

Welcome To SITREP EDITION 3

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TOP STORIES

A THANK YOU TO ALL OUR FUNDERS FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN 2023

ARMED FORCES COVENANT TRUST

FRANK BOSTON TRUST

VETERANS FOUNDATION

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

NORTH NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNCIL

AMAZON

WELLINGBOROUGH MASONIC HALL LODGE

AND TO EVERYONE WHO HAS SUPPORTED OUR EVENTS AND MADE DONATIONS

WITH THIS SUPPORT, SINCE APRIL 2023, VCN HAS SUPPORTED INDIVIDUAL BENEFICIARIES WITH A RANGE OF ISSUES INCLUDING HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT, BENEFITS, REFERRALS TO OP COURAGE, WELL BEING SUPPORT THROUGH SOCIAL PRESCRIBING AND REDUCING SOCIAL ISOLATION

VETERANS RENDEZ VOUS POINT (RVP)

Nestled in the North Bedfordshire countryside, just over the border from Northamptonshire, lies the village of Sharnbrook where a small farm is the venue for the Veterans Community Network Rendezvous Point (known as the RVP). This a smallholding where Veterans can come together in a safe, friendly



place to participate in many different activities.

During the finer months produce is grown such as, lettuce, pumpkins, chilies,

cucumbers and tomatoes, to name a few and this year we are building a Memorial Garden with a Memorial bench for those who wish to sit in quiet contemplation. There is also a small orchard where apples, plums and pears grow in abundance so they need harvesting at various times too.



We are currently in the process of building a new Hub which on colder days will serve as a warm place where veterans can play board games, have a game of cards or just get together for a friendly chat. Tea, Coffee and biscuits are always available and if you're lucky....homemade cake.

STANDING WITH GIANTS

'D' Day 6th June 1944 - "For your Tomorrow the Peoples Tribute- Normandy 80"

On Monday 26th February we attended the Standing with Giants event at Stanton Harcourt, Oxford.

The organisation creates large scale art installations of military figures using re-cycled building materials and provide meaningful spaces for people to visit and reflect. Some of our Veterans were able to take part in painting the silhouette's, which stand around 10 feet tall, and will undoubtedly become part of history.

A total of 1,745 silhouettes by 'Standing with Giants' will appear in Spring 2024 on the Normandy Beaches in Vel-sur-Mer, representing the number of British fatalities under British command on 6th June 1944.

The Founder Dan Barton says: *"Our ethos at Standing with Giants is to value life, to understand and appreciate why we have our freedom, and to remember and pay tribute to those who have fallen so we can live the lives we have today. 'Standing with Giants' is a great way of using art to do this".*

Sentiments of one of our Veterans who attended the event: *"I visited Standing with Giants in Oxfordshire and the job they do is absolutely fantastic which is all for the love of those who made the ultimate sacrifice. First of all we watched a video which was very emotional and the making and painting of the figures was just amazing. As a Veteran myself, to be part of that particular part of history was one of the most moving things I've ever done."*

EVENTS AND NEWS

THE LONGEST YARN – THE LONGEST DAY

The Yarn Bombers are a knitting group from Oundle who are currently putting the finishing touches towards a stunning 80 metre long D-Day display of the largest seaborne invasion in history.

They are part of an international team of crocheters and knitters, that was founded in France, who are helping to mark the 80th anniversary of D- Day.

In total 80 different groups from around the world will each be contributing a hand-crafted metre long display which involves ships crossing the channel to the landings on the beach and the Oundle Bombers will be focusing on Pegasus Bridge.

As the largest seaborne invasion in history, D-Day was a pivotal moment in the Second World War and the 'Longest Yarn is a play on words of the 'Longest Day' a quote made by German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel.

Once complete the full display will be exhibited in the Normandy Cathedral at Carentan from June until September 2024.

Before the Oundle Bombers exhibit joins the others in France it will be on display at:

The Hub, Fletton House, Oundle PE8 4JA on Thursday 21st March 10.00 to 15.00.

A piper will be playing "Blue Bonnets over the Border" which was the tune piped by Piper Millin as British Troops pushed forward on that day 6th June 1944.

In addition to this, yarn supplied by Piper Millins' son is that of his Fathers' jumper.

So please come and join VCN as we will have a stand at this wonderful historical event.

FAREWELL PAUL

Paul joined VCN in April 2022 as a Peer Mentor for Buckinghamshire. His post was funded by the Armed Forces Covenant Trust as part of their VPPP Program.

Paul represented VCN and a Veteran for the Journey of Remembrance in November 2022.



During his time with VCN, Paul has supported over 200 Veterans and Family members living across Buckinghamshire. He established the Veterans 'Get Together' at the Rivets Social Club in Aylesbury.



Paul also continued to support our Veterans at the Blue Light Hub in Milton Keynes.



Thank you Paul for all you have done for VCN.

In Memoriam



Francis O'Connell

14/02/43 - 13/12/23

Francis was an RAF veteran. Having joined as a boy entrant he completed his 18 month training and passed out at RAF Hereford in 1961. During his 12 years' service, he was posted to RAF Khormaksar in Aden in April 1963 and in 1964 was awarded the Campaign Service Medal for services in the Radfan mountains, 60 miles North of Aden. Tina met Francis in the Spring of 2021 in her role of 'Elderly Veteran Engagement Lead' for the Veterans Community Network and over the next two and a half years, she visited him almost every week as he had no close family and was very isolated. When Tina first visited him, Francis did not have a working boiler and had to rely on two plug in radiators to heat his house. Tina successfully applied on his behalf for a grant from RAFA to pay to repair his faulty boiler and replace two rusty radiators to ensure he had proper heating over the Winter. She also arranged for volunteers to completely clear his front and back garden which were severely overgrown and to dismantle and remove his decrepit shed. Francis O'Connell passed away on 13th December 2023 aged 80. His funeral was held at Crownhill Crematorium in Milton Keynes on Monday 22nd January 2024. Tina Griffiths and Pat Haslam from VCN both attended his funeral and Tina gave the Eulogy. Thank you for your Service.

USEFUL INFORMATION

VETERAN CARDS

The Ministry of Defence has been working closely with the Office for Veterans' Affairs to develop a new digital service to enable veterans who left the Armed Forces prior to December 2018 to verify their veteran status and receive a Veteran Card in the post.

Veteran Cards have two primary functions: to ensure that veterans can quickly verify their status to access public and charitable sector support if they need it and to provide a recognition of service in the Armed Forces. The service was officially launched at the end of January 2024.

You can apply if you were in the regulars or reserves for the:

- Royal Navy
- Army
- Royal Air Force (RAF)
- Royal Marines

What you'll need

When you apply, you'll be asked for:

- Your service number
- Your National Insurance No.
- The approximate year you started and ended your service - it does not have to be exact
- A recent [digital passport photo](#), showing your head and shoulders

To apply go to www.gov.uk/veteran-card

VETERAN RAIL CARD

Another card that you may be interested in is the Veteran Rail Card.

This gives you a 1/3 off most rail fares including Standard and First Class Anytime, Off-Peak and Advance fares to Veterans across England, Wales and Scotland, whether they are visiting family and friends or simply enjoying a day out.

A 1-year Veterans Railcard costs just £30. If you want to get more for your money, the 3-year Veterans Railcard is great value at £70, saving you £20 on the cost of renewing your 1-year Veterans Railcard for three consecutive years.

You can also nominate a companion to get 1/3 off when travelling with you and up to 4 children travelling with you get 60% off.

If you have served for at least one day in Her/His Majesty's UK Armed Forces (Regular or Reserve) or have been a UK Merchant Mariner who has seen duty on legally defined military operations, you may be eligible.

The Veterans Railcard is available to buy online and by post, and you can choose to have it on your phone (digital) or to have a plastic card posted to you.

To apply go to www.veterans-railcard.co.uk

FIND OUT MORE



www.vcn.org.uk



Veteran Community Network (VCN) Beds, MK, Northants



@VETCOMNETWORK

AND FINALLY.....A LITTLE BIT OF MILITARY BANTER

A COLONEL'S ORDER

A COLONEL ISSUED THE FOLLOWING DIRECTIVE TO HIS EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:

"Tomorrow evening at approximately 2000 hours Halley's Comet will be visible in this area; an event which occurs only every 75 years. Have the men fall out in the battalion area in fatigues, and I will explain this rare phenomenon to them. In case of rain, we will not be able to see anything, so assemble the men in the theatre and I will show them films of it."

EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO COMPANY COMMANDER:

"By order of the Colonel, tomorrow at 2000 hours, Halley's Comet will appear above the battalion area. If it rains, fall the men out in fatigues, then march to the theatre where this rare phenomenon will take place, something which occurs only once every 75 years."

COMPANY COMMANDER TO LIEUTENANT:

"By order of the Colonel be in fatigues at 2000 hours tomorrow evening. The phenomenal Halley's Comet will appear in the theatre. In case of rain in the battalion area, the Colonel will give another order, something which occurs once every 75 years."

LIEUTENANT TO SERGEANT:

"Tomorrow at 2000 hours, the Colonel will appear in the theatre with Halley's comet, something which happens every 75 years. If it rains, the Colonel will order the comet into the battalion area."

SERGEANT TO SQUAD:

"When it rains tomorrow at 2000 hours, the phenomenal 75-year-old General Halley, accompanied by the Colonel, will drive his comet through the battalion area theatre in fatigues."

SEE YOU NEXT TIME

UPCOMING EVENTS**ARMED FORCES DAY
SHOW YOUR SUPPORT**

Armed Forces Day is a chance to show your support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community.

The Armed Forces Day Celebrations starts on Monday 24th June 2024 with flag raising events across the UK.

Wednesday 26th June 2024 celebrates our Reservists and Armed Forces Day is on Saturday 29th June 2024.

To find out whats on near you, go to <https://www.armedforcesday.org.uk/>

VCN will be organising our own Armed Forces Day event, keep an eye on our Facebook page for the details.

TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

Events	Day	Time	Location
Tea and Banter	Every Tuesday with the exception of the 3rd Tuesday	14:30 - 16:30	Online via Zoom https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81761082058
Bedford Veterans Brunch Club	First Saturday of the month	10:30 - 12:00	North End Social Club, 60 Roff Avenue, Bedford, MK41 7TW
VCN Bedford Drop-in	Third Tuesday of the month	14:00 - 15:30	North End Social Club, 60 Roff Avenue, Bedford, MK41 7TW
Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Club	Second Sunday of the month	09:30 - 12:30	RAFA Branch Club 93, Ashburnham Road, Bedford, MK40 1EA
Veterans Get Together	Second Monday of the month	11:00 - 13:00	Rivets Sports and Social Club, Whitehead Way, Aylesbury, HP21 8AD
Veterans Fire Station Walk-in	First Thursday of the month	10:00 - 12:00	West Ashlands Fire Station Blue Light Hub, 3 Thornbury, West Ashland, MK6 4BB
Wellingborough Hub	Every fourth Wednesday	13:00 - 14:30	The Masonic Hall, 1 Mill Road, Wellingborough NN8 1PE
Wellingborough Breakfast Club	Third Saturday of the month	09:30 - 11:30	Ock n Dough, 14-16 Farm Rd, Wellingborough, NN8 4UF



The Rendezvous Point

RVP is a safe space for Veterans to come together and partake in a range of activities or to just relax with a cuppa and enjoy the peaceful surroundings. The site is based at The Cock and Pullet Ltd, Sharnbrook, Bedford, MK44 1LS (entrance near the railway bridge. Look for the RVP sign.)

Opening days

Sundays 10:00-15:00hrs
Tuesdays 10:00-15:00hrs (Ladies Day)
Thursdays 10:00-15:00hrs

About us

The aim of VCN is to support Veterans, Reservists and their families in accessing the treatment and support services to help cope, adjust and manage situations such as mental health, housing, benefits and social isolation. We do this through our network of trained Veteran Peer Mentors and a range of Social Activities.

Find out more



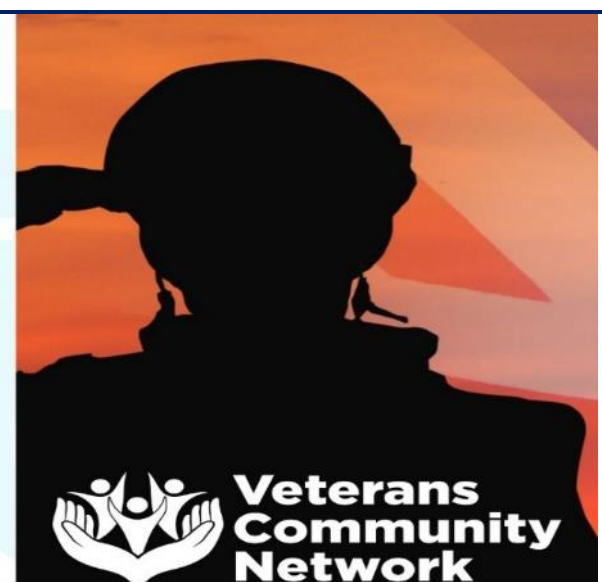
www.vcn.org.uk



Veteran Community Network (VCN) Beds, MK, Northants



@VETSCOMNETWORK



Supporting Veterans, Reservists and their families across Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Milton Keynes and Buckinghamshire



EMPLOYER RECOGNITION SCHEME

SILVER AWARD 2021
Proudly serving those who serve.

