

# DONCASTER ARMED FORCES COVENANT BOARD

*Quarterly Newsletter*



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## Doncaster's Armed Forces Covenant Board

Inside this issue, we find out about the Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Board and the work it does to drive things forward in Doncaster. We speak with active Board Members, Sgt Paul Setterfield from South Yorkshire Police and Station Manager, Gary Devonport from South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue.





## FOREWORD

### *Councillor Mark Houlbrook Doncaster's Armed Forces & Veteran's Champion*



Cllr Mark Houlbrook and Veteran Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson at Doncaster Sea Cadet Corps, T.S Lightning

As always, I am delighted to be able to welcome you to this edition of our Newsletter.

We have so much information to share with you about everything that has been happening in Doncaster over the past few months.

A particular highlight for me was visiting the Doncaster Sea Cadets. I was first invited along, taking me back to my Naval roots, to find out about the wonderful work that they do. I was then honoured to visit for a second time when the Cadets kindly hosted a 101st birthday party for Doncaster Veteran, Bernard. You can read all about Bernard's special celebration in this issue.

As we move towards March, we are fast approaching the end of the first year of the Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Action Plan 2023-2025. In this edition, I am pleased that we are able to share with you some work on what the Board do to deliver the Action Plan and some of the fantastic achievements we have already made in the first year.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and as always, we welcome your thoughts if you want to contact us about suggestions for future editions.

## Congratulations Major Adrian Hunt, Rt'd

No, we haven't made a mistake, this is the *second* edition in a row for us to feature, Major Adrian Hunt, now retired.

In November's newsletter, we told you a little about Major Hunt's incredible career and celebrated his retirement. However, we now have even more news to share with you.

Doncaster's very own, Major Adrian Thomas Hunt, DL, VR, Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Army Reserve has been awarded the King's Volunteer Reserves Medal in the 2024 New Year's Honours.

The King's Volunteer Reserves Medal, previously the Queen's Volunteer Reserves Medal was created by Royal Warrant of Queen Elizabeth II on the 29th of March 1999.

Only 13 King's Volunteer Reserves Medals may be awarded in a year. The medal is presented only to members of the Volunteer Reserves of the British Armed Services for exemplary, meritorious service in the conduct of their duties.

Well done Sir !





# Doncaster 8 Rifles Reserves

Doncaster has been home to the 8th Regiment of Rifle Reserves for many years.

Over the years, the Reserves have been deployed to Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, Kosovo and Northern Ireland.

Corporal Roman Kotwicki from the Rifles explains that there is a mixture of people within the Reserves who bring a wealth of Knowledge and skills from their civilian roles, ranging from Police Officers, Warehouse Operatives, HGV Drivers etc.

Roman was born and raised in Poland and was in the Polish Army. He came to live in England looking for a better future for him and his family.

On arrival in the UK, Roman approached the local Army Careers Office where he was advised that he could not enlist as he did not have British Citizenship.

Undeterred, Roman began the 7yr process of gaining his citizenship and explained that he was incredibly grateful to the United Kingdom for the opportunities that he and his family had been given. His ambition to join the "best army in the world" kept him motivated throughout the process.



Corporal Roman Kotwicki and his daughter at Armed Forces Day

On the day his proof of Citizenship arrived, Roman says that he went straight back to the Army Careers Office and joined the Rifles Reserves.

His career with the Rifles has so far seen him deployed to Afghanistan where he was an armoured ambulance driver. He explains that he transported many injured to the hospital including children, and military personnel from Afghanistan, America and others.

Roman very proudly explains that he is now a PT instructor and specialises in boxing. He is a battlefield instructor, and is part of the Recruitment and Training team based at Danum Road, Doncaster.

He and his family give thanks to Doncaster for making him feel at home and valued. Doncaster gives thanks to him and his family for his service to the country.



8th Regiment Rifle Reserves at Remembrance Day



# Employer Recognition Scheme



## EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

The Defence Employer Recognition Scheme (ERS) encourages employers to support defence and inspire others to do the same.

The scheme encompasses Bronze, Silver and Gold awards for employer organisations that pledge, demonstrate or advocate support to defence and the armed forces community, and align their values with the Armed Forces Covenant.

The ERS is designed primarily to recognise private sector support although public sector organisations such as the emergency services, local authorities, NHS trusts and executive agencies are also eligible to be recognised.

Employers who have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant can nominate themselves for a Bronze Award. This involves pledging their intention to support Defence and to take a positive stance towards reserves, cadet force adult volunteers and veterans who are either existing or prospective employees.

Bronze Award holders seek to promote an Armed Forces friendly position, and are open to employing reservists and supporting their training and mobilisation commitments.

Silver Award holders demonstrate support for Defence, employing at least one reserve, actively communicating and upholding a positive stance to their employees via established human resources policies and procedures.

Gold Award holders proactively advocate and support Defence, communicating their commitment both internally to employees and externally to the wider community.

In Doncaster, we have an ever growing number of businesses signing the Covenant and gaining ERS Award status.

We want Doncaster to be the best place for our Armed Forces community to live, work and thrive and therefore, if you would like to consider this for your business, visit the Yorkshire and Humber Reserve Forces and Cadets Association for support and information:

[www.rfca-yorkshire.org.uk/employers/recognition-scheme](http://www.rfca-yorkshire.org.uk/employers/recognition-scheme)

## Doncaster Sea Cadets' Annual Awards

On Tuesday 23rd January, Doncaster Sea Cadet Corps, T.S. Lightning held their annual awards evening.

The event was attended by special guests who presented awards including, Ben Parkinson MBE. A special award was given in memory of the former Deputy Lord Lieutenant and High Sheriff of South Yorkshire, John Holt who sadly passed away in 2023.

John was a huge supporter of the Sea Cadets and his legacy will stay with the Cadets for generations to come.

Many Cadets were recognised during the evening, including recognising those completing the most number of hours, those gaining qualifications and the prestigious, Cadet of the Year Award.



Sea Cadets at the Annual Awards Evening on 23rd January

# Meet the Board

You may never have even noticed, but our newsletter in the work of the Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Board (DAFCB). But who are the Board and what do they do?

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 2yr 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.

Over the next few additions, we want to introduce you to some of our Board Members and the fantastic work they do in their own organisations to help deliver the Action Plan.

In this issue, we are delighted to introduce you to Station Manager, Gary Devonport from South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue and Sgt Paul Setterfield from South Yorkshire Police.

Gary Davenport is a Station Manager in SYFR.

Prior to that, Gary completed 17 years in the British Army, 1st Battalion Duke of Wellington.

His military career saw him deployed to Iraq in 2003 where he was involved in Op Tellick 1 - a mission to remove Saddam Hussain. He completed a further tour in Iraq on Op Tellick 5.

Gary left the military and joined the Prison Service in a role that included the transportation of prisoners. Gary eventually joined the Fire Service and rose through the ranks to become a Station Manager.

Gary says "I owe a lot to the military. The person that I am today, that I probably wouldn't have been had I have not joined".

Gary sits on the DAFCB and says that a large percentage of his team are ex military and serving Reservists. The Reserves are given paid leave to carry out their Reserve duties and SYFR also hold the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, Silver Award.

As a result of Gary's work on the DAFCB, he was prompted to organise a 'Have a Go Day'. In October 2023, Greenwatch based Doncaster Fire Station, hosted the day where veterans were welcomed by the Station Manager.

Veterans were given a small introduction to the breathing apparatus and were able to try on equipment, be shown around the vehicles and all appliances.

The team on duty that day were mostly ex-military and spent time with participants discussing some interview questions and the stages of the recruitment process. They were given a good insight into life in the service and were able to participate in some tasks.

Special thanks to the Greenwatch for the day and to Gary for his ongoing work and commitment!



SYFR Station Manager, Gary Devonport on duty

In 1985, Sgt Paul Setterfield left Doncaster to start a career in the Army.

As a young lad, he says this is what he had always wanted to do. He set off from Doncaster at the age of 16 and started training with the Light Division as a Junior Leader in Shorncliffe, Kent.

After completing his initial training, Paul was posted to the Second Battalion of the Light Infantry, who at that time were stationed in Hemer, Germany. His battalion was part of the Air Mobile Brigade which was being trialled at the time.

Whilst Paul enjoyed his military career, he says that as he was so young when he joined, he wanted to experience civilian life and decided to leave the armed forces in 1989.

Paul's first civilian role was working in an explosives factory in Andover, Wiltshire. He moved back to Doncaster and worked on the railway with local company, Trackwork. Paul enjoyed this job but explains that he started to miss the structure that the Army gave him, and he decided to join the Prison Service in 1994.

After eight years at HMP Marshgate, he wanted more and became a Police Officer. Paul explains that being a Police Officer is the closest thing to being back in the military. The service relies on good teamwork and good partnerships.

Paul is now a Sergeant with South Yorkshire Police and an active member of the DAFCB. He is the Veteran SPOC (single point of contact) for the police in Doncaster.

He works in collaboration with Op Nova, supporting veterans who find themselves in the Criminal Justice System. He goes further by doing welfare checks on veterans who are identified as vulnerable and talks to those who have not been arrested but are at risk of arrest.

Sgt Paul Setterfield says that he is proud to be a member of the Board. He says that he enjoys working alongside other agencies and individuals who share the same passion as him to improve and make a difference to the lives of Veterans and their families in Doncaster.



Police Sergeant Paul Setterfield with a member of the Cold Stream Guards' Band at Armed Forces Day 2023



# Special Birthday Mentions

In November, we were honoured to celebrate not one, but two incredible Doncaster Veteran's Birthdays!

On 15th November, Doncaster Armed Forces Champion, Cllr Mark Houlbrook and City of Doncaster Council Veteran Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson were kindly invited into the home of Fred Adamson, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, the oldest KOYLI in the Country, to help mark his 104th birthday celebrations! Fred also received a visit from Calendar News and gave all of his visitors a signed portrait of himself.

November also saw 101yr old Royal Navy Veteran, Bernard Golding visit the Doncaster Sea Cadet Corps, T.S. Lightning at their Doncaster base. The Cadets presented Bernard with a gift, card and birthday cake to mark his 101st birthday and Bernard was able to spend time talking to the Cadets and showing them photos from his time spent serving on HMS Swift and HMS Warspite which included his involvement in the D-Day landing in 1944.

A huge happy birthday to you both and we pay tribute and thanks for your service!



101yrs old Bernard at his birthday party at the Doncaster Sea Cadets



104yrs old Fred greeting his well wishers to his home for his birthday

## Reflection on Remembrance

The Armed Forces community in Doncaster, as always, did themselves proud with commemorations on both Armistice Day and Remembrance Sunday.

A Civic Remembrance Service was held at The Mansion House on Saturday 11th November followed by a Service of Remembrance at the War Memorial on Sunday 12th.

This year was also marked at the Flying Scotsman which returned to its home town as part of its centenary celebrations.



## 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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