

## **Annual Report from Veterans' Champion – 2017 – 2018**

### **Councillor Liz Scott**

#### **13<sup>th</sup> March 2017 – Commonwealth Flag Raising Ceremony**

The Commonwealth Flag Raising Ceremony was a success given that there were 30 or more representatives from the Armed Forces, British Legion, Judge Sycamore, Hindu Society, etc.

The Mayor, Councillor Robert Redfern, read out the Commonwealth Affirmation. It was a simple but effective ceremony. Later we went back to the Town Hall for tea and coffee.

#### **7<sup>th</sup> April 2017 – Launch of the Great War and Whitehall by the Sea Exhibition**

The exhibition was held at Morecambe Heritage Centre on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017. It was well attended and a credit to all that made this happen.

Most of the artefacts are genuine items from WW1 plus some film props from the film The War Horse, along with the fascinating story of Morecambe's importance in WW1.

Most of the items were collected by Paul who managed to store and squeeze all his finds in his semi-detached home. What a credit to him for wanting to rescue and preserve the findings. It will be a great starting point for our local primary and secondary schools to learn about local history.

#### **11<sup>th</sup> April 2017 – Meeting**

I had a meeting had with the Chief Executive, Susan Parsonage, and Major Roly Sutton to discuss "Armed Forces Covenant" and to put in place in this district to help Veterans. Several recommendations will be followed and looked at.

#### **27<sup>th</sup> April 2017 – Lecture WW1 Commemoration Series**

The University of Cumbria in partnership with Lancaster Military Heritage Group and Lancaster University Department of History's 5<sup>th</sup> Lecture in WW1 Commemoration series 'The U-boat Campaign 1917' – unrestricted.

This lecture was delivered by Professor Eric Grove at the Hugh Pollard Lecture Theatre. The topic was chosen to take away from the focus of the Western Front and onto the sea.

During the war and at the end of 1916, there was a stalemate on the Western Front and both suffered heavy losses. The Royal Navy's blockade caused shortages including food in Germany.

Professor Grove's delivery was lively and engaging. There was over 60 people who attended the lecture and the Professor enjoyed answering questions at the end.

It was an excellent academic take on events during that period. The buffet was enjoyed by all.

### **28<sup>th</sup> April 2017 – Meeting**

I had a meeting with Gemma Gardner, an ex-Armed Forces personnel.

Gemma initiated the concept of Direct Transitioning Help which is a Charity. This is to help prepare soldiers and their families' transition from Military to civilian life and enable their return to active service. So far, an outreach centre is secured in Blackpool. A centre in Bolton is being initiated and Gemma wants to put in place a centre in Lancaster to be used as a main hub.

As the Veterans Champion, I welcome this initiative and has promised Gemma that I will support, help and work with her to help our Veterans and their families.

### **13<sup>th</sup> May 2017 – Exhibition**

I attended the opening of the new exhibition by The Right Worshipful, The Mayor of Lancaster Councillor Roger Mace.

The exhibition was called "Boomtown - from Front Line to White Lund". It marks the 100 years of the devastating explosion that was shattering and was heard as far as Manchester. This incident happened at the White Lund National Filling Factory on 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1917. Shells made at White Lund were supplied to our local King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment.

The process of shell-making and filling factories on war work, did bring about changes to the district in terms of employment and helped with the war effort in this region.

However, the explosions showed the bravery of so many who helped to save lives from beyond this region.

Fire Engines came from as far as Liverpool and Manchester to help.

### **18<sup>th</sup> May 2017 - Meeting**

I held a meeting with Steve Trainor, a bus driver, who is passionate about our Armed Forces. He initiated the Poppy Scatter at Happy Mount Park and is keen to initiate light up for Poppy Week and Poppy Scatter in Morecambe on the sea. I am sign-posting Steve to Councillors and others to help him realise his vision for Armed Forces.

### **31<sup>st</sup> May 2017 - Meeting**

A meeting was held with The Deputy Dean of the University of Cumbria to discuss how the Military Students who are studying to be Paramedics can help and support Veterans in our community.

I arranged to meet up with the Chair of Lancaster Military Heritage Group and a trustee of "First Light Trust" who is currently setting up a Centre in Lancaster to give advice and support to those suffering from physical, emotional and psychological disorders, depression, addiction and PTSD – post traumatic stress disorder. Debt counselling, homelessness are

some of the much needed support that the Veterans can tap into. A much needed resource in our district and I will support this scheme.

### **19<sup>th</sup> June 2017 – Flag Raising Event**

The Flag Raising event was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress, Councillor Roger Mace and his wife. We also had a representative from Lord Shuttleworth's office. This year was the first since the inception of the flag raising event, that we had a Bugler from Ripley St Thomas School, Lancaster. The Bugler was accompanied by his music master. We also had two Soldiers from the Barracks to take the salute. There was representation from the Police, Fire Service, British Legion and others from the Civic list.

There were about 20 people and we were invited by the Mayor to have tea in the Town Hall.

Rev Chris Newlands attend the event and said a short prayer for all those serving and have serviced in our Military.

### **19<sup>th</sup> June 2017 - Meeting**

I liaised to have a meeting for "First Light Trust" with the Dean of the University of Cumbria and two lecturers from the Department of Nursing, whose role is to support Veterans locally. They are setting up a "Hub" in Lancaster which hopefully will be ready by September 2017. The meeting was productive and it will also give the Military Students a lot of "hands on" work that will help with their learning.

### **24<sup>th</sup> June 2017 – Armed Forces Day**

Our Annual Armed Forces Day event was held at Lancaster Castle. We had serving troops, service families, veterans and cadets. We also had a selection of historic military vehicle displays, military modelling exhibitions and music. The New Orleans Jazz Band entertained the locals in the centre of town.

Rev Chris Newlands conducted the hourly tours to the Regimental Chapel in the Priory Church.

Lancaster University's History Department had a stand explaining WW1 and the town's people involvement in the Great War.

The weather was dull until after lunch and the crowds also picked up. My thanks to all the members of Lancaster Military Heritage Group who worked hard to support me. My thanks to Mr Mayor and the Mayoress for coming to our event. Much thanks to our re-elected MP, Cap Smith, for attending. A huge thank you to the Duchy of Lancaster for letting us use the Castle for Armed Forces Day.

There is room for improvement to make Armed Forces Day more attractive.

Many thanks to all that bought raffle tickets for Blesma and Combat Stress.

### **25<sup>th</sup> June 2017 – Armed Forces Day**

The Drumhead Service on the Promenade in Morecambe was excellent and a reminder as to why Armed Forces Day was a day of remembering our past Armed Forces Veterans and those that are serving.

The sun shone for Morecambe and we had a good turnout given that the Kite Festival, Mini Marathon and the Fun Fair was in situ. There were music stalls and face painting in the Winter Gardens. Mr Mayor and the Mayoress and the Lord Lieutenant's deputy also attended the Service. We sold substantive numbers of raffle tickets. There was a clear buzz for Morecambe's Armed Forces Day. My thanks to the Military Personnel and all the helpers, cadets and members of the public. A huge thanks to Tim Roberts for organising the Morecambe proceedings. Armed Forces Day in Morecambe ended with Sky Divers from Grange-over-Sands. It was excellent.

### **17<sup>th</sup> July 2017 – Honorary Freedom March**

The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment exercised their right as Honorary Freeman to march through the City. The weather was perfect for this occasion. A Service was held at the Priory Church at 11.00 am which was attended by the Mayor and Mayoress and the Chief Executive, Susan Parsonage. The service was robust with a packed church of smart looking soldiers. After the service, the soldiers were cheered on by 160 school children from Willow Lane Primary School. Then the soldiers marched through the city centre which was packed with cheering people.

The soldiers were received at Dalton Square by the Mayor. The Regimental Band played music in the Garden of Remembrance.

After the formalities, the regiment was served lunch in the Town Hall. Each table was hosted by a Councillor, Ex-Councillors and Honorary Aldermen.

It was a good day to show respect to our serving personnel.

My thanks to the two British Legion Standards Bearers who stood on the steps of the Town Hall.

### **21<sup>st</sup> August 2017 – Army Veteran**

I had a call from the Charity called Direct Transitioning regarding an Army Veteran, a single parent who became homeless. I met up with the Veteran and the representative from the charity at the Town Hall. The staff were very helpful and we went to Morecambe Town Hall to have an interview with the Housing Officer regarding an emergency situation.

The Veteran was given all the reassurances and support that was needed in such cases. It was reassuring to hear how our staff on the front line were knowledgeable and showed sensitivity to individual cases.

### **18<sup>th</sup> September 2017 – Meeting**

A meeting was held with Hannah Clarke, the Advice and Information Officer for Lancashire British Legion.

Hannah is based at Fulwood Barracks. According to Hannah, she has seen a lot of Veterans who had become homeless due to “Agency Work” and the “Zero Hours” policy. This creates financial hardship which results in difficulty to pay rent and to live. She also gave me leaflets about support for Veterans by the British Legion.

It was useful to know the kind of support that is available via the British Legion.

### **30<sup>th</sup> September 2017 – “Boomtown – From Front Line to White Lund”**

Lancaster University, Regional Heritage Centre and Department of History organised a special event at the Storey Institute, to complement the exhibition “Boomtown – From Front Line to White Lund”.

Dr Corinna Peniston-Bird from the History Department at Lancaster University gave the introduction and the overview for the day.

Steve Irwin from Blackburn Museum and Art Gallery spoke about the Impact of WW1 and spoke about local stories written by people from archive source.

The exhibition marks the centenary of the explosions at White Lund National Filling Factory during 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> October 1917. The lecture covered the need for supplies and the shells for our front line troops. Our local King’s Own Royal Lancaster Regiment played a huge part on the front line during WW1. Lancaster and Morecambe had the railway and sea to link up for transporting supplies, hence this district was chosen to play a part to manufacture shells and the filling factories. Through this, the war work bought employment and money to the area. By June 1916, 2.9 million shells were filled.

The King and Queen visited in the summer of 1917 and were presented with a silver plated shell.

The fire quickly spread with projectiles making it worse, and created the White Lund explosions. The explosion was heard as far as Manchester, Barrow-in-Furness and beyond.

The filling factory was built in 1915 using Piric Acid. The health and safety impact on the workers were unknown and the dangers that faced them at that time was unmeasured.

Residents went up all the way to Quernmore for refuge and safety from this crisis.

23 Fire Brigades came to Lancaster to help and control the blaze. The fire burned from the Tuesday to the Thursday.

### **12<sup>th</sup> October 2017 – Private Albert Halton VC**

A local boy, born and brought up in Warton, Private Albert Halton, was honoured with a Victoria Cross Commemorative Paving Stone. A service was held at Sparrow Park in Warton.

We were honoured by Mr Kevin Brigg, Chairman of Warton Parish Council, who spoke a few words about Albert.

The citation of Albert Halton was read by Rtd Major Shaun Laidler from the Duke of Lancaster's regiment.

Poems were read by Lewis, Millie and Lindsay from Archbishop Hutton's Primary School.

The unveiling of the Commemoration Stone was done by the Deputy Mayor of Lancaster.

The Blessing of the memorial stone was conducted by the Rev Robin Figg, Vicar of Warton.

Mr Raymond Hirst, President of the Lancaster Royal British Legion, cited the Kohima and Reville.

There were about 50 people in attendance and we finished up at the Village Hall for tea and biscuits.

All in all, Private Albert Halton, VC, was honoured for saving 12 prisoners, showing the greatest disregard to his own safety and setting a very fine example to those around him.

A most deserving Victoria Cross.

Many thanks to Lancaster City's Civic Department for putting this together.

### **12<sup>th</sup> November 2017 – Remembrance Sunday**

Remembrance Day Service in the Garden of Remembrance saw a lot of local people who came to show their respect on this Memorial Day. The Cadets, Soldiers, Serving Personnel, Reservists, representations from different organisations came together to lay their wreaths.

The Mayor, Councillor Roger Mace, and The Mayoress, were present. The Chief Executive, Susan Parsonage, and some officers and Councillors were present to pay their respect.

Raymond Hirst, President of the Lancaster Royal British Legion read Binyon's lines followed by a two minute silence.

After this event, a service was held at Lancaster Priory. It was a lovely service filled with our military and ordinary people. The choir was superb and majestic. A poem by Rachel Mann called "The Pilgrims at Luke Copse" was read by Lieutenant Colonel Justin Tancret from the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment.

After the service, the cadets and soldiers marched through the City to the delight of our Town's people who clapped and took photographs. They went past the Town Hall where the Mayor and Mayoress plus the Standard Bearers from the British Legion and Military personnel took the salute.

The weather was sunny but cold which made this Remembrance Day Service memorable.

### **17<sup>th</sup> November 2017 – Christopher Homewood**

A meeting was held with Chris Homewood who is the Case Officer for North Lancashire British Legion. His role is to help Veterans with welfare issues.

The meetings was interesting and we exchanged ideas and contacts to help with issues in the district relating to veterans' needs.

I took Chris to show him CVS, Lancaster and also the Homeless Drop- In Centre on Edward Street.

### **21<sup>st</sup> November 2017 – Elderly Veteran**

Today I had an urgent call from a member of the public asking me to help with an elderly veteran who had been hospitalised.

Suffice to say, I did what I could and managed to link up with some local ex-submariners who have maintained regular visits.

Because of its sensitivity, this report is brief.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> December 2017 – Captain Julian Whalley, Miss Whalley's Field**

Today, the Centenary event to remember Captain Julian Whalley was held at Miss Whalley's Field on Derwent Road. Captain Whalley was wounded and declared missing on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 1917 and died of his wounds in a German Field Hospital on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1917, aged just 33. He was the only son of Colonel J. Lawson Whalley, JP, Colonel Commandant of 3 & 4 Battalions, King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment and of Lady Ashton, and also the step son of Lord Ashton of Ryelands, Skerton.

In 1938, Miss Whalley bequeathed a sum of money to provide a recreation ground for the children residing in the Borough of Lancaster.

The Mayor, Councillor Roger Mace, and the Mayoress were in attendance. He made a speech and unveiled a beautiful piece of stone quarried in Carnforth and donated by the Aggregate Company.

The Army Cadets from the Boys Grammar School showed their presence and the Bugler played the "Last Post". A pupil from the school read Lawrence Binyon's poem called "The Fallen".

The weather was cold but dry which helped for the good turnout of people from the community.

Light refreshments were provided at the Gregson Centre.

### **31<sup>st</sup> January 2018 - Referral**

A referral from the Navigator (Lancaster District) of Lancashire Older Veterans Service – Age UK, was made regarding an urgent request for a vulnerable older veteran to be rehoused to a ground floor flat in Lancaster. I contacted our Strategic Housing Department and they made immediate contact with the veteran to discuss housing options. I also spoke to the veteran and gave him reassurances. I am waiting for the outcome at the time of writing this report.

### **8<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

Meeting held with Simon Denerley from Lancashire Age UK, Older Veterans Service, at the Town Hall.

We discussed the issues relating to older veterans, loneliness, disability issues and how to reach out and also to work closely with other agencies in the district like CVS for example. We shared suggestion, recommendations, ideas and contacts. We will continue the link to work effectively.

### **10<sup>th</sup> February 2018**

I wrote a piece of notice to the Lancaster Guardian regarding WW2 Veterans, for Free Remembrance Tours. The Royal British Legion is on a mission to take all surviving WW2 Veterans back to where they served on a free Remembrance Tour during their time in the Armed Forces. The tours will take place throughout 2018 and give the Veterans at Battlefield sites, cemeteries and memorials. The Treasury is enabling these free tours to be funded by LIBOR fines. This will enable the Veterans to return with a family member and carer. Please contact Arena Tours Ltd. On 01473 660 800 to register your interest or download the registration form and send it to Remembrance Travel, c/o Arena Travel, 2 Betts Ave, Martlesham Heath, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP5 3RH.

Councillors, if you have any family or friends that qualify for this trip, please let them know. Thank you.

### **1<sup>st</sup> March 2018**

I had a call from an ex-Veteran who was in the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment to help him with his Blue Badge which he had been waiting since January 2018. I called Lancashire County Council and stressed that the Veteran needed his Badge as a matter of urgency. We got a result because the veteran called me the following day to let me know that they had found his photo etc, etc.

### **5<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

We had a Courtesy call from Commodore Phillip Waterhouse ADC, who is the naval Regional Commander Northern England and IOM. The meeting was held with Mr. Mayor, Cllr. Roger Mace, the Mayoress, the Chief Executive, Susan Parsonage and I in the Mayors Parlour. We talked about the role of the Sea Cadets and their input and training. He explained about 'Employer Recognition' for RN Reserves. Barrow Council has a Silver Medal for their input regarding this concept.

We talked about my role as the Veterans Champion and my limitations due to the lack of funding and support. I explained that I have chase-ups from Veterans and they can be unpredictable, sometimes having an urgency to the request, confidentiality and a quick resolution to the need. It was good to hear and learn new ideas from an experienced person.

Later on, I took the Commodore to the opening of the HUB. It was initiated by the FirstLight Trust whose aim is to support Veterans. The HUB is on Market St. L/A. The aim is to help Veterans with housing, medical treatment, sorting out debt problems, pensions and



allowances. Drug and Alcohol issues and much more. I have supported FirstLight and help to link them with the University of Cumbria for partnership. This HUB is long overdue to help our Veterans who has given much during their service in the Armed Forces.

### **10<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

Campus in the City held their History Dept. Exhibition in St. Nicholas Arcade, L/A. The 4 exhibitions were WW1 projects on streets of Mourning, an attempt to trace the descendants of 4 women to unveil the panel of the War Memorial. They are the Butterworths, Gardeners, Prickett's and Williams's families.

An oral project on the women of Westfield War Memorial Village and also Minecraft and Deep Mapping of the Lake District.

I enjoyed my chat with Martin Purdy discussing Westfield Memorial and shared stories on evacuees from Salford. There was a good turnout of locals who enjoyed sharing stories and finding out new information about their area. These events have been much valued and welcomed by all who have attended the exhibitions.

### **11<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

I was contacted for support for a retired Veteran with medical issues that needs support at home. I gave contact details for Lancashire Older Veterans which is managed by AGE UK, LANCASHIRE.

### **12<sup>th</sup> March 2018**

Our Annual Fly a Flag for the Commonwealth took place in Dalton Square. The rain did not put people off. There was a reasonable turnout. We listened to the Mayor reading the Commonwealth Affirmation and watched the flag being raised. There was refreshments with the Mayor and Mayoress at the Town Hall.