

Veterans Awareness events planned for summer 2006



MOD

Minister approves new focus for War Pensions Committees

Minister for Veterans Don Touhig has recently agreed important changes to the way in which War Pensions Committees (WPCs) carry out their statutory functions. The new arrangements are designed to enhance ways in which committees support and advise Ministers and Veterans Agency.

In future, the 13 WPC Chairs will constitute a sub-committee of the Minister's Central Advisory Committee on War Pensions (CAC). Meeting twice a year in their new role, they will be able to table agenda items for discussion by the CAC and will submit a formal report on their activities to each CAC meeting. Mr Touhig has agreed that the membership of the CAC will include a minimum of four WPC Chairs.

Additionally, the WPC's role in monitoring and supporting the work of Veterans Agency will be consolidated by the Chair of the WPC sub-committee becoming an ex-officio member of the Agency's Management Board.

At the first meeting of the WPC Chairs in their new role, Air Commodore Jack Hargreaves was elected as Chair of the CAC sub-committee.

Commenting on the new arrangements Jack said, "The clear links established with the CAC and closer relationship with the Agency provides an excellent opportunity for the War Pensions Committees to strengthen their capacity to represent the interests of veterans."

For further information, see page 2.

Why you are getting Veterans WORLD

This newsletter is distributed to organisations that assist veterans in a professional capacity. Its aim is to raise awareness of the help and advice available and to disseminate good practice.

A veteran is someone who has served in HM Armed Forces. There are estimated to be over five million in the UK and together with their families, they comprise the 13 million strong veterans community.

All organisations in receipt of this newsletter will have veterans among their client base, which is why it is important that you and your colleagues are aware of veterans issues and what others are doing to make their life better.

National Standards on parade



MOD

Discussions are currently taking place between the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Confederation of British Service and Ex-Service Organisations and other bodies to formulate Veterans Awareness activities next year.

It seemed a fitting tribute to the determination and stoicism displayed by those living through the devastating events of WWII, that visitors to events commemorating Veterans Awareness Week (4 – 10 July 2005) were not deterred from paying their respects by the terrorist attacks in London.

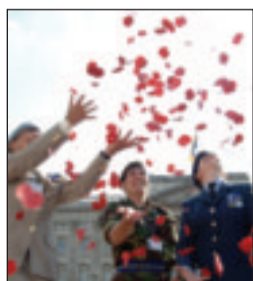
Rather than stay away, thousands flocked to the displays in St James' Park, which included the WWII Living Museum, and to The Mall during National Commemoration Day on Sunday, 10 July.

Veterans Awareness Week was a national event and many other important commemorations were held up and down the country. With the help of the Big Lottery Fund, which contributed almost £50 million, many groups and organisations hosted their own regional and local events, including travelling exhibitions, commemorative trips for young people, websites, digitisation projects, outreach activities and museum/school projects.

Such was the public's response that the MOD are to build on the progress made during 2005 by planning further annual Veterans Awareness events. Although not likely to be on the scale of this year's WWII commemorations, they will, hopefully, be just as memorable.

"This announcement is good for all involved in serving our veterans, says Alan Burnham, CEO, Veterans Agency. "Helping raise the public profile of the ex-Service community can only lead to an improvement in perception and status for all who have served their country so well over the past five decades."

Future events may combine some recurring elements, such as educational activities with specific annual themes. Plans will be announced as soon as possible.



MOD

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Update on pensions increase

Earlier this year, Minister for Veterans announced an increase to the supplementary pension paid to the widows and widowers of Service personnel who died or left Service before 31st March, 1973. This increase is over and above the normal inflation increase and amounts to £104.00 per year or £2.00 per week.

Legislation came into force in July 2005 with payments backdated to April 2005.

The increase was included in pension payments from August 2005 onwards but did not include arrears back to 6 April. A dedicated team within Veterans Agency has been established to deal with this. Their work is scheduled for completion by 31 March, 2006. The team are working through cases in alphabetical order to clear the arrears.

Memorial unveiled

18 September, 2005 marked the 65th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. As part of the commemorations, HRH the Prince of Wales unveiled a memorial depicting the story of WWII heroism. In attendance at the unveiling were 70 of the few surviving pilots and their families.

The memorial, two bronze friezes depicting battle scenes designed by sculptor Paul Day, pays tribute to those who fought in the air and who gave support on the ground during the battle which raged between 10 July to 31 October 1940. The battle is regarded as the turning point in WWII.



The clay sculpture before being cast in bronze

Military field hospital open day for NHS medics

The Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) hosted a two-day conference in September for National Health Service (NHS) staff. Also attending were Minister for Veterans Don Touhig and NHS Chief Executive, Sir Nigel Crisp.

The aim of the conference was to highlight the 'real life' role that medical reservists play in the provision of high quality medical care to Service personnel in the field. As part of raising awareness, a fully equipped 25-bed military field hospital was set up the grounds of RCDM at Selly Oak Hospital, Birmingham. Large enough to fill a cricket pitch, the field hospital was staffed by medical reservists from 202 Field Hospital (Volunteers) and personnel from RCDM.

Book deal

Victoria Cross hero Private Johnson Beharry has signed a £million pound book deal for his autobiography *Barefoot Soldier*, to be published next year.

Beharry won the VC for twice saving comrades under fire. He is the first living British recipient of the VC for 40 years.

Veterans' group disbands

The Commando Association has held its final parade in Portsmouth. The Association has supported soldiers for the past 60 years. However, due to falling numbers, it has disbanded and stood down.

The commando force was created by Winston Churchill in 1940 and its members formed the Parachute Regiment, the Special Air Service (SAS) and Special Boat Service (SBS).

Start of a letters page?

The first issue of *Veterans WORLD* prompted a letter from Mrs Joyce Cooper, an 86 year old veteran who is a volunteer at her local Citizens Advice Bureau and has been for the past 45 years.

"I was delighted to read your comments on how Citizens Advice is improving its support to veterans. We certainly do all we can to help with problems that arise with young and old veterans, and keep an excellent list of ex-Service charities whose help proves invaluable when needed. I look forward to the next newsletter."

If you have something to say or want to see an a topic explored in future editions, write to The Editor or call 01253 338816.

Veterans WORLD contact details

This newsletter is published quarterly by Veterans Agency, an Executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

The Agency is the single point of contact within the MOD for providing information and advice on issues of concern to veterans and their families. It is responsible for the assessment, administration and payment of war and war widow(er)s' pensions and supplementary allowances, and the new Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. It manages the national free veterans Helpline, the War Pensioners' Welfare Service (the face-to-face advice arm of Veterans Agency based in 25 offices throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland) and Ilford Park Polish Home, a residential care and nursing facility established under the 1947 Polish Resettlement Act.

Outline guidance on claiming a war pension and war widow(er) pension can regularly be found on the inside back page.

For further copies of the newsletter or to make a contribution, contact The Editor. Veterans WORLD, Veterans Agency, Room 6108, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP.

Tel: 01253 338816 Fax: 01253 332219 Helpline: 0800 169 2277

Email: help@veteransagency.gsi.gov.uk Web: www.veteransagency.mod.uk

Acronyms used throughout:

VA – Veterans Agency, WPWS – War Pensioners' Welfare Service, AFCS – Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, AFPAA – Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency, MOD - Ministry of Defence, RBL – The Royal British Legion, SSAFA Forces Help – Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help, BLESMA – British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association.

Veterans Agency

An Executive Agency of the Ministry of Defence



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

.....continued from front page

War Pensions Committees (WPCs) fulfil four main functions:

- act as a medium for local consultation by Ministers, Veterans Agency and the rest of the Ministry of Defence, on issues affecting war pensioners and war widows;
- raise awareness of the War Pensions Scheme and the services of the War Pensioners' Welfare Service (WPWS) in their areas;
- support and monitor the work of the WPWS in their areas; and
- assist individual war pensioners and war widows with any problems or complaints they have regarding war pensions or act on their behalf when appropriate.

There are 13 WPCs, each covering a geographical area of the UK. Chairs and members are appointed by the Secretary of State for Defence.

Members are drawn from across the full range of the veterans community, chosen for their specialist knowledge of disablement and ex-Service issues, and their links with ex-Service organisations.

- Are you interested in becoming a WPC member?
- Would you like to know who sits on your local WPC?
- Would you like the WPC to help you with any issues relating to war pensions?

If so, contact the Veterans Helpline on 0800 169 2277. Alternatively, visit www.veteransagency.mod.uk

State pensioners' guide 2005 available now

Packed full of helpful advice – from details on entitlements available across Government for people aged 60 or over, to advice on leisure and health – the guide is an established popular reference tool for pensioners.

Updated annually, the 2005 edition also covers State Pension Deferral, Age Related Payments and information on how people born before 2 September, 1929 can obtain a free British passport.

The guide is available in a number of reader friendly formats; on-line braille, audio and Welsh versions.

Pensioners and advisors can order copies by calling freephone 0845 606 5065 or downloading via www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/leaflets



New DVD on veterans launched

Veterans Agency has produced a DVD entitled *Reaching Out to Veterans - A partnership on behalf of the Communications Action Team - a group comprising representatives from ex-Service organisations and Government, which seeks to raise awareness of the help available to veterans, from advice and guidance to practical support such as finding accommodation. Falklands hero Simon Weston is the main presenter.*

The DVD features a series of case studies to illustrate how individual veterans have been helped to get their lives 'back on track' when facing seemingly intractable problems, whether coping with disability or financial difficulties. It also emphasises the importance of multi-agency solutions and highlights the partnership between ex-Service organisations and the Government.

To help extend the message, the DVD will be distributed free to a number of public outlets such as GP surgeries, hospitals and Citizens Advice Bureaux.

To obtain a copy, call 0800 169 2277 or write to: Reaching Out to Veterans DVD, Veterans Services Team, Room 6108, Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP.



Liverpool conference planned

Already, three national conferences for frontline workers who deal directly with veterans issues have been held. The last, held in Wales on the 14 July, 2005 proved to be a valuable networking opportunity for the ex-Service and charitable sectors, as well as increasing the awareness of the support available to vulnerable veterans.

Following hard on the heels of similar conferences in London and Edinburgh, the conference explored the help and advice available throughout Wales.

Key speakers included Edwina Hart, Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration with responsibility for Veterans' Issues in Wales, representatives from the Welsh Assembly and Alan Burnham, CEO, Veterans Agency.

Other speakers included representatives from The Royal British Legion (RBL), Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help (SSAFA Forces Help), British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association (BLESMA), Regular Forces Employment Association and the

Joint Service Housing Advice Office.

Two veterans also gave personal accounts of how they were helped by a multi-agency approach involving Veterans Agency, RBL and SSAFA Forces Help.

A wide range of delegates attended from ex-Service organisations, welfare groups, Homeless Link, The Pensions Service, Mobility Bureau and many others. Feedback showed that the conference was informative and useful. In particular, client case studies were well received.

Building on this success, Veterans Agency, in conjunction with the Ministry of Defence's Veterans Policy Unit, is planning the first in a series of regional conferences. Liverpool is the first city venue to be earmarked with the event provisionally scheduled for 23 November.

If you would like to attend this free conference (aimed at organisations that give advice to the general public) or contribute a presentation - please contact Tracy Shepherd on 01253 333659 or email: tracy.shepherd1@veteransagency.gsi.gov.uk

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

What's going on behind the headlines



If you believe all you read in the media then active Service today results in high levels of mental symptoms and illness. Of course, evidence has never stood in the way of a good story and the evidence proves quite clearly that this is NOT the case! From the start of operations in Iraq to the end of 2004, only about 1% of deployed Servicemen and women have received or are receiving treatment for mental symptoms and illness.

Indeed, there are many measures in place in Service to prevent Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other disabling disorders linked to psychological trauma, including pre- and post-deployment briefings and other support.

In 2003, a class action was brought against the Ministry of Defence (MOD) by veterans suffering from PTSD. The veterans alleged not that they had become ill but that HM Armed Forces had failed to support, train and prevent them from developing psychological injury, and then to detect it and provide appropriate treatment. The veterans had served during the period 1979-94, the majority in Northern Ireland, the Falklands or the Gulf. The MOD won the action on almost all the generic issues.

Following on from the PTSD action and to ensure a similar outcome in any future actions, two important mental health projects were set up by the MOD.

The first, an Overarching Review of Operational Stress Management, is staffed by representatives from the single Services and civilian staff (including medical and administrative). The group has developed a tri-Service policy and is now finalising the implementation, training and communications strategies.

Sponsorship by senior officers and training at different stages of a Service career are crucial to ensure success.

The second project is the Mental Well Being Steering Group which is considering policy and practice on suicide, deliberate self-harm and stress in the workplace, including the application

of new Health and Safety Executive stress management standards.

The UK National Institute of Clinical Excellence Guidelines on PTSD were published on 25 March, 2005. They are available at www.nice.org.uk. Guidance is based on published peer-reviewed evidence wherever possible. The MOD has contributed to the guidelines which contain user and family/carer perspectives, including some with a military background. The key general message is that PTSD and other stress related psychological injuries can arise from a range of stressors, and can be treated.

Help for serving personnel

Where Service personnel do become ill they are encouraged to seek

appropriate treatment through the regional Community Mental Health (DCMH) teams, usually co-located with primary care facilities. They are staffed by uniformed consultant psychiatrists, community psychiatric nurses and civilian clinical psychologists. Where in-patient treatment is required, it is provided by the private sector.

Help for veterans

Since 1948 mental health care for veterans has been the responsibility of the National Health Service (NHS). War pensioners are entitled to priority NHS treatment for accepted disorders with priority decided by the clinician in charge and dependent on clinical need.

Mental health problems are often associated with unemployment, homelessness, poor social interaction and other indices of social exclusion.

Many veterans with mental symptoms and illness fail to seek medical help because of stigma and actual or perceived discrimination. A programme to tackle stigma has, however, now been launched by the National Institute for Mental Health England. The MOD is represented on its Oversight Panel.

Some veterans may have left Service having failed to seek help for their problems, others may become ill after leaving. Although problems may not always be due to Service there is often a reluctance by veterans to consult civilian health professionals because of their limited knowledge of military matters.

However, the Royal Colleges, Department of Health and devolved administrations, and the MOD are all actively working together to address such issues. First, by ensuring Service leavers are informed about how to access services in civilian life and what to expect from them. As a result, a new leaflet/website called *Looking After Yourself* is soon to be published.

Second and concurrent with the above work, are activities to help increase civilian health professionals' awareness of life in HM Armed Forces.

What then, is the overall message?

Disabling psychological symptoms and illness can and do occur in HM Armed Forces and veterans' populations. However, they are not common and where they do occur, prompt access and treatment is the aim. In most cases, a cure is a very real and achievable goal.

A copy of the *Looking after Yourself* leaflet will be made available shortly on the Veterans Agency website: www.veteransagency.mod.uk

Help for homeless veterans

At a meeting in September, the Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) Veterans Policy Unit reached an agreement with the ex-Service Action Group on Homelessness (ESAG) which will fast-track the assistance it provides homeless veterans.

ESAG was established ten years ago in response to a report which highlighted the fact that one in four homeless people were veterans.

Comprising representatives from ex-Service welfare organisations such as The Royal British Legion, Combat Stress and the Army Benevolent Fund, ESAG's purpose is to identify the scale and nature of ex-Service homelessness and devise and support initiatives that help to alleviate the problem.

Prior to September's meeting, many homeless veterans arrived on ESAG's

doorstep seeking help but lacking any proof of having served in HM Armed Forces. This often resulted in time-consuming correspondence between ESAG and the MOD to establish Service records. Now, as a result of the agreement, ESAG can telephone the Veterans Advice Team (part of Veterans Agency, see page 8) for quick confirmation. This new initiative will greatly speed up the delivery of ESAG services.

Rick Brunwin, Chair of ESAG has said, "The fast-track access to Service records set up by Veterans Agency for veterans charities is one of the many simple but effective ideas that has emerged as a result of our joint working with the MOD."

"Those of us working with homeless veterans, many of whom are rootless and transient, often have only a small

'window' of opportunity in which to capture and secure for them the solutions that will put an end to their homeless ways.

"Having fast-track access to their service records ensures that veteran's charities can therefore respond quickly and effectively to secure the right resources at the moment they are most needed."

Veterans Agency also helps the homeless direct. It recently received a call via the Helpline (0800 169 2277) from a despairing, penniless and homeless veteran in a London telephone box. He was promptly put in touch with the Ex-Service Fellowship Centre, a London-based organisation that was able to provide him with immediate accommodation and sustenance.



Homeless in London

Stuart Griffiths

Focus on National Servicemen



Imperial War Museum

National Servicemen are veteransbut many don't believe it, especially those stationed within the UK and not overseas.

Approximately 2.2 million National Servicemen were conscripted into HM Armed Forces between August 1945 and August 1963. Now in their early sixties and over (the youngest is 63 years old) they are all veterans, and all entitled to ex-Service support.

Recently, the media has drawn attention to the National Service years with a number of reality programmes. Whilst there has been criticism that their portrayal of conscript life has not been accurate, for a sizeable proportion of the population - 'the called up' throughout the late forties, fifties and early sixties - the broadcasts would have brought back memories of military life.

Television broadcasts often included interviews with National Servicemen recounting their memories. Whether good or bad it seems none can forget what they now look back on as a life enhancing experience.

Now, as senior citizens many do not realise that they are entitled to support from ex-Service organisations and Government.

It is important to inform the public and professional groups who seek to serve veterans, that National Servicemen are as much part of the veterans community and can receive the same benefits as career Service personnel.

Indeed, National Servicemen could be looked upon as the first of the post '45 professional forces. Following hard on the heels of the citizen armies of WWII - they were generally better trained and, contrary to common perception, were on the whole placed in units which

made the most of their abilities.

Anecdotal evidence seems to suggest that being aware and proud of their status as a veteran is not an issue with either the WWII generation or those who have served more recently. Younger ex-Servicemen and women especially are more aware of their rights and are vocal in claiming entitlement.

However, whether due to the nature of conscription or a relatively short Service life (approximately two to two and a half years with the remainder of the five and half years conscription being served in the Territorials), many National Servicemen seem oblivious to the fact that advice and financial support is readily available to them.

Raising awareness of both their status and right of access to this support is a major challenge for both the ex-Service community and Government but one that is continually being addressed.

Why is this important?

First, all veterans deserve the respect paid to them through remembrance and commemoration.

There is no doubt that their dedication and bravery contributed to the freedoms we all enjoy today. Without their sacrifice, life today could all be so different. It should not be forgotten that as many as 13,000 died whilst serving their country between August '45 and August '63 - the National Service years.

Second, National Servicemen could bolster falling memberships of ex-Service organisations and potentially, could

increase the number of case and field workers on the ground thus securing the long-term viability of existing welfare provision.

Your views are sought

Have you ideas on how best to raise awareness among National Servicemen, especially those who didn't go outside of the UK during their enlistment?

If so, *Veterans WORLD* would be grateful for your suggestions. A new discussion forum is being contemplated on-line at the Veterans Agency website and your contributions could well be the start of an exciting new communication platform. In the first place, write or email your comments to The Editor (contact details, page 2). Depending on the feedback, we'll publish them on your behalf in what could be the first discussion strand.



Imperial War Museum

What we did and where we went

by Alan Tizzard, Chairman, National Service Veterans Alliance (NSVA).



Alan Tizzard

Post-war National Servicemen comprised a large proportion of the nation's Armed Forces from the end of WWII up to May 1963. It was a time of withdrawal from empire and increasing commitment to Europe. It was also a time of cultural and political change that provided the building blocks for the modern Britain we know today. Yet through all those long years, young men from all corners of the country were called upon to put their lives on hold, put on a uniform and be shipped out to the cold north German plain or to exotic far distant colonies too few even knew existed.

The British Army of the Rhine (BAOR) took 70,000 troops to guard West Europe's northern flank against Soviet threat in the Cold War of the 50s. And conscripts were there in force.

Other areas where National Servicemen served included:

Abyssinia; Eritrea; Somaliland; Sudan; Indo China; Japan; India; Pakistan; Egypt; Syria; Cyprus; Kenya; Ghana; Palestine; Aden; Burma; Ceylon (Sri Lanka); Malaya; North Borneo; Singapore and the Caribbean where British soldiers were committed to areas of potential or actual conflict.

National Servicemen were also present at the atomic tests on Christmas Island.

From that long list, which is far from exhaustive, a number of conflicts are indelibly linked to National Service.

Korea is often described as the National Service War because of its high proportion of conscripted men involved in fighting. Action against the Mau-Mau in Kenya during 1952-55 and the guerrilla war in the jungles of Malaya also tested conscript stoicism and military skills to the limit. It is a testimony to all that served that military records find 'they were not lacking.'

Conscripts were not just to be found in the lowest ranks. Few realise that some RAF

Famous National Servicemen

We haven't the space to list every National Serviceman who has made a mark on the country or indeed the world, whether in commerce, entertainment, sport or politics but here are a few.

- Michael Aspel
- Kenneth (Lord) Baker
- Alan Bennett
- Brian Blessed
- Sir Matt Busby
- Sir Michael Caine
- Dr. George Carey
- Sir Bobby Charlton
- Chris Chataway

- Henry Cooper
- Ronnie Corbett
- John Edrich
- Duncan Edwards
- Michael Heseltine
- Bruce Hokin
- Derek Jameson
- Bob Monkhouse
- Peter O'Toole

- Doug Padgett
- John Peel
- Oliver Reed
- Ken Scotland
- Alan Sillitoe
- Leslie Thomas, author of *The Virgin Soldiers*
- Tom Hickman, author of *The Call Up*

Do you know of others? Call 01253 332463 and we'll add them to the list!



MOD

emen

National Servicemen were also trained as fighter pilots.

Naturally, great importance is placed on those killed in action. Of all active Service casualties from the close of WWII to the first Gulf War, 12% were National Servicemen conscripted between August '45 and May '63.

During those National Service years, conscripts made up roughly 50% of the Armed Forces: 72% soldiers; 26% airmen; and 2% sailors. In some actions, 75% of the personnel involved were conscripts.

So, who now represents this shared common experience? Who now fights for recognition and represents the interests of all those once young men?

One of the bodies that represents this group is the National Service Veterans Alliance (NSVA) 1945 - 1963 which was inaugurated in 1996. Its members are spread across the country and not unnaturally, can also be found in large numbers in Australia, Canada and the USA.

NSVA is recognised by the Ministry of Defence, The Royal British Legion and is a member of The Confederation of British Service & Ex-Service Organisations. NSVA is an active contributor to the annual Veterans Plenary (chaired by the Minister for Veterans) where ex-Service organisations are updated on policy issues relating to veterans' concerns.

In March 2003, NSVA was awarded its own heraldic badge that has enabled it to establish both a National Standard and branch standards.

The media constantly turn to the NSVA for advice and assistance. Authors also seek help, one of the most recent being Tom Hickman for his last published book, *The Call Up*.

NSVA provides practical advice to its members and lobbies on their behalf. It actively supports the establishment of National Service exhibits within museums and other locations, fosters re-unions and campaigns for memorials to be erected. On the latter point, the new Services Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum will recognise all who have died in the Service of their country be it on exercise, manoeuvres, training or through illness. A great many are National Servicemen.

For more information on the work of NSVA, call 0208 8598378 or email alantizzard@nsva.fsnet.co.uk

(Editor - future editions of *Veterans WORLD* will carry overviews of other ex-Service organisations).



Alan Tizzard

Alan in his National Service years

Prototype nuclear powered Royal Navy submarine HMS Dreadnaught. S10



Accessing Service records

People seek Service records for a variety of reasons, some official such as for medical issues and some in connection with the growing interest in family history. Whatever the reason, obtaining records can be a surprisingly straightforward process if they are your own. The process is slightly more complicated (but not much) if you are seeking those of others. Outlined below are the steps you need to take.

Seeking your own records

To obtain your own Service records you must complete a Subject Access Request (SAR) Form which can be obtained from either the Ministry of Defence (MOD) or Veterans Agency websites, the latter (www.veteransagency.mod.uk) being the easier to access as *Service Records* is highlighted on the Home Page.

After completing the form simply post it off, accompanied by proof of identity (a photocopy of your passport, driving licence or a recent utility bill will suffice) to the relevant Service address below:

Royal Navy (inc. Royal Marines)
DPS(N)2
Building 1/152
PP65
Victory View
HMNB Portsmouth
PO1 3LS.
Tel: 02392 727531/723114/726063

Army
Army Personnel Centre
Disclosure 2
Mail Point 515
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street
Glasgow G2 8EX.
Tel: 0141 224 2392

Royal Air Force
PMA IM 1B RAF
Room 5
Building 248A
RAF Personnel Management Agency
RAF Innsworth
Gloucester GL3 1EZ.
Tel: 01452 712612 ext. 7622

If you do not have access to a computer linked to the internet, then simply write or call the relevant office for the SAR form.

However, there are a number of caveats.

Royal Navy: Prior to 1972 all personnel in the RN were given their Service records on discharge so the only information held for

Service prior to 1972 are salary details (kept for pension purposes).

Army: the address left should only be used for those who served after 1920.

Royal Air Force: the address left should be used if you served after 1922.

For both the army and RAF, if Service was before 1920, you must apply to The National Archives (known formerly as the Public Record Office). Write to them at Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DU, call 0208 876 3444 or visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

For those who served in non UK and Commonwealth Armed Forces

Advice should be sought from the Governments of countries that gained independence. However, the records of certain small groups of Service personnel are retained in the UK, namely:

Poles and Czechs who served in any of HM Armed Forces during WWII and after;

Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders and South Africans who served alongside the RAF in WWII; and

British Officers who served in the Indian Army, from 1890 to 1947.

Space does not allow us to print all the individual addresses where the records are kept but all contact details are available via the veterans Helpline (0800 169 2277) or Veterans Agency website.

Clearly, the more details provided such as Service number, rank, full name date of birth and when and where served, will avoid delay and help process your application that much faster.

Seeking the record of a family member or of others

Submit the SAR form to the aforementioned addresses for former Navy and RAF, for Army personnel use the following address. Include a letter of consent from the subject of the record and his/her proof of identity (see left).

If the person whose record you are seeking is deceased then you must include a letter of consent from his/her widow/widower or next-of-kin, again with their proof of identity.

If you are the widow/widower or

next-of-kin applying you should provide proof of death and your relationship.

Army Personnel Centre
Historical Disclosures
Mail Point 400
Kentigern House
65 Brown Street
Glasgow G2 8EX.

Seeking Service records in the public domain

The following records have been transferred to The National Archives:

- Royal Navy officers who enlisted prior to 1914;
- Royal Navy ratings who enlisted prior to 1924 and WWI records for Women's Royal Naval Service;
- Royal Marine officers and other ranks who enlisted before 1926;
- Army officers and other ranks who enlisted prior to 1920;
- Royal Air Force officers who served prior to 1922; and
- Royal Air Force airmen who served prior to 1924.

Whilst the archives will not carry out a search on your behalf, you are most welcome to visit them at Kew or to hire a researcher to undertake a search.

Is there a cost?

Service records are usually provided at no cost. However, a small charge is made if the reason for your application is to support a genealogical/family tree interest.

Historical records information

The United Kingdom has a long and glorious military past and its records are many and varied.

Most county and borough record offices have military collections as do, of course, the many regimental and national museums. A good start may be made via the Veterans Agency website with its links to principal collections.

Another option is to contact The National Archives for details of record offices in the UK, Isle of Man, Channel Islands and some overseas facilities that hold British records. A contact list entitled ARCHON can be found on their website. Another good and complementary website is www.familyrecords.gov.uk

New compensation scheme for radiation linked diseases

For a very small number of veterans who think they may be suffering from radiation linked illness, the new scheme promises a fast-track to compensation.

There has been concern for some time about the difficulty in taking radiation linked diseases cases to Court and the subsequent distress caused to claimants, the length of time such actions take and the risk of attending costs.

A Court will normally assess a case on the balance of probability - effectively, a claimant needs to show that there is at least a 51% chance that their illness was caused by radiation exposure.

However, the Compensation Scheme for Radiation-linked Diseases has been designed to be faster, less costly, less traumatic and adopts a less vigorous test than that applied by the Courts.

Compensation will be paid on the basis of a 20% probability that the illness was caused by occupational radiation exposure.

The nuclear industry's scheme is a joint initiative which the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and its trades unions are participants. It is managed on a day-to-day basis by an independent executive secretary on behalf of MOD, AWE plc, DML, Babcock Rosyth, Babcock Naval

Services, BNFL, UKAEA, British Energy Generation and British Energy Generation (UK).

Claimants must be an employee or ex-employee of any one of the above organisations or a dependant in the case of a deceased employee. A 'radiation dose record' must exist for the individual and they must have contracted or died from a disease covered by the Scheme. This includes most (but not all) forms of cancer as well as cataracts.

The purpose of the scheme is to identify cases where there is a 'reasonable probability' that the illness has been caused by occupational radiation exposure from those cases where there is a 'low probability.'

All claimants are assessed according to criteria which apply to all employers within the scheme, including the MOD. Cases are determined by an expert panel which is appointed by scheme employers and trades unions.

A case assessment report is produced, agreed with the employer(s) and forwarded (via a trade union) to claimants for comment. If the causation probability

is below 20%, the case will not be considered for payment. However, if the causation probability lies between 15 - 20%, the trade union can request a further review. Claimants with a causation probability between 20-30% receive a quarter payment, between 30-40% a half payment, between 40-50% a three-quarter payment and over 50%, a full payment.

It is an essential feature of the scheme that cases are never closed. If further evidence becomes available, such as changes to a claimant's dose history or advances in scientific or medical knowledge, cases can always be reassessed.

Claims for compensation can be made through a trade union or direct to: Executive Secretary, Compensation Scheme for Radiation Linked Diseases, British Nuclear Fuels plc, 1100 Daresbury Park, Warrington, Cheshire WA4 4GB. Tel: 01925 832706.

Web: www.csrlid.co.uk



The Burma Star Association

The first in a regular feature on ex-Service organisations.

The Burma Star Association was established on 26 February, 1951 with 2000 members. Its aim is to relieve need, hardship or distress among men and women who served in HM and Allied Forces or the Nursing Services in the Burma Campaign of 1941-45. It also supports others entitled to the Burma Star or Pacific Star with Burma Clasp and their widows, widowers and dependants. Each branch has its own welfare officer to whom veterans can turn for help and advice on a whole range of issues, including war pension matters.

The Burma Campaign was one of the longest fought by the British in WWII. The war in the Far East started in December 1941, simultaneously with the bombing of Pearl Harbour and ended when the Japanese surrendered on 15 August, 1945 now known as VJ Day. The campaign was unique: from the conditions the men fought in (jungle, mountains and the desert-like Burmese plain); how they fought (often face-to-face); the use of landing craft and



gliders; to the evacuation of casualties. Of particular importance is the bitterly fought battle of Kohima, now considered the turning point in the war against Japan.

For further information, contact:
The Burma Star Association
4 Lower Belgrave Street
London
SW1W 0LA
Tel: 0207 823 4273
Fax: 0207 730 7882
Web: www.burmastar.org.uk

An official history of Kohima is available at www.veteransagency.mod.uk

Burma Star Medal



The medal is awarded for Service (six months qualifying Service) in the Burma Campaign between 11 December, 1941 and 2 September, 1945 (inclusive).

Royal and Merchant Navy personnel qualified through Service in an area restricted to the Bay of Bengal.

Army personnel qualified through Service in any part of Burma between 11 December, 1941 and 2 September, 1945, or in Bengal and Assam, East of the River Brahmaputra, between 1 May,

1942 to 2 September, 1945 or in China and Malaya between 16 February, 1942 and 2 September, 1945.

RAF aircrew have to have made one operational sortie to be entitled, while ground crew must meet the same criteria.

If a Serviceman or Mariner qualified for both the 'Burma' and 'Pacific' stars, they would be awarded the first 'earned' star and supplied with a clasp or rosette on ribbon-alone for the other.

As ever, a number of caveats apply and for more information, contact: Ministry of Defence Medal Office, Armed Forces Personnel Administration Agency, Building 250, RAF Innsworth, Gloucester GL3 1HW. Tel: 01452 712612 Ext 8149/8200

New memorial for Far East POWs opens

The 15 August marks VJ Day (Victory over Japan) and the end of WWII. This year, as the 60th anniversary, it was commemorated by the opening of the new Far East Prisoners of War Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum, Alrewas, Staffordshire.

The memorial building has been created as a lasting tribute to all those involved in the Far Eastern campaign and reflects the tragedy that befell the POWs who were captured by the Japanese. The building is the result of a campaign led by the Children and Families of the Far East Prisoners of War (COFEPOW).

£450,000 has been raised over a period of three and a half years (exactly the length of time that most POWs were held captive) and is largely the result of the public responding to hundreds of appeal letters, with matching funding from the Millennium Commission.

After a Service of Thanksgiving and Remembrance, the building was officially opened by Air Marshall Sir John Baird, Surgeon Vice Admiral Ian Jenkins and Lt Col. Christopher George Stallard, in front of an estimated 4,500 audience.

75 sprays of white orchids were flown over from Singapore especially for the opening and were later given to those war widows who attended the event.

The day concluded with a grand parade at 3.00pm involving former POWs, veterans, standard bearers, families and friends.



The FEPOW Memorial building

The Far East Prisoners of War organisation has now disbanded and has 'handed over' the continuation of its work to the children and grandchildren, (COFEPOW) of veterans.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (see right) manages the 'Archive of Commemorations' details of which have been on their website since 1998.

The Commission lists 1,694,883 commemorations. Their Debt of Honour website (www.cwgc.org) averages 250,000 hits a month.

The National Arboretum is open from 10 am – 5 pm. For more information call 01283 792333 or visit www.memorialtreesuk.org.uk

The FEPOW memorial building is open 10.00 – 4.30 pm. For further information about COFEPOW visit www.cofepow.org.uk

Commonwealth War Graves Commission

In 1915, Fabian Ware in command of a Red Cross Unit, landed in France. He was struck by the appalling loss of life and by the lack of any organisation to mark and record the graves of fallen soldiers. He began campaigning to persuade the War Office of the importance of commemorating the brave sacrifice of men and women from all over the British Empire.

As early as 1916, Ware was requesting help from distinguished horticulturalists at Kew and from the greatest architects, on how the cemeteries and memorials should be designed.

On 21 May, 1917 his diligence was rewarded when the Imperial (now Commonwealth) War Graves Commission was established by Royal Charter.

After the war, the Commission began to make cemeteries into the tranquil havens we see today. The task was gargantuan; a million Commonwealth men and women had lost their lives. Started in 1919, the building and planting of the Commission's WWI cemeteries and memorials would take twenty years to complete. Just one year after the last memorial was unveiled, war again engulfed Europe and the Commission was called upon to once again honour the fallen.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission is now responsible for the graves and memorials of 1.7 million Commonwealth men and women who gave their lives in the two world wars. The Commission manages over 21,000 sites in 150 countries throughout the world.

The task is never-ending. Gardening takes place all year round while regular inspection and maintenance keeps the now aging structures in good repair. The Commission also works to inform, providing information when required and engaging a new generation in the importance of remembrance. Education and community initiatives aim to ensure continued public awareness of the ultimate sacrifice made by so many young men and women in the name of freedom.

To find out more information about the place of commemoration of a relative or former comrade who fell in either WWI or WWII call 01628 207200, e-mail casualty.enq@cwgc.org, visit www.cwgc.org or write to: Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 2 Marlow Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 7DX.

Theipval Memorial bears the names of 72,000 missing in the Battle of the Somme



The Commission's education website, *Remember Me* was launched in November 2004 to great acclaim. The website includes the presentation *One Boy* which tells the tragic story of Horace Iles killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme aged only 16.

This year, further resources have been developed to encourage young people to take an active part in the 60th Anniversary of the end of the WWII. The *Sixty Sixty* project is an activity pack which challenges them 'to give sixty minutes of their time for sixty years of remembrance' using war graves in their local community as a focus.

The Commission also produced a presentation CD-Rom entitled *Some Go Early* about Jack Banks who was killed in Normandy in 1944 also aged 16. His tragic story shows how the impact of his death is still felt by family, friends and comrades even after 60 years have elapsed.



Engaging a new generation

"We can truly say that the whole circuit of the earth is girdled with the graves of our dead... I have many times asked myself whether there can be more potent advocates of peace upon earth... than this massed multitude of silent witnesses to the desolation of war."

King George V, Flanders, 1922.



The Cabaret Rouge British Cemetery, Souchez (near Arras)

Scotland expands dedicated care

One of Erskine's many fundraising events



Erskine, an independent charity, provides nursing and dementia care for ex-Servicemen and women in purpose-built homes near Erskine Bridge on Scotland's west coast and in Edinburgh on its east coast. Erskine also runs a bursary scheme in partnership with selected care providers in Inverness, Aberdeen, Dundee, Perth and Dumfries to provide care for patients near to their home and family.

Scotland's First Minister, Jack McConnell MSP, launched Erskine's 2010 Appeal earlier this year to encourage awareness of the need for dementia care and most importantly, to raise much needed funds.

Central to the fundraising drive is the construction of a new £5.4million specialist dementia care home located within the grounds of the Erskine estate in Renfrewshire, scheduled to open in 2006. The charity has also announced that it is to open a new home in 2007 on the site of the present Flanders House in Anniesland, Glasgow. It is also presently considering how best to increase the number of beds available at its Edinburgh home.

The specialist dementia care home in Renfrewshire will provide respite as well as long term care for more than forty people in any one year.



Two of Erskine's residents

Meanwhile, the Anniesland site provides a unique opportunity to expand Erskine care into the heart of Glasgow, where there is currently a waiting list. The new home will provide 45 new beds offering a for a range of services from residential social to long term nursing care.

Colonel Martin Gibson, Erskine Chief Executive, says, "Many have given generously to help fund the ongoing care we provide and we are delighted to be in a position to build our new dementia care home, expand into Glasgow and address the growing demand for places in Edinburgh."

"However, we have a long road ahead and we sincerely hope that the announcement of much needed new beds will inspire others to support the work of Erskine either by fundraising or by volunteering help."

Erskine first opened its door in 1916 to tend the wounded returning from WWI. Each year, it cares for around 1,000 ex-Servicemen and women of all ages throughout Scotland. Today's residents include veterans who fought in WWII, as well as those who served in more recent conflicts and peace-keeping initiatives.

Erskine's aim is to provide high quality specialist care for as long as there is a need. Demographics indicate a demand for Erskine places up to at least 2020.

If you would like to find out more information about Erskine and how you can help, please visit their website www.erskine.org.uk or telephone the fundraising team on 0141 814 4533 or the volunteer co-ordinator on 0141 814 4640.

Financial planning and protection for veterans



Veterans and their families should be aware of the services provided by the Public Guardianship Office (PGO), especially those in later years planning for the future.

This arm of central Government, provides financial protection services for people who are unable to manage their own financial affairs due to mental incapacity.

PGO responsibilities extend across England and Wales. Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own arrangements (see below).

PGO has two main roles: to provide help, support and advice to receivers; and to those appointing attorneys under an Enduring Power of Attorney.

When a person loses their ability – through some form of mental incapacity – to make decisions relating to their financial and property affairs, the Court may appoint a person called a receiver to do so on their behalf. The PGO then assists, guides and supports the receiver and works with them to ensure that together, they promote the best financial interests of the person concerned.

An Enduring Power of Attorney (EPA) is a legal process in which a person,

known as the donor, hands over to someone they trust (an attorney) the power to decide what is to be done with their financial and property affairs in the event that they become unable to make decisions.

An attorney can use the power straight away if that is what the donor wishes. Alternatively, the donor can make it clear that the EPA is only to be used when they become mentally unable to manage their affairs in the future, at this point the EPA must be registered.

PGO advises people on how to set up EPAs but cannot give them legal advice. PGO also provides help, support and advice to the attorney during the registration process.

To raise awareness of the risks people may face and to introduce the two services provided, PGO has produced an advisory leaflet entitled: *Who would look after your finances if you couldn't?*

To obtain a copy or seek further advice call PGO on 020 7664 7154/7055, e-mail: custserv@guardianship.gov.uk or visit: www.guardianship.gov.uk For Scotland call 01324 678300 and for Northern Ireland call 028 9072 4732 / 4733.

Finchale helps prepare disabled students for the workplace

Finchale Training College in Durham was originally established in 1943 as a rehabilitation centre for wounded Armed Forces personnel. Over the years it has evolved into a specialist, residential and vocational training centre supporting disabled adult students, 10% of whom came from a Forces background.

Adult students come to Finchale from all over the country. It provides training and support to those experiencing a range of mental, medical and physical health conditions and special needs.

Finchale is a registered charity and its courses, all of which are residential, are fully funded, the individual student pays nothing. Courses target gaps in the employment market and range from computer aided design to accountancy, bench joinery to horticulture.

Finchale aims to give its students a 'holistic' package, comprising:

- vocational qualifications;
- real work experience;
- personal and communication skills; and

The main entrance to a world of training opportunities



Finchale Training College

- support to gain and retain employment.
- Currently, 68% of Finchale students go into full-time sustainable employment, an outstanding achievement especially when considering the diverse and multiple barriers its students have to overcome.

For more information on eligibility and course access visit:

www.finchalecollege.co.uk or e-mail enquiries@finchalecollege.co.uk

War disablement and war widow(er) guidance

Veterans are entitled to claim a war pension if they were:

- injured or disabled before 6 April, 2005 through serving in the HM Armed Forces, including the Ulster Defence Regiment, the Home Guard and the Nursing and Auxiliary Services;
- disabled whilst serving as a civil defence volunteer;
- a civilian disabled as a result of enemy action in the 1939-45 conflict;
- a merchant seaman, member of the Naval Auxiliary Services or a coastguard and was disabled because of an injury received or a disease suffered because of conditions during a war or as a prisoner of war; and
- a member of the Polish forces

under British command, who served in the 1939-45 conflict or in the Polish Resettlement Forces and was injured or disabled through that Service.

NB: war pensions are not paid until Service in HM Armed Forces has ended.

Veterans Agency guidance leaflets explain terms such as 'attributable condition,' 'aggravated condition,' 'injury,' 'disablement,' 'qualifying injury' which have a bearing on claims. If in doubt, call the veterans Helpline.

Widow(er)s may be entitled to a war widow(er) pension if:

- their husband/wife's death was due to or substantially hastened by an injury or disease which was caused by Service in HM Armed Forces;

before 6 April, 2005;

- their husband/wife was a civil defence volunteer and whose death was due to or hastened by, their Service in the 1939-45 conflict;
- their husband/wife was a coastguard, merchant seaman or a member of the Naval Auxiliary Services and whose death was due to or hastened by, an injury or disease they sustained during a war or because they were a prisoner of war;
- their husband/wife's death was due to or hastened by Service as a member of the Polish forces under British command who served in the 1939-45 conflict, or in the Polish Resettlement Forces;
- at the time of their death their husband/wife was in receipt of Constant Attendance Allowance with

their war pension or would have been if they had not been in hospital; and

- at the time of their death their husband/wife was in receipt of a war pension at the 80% rate or higher and Unemployability Supplement.

NB: in some cases a war widow(er)s pension cannot be paid if the widow(er) either remarries or lives with a partner as husband and wife. However, if this is the case, allowances payable for children may continue. If the marriage or relationship ends or the claimant becomes a widow(er) again, then the war pension can be re-instated.

In the next issue of *Veterans WORLD* we explore the criteria for claims made to the new *Armed Forces Compensation Scheme*.

Scarborough pilot highlights partnership

Scarborough's South Bay taken from the town's war memorial site, Oliver's Mount.



Max Payne MBE

Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) Veterans Challenge Fund (see below) is helping underpin a number of Citizens Advice Bureaux (CABx) projects aimed at veterans and their dependants, ranging from the preparation of promotional material to the establishment of a new outreach project in Tidworth, Wiltshire. In this issue, *Veterans WORLD* focuses on a case study from one such project in North Yorkshire.

Scarborough CAB has appointed a dedicated adviser to coordinate a project working with local ex-Service organisations to publicise its services and provide advice direct to veterans. The project started in June 2005 and already there have been positive outcomes.

Henry Rowlands, CAB's dedicated veterans adviser highlights one example of how quickly things can happen if organisations work together.

"In July, I went to see an ex-Serviceman who had visited the bureau with his carer a few days earlier, on the issue of a landlord's responsibilities for repairs.

"The client was living in private rented property that was being repaired. Unfortunately, the landlord had gone off on holiday for a month and the repair work had stopped leaving the flat in an appalling state of disrepair.

"It was obvious that the flat was uninhabitable. Indeed, the client was at the time, sleeping on the floor.

After checking that he was in receipt of all welfare benefits to which he was entitled, I contacted the local SSAFA Forces Help representative and within a few days we had arranged a fortnight's respite care for him in a British Legion Home in Wales.

"I also managed to contact the landlord and get the repair work restarted. The Home came and picked up the client and brought him back after his stay. During his time away, the landlord had finished the renovations and the flat was ready for occupation.

"Whilst the client was in the Home, I also contacted the War Pensioners' Welfare Service (WPWS) which is now endeavoring to find suitable alternative accommodation which can be adapted to his needs. As an alternative again, WPWS is negotiating other suitable long term accommodation together with support for new claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit."

This is but one of many successful case examples from the Scarborough project from which much good practice may be learned.

It is also a prime example of how multi-agency approaches can best solve seemingly intractable problems.

For more information on the Scarborough project call Sam McQueen, Project Manager, National Development Team, Citizens Advice on 01223 356322 or e-mail him at sam.mcqueen@citizensadvice.org.uk

Ministry of Defence and charities join forces on training



Discussions are now taking place between the Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) War Pensioners' Welfare Service (WPWS) and charities to plan workshops exploring good practice and policy.

Now in its third consecutive year of planning joint training events with ex-Service organisations, WPWS is forging ahead with the concept, forecasting closer ties still between all welfare services seeking to address veterans concerns.

The aim is simple, to increase knowledge and understanding, and share good practice to ensure all welfare provision meets a uniform high standard.

It's early days for a brave concept which builds upon on a successful experiential training event held three years ago for WPWS delegates at St Dunstan's home for the blind in Brighton. Now plans are in place within WPWS to roll out more multi-agency training sessions for 2006 and beyond.

"The results from our joint training activities have exceeded all our expectations and reflect our growing commitment to working hand-in-hand with others to ensure that the best practices and processes are in place which best meet our client's needs, says Sue Turner, Head of WPWS. "It is often the case, that the best solution to a welfare problem is often a multi-agency solution. Our development and learning programme now fully reflects this fact."

Every year, WPWS publishes *Learning Curves*, a review of its training activities undertaken over the previous year. Pick up last year's copy and it soon becomes apparent that joint training is an increasing priority. From small beginnings the concept is growing apace and many more such sessions are planned.

"Our policy is to focus on two key topics every year, says Alan Mayers, WPWS Operations Manager. "For example, last year we undertook training revolving around mental and physical disabilities in partnership with Combat Stress and British Limbless Ex-Service Men's Association (BLESMA). Next year, we will be exploring the welfare needs of the younger veteran and his or her family.

"Our other topic is actively being discussed. This training enables our welfare managers to more fully understand and empathise with the situations of many of our clients, and to explore the problems they encounter on a daily basis and the services to which they turn for help."

The joint training initiative has two separate but mutually supportive strands. First, are training events organised and hosted by WPWS to which welfare officers from ex-Service organisations are invited to attend. Second, are a small but growing number of specialist events that are organised by others on behalf of WPWS delegates.

The former are designed to keep delegates up-to-speed with legislation and policy whilst the latter aim to increase the depth of knowledge needed to assist those with specialist needs.

A template has emerged for successful joint training based on mixing and matching the professional knowledge and experiences of those delivering services with the personal experiences of clients. In planning, the latter can only be contributed where there is mutual respect and confidentiality and of course, total confidence in those organising and attending the event.

The multi-agency training programme springs from a series of partnership agreements (or Memos of Understanding) signed between Alan Burnham CEO, Veterans Agency and his counterparts in Royal British Legion (RBL), RBL Scotland, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help (SSAFA - Forces Help), BLESMA and Combat Stress. While the agreements cover a wide range of issues, one of the most important is to share good practice. The training that has emerged to date is a direct result.

Joint training is one strand in the WPWS learning and development portfolio but its potential to help deliver the highest quality welfare services to veterans and their families is beyond doubt.

For further information call Sandra Price at WPWS Birmingham on 0121 626 3285 or Keith Simmonds at WPWS Bristol on 0117 971 8436.

Update on supporting prisoners and their families

As part of the Ministry of Defence's (MOD's) co-ordinated *Prison In-Reach* initiative, The Royal British Legion (RBL) and Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association - Forces Help (SSAFA - Forces Help) are working in partnership to reach ex-Service personnel currently serving a custodial sentence or who are ex-offenders. The project aims to assist immediate dependants as well.

The main priority is to raise awareness about the assistance available to prisoners, resettlement advisers and others. The aim being to deliver advice, support and financial assistance to ex-Service offenders in custody, to facilitate their rehabilitation on release and to provide support, information and assistance to their families. RBL leads the prisoner focus, SSAFA Forces Help leads on families.

In January, an advert and article were placed in the HM Prison Service's *Inside Times* newsletter highlighting the type of assistance available. Those eligible were invited to write to a freepost address with details of their Service record and their request for assistance. To date, nearly 300 responses have been received. They have all been distributed to RBL county field officers and SSAFA Forces Help caseworkers so that client visits can be arranged. Prison In-Reach publicity leaflets and information cards have also been designed for an advice wallet which is to be distributed within prisons.

In liaison with other voluntary organisations, a dedicated web page on the

Veterans Agency website, a leaflet entitled *Supporting Prisoners' Families* and an article placed in *Action News* - the quarterly newsletter of Action for Prisoner's Families - highlighted the type of assistance available and made the point that immediate dependants are eligible for help even if their relationship has broken down.

The leaflet will be distributed to visitors' centres and other relevant organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureaux to target those clients that may not be visiting prisons.

Plans to roll out the project in Scotland are at an early stage but contact has already been made with organisations involved in prisons north of the border. Early discussions have been extremely encouraging and updates will be included in future editions of *Veterans WORLD*.

For further information please contact

SSAFA Forces Help:
Tel: 020 7403 8783
Email: info@ssaafa.org.uk
Web: www.ssaafa.org.uk/prisonServices.html

RBL:
Legionline Helpline: 08457 725 725
Email: inreach@britishlegion.org.uk
Web: www.britishlegion.org.uk

Further information can also be found on: www.veteransagency.mod.uk/links_to_vets/prison.htm

Challenge Fund reminder



The Ministry of Defence (MOD) can help pump-prime projects aimed at either helping veterans directly or raising awareness about their status and/or concerns.

To prepare a submission to the MOD's Veterans Challenge Fund, you must ensure that any future funding does not:

- replace existing sources of money;
- duplicate existing activities of other bodies;
- support the routine or core activities of your own or another's organisation: and

- must address an identifiable gap in existing activity or knowledge.

All submissions are acknowledged. Some bids may require additional information but all are evaluated and those successful are submitted to the Director, Veterans Policy Unit for final approval.

Submissions must be made in writing to:

Director, Veterans Policy Unit
Ministry of Defence
Floor 7, Zone H
Main Building
Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HB

For more information on the fund, visit www.veteransagency.mod.uk/pdf/vasec/pdfs/challenge.pdf

Agency team dedicated to veterans advice

Veterans Advice Team is based within Veterans Agency at Blackpool. It deals with enquiries that cover everything from entitlements to employment, health matters to pensions. Recent enquiries have included tracing a grandfather's WWI Service record to providing contact details for Service pension enquiries. Veterans, family members, carers and professional advisers are all encouraged to make use of this service.

Between April and September 2005 the team received 3,407 pieces of correspondence.

To contact them:
e-mail: help@veteransagency.gsi.gov.uk,
call: 0800 169 2277

or write:

Veterans Advice Team
Veterans Agency
Norcross
Blackpool
FY5 3WP