



# THE WARRIOR



Newsletter for ESVH & the Military Community In East Sussex

VOL. 2. NO 36

[www.eastsussexveteranshub.co.uk](http://www.eastsussexveteranshub.co.uk)

OCTOBER 2021



## Happy Birthday British Legion!



For 100 years the Royal British Legion has been helping serving and ex-serving personnel and their families.

From those who served in the First World War to the men and women of our Armed Forces today, they pledge that no-one should suffer for having served others.

In his address, in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen, the Dean of

Westminster, the Very Reverend David Hoyle, celebrated the Royal British Legion's ability to stitch "together our shattered experience" and make us "whole". He also said it has become the bridge between ordinary men and women and those "who have been set apart by serving in the forces".

"Men and women who've been broken by their service, both physically and mentally, those we have managed to rebuild their lives and help them get back on their feet... and, in many cases, I'm afraid, get over some very difficult and dark mental challenges."

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### Support Services Telephone Contact Numbers

**NHS 111** Any suspicion of coronavirus, ring 111 IMMEDIATELY, for advice. Some GPs have a telephone triage service as well. Also ring 111 for veterans' mental health service HIS.

**ESVH** 07884263824/01424 446292/Freephone 0330 1077 808

**STAR** Freephone 0300 303 81600

**ESRA** 01424 435318

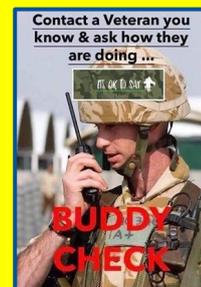
**Seaview** 01424 717981

**Job Centre Plus Hastings** 0800 169 190

**Samaritans Hastings** Freephone 0330 094 5717

**Bexhill Caring Community** 01424 215116

**Hastings Covid-19 Community Support Hotline** 01424 451019



**East Sussex Veterans Hub 99/100 Group, 5 Harold Place. Hastings TN34 1JA**  
01424 446292 Email: [ESVH99100@esvh99100.onmicrosoft.com](mailto:ESVH99100@esvh99100.onmicrosoft.com)

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Charles Byrne, Director General of the Royal British Legion, said the organisation carries "forward exactly the same principles that those who founded the legion set in stone".

"When we play our part, where we help knit counties, organisations, individuals together, to show their support for our Armed Forces community – it's still very much who we are and what we do today.

"We're woven into the cultural fabric and the calendar of the country and you see that huge public support for the Armed Forces and the work of the legion that comes out every remembrance time."

General Sir Nick Carter, Chief of the Defence Staff, and Victoria Cross hero Colour Sergeant Johnson Beharry also gave readings at the service.

The charity was founded on 15 May 1921 and brought together four national organisations established to care for military personnel and their families after the First World War.

The Royal British Legion is also famous for its annual poppy appeal, which encourages public donations in return for the red flower worn in memory of the UK's war dead.



## Northern Ireland Veteran Dies

**Army veteran Dennis Hutchings, who had been on trial over a Troubles shooting, has died after contracting COVID-19.**

The former Life Guard died in a Belfast hospital on Monday whilst his trial had already been adjourned for three weeks after he caught COVID.

Defence barrister James Lewis QC had informed Belfast Crown Court of the COVID diagnosis as proceedings in the non-jury trial were due to begin on Monday. He told Mr Justice O'Hara that Hutchings' condition had been confirmed by a PCR test on Saturday, saying: "I regret Mr Hutchings is not well with regard, as one would expect, to his other co-morbidities of renal failure and cardiac malfunction."

Dennis Hutchings, 80, had been suffering from

kidney disease and the court had been sitting only three days a week to enable him to undergo dialysis treatment between hearings.

He was charged with the attempted murder of John Pat Cunningham in Co Tyrone in 1974, which he denied. He also denied a count of attempted grievous bodily harm with intent.



Mr

Cunningham, 27, was shot dead as he ran away from an Army patrol across a field near Benburb. People who knew him said he had the mental age of a child and was known to have a deep fear of soldiers.

In a statement, the Cunningham family said they wished to acknowledge that this is a difficult time for the Hutchings family, adding they should be given time to grieve and will respond in greater detail in due course.

Democratic Unionist Party leader Sir Jeffrey Donaldson called the veteran's death "desperately sad news", but said that "serious questions" needed to be answered.

"Whilst understanding the desire of the Cunningham family for justice, we have consistently challenged those in legal authority who insisted that Dennis stand trial again," he said in a statement.

"He was an 80-year-old veteran, in ill-health on dialysis and there was a lack of compelling new evidence.

"There now stands serious questions around those who made the decision that Dennis should stand trial once more. He was honourable. He wanted to clear his name again but was dragged to a court and hounded until his death.

"This is a sad indictment on those who want to rewrite history but also demands serious questions of the Public Prosecution Service about how this trial was deemed to be in the public interest."

Danny Kinahan, the Veterans Commissioner for Northern Ireland, said that the news was "incredibly sad".

On Twitter, he wrote: "I got to know Dennis over recent years. An elderly man, in poor health, he was determined to clear his name once and for all.

"Deepest condolences & sympathies to his wife and family at this difficult time."

DUP MP Carla Lockhart also described the news as "awful".

She tweeted: "Such sad news that he never got to live out his last days in peace. Awful. Spent last months of his life being hounded by a political show trial."



### Deputy Mayor of Hastings Praises Work of ESVH

**Councillor Ruby Cox visited ESVH on 11 October as part of Hastings Week. She subsequently wrote on her Facebook page:**

'As Deputy Mayor, yesterday I visited the East Sussex Veterans Hub and was astonished at the amount and breadth of the work undertaken there by volunteers dedicated to making life easier for our veterans.

Coupled with that they are now in their first year of 'giving back' to the broader local community by taking a leading role in Project Adder, giving them an opportunity to apply their skillset experienced by dealing with veterans with trauma related issues, alcohol and substance misuse or addiction. Truly remarkable work which benefits everyone in Hastings.'

### Deputy Mayor and Previous Mayors visit ESVH



### Gaps & Barriers

**With the gradual withdrawal from the restrictions of Covid 19, businesses and charities have been left with a legacy of digital inclusion, innovative know how and methods of communication. It would seem many in the third sector are more and more leaning towards 'stepping back' from one to one engagement, if only at the point of first contact.**

This on the face of it appears progressive and certainly cost saving but experience is showing that the retraction of services denies the most vulnerable access.

Where veterans are concerned, particularly those with mental ill health, who have difficulty in dealing with telephones, remote contact, with faceless people, it is a place they do not wish to visit. Often being told to wait for further contact from a caseworker, effectively denies them seamless support, as they will withdraw. It also has the potential to increase their anxieties, rather than ease them.

In such circumstances, 'services' should consider becoming more 'needs' orientated. To achieve this, better collaboration and training will be involved, maybe essential for those dealing with this selected cohort, i.e. those with PTSD. Certainly any training should include the principles of psychologically informed environments (PIE) and trauma informed care (TIC), if not, maybe mental health first aid?

### Thoughts from Frontliner



First Floor, 5 Harold Place, Hastings  
TN34 1JA  
information advice & guidance  
Ring : 07869688038

## Afghan Remembered



**The Armed Forces commemorated the 20th anniversary of the start of Afghanistan War with a wreath laying ceremony to remember the 457 British troops killed in the conflict.**

Wreaths were laid at 7.30am at the Bastion Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire by the Minister of the armed forces James Heappey (who served on two tours of Afghanistan) and Major General Gerald Strickland and wreaths were also laid at the Iraq and Afghanistan Memorial near the Ministry of Defence in central London.

The Ministry of Defence organised today's ceremonies to honour 'the courage and commitment of its people' during the war.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said: 'Today we remember the sacrifice and courage of the 457 service personnel who lost their lives during the 20 years of UK operations in Afghanistan. Our armed forces overcame unimaginable challenges in support of the people of Afghanistan and to defend the UK and its allies. We must continue to honour the legacy of the generations of service personnel who served in Afghanistan.'

The design of the Bastion Memorial is a replica of the former memorial wall in Camp Bastion, the former British Army airbase in the Helmand Province area of Afghanistan.

Material from the original wall is incorporated in the foundations, with the memorial also featuring brass plaques and a cross made of shell casings from the Camp Bastion site. On Thursday, a wreath laying service took place at the Bastion Memorial at the Arboretum to mark the 20th anniversary of the start

of UK operations in Afghanistan and to recognise the sacrifice that so many have made, including the UK Service personnel who lost their lives in the conflict.

"The service was attended by Major General Gerald Strickland and three representatives of the single Services, all holders of the Operational Service Medal for Afghanistan. A military piper started the ceremony, which was followed by the last post, observation of a minute's silence and reveille, before each of the single service representatives laid a wreath.

UK Armed Forces involvement in Afghanistan lasted for 13 years and at the conflict's peak there were 137 UK bases and around 9,500 British troops in Helmand Province alone. In Helmand, British forces operated out of Camp Bastion, a specially built base in the desert near the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah.

Camp Bastion grew to the size of large town with a perimeter wall more than 20 miles long. At the height of the fighting, there were more than 600 flights a day using the 2.2-mile runway, ferrying troops, supplies and casualties.

In 2006, a small memorial cairn was built in Camp Bastion to commemorate those who died during the deployment into Helmand Province. As fighting intensified, the memorial grew into the Bastion Memorial Wall to accommodate a lengthening list of those who had fallen. The memorial became a focal point for remembrance in Camp Bastion, where anyone could go to reflect and remember their comrades.

Following the end of combat operations in 2014, the Bastion Memorial Wall was deconstructed in Helmand Province, Afghanistan and 'reconstructed' at the Arboretum the following year as the Bastion Memorial.

Based on the same design, the new memorial reflects the spirit of the former and contains elements of the original structure, such as the cross made of shell cases placed on top of the Memorial's cairn, the original memorial plaques placed inside the structure and material from the original wall which has been inserted into the foundations.

An engraved map of Afghanistan is mounted on the rear of the Memorial, marking the locations where the UK Forces served over the 13-year campaign.



## Former Commandant General Royal Marines Crossed the Bar



**Major General Matt Holmes OBE, DSO. former head of the Royal Marines died as a result of hanging after having “concerns about his marriage and service career”, a hearing to open the inquest into his death was told.**

Major General Matthew Holmes, 54, was found in a bedroom at his home in Winchester, Hampshire, on October 2, the inquest heard.

Hampshire coroner Jason Pegg said that Maj Gen Holmes’ body was formally identified by his widow, Lea, and a post-mortem examination gave hanging as a preliminary cause of death.

Maj Gen Holmes, who had served in Northern Ireland, Kosovo, Iraq and Afghanistan, was Commandant General Royal Marines from 2019 until April this year.

He commanded 42 Commando Royal Marines from 2006 to 2008 and was appointed as a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order for his leadership on operations in Afghanistan in 2007. From 2019 to 2021 he was Commandant General Royal Marines and was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 2019.

Mr Pegg said: “It’s suspected that Matthew Holmes had a number of concerns at the time of his death including matters relating to his marriage and his service career.”

He added: “I direct the Royal Navy provides a

statement setting out very briefly Matthew Holmes’ career and his career management post-supersession from his post as Commandant General Royal Marines and the known response to that from Maj Gen Matthew Holmes.”

The short hearing held in Winchester heard that police had attended an incident at the family home on September 22.

Mr Pegg said: “There was also an incident at the home address September 22 and I direct the police officers who attended the incident provide statements.”

The coroner also said he would be requesting statements from Maj Gen Holmes’ widow, Lea and his sister, Sarah Holmes, as well as a RN doctor and the full results of the post-mortem and toxicology tests.

The inquest was adjourned for a full hearing on February 10 2022.

The funeral for Maj Gen Holmes took place at Winchester Cathedral on Wednesday 13 October.



**Major General Matthew Holmes was one of the pallbearers for the Duke of Edinburgh , this year.**





## East Sussex Veteran's Charity Recognised Nationally

**Hastings based East Sussex Veterans Hub (ESVH), a local veteran's\* charity, has received national recognition from the English Veterans Awards 2020/21, at a special presentation evening and dinner, held in the Midlands last recently.**

The Veteran's Awards promotes the positives from UK's military veteran community. It focusses on the work of veterans for veterans, serving reservists along with organisations and companies that support ex service personnel. They aim to recognise and reward those involved in the areas of fitness, business, health and well-being, plus contributions to the wider community.

One award was for Veteran Volunteer of the Year, awarded to Bernard Stonestreet, Executive Secretary and Founder of ESVH, part of which is the 99/100 Group that supports veterans of HM Forces across East Sussex, suffering from PTSD, mental ill health, alcohol, and substance issues or having any involvement within the criminal justice system. This award was one of 12 Gold Awards made for various categories, covering both individuals and businesses or organisations from across the country.



A second accolade came as a particular surprise, at the end of the awards evening. It was for the Overall Champion of the English Veteran's Awards, selected from the finalists of all 12 categories. This was also presented to Bernard Stonestreet.

He said, "I am humbled by the decision of the organisers and judges to recognise the work of the ESVH team and that of our veterans, all who have taken a tremendous step in asking for support in addressing their issues.

"I must record a big thank-you to those who nominated myself and ESVH for these awards, including the Armed Forces Network, Sussex, the Veterans Transition, Intervention and Liaison Service (TILS), a part of the NHS mental health service and other veteran champions."

The work of ESVH has evolved since it was established in 2016, in order to fill a gap in local support for the military community, especially those with mental health issues. As a result of the efforts of volunteers the charity has become sustainable and grown, with ESVH and its veterans now providing skills transfer to other, new initiatives that not only enhance veteran's recovery options, but importantly work to the benefit of the wider community, currently as part of Project ADDER.

Another exciting initiative is currently evolving, with the co-operation of Netherfield Place Farm, near Battle. It aims to deliver a rural activities facility to include such programmes as woodcarving, sculpture, woodcraft, equine therapy and camping opportunities. Coupled with this ESVH expect to move to new larger offices and have now re-opened their Monday morning 'Drop In' for any veteran and/or their families, if only for a coffee and chat.

Mr Stonestreet concluded:

'There is no reason for any veteran in East Sussex, wanting information, advice, guidance, or support, should not to be able to get it. By simply coming to our offices anytime, joining our fortnightly sessions or popping into our weekly drop in, it could be an important first step to making a difference. ESVH is proud of its response times, being local, and accessible in the town centre of Hastings. Alternatively, we are a phone call away and will visit through an outreach service.'

\*A veteran is any person who has served one day's paid service in HM Forces, or Emergency Services; this includes those who did their National Service until the early sixties and certain veterans of Mercantile Marine.

Ofsted has published its 13th annual report on the effectiveness of care and welfare arrangements for recruits, trainees and officer cadets in Armed Forces initial training.

The annual report draws on evidence from 14 inspections carried out at the request of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), and under a new inspection framework.

The new inspection regime aligns with Ofsted's education inspection framework but is contextualised for Armed Forces initial training. Under the new arrangements, inspectors identify strengths and weaknesses to inform key judgements on the quality of training and support; the personal and professional development of recruits and trainees; the quality of facilities, infrastructure and resources, and the effectiveness of leadership and management.

Army Foundation College, Harrogate, and the Defence Fire Training Unit at Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire were both judged outstanding in all 4 key judgements and for overall effectiveness. Another 7 establishments were graded good overall, and 2 were rated requires improvement.

We found there is a lot to celebrate in the work of the strongest establishments, including well-coordinated care and welfare arrangements and highly effective training. However, much remains to be done. Serious weaknesses persist in resources, infrastructure, accommodation, self-assessment and improvement planning. For example, inspectors found that, at some establishments, heating and hot water are unreliable and a couple had several accommodation blocks that suffered from sewerage failures. The poor living conditions in these establishments meant that senior officers spent too much time trying to secure funding to improve outdated, non-functioning or badly maintained infrastructure, rather than focusing on the quality of training and the care and welfare of trainees.

Previous annual reports have highlighted the same problems for nearly 2 decades. If the MoD is to deal with this head-on, we recommend that all Regular and Reserve training establishments:

- urgently deal with the continuing and repeated

failures in infrastructure, in particular in the accommodation used by recruits and trainees, so that they live and train in good conditions. This will allow commanding officers (COs) and their staff to concentrate on the training, care and welfare of recruits and trainees, rather than maintaining and repairing their establishments.

- provide all phase 2 trainees – those who are about to start their first professional role – with improved living facilities in their accommodation blocks.

Inspections of 9 Regular training establishments, 2 Reserve units and 3 support and assurance visits to University Services Units (USU) headquarters contributed to the annual report. All inspections were carried out between October 2020 and May 2021.

### **Steve's Special - Classic Cottage Pie**

Prep time: 15 minutes : Cooking time: 45 minutes: Serves 4



#### **Ingredients**

- 1kg potatoes, washed and cut into chunks
- 350g extra-lean minced beef
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 carrot, chopped
- 1 courgette, finely chopped
- 100g green beans, chopped
- 50g sweetcorn
- 450ml cold water
- 4 teaspoons reduced-salt gravy granules
- 1 teaspoon dried mixed herbs
- 1 pinch ground black pepper

#### **Instructions**

- Cook the potatoes in a large saucepan of boiling water until tender, about 20 minutes.
- Meanwhile, heat a large saucepan and add the minced beef a handful at a time, cooking until browned.
- Stir in the onion, carrot, courgette, green beans and mixed herbs. Add 450ml water and bring to the boil. Simmer without a lid for 20 minutes.
- Preheat the grill and warm a large baking dish under it for 1 to 2 minutes. Drain and mash the potatoes, seasoning them with some pepper.
- Add the sweetcorn to the mince mixture, then sprinkle in the gravy granules, stirring until thickened. Season if needed, then tip into the baking dish.
- Spoon the mash on top, spreading it out to cover the mince, and grill for a few minutes until browned. Serve immediately.



**Milo Says:  
It's All Happening**



**Steve with H4H  
Rep & Past  
Mayor of  
Hastings**



**Tango at Open  
Day as part of  
Hastings  
Week 2021**



**99/100 Group open for business**

**Making progress with our barn...**



**It wouldn't happen without scran...**

**ESVH Programme of Meetings**



**Veterans' Weekly Drop Ins**  
 Monday October 25  
 November 1/8/15/22/29  
 1000 - 1400

**Rural Activities**  
 Netherfield  
 October 23 November 20

**99/100 Group**  
 Saturday October 30 Office  
 November 14  
 Remembrance Day  
 27 Office



**Models on Display  
Doug's LCT &  
Clem's Pink Panther**



**First Point of Call for Veterans of HM Forces in East Sussex**

**VETERANS' WEEKLY DROP IN**

First Floor  
5 Harold Place  
HASTINGS  
TN34 1JA  
**10AM TO 2PM  
EVERY MONDAY**

Welfare Information, Advice and Guidance

- Specific Support for those with PTSD and Mental Ill Health
- Close Liaison with other Agencies & Military Charities



- Refreshments

An opportunity to meet others over a cuppa

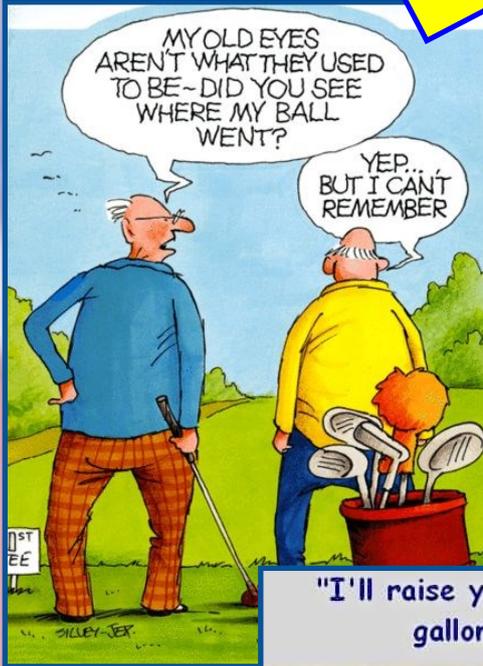
Contact Details:  
Freephone: 0330 1077808  
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Registered with Charity Commission No 1183583

**A Full Page Of**

**LoL**



**"Let's eat Grandma!"**



**"Let's eat, Grandma!"**

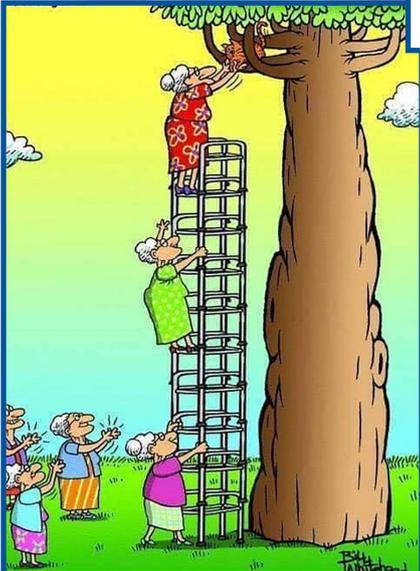
**PUNCTUATION SAVES LIVES.**



**The only thing I take seriously in the newspapers nowadays is Fish and Chips.**

**And even that I take with a pinch of salt.**

**Public told to plan ahead for Christmas due to supply issues, forcing majority of men to bring their shopping forward to Dec 23rd.**



**My boss said to me, "This is the fifth time this week that you've come to work late. Do you know what that means?"**  
**"Yes," I replied, "it's Friday."**

