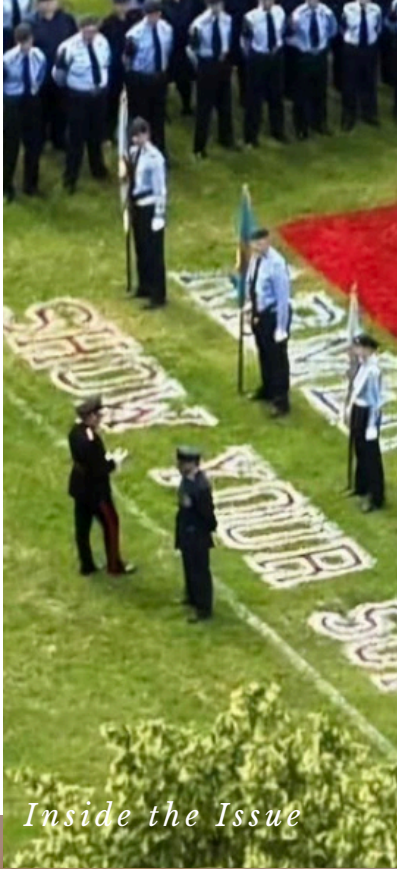


DONCASTER ARMED FORCES COVENANT BOARD

Quarterly Newsletter



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from
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Ros Jones CBE

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Doncaster's Armed Forces Covenant Board

In the last issue, we spoke about the Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Board and introduced you to the Board representatives from South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue. In this issue we are delighted to introduce you to Mandy Espey, the NHS representative on the Board. Mandy explains her role and the work that's going on to try and make improvements in Doncaster.



FOREWORD

Mayor of Doncaster
Ros Jones CBE



The first ever Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Awards Evening in October 2024

It is a great honour to be asked to write the Foreword for this packed edition of the Doncaster Armed Forces' Covenant Newsletter.

This edition is a round up of all that has happened in the past year with our incredibly special Armed Forces community here in Doncaster.

Over the past 12 months, I have been delighted to be able to celebrate, commemorate and remember our serving Military personnel, our veterans and their families.

In 2024 we celebrated Armed Forces Day with a week full of activities, culminating in the celebrations in Elmfield Park, lead by our inspiring young people from all 3 Cadet forces.

Throughout this issue, you will hear more about all of what has been happening in Doncaster, including the first ever Doncaster Armed Forces' Awards Ceremony that I was thrilled to attend in October.

We will also pay tribute and thanks to Bernard Goulding, a Doncaster D-Day Veteran who sadly

passed away last year. I never cease to be amazed by the truly incredible Doncaster people and will always be proud to represent this unique City. I look forward to seeing what the next 12 months will bring!

A Fond Farewell to D-Day Veteran, Bernard

You may remember Doncaster D-Day Veteran, Bernard who featured in one of our previous newsletters.

It is with great sadness that Bernard passed away in July last year. However, the Doncaster Armed Forces community came together to ensure that Bernard had the send off he deserved and that his memory will be cherished forever.

Members from the Sea Cadets, 150RLC 219 Squadron, Navy Association, Doncaster Veterans, Breakfast Club, Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Fire fighters, and Council employees gave him a guard of honour, and Mayor Ros Jones was also in attendance.



Bernard joined the Navy at a young age and when WW11 broke out. He was on HMS Swift and part of D-Day when the ship was hit by an underwater mine causing it to sink on June 24th 1944.

Bernard survived but there were a significant number of casualties. Bernard's family say that he did not talk about this time in his life up until a year before he sadly passed away at the age of 101yrs.

Staff at the local library in Woodlands would look forward to his daily visit that he made for many years up until he became too unwell.

They have created a dedicated area in the library with his walker and his favourite chair where members of the community go to remember him.

Pictured above is Bernard with Wellbeing Officer, Amanda Wilkinson and Cllr Mark Houlbrook, Doncaster Armed Forces Champion. Right: Bernard's Memory Corner and plaque at Woodland's Library.



A Year in Review

Whilst there is so much to look forward to this year, 2024 was an incredible year for Doncaster's Armed Forces community and it's certainly worth taking a minute to look back on this action packed 12 months.

Let's start with the Armed Forces Day celebrations. The week long activities started with the raising of the Union Flag in Sir Nigel Gresley Square and a reception hosted by the Mayor at the Mansion House for nominated Doncaster Veterans. Doncaster's 150 Regiment, 219 Squadron also hosted a Football Tournament in honour of Armed Forces Day and to raise awareness of the importance of mental health within our Military community. The week culminated in Armed Force's Day itself and led by our city's young people with representative's from the Sea, Army and Air Cadets.

The day saw a revised, but equally impressive parade through the City and followed by an afternoon of celebrations at Elmfield Park. This time, the entertainment, included the renowned Lahdidahs 1940's singers, war time vehicles and a Tri Services Tug of War competition.

It was a hugely successful day and plans are already underway for this year's celebrations which will start with the raising of the flag on Monday 23rd June and Armed Forces Day itself on Saturday 28th June.



All Armed Forces Day photo credits to Ben Harrison Photography

A Year in Review, cont'd...



D-Day 80

In June, Doncaster also commemorated D-Day 80. The 80th anniversary of the Normandy Landings on 6th June 1944. The historic operation saw the Allied Forces mount a large-scale invasion of Nazi-occupied France that ultimately tipped the course of the Second World War in the Allies' favour.

The anniversary was marked with a reception at Elmfield Park where guests were treated to a traditional fish and chips supper served in 1940's style newspaper. Guests were also presented with a commemorative D-Day 80 tin mug.



The traditional fish and chips and commemorative mugs presented to guests

Cllr Mark Houlbrook, Lt Colonel (Rt'd) Graham Whitmore, Staff Sergeant Charley Foster-Tomlinson, Major (Rt'd) Adrian Hunt, Ellie Grace, Civic Mayor Cllr Julie Grace & Captain Richard Lewis

A Year in Review, cont'd...

In October, the Board hosted the first ever, Doncaster Armed Forces' Awards. Anyone was welcome to put forward nominations for 10 different categories with the nominations being shortlisted and then finally the decision made by members of the Board.

The evening was a huge success with nominees, members of the Armed Forces community and other guests joining for a pie and pea supper, presentations and live music at the Scarbrough Barracks.

The Awards were a perfect opportunity for individuals and organisations from across Doncaster to be recognised for their commitment and the difference they make. It is hoped that the Awards will now be an annual event, so be sure to follow the Doncaster Armed Forces Facebook page with news on how to nominate for the 2025 Awards.



Award winners with Mayor Ros Jones, CBE and City of Doncaster Council, Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson



Adult Cadet Leader of the Year
First Lieutenant Stephen Green
Doncaster Sea Cadets



Board Member of the Year
Elaine Mason
Op Nova



Business of the Year
Victoria Cross Trust



Charity of the Year
Doncaster Culture & Leisure Trust



Community Engagement Award
Barry Cooper



Giving Back Award
Blue Thornhill



Innovation Award
People Focused Group



Reservist of the Year Award
Cpl Roman Kotwicki



Volunteer of the Year Award
Keith Lumley
Victoria Cross Trust



Special Recognition Award
Sgt Major Paul Elder
219 Transport Squadron

A Year in Review, cont'd...

Remembrance Observations

As always, Doncaster came together in November to remember all of those who have given the ultimate sacrifice for their country.

Doncaster residents gathered across the city, including at the War Memorial on Bennetthorpe on Sunday 10th November, as well as at the Mansion House on Armistice Day, Monday 11th November.



A community comes together for the Doncaster Sea Cadets

In September, City of Doncaster Council's Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson completed a 100 mile challenge to raise much need funds for the Doncaster Sea Cadets.

The Sea Cadets were targeted by vandals earlier in the year, as well as needing costly repairs to the roof at their city centre base.

Teresa completed the challenge over the course of a week and throughout the week was supported by numerous members of the community.



Save the Dates for 2025

Armed Forces Day 2025

The date for this year's Doncaster Armed Forces Day celebrations have been confirmed:

Raising of the Union Flag

Monday 23rd June
12pm
Sir Nigel Gresley Square, Waterdale

Veteran's Reception

Tuesday 24th June
Hosted by the Mayor at the Mansion House
If you know someone that should be nominated, please contact us via email:
armedforcescovenant@doncaster.gov.uk

Armed Forces Day

Saturday 28th June
Parade step off, 11am on Duke Street
Entertainment throughout the afternoon at Elmfield Park



VE Day 80

VE Day in 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, with two key dates to remember, Thursday 8th May and Friday 15th August.

Thursday 8th May is Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) – the day the German Forces surrendered to the Allied powers.

Friday 15th August is Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) This is the day on which Imperial Japan surrendered, in effect bringing World War Two to an end.

Preparations are underway for Doncaster's commemorations, however, The Mayor, Ros Jones is keen to encourage all to get involved, including support for street parties. If you would like to arrange an event, please visit the Council website for advice and information:

www.doncaster.gov.uk/doitonline/organise-and-stage-an-event-in-doncaster



Meet the Board - Mandy Espey, NHS

The DAFCB is made up of representatives from Doncaster organisations, including the Council, Housing, Health and many more. It also includes retired and serving Armed Forces personnel.

The Board work towards a 2 year Action Plan trying to ensure that Doncaster improves across a range of issues to help Doncaster become the very best place it can be for the Armed Forces community.

In our last edition, we introduced you to our representatives from South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and South Yorkshire Police. This time around, we have the great privilege of introducing you to our NHS rep, the hugely enthusiastic and energetic, Mandy Espey.

Mandy Espey has been the Health Inequalities Lead across Doncaster for 2 years, but has worked for Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals for most of her career. She originally trained as a Physiotherapist in Sheffield and has worked in various leadership roles, including Divisional General Manager for Surgery and Cancer and more latterly Interim Chief Allied Health Professional DBTH and RDASH.

Mandy now helps services across Doncaster to understand the barriers that some communities face, when it comes to accessing health and care services, such as poverty, translation, lack of a phone, mistrust of services or addiction.

An important part of the role is to work with different communities to understand the specific challenges they face when accessing healthcare and to listen to what really matters to them. This is never more important, than when we are thinking about our Armed Forces' community. The new Armed Services Covenant Duty raises awareness amongst organisations that provide services in healthcare of how Service life can impact on the Armed Forces community, and how disadvantages can arise due to Service when members of that community seek to access key local services.

Mandy chairs the 'Improving Access to Healthcare' group, which has representation and commitment from Doncaster and Bassetlaw Teaching Hospitals (DBTH), Rotherham, Doncaster and South Humber (RDASH) NHS Foundation Trust (providers of services including Mental Health support) and GP Practices.

The key objective of the group is to support our hospitals and our GP practices to become 'Veteran Friendly'. The Veteran Friendly GP Practice accreditation scheme supports practices to deliver the best possible care and treatment for veterans who have served in the UK Armed Forces and their families. In Doncaster, 65% of GP practices are Veteran Friendly and both of our hospitals have also achieved Veteran Friendly accreditation.

Doncaster is doing well, but there is an expectation that 100% of GP practices will become accredited and that accreditation leads to real improvement in the experience of veterans when they access their GP and hospital care. Part of the work of the group will be to raise awareness of the services that are available to veterans who are experiencing mental and physical health challenges – services such as Op Courage and Op Restore.

You may have noticed recent changes that have happened as a result of our work, for example, when you receive a letter from the Hospital or check in on arrival, you should be asked if you have ever served in the Armed Forces.

We are committed to working with veterans to make sure they are accessing the services that are available to them and that no-one is left behind. In order to do this, we are keen to listen the stories of our veterans when they are trying to access healthcare, to hear about what matters to them and how they think we can better support and empower them to navigate services.



Mandy Espey, Health Inequalities Lead for Doncaster Integrated Care Board, NHS



Spotlight on the Armed Forces Link Officers



The City of Doncaster Council have an initiative whereby teams have 'Armed Forces Link Officers'. These officers have their normal roles and duties, but in addition, volunteer to act as Link Officers within their teams.

As Link Officers, they act as a point of contact within their teams, ensuring the team is kept up to date on what support is available for the Armed Forces community.



Tom Cocksedge, Neighbourhood Officer and Armed Forces Link Officer



Tom at a Remembrance event at the Victoria Cross Trust in the Frenchgate Centre

Link Officers attend bi-monthly meetings with the Armed Forces Covenant Co-ordinator, receiving regular updates on what's happening in Doncaster, progression on the Doncaster Action Plan and updates on what support and services are available.

You will see Link Officers out and about in the community, running Community Conversation Points (www.yourlifedoncaster.co.uk/ccp), attending community events and supporting at Armed Forces events such as on Remembrance Day and Armed Forces Day.

In this edition we are meeting Tom Cocksedge who has worked for the council for 7 years and works within the Stronger Communities Team as a Neighbourhood Officer covering Town Ward.

In Tom's role as a Neighbourhood Officer, he works on providing support to Doncaster residents facing a number of issues including anti-social behaviour, health and wellbeing. Tom's role is to support people at the earliest opportunity and help to ensure they can be safe and healthy in their own community.

Tom became a Link Officer in November 2023. He says that being part of last year's Remembrance service made him really consider the sacrifices that Armed Forces personnel and their families make to ensure that we live in a free country.

Tom says that he has thoroughly enjoyed learning about the Military community and has spent time with Military groups by visiting Breakfast Clubs, attending the monthly Armed Forces Forum, by talking to veterans at Community Conversation Points, attending specific training and being around veterans during a recent fundraiser.

Tom says "I'm very proud to be a Link Officer and to support the Military community. Over the past year I've learned a lot about some of the difficulties people face in transitioning back into society after their service and how we can support them".

We hope to see more teams across the Council introduce Armed Forces Link Officers, helping to ensure that staff are fully informed and in a better position to support Doncaster residents.

Well Done Tim!

Let us leave you with a story of hope and determination.....

Tim Millard began his service with the 2nd Battalion Light Infantry, which later amalgamated to the Rifles, in 2002.

Having completed 1 Tour in Iraq, 1 Northern Ireland and 2 Tours of Afghanistan, Tim decided to leave the armed forces and volunteered for redundancy.

Tim decided to settle in Doncaster to be close to family and explains that on leaving he became more aware that his time in the Forces had impacted on his mental health which resulted in his diagnosis of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). This left Tim feeling mentally crippled and he contemplated suicide on a few occasions. Tim completed a 2 week residential treatment with Combat Stress which changed his life forever.

Tim discovered Ti Chi and martial arts during this period, and this very quickly developed into something much more. He noticed that exercise contributed to an improvement to his mental health and wanted to use his experience to help others. He completed a 3-year teaching course and turned his passion into a business.

He now runs a Martial Arts Academy in Bentley and has 140 members aged 3-56yrs. His academy supports children with autism and people with mobility issues.

Whilst Tim continues to have poor days with his mental health, he is proud of his achievements, proud to support the local community and proud of everyone who steps through his doors and takes part.

In 2024 Tim approached the Wellbeing Service in the Council for support in him and his sons to attend the ICO World Championship. Tim was supported through the Veteran's Innovation fund.

The 3 competitors returned home with an incredible 8 medals between them and 4 of them being gold making them ICO World Champions! Huge well done to you all!



Tim in his 1st position on the podium



Tim and his sons Taylor and Aiden

Walking Home for Christmas



In December, members of the Doncaster Armed Forces community came together to raise money for Walking with the Wounded's 'Let's Talk Walking Home' campaign.

The group, including veterans, walked 10 miles, taking in Loversall and finishing at Scarborough Barracks for refreshments.

The campaign raises much needed money for therapy sessions for veterans.

February 2025

LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS

We are keen to get your feedback on the content of our newsletters.

If you have any ideas for future issues or questions on anything included, please contact by either email or telephone.



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