Pride in Veterans Standard, intergenerational working with older veterans, and developing sporting opportunities for older veterans and those with sight loss. We also had a presentation on what lifelong learning can offer to older veterans, from Alix McDonald and Lynda Scott of Strathclyde University and George Cleland of the University of the Third Age; and a talk from the Chief Executive of the Military Wives Choirs on Singing for Wellbeing in the Veterans Community. This was followed by a wonderful performance from a local Military Wives Choir.



Military Wives Choir



Delegates at the spring gathering



Delegates at the November gathering



Minister and Commissioner with UF staff

Autumn 2024 Gathering

We were happy to host another positive and well-attended Gathering in Stirling in November, which brought together partners and supporters for a day of discussion and connection. The feedback was overwhelmingly good, particularly regarding The Barracks location.

On the day, we welcomed Graeme Dey, the Veterans Minister, who gave a talk on the ongoing commitment for supporting veterans. We also had two excellent keynote speakers, Leanne Bonner and James Murphy from the Forces Employment Charity, who spoke about employment opportunities for veterans in later life.

Delegates also took part in three engaging and interactive workshops:

- **Battling the Odds**, understanding gambling related harms in the armed forces community, delivered by **Jamie Higgins** of the **RCA Trust**.
- **From Combat to Care**, jointly delivered by **DMWS** and **Vector24**, addressed the barriers veterans face accessing medical support and engaged participants in fun, interactive challenges to highlight the difficulties and rewards of effective collaboration in supporting veterans.
- **Building Our Brain Health**, delivered by **Prof. Alan Gow** from Heriot-Watt University, focussed on the lifestyle factors associated with good brain health.

Our next Unforgotten Forces Gathering will take place on the 8th of May in Stirling. Keep an eye on our monthly e-bulletins for more details.



Prof. Alan Gow



Dougie Morgan, Fighting with Pride



Graeme Dey delivers the keynote presentation

The man who built Scotland's largest military history collection



Ian Inglis was nine years old when he received his first military artefact – World War Two medals inherited from his late father. Little did he know that these medals would spark an interest in military history that would lead to the creation of the largest collection of military memorabilia in Scotland.

Now, in a crowded building on the grounds of the Scottish War Blinded centre in West Lothian, Ian presides over the award-winning Military Museum Scotland with its vast and varied collection of artefacts dating from the Battle of Waterloo era all the way through to more recent times.

Still in storage, because of a lack of space, Ian also has more than 15,000 military books, periodicals and letters which form the country's biggest military library. Together the collections form Scotland's biggest military research archive.

Ian, who served in the Royal Artillery like his father and grandfather before him, and was also in the Territorial Army for 18 years, is now a connoisseur of military items, having dedicated many hours to collecting and investing in his collection. "I started with collecting pieces, then investing in bits and pieces. I would go to car boot sales and to jumble sales and pick up anything that caught my eye. I'd see cap badges and medals. A lot of time, people don't realise what they've got. It's not just about the value but an interest in military history," he says.

"After my Dad died I wanted to find out more about what he did during the war. As a child I read a lot of books. My main topic of interest was World War Two and World War One, but some of the stuff I've got goes back to the Waterloo era."

In the early days, Ian's collection filled storage boxes, spare rooms, attics and garages of his own home and those of generous friends. At that stage his collecting was a hobby – he had a full time job as an outdoor instructor in Oban – but it was slowly taking over his life, as well as his home. "It just snowballed," he says.

Eventually Ian realised he had to do something with his collection, so he set up the Mobile Military Museum which he took around schools from Inverness to Essex teaching pupils about military history through his artefacts.

After ten successful years on the road, Ian decided his mobile museum needed a permanent home, and in May 2016, thanks to the Scottish War Blinded, he found one in a building on their grounds which had lain empty for years. With a budget of just £280 Ian, and a band of willing volunteers, set about creating the Military Museum Scotland and filling it with items from his collection. It was opened in March 2017 by the Lord Lieutenant of West Lothian, Isobel Brydie.

Initially Ian saw the museum as an education resource for primary schools, but as news spread about the wide range of military artefacts on display, visitors began to stream in from all over the UK and further afield. Ian has welcomed visitors from New Zealand, the US, China and Japan. It also became a gathering place for veterans. "It is a safe, familiar place for these guys. There is squaddie banter that they don't get elsewhere," says Ian.

Now the museum is very much a veterans' hub with the Military Museum Scotland Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club, a Veterans Drop-in, coffee mornings, a veterans' shed and Combat

Curry Nights held on the premises. “There’s also the Friday Club which was set up in winter a couple of years ago to help older veterans deal with the cost of living crisis,” Ian says. “Every Friday veterans meet in the museum for breakfast, then stay for a soup lunch, then go home happy and smiling. The banter in the museum every Friday is fantastic and also well received by other visitors to the museum. The club just goes from strength to strength.”

Other veteran organisations, including Help for Heroes, the Homeless Veterans Project, SSAFA and the Royal British Legion use the museum facilities for events too.

Meanwhile, Ian’s collection continues to grow. “I have rescued so many bits and pieces from skips. And I will never refuse anything with a military background. Every piece is a part of someone’s personal story. If I don’t take it, it will be lost forever.”

Most of the items on show in 75 display cabinets, and in storage, are catalogued by Ian and his volunteer team. He starts by photographing every item and currently has about 30,000 photographs. He is only half way through cataloguing his huge library.

Among the stand out exhibits is a collection of sketches from the trenches during World War One by France’s official war artist, Paul Jobert. The collection had never been displayed outside France, and Ian said it was a “great achievement and a first for Military Museum Scotland”.

Outside in the grounds is an authentic World War One trench, dug by Ian over the course of a month during lockdown, a Communications Shack, featuring radio kit through the years, and a tented field hospital, complete with model patients.

Ian is keen to point out that the museum, a registered charity which is open seven days a week, is 100% self-funded, and run entirely by volunteers, himself included. He does the job for love, not money. The museum receives donations and raises funds by charging an entry fee and through fundraising initiatives such as triathlons and the Kiltwalk.

The next stage in Ian’s master plan is to expand into larger premises to establish a formal veterans’ hub, with a veterans’ village, and a Western Front experience, with two opposing trench systems and no man’s land in the middle. To help with funding, Ian would make the site available to film companies and for corporate events.

“It’s a huge and daunting plan,” he says. “However no-one thought the earlier phases would succeed, and they did. It will be a place for people to learn about military history. I am still learning about it myself. We must always remember the sacrifices that were made, and that is what Military Museum Scotland aims to do.”



Royal Marines get a tour from Ian



Ian spent a month of lockdown digging a replica WW1 trench

From sticky buttons to smart computers – the technology helping older veterans

We know that most people as they grow older would choose to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. But what about older people who have a disability which makes that challenging, or perhaps unsafe? Is there support to help those older people stay well at home?

For many of the older veterans who attend **Sight Scotland Veterans' Linburn centre** at Wilkieston, West Lothian, the answer is a resounding yes, thanks to advances in technology to support those with visual impairment.

The Linburn Centre is an activity hub for ex-servicemen and women with sight loss that significantly affects their independence. There is a wide range of activities on offer - an opportunity to enjoy the beautiful gardens and greenhouse, an archery club, woodwork workshop, an arts and crafts room and a gym. For the older veterans who attend, the warm, welcoming hub is a sanctuary which has transformed many lives.

But perhaps the most beneficial service is access to, and help to use, technology that can assist older veterans in their own home. From liquid level indicators – to avoid overfilling cups with boiling water – to sticky dots on the oven and specially adapted computers for drawing and painting, Sight Scotland Veterans finds ways to support independent living among older veterans.

For **Janice**, 70, who served in the Royal Navy as a young woman, the adaptations to her home have changed her life. In 2019, she lost 60% of her vision overnight, after experiencing sudden angle-closure glaucoma which required immediate medical attention.

Over the course of a five-week hospital stay, Janice was told she couldn't return to her home in Livingston unless adaptations were made, including the installation of a stairlift.

"I have no peripheral vision, and cannot see shapes. I was walking into doors and cabinets. I contacted Guide Dogs, and they asked if I'd ever served in the military. When I said I'd been in the Navy they said I'd won the golden lottery ticket," says Janice. "They put me in touch with Sight Scotland Veterans and it was like an angel had stepped into my life. They gave me a new lease of life."

While Guide Dogs paired Janice with Megan, a five year old yellow labrador guide dog, Sight Scotland Veterans set about sourcing kit to help Janice at home.

"I have a camera – about half the size of a remote control – which I use when I go shopping. It reads the labels for me so I buy the right things. I have a big magnifier at home so I can read and it changes the colour of the background because it is easier for me to see yellow. My teapot has a button which I press to get the right amount of water in the pot and I have talking scales to measure out Megan's food. The scales were my gift from Linburn when I got Megan," she says.

Another game changing piece of tech helps Janice get in her front door. Since she lives with night blindness, coming home after dark in winter and trying to find her key to fit into the lock and open the door was becoming so difficult that Janice was unable to go out much at all during winter.

"Now I have a key ring fob, which I press as I approach the door. It opens the door, keeps it open for ten seconds – long enough for me and Megan to get in – then closes and locks the door. It has been life changing," she says. "Standing on the doorstep trying to get the key in the lock was hard, and I didn't feel safe. People would sometimes say, oh but you've got a bright outdoor light that comes on, not realising that I couldn't actually see the light. With everything I now have I feel extremely lucky."

Niall Hunter, 58, who was in the Royal Signals for seven years, is a keen painter who thought his painting days were over when he began to lose his sight. When he started attending the Linburn Centre, he tried out the well stocked arts and crafts area. “I’ve always loved art, including anything to do with the history of art. When I came here, I just started doodling,” he said.

Spotting his artistic talent, staff and volunteers introduced Niall to the Clover Book, which is a magnifier with a close up and distance overhead camera. Niall can work on a pencil drawing or an oil painting, and see what he is creating on a magnified screen. “It has changed my life,” he said. “I didn’t think I’d be able to paint again, but now I can.”

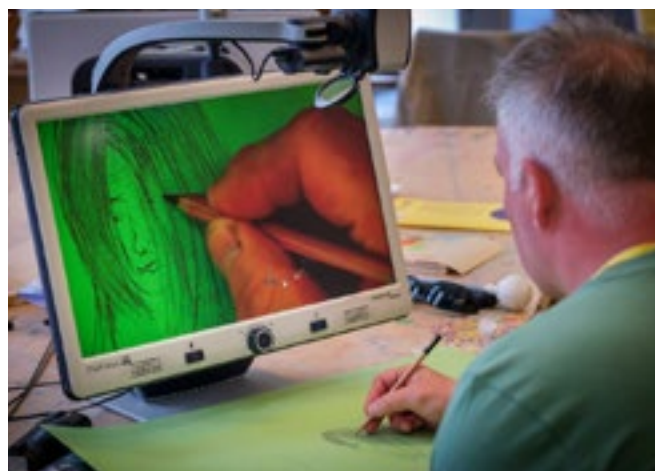
Ann McLean, 87, who was in the Women’s Royal Army Corps, uses her speaking phone for tasks including telling the time, checking the date and calling friends and family. “I have become very dependent on my phone,” she says. “I get tech support from the Linburn Centre and they show me how it can help me do everyday tasks.”

Colin Hilditch, head of community services at Sight Scotland Veterans, explains that older veterans referred to the centre are put in touch with the independent living team who assess the needs of each individual and draw up a support plan.

“For us it is all about what does the person need to continue doing that they want to do. It is about creating independence. The tech on offer doesn’t have to be high tech Virtual Reality headsets – although we do have them at the centre – it can be sticky dots on oven or microwave dials that lets the person know what the setting is. It is client led – what do they need,” he says.

“There has been big change in the past five years – the technology has really advanced and especially since Covid, when people were forced to stay in touch with family and friends on FaceTime, for example.

“But there is also a lot of support available from standard home tech like Alexas, talking books, central heating hubs, fall alarms and alarms for taking your medication. Our job is to find the right tech for the right person.”



Clockwise from top left: Regulars at the Linburn Centre say tech support available has given them back their independence; With the help of this computer and camera, Niall can continue to draw; Janice has configured her phone to suit her sight loss, and is helped by her guide dog, Megan; Liquid level indicators allow people with sight to loss to make hot drinks safely

Local spotlight on >

The Orkney Veterans Breakfast Club

From their first fry up in a Kirkwall café to a museum tour on Hoy, the Orkney Veterans Breakfast Club has grown into a thriving community of ex-Armed Forces men and women who meet once a month to chat, listen and forge connections.

The club was formed in January 2017 by Simon Brodie, a Royal Air Force veteran who had moved to Orkney from Oxfordshire the previous year. A regular at his local veterans' club in Oxfordshire, he wondered if there was anything similar in Orkney. When he realised there wasn't, he placed an advert in the local paper inviting ex-Armed Forces men and women to a local café on the last Saturday of the month, then waited to see if anyone would show up.

"The breakfast club I had gone to before gave me a sense of familiarity with people who had a similar connected experience to me. I left the Air Force with a bad back, and depression, and I was looking for some positive connections with the military. And I wanted to see if we could have something similar in Orkney," he says.

Between ten and 12 people turned up at the first breakfast, and now on average around 30 attend the monthly gatherings although numbers can surge to more than 40. Attendees range in age from around 30 to 95. Most regulars are 55 plus. In total there are 150 members of the club's Facebook community, but as Simon says some never come to breakfast.

"But I always phone them to let them know the date and venue, and have a chat with them. To me that is as important as them turning up. It's also a chance to check in, see if they need any support, because people sometimes forget there is help available or they would never ask for it. My perspective is, if they are aware of the breakfast club, they know it's there for them if they ever want it."

The club's biggest growth came about after the Covid lockdowns, with people keen to get out and socialise again. Simon believes the breakfast club also appealed because it was open and welcoming with no bureaucracy.

"There is no management," he says. "All I do is arrange where we are going, because we use different venues. All the veterans have to do is turn up and have their breakfast, pay and leave. If anyone can't afford breakfast, they can just eat and leave. No-one has to feel bad if they can't pay."

Among the regulars, there is also a fairly even number of representatives from the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, as well as some who did National Service during the conscription era.

For the first year, the club met in the same café in Kirkwall, but as numbers increased they explored different venues. Recently the club has left the Orkney mainland to visit some of the outer islands – which becomes more of a day trip than a breakfast gathering.

"It can be three quarters of day, once you get the ferry there and back. But members enjoy the trip," says Simon. "We went to Hoy and got a guided tour of the naval museum there. I'm hoping to go to more of the islands."

In the early days Simon didn't have much of a plan for the club beyond 'facilitating regular sessions for veterans to hang out'. He learned a few things along the way to make it easy for newcomers to feel at ease – using freezer labels as name badges and letting first timers know to look out for him wearing a bright pink top when they come to the venue. There is also a selection of Age Scotland advice and information guides and leaflets from the SSAFA for anyone to pick up.

The breakfasts – which are almost always a much-anticipated full fry up – don't follow any structure. Simon tried a couple of presentations and themes, but says they didn't spark much interest. "It's very informal. People seem to like that, when there's no pressure. It's literally 30 people turning up for a meal. Some prefer to wear their regimental jacket and tie, others turn up in jeans and a T-shirt. We have a reasonable LGBT membership, for a group of our size, which I'm pleased about," he says.

"We are all part of a wider family. I have more in common with people in the group than I do with most guys my own age. It does a lot to tackle loneliness and isolation. I have guys who say the club is the only time they get out of the house."

"Another guy, whose partner has dementia, has never made it to a breakfast but I call him once a month and hopefully he might make our next breakfast because he's got some respite care in place."

Simon says Orkney is a great place for older veterans – not because they are veterans but because the islands have a strong sense of community and older people are looked after. "This is a small and supportive community," he says.

Feedback from veterans about the breakfast club is generally positive – although it is mostly about the standard of the food. "If the food isn't up to scratch at a particular venue, I hear about it pretty quickly," he says. "Other than that, I do get people coming up to me in the street saying how much they appreciate the club."

"For me the club is really a community hub, a way of bringing veterans together and building connections. And a place where everyone is welcome."



Clockwise from TL: Breakfast club regulars look forward to their monthly fry up (by Adrian Hughes); Veterans get together to enjoy connection and camaraderie (by Martin Laird); The group's logo incorporates the Orkney flag; The group meet at different locations every month for breakfast (by Simon Brodie)

Support scheme offers lifeline to veterans caught up in the criminal justice system

For **Brian Kelly** leaving the British Army and building a life as a civilian proved challenging. After ten years in the military, serving on tours of Iraq and Afghanistan, he came back to Scotland with PTSD and an addiction to alcohol, and quickly found himself homeless.

"I was lost," he says. "I'd been in the Army for ten years. I lost friends on my last tour. I had PTSD and I was drinking. I left after being told I was not allowed to handle weapons and that was a career killer. It was bad for morale and I knew it was time for me to sign off.

"I didn't know what support was available when I got back. I didn't know about SACRO or Combat Stress. I didn't even think of myself as homeless because I was sofa surfing on friends' couches and not living on the streets."

Eventually as Brian's issues escalated, his family tried to persuade him to speak to Combat Stress, the mental health charity for veterans. He refused. He started to get into trouble with the police, and ended up with what he describes as a 'serious conviction'.

"At that point I was in a deep hole. You feel like you're expendable. It was coming into the Covid period and everything was shutting down. So I went to Combat Stress and I begged them to help me. They put me in touch with SACRO and the support then started to kick in. I stopped drinking. I got therapy through Combat Stress. My sentencing kept being delayed, because of Covid, and when I did appear in court the Sheriff was told about the progress I'd made and he gave me a chance, instead of sending me to prison. I grabbed that chance with both hands."

Now it's Brian's chance to give other ex-Armed Forces personnel a second chance if they find themselves in the criminal justice system.

Brian is one of six mentors in SACRO's Veterans Mentoring Service, founded ten years ago and run by former police officer, **Gavin Phillips**. SACRO, a Scottish community justice organisation, provides the service to veterans of all ages, including those at risk of entering the criminal justice system, those in prison and those released after a prison sentence.

Most of the ex-Armed Forces personnel supported by SACRO are over 35, many are 50 plus and recently the service supported an 83 year old veteran released from prison. "They're all veterans," says Brian. "There isn't a big difference in whether they're older or younger."

Gavin, who has led the service for ten years, has recruited mentors like Brian mainly across the Central Belt, and would like to expand the service to the North East and the Highlands where he believes there is a strong demand.

He knows the main challenges that veterans face, and the vulnerabilities that can lead them into the criminal justice system. "Support with housing, access to benefits and a military pension, alcohol addiction, social isolation – these are just some of the things many veterans might need support with throughout their lives," he says.

According to the most recent Scottish Government prison population statistics, from 2021-2022, there were just over 400 ex-servicemen and women in the country's jails. However as Gavin points out, not all veterans disclose their background to prison staff. The Scottish Prison Service has a

I didn't know what support was available when I got back.

Brian Kelly

national Armed Forces and Veterans champion, as do several individual prisons. There are also veterans in custody support officers. But there will still be prisoners who choose not to be identified by their military past.

“It is important to remember that a lot of veterans in the criminal justice system do not like to be labelled,” says Brian. “It is the first barrier we face in getting to them. Veterans who have committed an offence are ashamed, or they think being a veteran is irrelevant or they are simply not asked.”

As Brian knows, adjusting to life outside the military can be difficult, and in some ways being inside the prison system can feel like being back in the Armed Forces for some veterans who are struggling, particularly those who are homeless. “Being sent to prison means having a roof over your head, three meals a day and regimented days, for those who don’t know how to cope outside the regimented way of life,” he says.

Of course the vast majority of veterans go on to make positive contributions to society, says Gavin. But it’s the small number who are at risk of becoming embroiled in the criminal justice system that SACRO wants to reach.

“It’s a constant challenge because although there are a lot of veterans’ charities, there are a lot of veterans who are not known to any services,” says Gavin. “At the same time I don’t feel there is a lot of public sympathy for people who find themselves in the criminal justice system.”

Support for ex-military personnel who do become involved or at risk of involvement in the system is an area that Susie Hamilton, the Scottish Veterans’ Commissioner, is currently working on, with a report called Veterans and the Law due to be published in the autumn.

“While conducting research and engagement, I learned of the importance of appropriate and timely support for the small minority of veterans who are at risk of entering, or have already entered, the criminal justice system,” she says. “I also heard about the challenges of providing effective support and the difficulties around identification of veterans.

“Understanding that veterans may have specific needs and experiences is key to ensuring that they are not disadvantaged if they encounter statutory bodies such as the police, the courts, justice social work or prisons. It will also help to establish appropriate, sustainable systems of support. These are subjects I will be covering in my report as well as citing some of the excellent practice which also exists, including SACRO’s mentoring service.”



Photos by Lindsey Cleland

LGBT Financial Recognition Scheme for Veterans

Having started this year with the 25th anniversary of lifting the 'gay ban' in the British military, the UK government has announced long-awaited details of the LGBT financial recognition scheme for veterans. Those impacted by the ban while serving in the HM Armed Forces between July 1967 and January 2000 can now apply for recognition payments.

The scheme is open for applications until the 12th of December 2026. The Fighting With Pride website www.fightingwithpride.org.uk has been updated with an overview, links and notes for consideration (how to apply, scheme rules and FAQs).

You can also find full guidance on the gov.uk website:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/veterans-of-the-lgbt-ban-financial-recognition-scheme.



Age Scotland and **Fighting with Pride** have collaborated on a revised edition of our Support for Older LGBT+ Veterans in Scotland guide. This contains advice and guidance on the financial and non-financial reparations that are available for victims of the gay ban in the UK military, as well as information on the range of support available for LGBT+ veterans in Scotland. You can access the revised guide at www.agescotland.org.uk/information-advice/information-guides/information-for-veterans or call the **Age Scotland Helpline** on 0800 1244222 to request a printed copy of the revised guide.



Fares4Free rebrands as Vector24: New Name, Same Vital Support

Veterans and their families will be familiar with **Fares4Free**, the charity that has been providing essential transport services since 2016. Now, they have rebranded as **Vector24**, a name that reflects its expanded mission and ongoing commitment to ensuring that no veteran, serving personnel, or their families face barriers to accessing critical services.

Vector24 continues to provide free, tailored transport for veterans to attend medical appointments, mental health support sessions, and community events – ensuring that those who have served are never left isolated or without the help they need.

The rebrand marks an exciting new chapter for the charity, and veterans are encouraged to engage with Vector24 to learn more about the services available and how they can support or get involved.

[Vector24.co.uk](https://vector24.co.uk)



VECTOR24
MORE THAN A JOURNEY



Take Five to Age Well Campaign

Age Scotland is supporting a new **Take Five to Age Well initiative which is inviting all of you to make small changes for better ageing from May 2025 onwards.**

We have all tried it many times – New Years’ resolutions for better health. Often these set overly ambitious goals and it is hard to stick to them. A more sustainable way to succeed is implementing small daily changes, which over time can become habits we just do, without much effort.

This thinking is at the heart of the new campaign ‘Take Five to Age Well’, inviting everyone to make small changes in their routines for May. There are five areas science proves to be vital for healthy ageing – eating well, staying hydrated, moving more, keeping your brain stimulated and connecting socially. This challenge first started in 2023 and more than 3000 people took part from across the UK, stating that it made a big difference to their lives.

Even if ageing is not optional, we certainly can influence its speed – research suggests that we can add an average of 14 years to our lives. Everyone has individual barriers to ageing well, for example caring responsibilities or long-term health conditions – this is especially visible in the veteran community, where research shows that older veterans in Scotland are at greater risk than their non-veteran peers to a number of health conditions, such as type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, peripheral arterial disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Yet, we all have the power to do something about it, with small changes, over time, making a big difference. While a healthy long life cannot be guaranteed, things that boost our chance of enjoyment, such as hobbies and friendships, are often fun and satisfying and come at a low cost or for free.

Age Scotland is inviting you to register online from late March to receive support for a personal healthy ageing pledge. You can also support each other to age well and form a ‘Take Five to Age Well’ club. Alternatively, you could be friends or neighbours who would like to set up a ‘Take Five to Age Well’ club from scratch. Age Scotland is happy to provide you with materials to explore healthy ageing together, with no need for the internet. You can support each other in selecting and achieving personal health pledges and/or choose a whole-group pledge.

To find out more, you can visit the website age.scot/takefivetoagewell or phone Age Scotland on **03332400** and ask for the Health and Wellbeing team.



Unforgotten Stories

Unforgotten Forces magazine readers' survey results

We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who took part in our readers' survey. We are grateful for the helpful feedback you've provided.

It's great that 97% of respondents would recommend Unforgotten Forces magazine, and it's good to know that many readers are passing on information in the magazine to friends, family and groups.

75% of you said you find the magazine "very useful" or "extremely useful", and a further 22% told us you find it "somewhat useful".

It is heartening that reading the Unforgotten Forces magazine has allowed people to find help when needed: 32% of respondents have contacted a group or service that you read about in the magazine, and 58% said you might do so in the future.

Readers have found help with a range of issues, including applying for benefits, dealing with energy suppliers and learning computer skills. Information in the magazine has also led to people finding social activities including breakfast clubs.

Readers like many things about the magazine and we'll keep these going in future issues, including:

- finding Information on groups and services and their contact numbers and websites
- reading about the experiences of other veterans
- articles on relevant topics, including different aspects of health
- feeling there's a shared mindset and being reassured that veterans are not being forgotten.

Helpful suggestions for improving future issues include:

- having information on local groups and activities for veterans in different areas
- once in a while, dedicating an issue to a specific topic, such as housing or pensions
- making copies of the magazine available to more veterans who are in custody.

And we've had a very clear message that readers value the printed magazine at a time when so much is going online. So, we'll keep producing the printed version.

We really appreciate your thoughtful comments.

Unforgotten Forces E-Bulletin

Stay connected by signing up for our monthly e-bulletin! It is packed with updates on veteran's services, news from our partners, community highlights, training opportunities and upcoming events across Scotland.

Sign up by emailing veteransproject@agescotland.org.uk.



Identification is also part of Brian's job when he goes into prisons and makes himself available to talk to prisoners who have served in the Armed Forces, if they choose to come forward, and letting them know about the support that is out there. Being a veteran himself – as most of the SACRO mentors are – is vital for gaining trust and having the shared experience. "They know they can offload on me and I'm never going to judge them," says Brian.

For Brian, his brush with the criminal justice system has had a positive outcome and enables him to help others who find themselves in similar situations after they leave the military. This summer he got married and his wife is expecting their first child.

"We have got to keep sustaining the service," says Gavin. "There is so much demand. It is a battle to keep up. But we know what we do works and that is why we want to carry on doing it."

Contact **SACRO** at www.sacro.org.uk/advice/contact-us or call **0131 624 7270**

It's a constant challenge because although there are a lot of veterans' charities, there are a lot of veterans who are not known to any services

Gavin Phillips

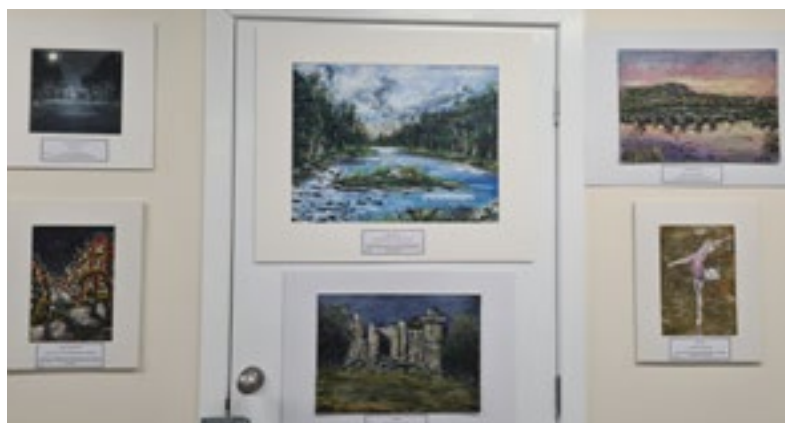
Exhibition features work created by veterans in custody

The first public exhibition of art created by inmates who previously served in the armed forces went on display earlier this year.

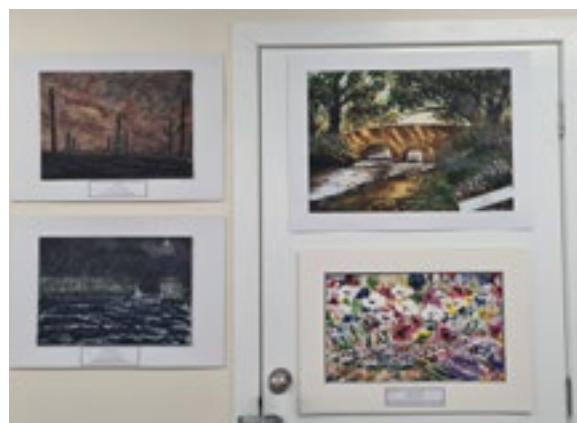
The 56 works of art, by prisoners in HMPs Perth and Castle Huntly, were shown in Kinross, with support from the Perth and Kinross branch of SSAFA, the armed forces charity.

Inside Out featured pieces that were available to purchase, raising funds to allow SSAFA to continue its work with veterans and armed forces families across Scotland.

Andy Hodge, governor of HMP Perth, said: "This is a fantastic opportunity for those in our care, all of whom have previously served in the armed forces, to showcase their talent and creativity, whilst hopefully raising vital funds for SSAFA."



Some of the veterans had never painted before they came to prison.



This was the first public display of the inmates' art.

THE KNOWLEDGE

A round up of hot topic information and new opportunities

What can veterans expect from the new government?

On July 4 a new Labour government was swept into power at Westminster after a landslide victory. Since taking office, there has not been much insight into what this could mean for ex-Armed Forces personnel, but contained in Labour's manifesto was the pledge to enshrine the Armed Forces Covenant fully into law and a commitment to establishing an independent Armed Forces Commissioner.

The party also said veterans would have access to mental health support, employment and housing and promised to scrap visa fees for non-UK veterans who have served for more than four years, and their dependents. Within government, PM Sir Keir Starmer announced that John Healey, the defence secretary, will represent veterans at Cabinet, but did not appoint a dedicated veterans minister.

Unforgotten Forces' partners improve access to benefits

The Royal British Legion and Poppyscotland have come together to help injured veterans access the benefits they need. The two organisations published a report which highlighted the unique barriers many older veterans face, and put forward 24 recommendations to the Scottish and UK governments urging them to improve the way the social security system supports disabled veterans.

Mark Collins, chief executive of Poppyscotland, said: "The report highlights that injured veterans often struggle to access benefits because the system doesn't understand their needs or time in service. Too many face challenges accessing the essential financial support that they need and deserve."

To find out more about the benefits campaign go to www.poppyscotland.org.uk/about-us/campaigns-advocacy-policy/getting-social-security-right

Census finds most veterans in Scotland are over 65

Figures published from the 2022 Census, published in July, found that there were 176,100 veterans living in Scotland. Half of all veterans (50.4%) were aged 65 and over. And just under one third (30.6%) were aged 50 to 64.

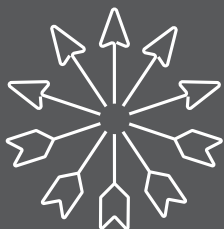
According to Scotland's Census, the high percentage of veterans in the oldest groups is explained by the National Service policy in place between 1939 to 1960 and War Service (to 1948).

Around one in five people aged 85 and over had previously served in the UK Armed Forces. If we look specifically at males, we see that over half of all males aged 85 and over had previously served.

National Service veterans invited to share their stories

The arts organisation, Same But Different, is looking to hear from National Service conscripts to expand their National Service Remembered project. The exhibition honours the contribution of more than two million men who, between 1947 and 1963, took part in mandatory National Service. The organisation wants to capture their knowledge and experiences for generations to come, through individuals' stories and photographs.

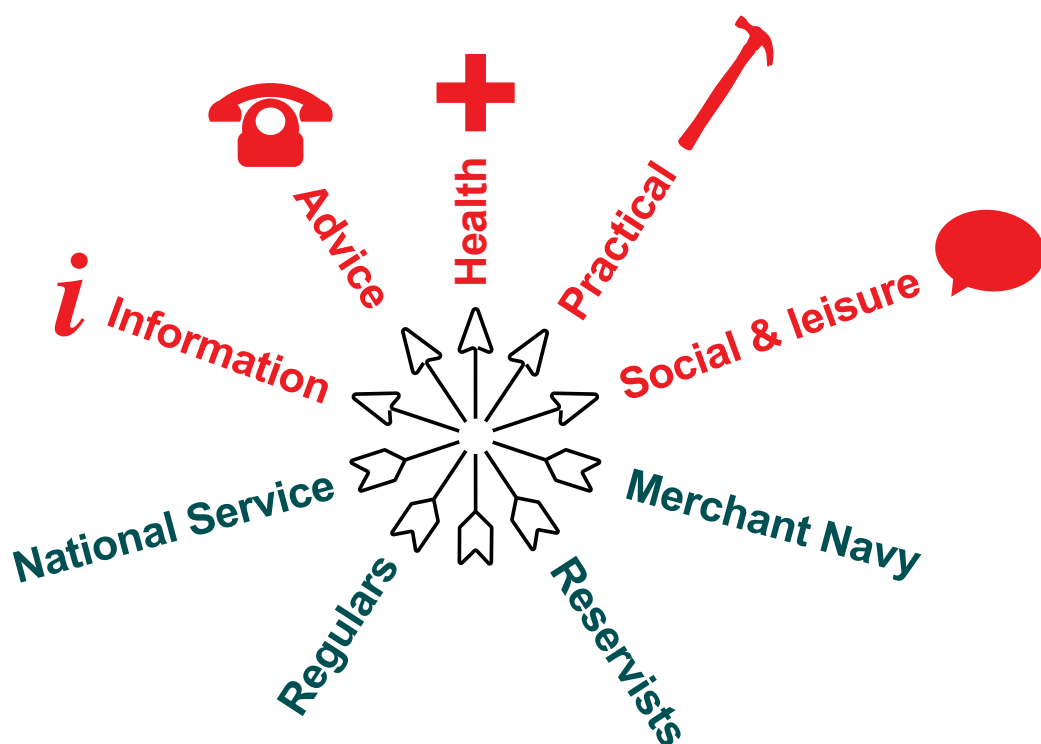
If you are interested in taking part, or read the stories of others, go to www.samebutdifferentcic.org.uk/nationalservice



UNFORGOTTEN FORCES

Supporting Scotland's
Older Veterans

If you are aged 60 or older, live in Scotland, and served in the British Armed Forces, Unforgotten Forces is your doorway to camaraderie and extra support, should you need it.



@UFForces



@UnforgottenForces

www.unforgottenforces.scot

0800 12 44 222

(The Age Scotland helpline can connect you with Unforgotten Forces services if you are unsure who to approach)

