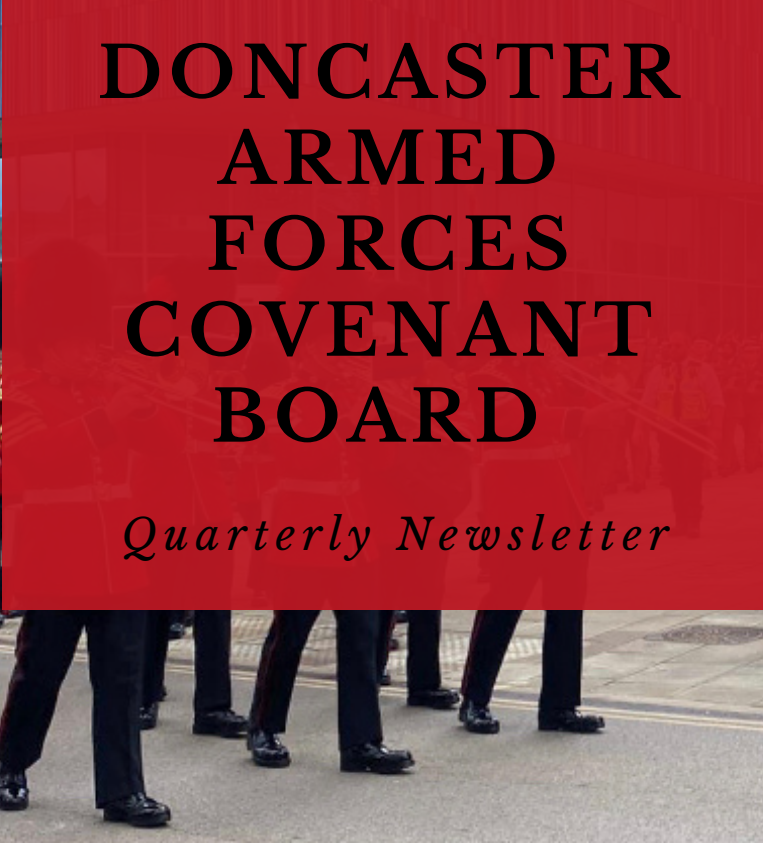


DONCASTER ARMED FORCES COVENANT BOARD

Quarterly Newsletter



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**Doncaster
Borough**

FOREWORD

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



Cllr Mark Houlbrook, Mayor Ros Jones and Civic Mayor Duncan Anderson at the Annual Lord Lieutenant Awards Ceremony

It has yet again been an incredible 3 months in Doncaster and I am delighted for this to be shared with you in this jam-packed edition of our Newsletter.

I have been honoured to be involved in numerous events over the past 3 months, including attending the Lord Lieutenant Awards and visiting both the Sea and Air Cadets.

I have been truly humbled and inspired by Adult Cadet Leaders who volunteer their time for free and of course, the incredible young people who make this commitment and are gaining skills, qualifications and experience that benefits not only them, but the whole Armed Forces and Doncaster community.

I never cease to be amazed by our Armed Forces community, but what I have particularly been impressed by recently, is how all parts of our community, including Sea, Army, Air, Regulars, Reserves, Cadets and Veterans have all come together, supporting one another and working collaboratively to achieve the best for them and for Doncaster.

Thank You Major Adrian Hunt

On 21st September 2023, Doncaster's very own, Major Adrian Hunt retired from the Army Reserves after an incredible 47yrs military service.

Major Hunt joined the Regular Army on 10.04.1975 and spent time in Germany, Canada, Cyprus and Belize up until 1998. After a short break, Major Hunt decided to re-enlist as an Army Reserve in 2000.

Major Hunt has dedicated his entire working career to the Armed Forces and supporting the wider Doncaster community.



Despite Major Hunt retiring from the Army, he still continues in his numerous volunteer and community roles:

- Deputy Lord Lieutenant (Lead for Doncaster)
- SSAFA Branch Secretary
- School Governor
- Chair of the Doncaster REME Association
- Chair of Trustees for Rotherham MCVC
- Trustee for Yorkshire Water Community Trust
- Member of the Veteran's Advisory Pension Committee
- Deputy Lead for Doncaster's Cadet Forces

On behalf of Doncaster, thank you Major Hunt.



Mental Health

As part of the Doncaster's 2 year Action Plan, supporting the mental health of our Armed Forces Community is part of the 'Access to Healthcare' and 'Education and Family Wellbeing' priorities.

We recognise the impact that serving in the forces can have on a person's wellbeing and in Doncaster we want to ensure that our partners work together to provide the very best possible support network for our community.

In this issue we are delighted to share the lived experience of Army Veterans, Baz and Kurtis. If you would like information on what support is available in both Doncaster and nationally, please contact us on the details given on the last page of this newsletter.

Baz's Story

Baz is a 44yrs old Veteran who left the Army in 2005.

Baz's business ran into financial difficulty due to COVID-19 and this had a severe impact on Baz's mental health. Baz began using Cocaine recreationally, however, this, together with his poor mental health, saw his 20yr relationship breakdown.



Baz binged on huge quantities of Cocaine and found himself admitted to hospital with drug induced psychosis. At no point during his hospital admission did anybody ask Baz why he had used Cocaine and nor did they establish he was a veteran.

Baz was introduced to the City of Doncaster Council's Wellbeing Service through attending the Club Doncaster Foundation Fit Forces Programme. Baz was sofa surfing with friends and his mental and physical health was at an all time low. Baz was supported by Fit Forces, PFG (People Focus Group) and City of Doncaster Council Wellbeing Officer, Dalton.

Dalton supported Baz with a range of issues including support finding accommodation. Baz has also secured employment, delivering Mental Health Training across the country.

Dalton also accessed several Armed Forces charities including Help for Homeless Veterans and The Veterans' Charity to support with bond, white goods and food to ensure that Baz didn't fall into difficulty before receiving his first wage.

The physical transformation is clear to see in Baz's photos above. Baz said "I feel I have landed back where I belong. My identity has returned, my need for validation squashed, I feel amazing".

Kurtis' Story

City of Doncaster Council employee and Army Veteran, Kurtis Parkes served with the 3rd Battalion Rifles and was deployed to Afghanistan on Op Herrick 11. He explained that without the support of his wife and mother, he would not have been the excellent soldier that he was.

On his return home, Kurtis became mentally unwell with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. He explains that this ultimately resulted in him being medically discharged from the military. He had hoped to remain in the military and complete the full 22 years and therefore his discharge was a devastating blow. He described feeling a huge sense of loss of his identity, military family and purpose.

When Kurtis returned to Doncaster, he received a lot of support from various agencies, including Veterans UK, Aspire and therapy through RDASH. Once he began to manage the symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Kurtis began to look for a new career.

Kurtis remembers that during this time, he found it incredibly difficult to secure employment. He was constantly knocked back and this was detrimental to his mental health. He says that during this time he felt let down by society and believed that he was not being given a chance to prove himself and show his worth as an army veteran, and to bring his transferable skills and excellent work ethic.

Kurtis eventually applied for a role in Doncaster Council and was successful in a role working for the Prison team, this required him to take Prisoners out to clean the environment. Kurtis has since been promoted to Chargehand, managing a team of 12 people some of whom are also veterans.

Kurtis is very proud to work amongst other veterans in his team. His main joy is having the sense of pride and job satisfaction when he and his team have successfully cleaned areas which improves the environment for the communities and for wildlife.

Kurtis says that he feels completely supported in his role by his management and team and is pleased to have the opportunity to give something to the veterans of Doncaster in the preparations for Remembrance Day. Read about Kurtis' and his team's work in our Remembrance information.

Op Courage



The Veterans Mental Health
and Wellbeing Service

The first call for help takes courage

Op COURAGE: The Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service

OpCOURAGE

Op COURAGE offers a range of specialist support and treatment, tailored to your specific needs. This includes:

- Helping you to recognise and treat early signs of mental health problems, as well as more advanced mental health conditions and psychological trauma
- Providing support and treatment for substance misuse and addictions
- Liaising with charities and local organisations to support your wider health and wellbeing, such as help with housing, relationships, finances and employment
- Referring you to other NHS services where needed
- Recognising that your family may also need help and care and supporting them to access this

If you live in the North of England and want to access Op COURAGE, you can do this by:

- Calling 0300 373 33 32
- Emailing: OpCourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk

To find out more search www.nhs.uk/opcourage

For advice and information about what other support is available locally, contact:

Website: www.doncaster.gov.uk/armedforces

Email: armedforcescovenant@doncaster.gov.uk

Tel: 01302 735600

Well Done Teresa!

In September and October, City of Doncaster Council Veteran Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson completed her double fundraising challenges of a Half Marathon and climbing Ben Nevis to raise funds for the Club Doncaster Foundation, Fit Forces Programme.

Teresa was supported by people from across the Armed Forces Community. Teresa has raised over £800 which will go to help the programme continue to improve veteran's physical and mental wellbeing. The whole community is grateful and proud of you Teresa, thank you!

November 2023



Teresa completing her Half Marathon with the support of members of the Armed Forces Community

Club Doncaster Foundation

Fit Forces

Saturday, 9am-11am
at Foundation Fitness, Eco Power
Stadium, DN4 5JW

FIT FORCES

A project that supports the
mental health and wellbeing
of people that have served in
our Armed Forces over land,
sea and air

For more info, call 07523 905254 or email
fitrovers@clubdoncasterfoundation.co.uk

Spotlight on the Sea & Air Cadets

You may remember that in our last edition, City of Doncaster Council's Veteran Co-ordinator, Teresa Hodgson had been invited to meet with the Army Cadets at Scarborough Barracks. In August, Teresa had the great honour of being invited to meet the Doncaster Sea and Air Cadets.



Cllr Mark Houlbrook and Teresa Hodgson with the Sea Cadets at their Doncaster base



DL Major Adrian Hunt and Rt Hon Dame Rosie Winterton MP with Doncaster Air Cadets at the Air Museum

The Sea Cadets were formed in 1856 and known as the Naval Lads' Brigade. There were many orphans of the Crimean War, sleeping in the streets around Sea Ports and the sailors decided to teach them nautical skills and training to give them the opportunity of a better future.

Today, they are called the Sea Cadets and the Cadets are aged between 10yrs-18yrs old. They are an inclusive organisation and support children from diverse backgrounds.

Chief Officer 1st Lieutenant, Steven Green explains the difference that being a Cadet makes to the lives of the young people and through into their adult life. During his time as a Cadet leader, Chief Officer Green has witnessed children grow in confidence, gain leadership skills and make new friends. He says that whilst they are a youth organisation, they are also disciplined and run from the customs and traditions of the Royal Navy.

Commanding Officer Heather Blades says that the courses that they offer include: First Aid, Sailing, Meteorology, Seamanship, Marine Engineering, Communication, Shooting, Piping and Navigation and many more.

Heather is a Veterinary Nurse and started in the Cadets at the age of 10yrs. Now the Commanding Officer, she says that she often gets asked why she gives her time for free. She says that she gets a sense of satisfaction when she sees the potential in the Cadets and witnesses how they develop, grow, and achieve great things both in the Cadets and in adulthood.

Cllr Mark Houlbrook and Veteran Co-ordinator Teresa Hodgson were invited to witness an Inspection at their establishment in Doncaster.

On speaking with the Cadets, they talked about a sense of pride having taken part in Doncaster's largest Armed Forces Day earlier this year. They explained how they feel part of something and enjoy learning new skills. Some even talked about noticing improvement in other aspects of their lives including with schoolwork.

The birth of the Air Cadets began after an idea from Air Commodore J.A Chamier, now known as the Father of the Air Cadets. He served in the Army, Royal Flying Corps and the RAF in 1919.

In 1938, with WW2 on the horizon, aircraft would be used as a major combat strength and the RAF would need combat ready pilots.

Squadrons were set up across towns and cities in the United Kingdom and they were run by local people with the aim of preparing Cadets for joining the Royal Air Force.

By the end of the war, almost 100,000 Cadets had joined the RAF. In 1980, the Cadets became more inclusive, and females were able to join.

Flight Lieutenant Rob Weban joined Doncaster Air Cadets at the age of 13. He went on to have a successful career in the RAF and is now a teacher at Hungerhill School. He runs the Armthorpe Air Cadets and has 40 cadets ranging from 12 years to 18 years old.

He explains that this is a military organisation and discipline, and respect are paramount both in the sessions and when representing the Cadets in public.

The courses available include:

- Air; Flying and Gliding.
- Space; Satellite Communications, Rocketry, Air Space Technology
- Cyber; Cyber Security, Cyber Warfare.
- Skills; Sports, Music, Bands, First Aid, Radio Communication, Drill and Ceremonial Marching, Adventure Training, Rock Climbing, Abseiling, Sailing, Canoeing and Hill Walking
- Military; visits to specialist units, Annual Camps, Target Training
- Further Education; BTEC Diplomas in Teamwork, Personal Development, Leadership and Management

All the skills gained complement the qualifications that are taught in schools and can be used in adulthood and in their careers whether they decide to go into the Armed Forces or have employment in the community.

Rob Weban very proudly explains that in his career, his regiment has supported Cadets into careers as Pilots, Army officer, officers in the Navy, and some are enjoying successful careers in the Police Force.

Joining Forces

Many hands make light work! On Saturday 7th October, Doncaster Reserve Unit, 219 Squadron, Royal Logistics Corps joined forces with City of Doncaster Council, Sea, Army and Air Cadets to carry out a Community Litter Pick around the Balby area of the city.

The event was put together by 219 Squadron who had approached the Council asking for their support in organising. The Council made the arrangements, including providing equipment, risk assessments, staffing and rubbish removal. However, the most important part of this project, was seeing the collaboration between forces, adults and young people, all sharing the main aim of wanting to make their community a cleaner place. Huge well done and thank you to all involved and also, a special thanks to Morrissons in Balby who provided support, including refreshments for the troops!



Doncaster Reserves 219 Transport Squadron, Doncaster Sea, Army and Air Cadets at the litter pick earlier this month



citizens
advice

Doncaster
Borough

Phone: 01302 243057

Website: www.cadoncasterborough.org/

Doncaster Citizens Advice are wanting to gather input from the Doncaster Veteran Community. Your experiences and insights are incredibly valuable to the Citizens Advice as they work to better understand the needs and preferences of veterans in Doncaster.

Doncaster Citizens Advice are doing this through the recruitment of a Veteran Volunteer and through Veteran Focus Groups.

The Focus Groups, which ran throughout October, aimed to create a platform where veterans could openly share their thoughts, suggestions, and concerns regarding the services and support available to them. Citizens Advice want to ensure that their initiatives align closely with the needs of the Armed Forces community.

Citizens Advice help people find a way forward. They provide free confidential and independent advice to help people overcome their problems. They value diversity, champion equality and challenge discrimination and harassment.

Doncaster's Citizens Advice is an independent, local charity and supports people with debt, benefits, immigration, housing and more.

Sarah Robinson is the Armed Forces Lead for Citizens Advice Doncaster. Sarah explains that she has always had respect for the Armed Forces and is thrilled to have this role as it means that she can make changes to ensure that ex-military can access support with confidence.

Sarah has been an adviser for 16 years and is now a Supervisor. As part of her role as Armed Forces Lead, Sarah is intending on getting out and about in the community to make their services more accessible to the military community as she recognises that some people in the community will not come and ask for help.

Her interest in the Military began as a child. Her father completed National Service and often talked about his time in Busan, South Korea. She understood that this was very important to her father and says that his "experiences and military training had never left him".

Citizens Advice Doncaster have signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant and are now members of the Doncaster Armed Forces Covenant Board. Since joining, they are now actively monitoring the amount of military that are accessing their service and what are the main issues that they are presenting with.

Nationally and locally, Citizens Advice are always campaigning and engaging with MPs around the issues that they are facing. This includes inflation, gambling, and energy prices. On behalf of residents, the concerns that Citizens Advice have identified, have been raised in Parliament.

Citizens Advice now have an energy project funded by British Gas to support people who are struggling to pay their bills. They can provide fuel vouchers and support to find the cheapest tariff. There is also a 'Help to Claim Project' for those wishing to claim Universal credit, plus a team of debt specialists and welfare rights advisors who are trained to the level of appealing benefit decisions.

November 2023



Doncaster Remembers

Doncaster is preparing to remember on both Armistice Day and on Remembrance Sunday. Remembrance is our opportunity to remember the service and sacrifice of all those that have defended our freedoms and protected our way of life.

We remember the Armed Forces, and their families, from Britain and the Commonwealth, the vital role played by the emergency services and those who have lost their lives as a result of conflict or terrorism.

On **Armistice Day, Saturday 11th November**, there will be a Civic Remembrance Service and 2 minutes' silence at the Mansion House steps. The silence will be held at 11:00am.

On **Remembrance Sunday, Sunday 12th November**, a Service of Remembrance will be held at 10.35am at The War Memorial on Bennetthorpe. A 2 minutes' silence will then be held at 11am. There will then be a Parade to the Minster of St George with a short service following the Parade.

Every year, the route of the Parade is prepared by the Council, with additional cleansing.

However, this year, City of Doncaster Council Street Scene Chargehand, Kurtis Parkes, featured in the Mental Health article, has made this a very personal project.

Kurtis, together with a team of Veterans that work across the Street Scene Service have specifically asked that they be involved in this work, making sure the Parade route is in the very best possible condition ahead of Remembrance Sunday.

On behalf of the Doncaster Armed Forces Community, a huge thank you to Kurtis and his colleagues.



Special Shout Out

In September, The Mayor, Civic Mayor and Cllr Mark Houlbrook were delighted to be invited to the Lord Lieutenant of South Yorkshire, Professor Dame Hilary Chapman DBE's Annual Awards Ceremony.

At the Ceremony, Doncaster Army Cadet, Staff Sergeant Charley Foster-Tomlinson was named as this year's Lord Lieutenant Army Cadet. Huge well done Charley!



Photo credit - David Harrison

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.



ArmedForcesCovenant@doncaster.gov.uk



01302 735600



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