

NEW FRONTIERS



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**Scotland's
Veterans
Wellbeing
Alliance**

THRIVE TOGETHER

Empowering Veterans and Families:
Creating Connections, Building Futures

Welcome to our second issue!

I hope you are enjoying the summer and taking advantage of these sunny days to enjoy our wonderful green and open spaces. This issue we are travelling to France with Pauline, demystifying drama with Hannah, getting outdoors with Charlie and hearing what's been happening to build the collective advocacy movement for veterans across Scotland.

I'm delighted to welcome our new Alliance partners – **Military Museum Scotland, Operation Cairngorms, the Wilfred Owen Association and Combat Stress.** Our Alliance door is never closed so please do get in touch at **lirvinefitzpatrick@napier.ac.uk** if you would like to join us!



Devising Project 2025

Hannah Uttley

Each year Stand Easy delivers a devising project for military veterans, family members of veterans and emergency responders.



This project takes place over three or four weeks and culminates in a small tour of a performance created by the group.

There is no need for those taking part to have any experience of drama or performing (in fact, most of those who take part have never done anything like this before), all you need is a willingness to try something new.

The project usually takes place in Dundee however we provide accommodation for those who don't live in the local area, we also cover travel costs and provide meals throughout the process. The piece the group creates will be inspired by their own stories and experiences, previous themes have included the Falklands war, transition from military to civilian life, reflections, and family life in the forces.

This years project will begin on September 15 – October 10, 2025, in Dundee. We are still in the planning stages for this project and will update everyone with the details as and when we confirm them. In the meantime, if you or anyone you know would like more information about this project, please get in contact with Morag at: standeasyproductions@gmail.com

Also please visit our website to see our previous years devising projects:
<https://www.standeasyproductions.org>

Stand Easy is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.
Scottish charity registration number: SC045309.
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We Will Remember Them

Pauline Cherrington



A group of LVC's veterans had the honour and privilege of joining McCrae's Battalion Trust's Annual Pilgrimage to Contalmaison from 29th June to 4th July.



Jack Alexander, a historian and author, and Eddie Dalgliesh, both members of the Trust organise these annual pilgrimages and are authorities on all things to do with McCrae's Battalion and the First World War. They could not have made our group feel more welcome and included from start to finish. Of course, we must also thank **Tam Douglas BEM**, who recently retired from Legion Scotland, for the introductions and his help in making this happen for LVC's veterans. This was an especially poignant, and emotive pilgrimage, not least because my great-grandfather, Richard Cherrington, was one of the first volunteers for **McCrae's Battalion** and this was to be Tam Douglas' last pilgrimage as part of the **Royal Scots Standard Bearers Party**.

Day 1 consisted of an early departure from Edinburgh City Centre and a convivial coach journey to Hull where we boarded the overnight ferry to **Rotterdam**. There were many familiar faces on the trip as well as some new ones, including well-kent faces from the **Royal Scots**, members of **McCrae's Battalion Trust**, and descendants of soldiers in **McCrae's Battalion**. Our group soon started to get to know everyone, and we enjoyed lots of camaraderie, laughs and libations both on the coach and ferry!

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Day 2 consisted of a coach journey to Zonnebeke, Belgium, where we visited the Museum of Passchendaele which offered an insight into the history of the **Battle of Passchendaele** and was enriched by personal stories and authentic objects from the First World War. We had the chance to walk through reconstructed British and German trenches that presented a powerful insight into life at the front, and the museum also had a dugout that we walked through that showed how British troops lived underground in 1917.

In another room we saw projected historical images of the Battle of Passchendaele and the landscape of 1917 which depicted the horrors that so many young men had to endure.

After our walk around the museum, we boarded the coach to take us to our hotel in Arras, France. It was a very hot day, so we were grateful for our airconditioned **Bibby's Travel** coach and comfortable journey, a stark contrast to that of so many young men during the Great War. After checking into our hotel, we were able to explore the beautiful city of Arras with its large square and array of restaurants and bars.



The museum also had a dugout that we walked through that showed how British troops lived underground in 1917.

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Day 3 (Tuesday 1st July) was the day of the ceremony at Contalmaison, a small, picturesque village in France surrounded by lush green fields.

On 1st July 1916 those fields were anything but; they were filled with young men of the **34th Division of the British Expeditionary Force** and at the front was **Lieutenant Colonel Sir George McCrae's Battalion**, the **16th Royal Scots – the Pals Battalion**. The battalion was made up of players from **Heart of Midlothian** football team, who were at the top of the league in 1914, their supporters, players from other teams including Hibernian and many local men from Edinburgh and surrounding areas, each man volunteering following an appeal by McCrae to the young men of Scotland's Capital City in November 1914.

On 1st July 1916, the opening and bloodiest day of the **Battle of the Somme**, British and Commonwealth casualties totalled 57,470. Of that number 19,240 were killed and 2,152 missing or captured. Entire battalions of pals, brothers, cousins, neighbours and workmates were wiped out in a matter of minutes. Amid the carnage it was the heroic men of the **16th Royal Scots** that penetrated furthest into the German's defences.

Almost three quarters of their fighting strength became casualties, including several of the Hearts players and their pals from other football clubs, despite this, a small party pressed on to reach the tiny, ruined village of Contalmaison, deep inside the German trench system.

In 2004 a commemorative Cairn was raised in Contalmaison in memory of McCrae's Battalion. It was constructed by Scottish craftsmen using Scottish materials and has become the centrepiece for Scottish pilgrimages on the Somme ever since. The ceremony was on the hottest day of the pilgrimage with the temperature reaching a sweltering 40 degrees, and it culminated in the laying of wreaths and singing the French and British National Anthems.

The Royal Scots Standard Bearers Party did well to stand for so long in such a heat! Afterwards, our group made the short walk to the **Contalmaison Chateau Cemetery** to pay our respects to the fallen before enjoying an afternoon of delicious food, drinks, singing and speeches.

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Day 4 consisted of two visits, the morning visit being to The Underground City at Naours, France.

The original chalk mines were used as shelters for people and their property and then became underground hiding places. The **Underground City** was dug by hand and at its peak, there were 28 galleries and 300 rooms. These were occupied from the Middle Ages until the 17th century when they fell into disuse until they were rediscovered in 1887. The Underground City became a very popular local curiosity after its rediscovery, especially during the First World War. Many Allied soldiers visited the site when they were back from the front lines, and many wrote their names on the walls. The graffiti was discovered in 2014 and no less than 3,200 graffiti have been catalogued, making this the largest known concentration of Great War graffiti.



The afternoon visit was to Vignacourt, France, which was the site of an important military base behind Allied lines during the Great War. Two local farmers, Louis and Antionette Thuillier owned their own camera, which was rare at that time, and they turned their farm into a studio. Civilians and soldiers would come to the farmhouse to have their photographs taken. When the war ended the photographic plates (negatives) were stored in the attic of the farmhouse and forgotten for over a century. They now form the Thuillier Collection, a unique set of images displayed in their original farmhouse. The faces in the photographs tell their own story of the Great War.

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Day 5 saw us checking out of the hotel and taking the coach to Tyne Cot Cemetery and Memorial to the Missing for the dead of World War I in the Ypres Salient on the Western Front. It is the largest cemetery for Commonwealth forces in the world, for any war and is located, near Zonnebeke, Belgium. There are German concrete pill boxes on this site which formed part of a fortified position of the Germans and played an important tactical role during the Battle of Passchendaele in 1917. It is such a tranquil place that it is almost impossible to discern the grim horrors of war that once happened there.

In the afternoon we headed for the beautiful city of Ypres, Belgium, which was almost entirely destroyed during the Great War. The city was rebuilt using the original medieval plans and it's hard to believe that you're not walking through a genuine medieval townscape. While there we visited the **Menin Gate** which is dedicated to the nearly 55,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers who were killed in the Ypres Salient of World War I and whose graves are unknown.

The memorial is located at the eastern exit of the town and marks the starting point for one of the main roads that led Allied soldiers to the front line. Then it was onwards to Rotterdam and the overnight ferry to Hull.

Day 6 was our return journey to Edinburgh where we said our farewells to everyone.

LVC is grateful to **McCrae's Battalion Trust** for allowing us the privilege to join them on this poignant and thought-provoking pilgrimage to commemorate the heroes of the **16th Royal Scots**. McCrae's Battalion Trust is the world's first registered charity to be inspired by the sacrifice of an infantry battalion of the Great War. It was established to ensure the long-term care and maintenance of the **Contalmaison Cairn** and its associated commemorative works. An educational purpose was also incorporated into the Deed of Trust to ensure that the story of **Sir George McCrae** and his wonderful battalion would not be forgotten.

LEST WE FORGET



No Green Thumb? No Problem!

Charlie Marno



What it's really
like to come
along to a
DGS gardening
workshop?



Let's be honest—when some people hear “gardening workshop”, they picture a stern instructor, a Latin plant glossary, and a clipboard full of soil pH readings. At DGS, we prefer **Laughter over Latin and Tea over Textbooks.**

Our ‘Cultivate & Connect’ workshops are designed for everyone - yes, even you, the one who once mistook a weed for a wildflower and proudly watered it for weeks. Whether you're a horticultural hero or have never held a trowel in your life, you'll be welcomed with muddy hands and open hearts.

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Here's what to expect:



A warm brew on arrival
(and probably a biscuit or three)



Gentle, hands-on activities like
sowing seeds, potting bulbs,
or just pottering about



A relaxed, supportive group
where no one's keeping score



A chance to make new friends,
breathe, reset, and maybe even laugh
at someone trying to plant a glove
thinking it was a bulb (true story)

You don't need to bring anything but yourself.
We've got the tools, the gloves, and the
know-how. And if you're not sure what to
do, don't worry, half of us are just winging it
with enthusiasm and a vague memory
of Gardeners' World.

One participant said.

***"I came for the gardening, but
I stayed for the banter, and the
biscuits. Mostly the biscuits."***



Another participant told us,

***"It's the first place I've been where I didn't have
to explain myself. I just turned up, and that was
enough".***

So, if you're thinking about it, just come along.
You won't be judged, you won't be quizzed, and
you won't be bored. Just bring yourself, and
maybe a coat. It is the UK, after all.

Come and see what's growing inside and out. Workshop dates and locations are as follows:

9th Oct 25 - Helensburgh, Argyll & Bute.

23rd Oct 25 - Scone Palace, Perth.

6th Nov 25 - Linburn Walled Garden,
Kirknewton, Edinburgh

TBC - Highlands.

To register please contact:

charlie@defencegardens.org

Cultivate & Connect Scotland

The Defence Gardens Scheme is delighted to promote the following health & wellbeing workshops for the Armed Forces Community in Scotland.



"I love pottering around here, I don't know what I'm doing, but I love seeing things grow."

Veteran, 2025

No previous gardening experience is required, just a willingness to join a small group of like-minded members of the Armed Forces Community.

9th Oct 25 - Helensburgh, Argyll & Bute.

23rd Oct 25 - Scone Palace, Perth.

6th Nov 25 - Linburn Walled Garden, Kirknewton.

TBC - Highlands.

**For further information, please contact Charlie:
charlie@defencegardens.org**

Building Veterans Collective Advocacy

Ele Davidson

CAPS
Independent Advocacy



Veterans, pipe band member and CAPS staff standing and seated in front of a building at Gordon Barracks

During the first three months of our new Veterans workers being in post they have been extremely busy! During May Steven visited and talked to:

The Lothian Veterans Centre, PTSD resolutions, Blesma, VE celebration at Napier University, Glen Almond Veterans walk, Forces Children Scotland, Vector 24, Veterans Scotland, Councillor Ronnie Proctor (SSAFA Angus, Veterans Housing Scotland and Black Watch committee), SSAFA Glasgow, Mark Ferguson (Survivor Support and Veterans Mental Health Scottish Government) Duns Breakfast club and whilst visiting Community Veterans Support in Govan and speaking to the veterans there they invited him to use their space to host the first Veterans Advisory Group meeting!

Moving into June more visits and many more conversations with veterans and organisations. This month Steven spread his traveling wings even more and was able to visit or chat to:

Royal Marines Association, Defence Gardens, The Journey, SSAFA Helensburgh, Cyrenians, SACRO, Linwood Walled Gardens, Rock to Recovery, Veterans Community Café Edinburgh, Kari McGhee (NHS Highland) Musselburgh Breakfast Club, HMP Perth, Stand Easy, Combat Stress, Aberdeen Council Veteran stakeholders quarterly meeting and a visit to Spean Bridge to the Commando Foundation Team for the launch of their new museum where he connected with many veterans and their families.

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With a picture building up of the geography of veterans across Scotland and some important links made in the Grampian region Steven embarked upon his first of several planned 'area visits'.

In July Steven made a 5 day trip to Aberdeen and was able to meet and chat with lots of veterans organisations, allied groups and veterans across the region.

He visited the Aberdeen Breakfast Club held at the Ghillies Lair Harvester, The Banchory Breakfast Club at the Royal British Legion where Bob, a 100-year-old veteran, was in attendance and drew admiration from many. Deeside Breakfast club, OP Cairngorm, Gordon Barracks for a meeting with SSAFA and Poppy Scotland representatives along with a performance from the 6th and 7th Scots Pipe Band! He also visited Erskine Activity Centre in Forres. At the Station Hotel in Aberdeen, he joined the Sight Scotland Veterans group, composed mainly of older veterans. Finally, he met with Dr Zoe Morrison from NHS Grampian.



In all of his travels Steven has interacted with **180 veterans** so far and has been listening to their stories and planning our first Collective Advocacy Advisory Group meeting. This will be an opportunity for people to come together to discuss what is important to them living as veterans in Scotland. The meeting will take place on the **28th of August at the Pearce Institute in Govan** and will be open to people to join both in person and remotely online. So far we have 40 people who have confirmed that they would like to join in person and many more who are interested in joining online. We will be promoting this more over the next few weeks and hope to have a great event gathering the voices of Scotland's veterans about what is important to them, what works and what can be improved.

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Above: Members of Deeside Veterans breakfast club

Next order of business for Steven, as well as planning meeting number two of four in a different region of Scotland to ensure that as many people as possible have the opportunity to attend a meeting in person, he will be moving his eye to organisations and groups in the West of Scotland and in the Highlands.

He will also be working to seek out those veterans that aren't connected with services. He plans to do lots of 'feet on the ground' promotion in community settings that everybody uses – GP practices, community centres, libraries and sports centres and hopes. He will also use the contacts he has already made throughout Scotland with support from partners in the SVWA.

...he will be moving his eye to organisations and groups in the West of Scotland and in the Highlands.

Whilst all of this work has been going on our Veterans In Prison Worker, Stephanie Morrison, has been establishing her presence in several of Scotland's prisons for this new piece of work.

Whilst this has been a very different prospect we have been visiting, chatting and establishing good relationships with HMP Grampian, HMP Perth, HMP Inverness and HMP Castle Huntly, with a trial of Collective Advocacy in these facilities due to start shortly.

A visit during Armed Forces week to Perth prison, not only proved to be a very fun day, with games and presentations but also allowed us to make good connections with veterans serving sentences here and the VICOS officer in the facility.

A productive meeting with Perth Governor, Lillian Burns, started a positive link with the SPS (Scottish Prison Service) and a budding relationships with other VICOS officers across Scotland.

Stephanie has been meeting with other advocacy organisations that provide Individual Advocacy in Prison and some great working relationships have been made with Sacro and Care After Combat who are also part of the SVWA. Stephanie has also began to establish great connections and relationships with staff working in Perth, Addiewell and Edinburgh HMPs.



SAVE THE DATE!

'WORK TOGETHER' Thursday 28th August
The Pearce Institute, 840-860 Govan Road,
G51 3UU, 1.30pm to 4.30pm or hybrid online

CAPS Independent Advocacy is a partner in Scotland's Veterans Wellbeing Alliance. Our role, as an Independent Advocacy provider is to ensure that the voices of as many veterans as possible are heard and amplified in the design and delivery of the work of the Alliance.

- What is it like to be a veteran living in Scotland?
- Do you know what services are out there for veterans, and what they all do?
- Is it easy to navigate these services?
- What's missing?

Come along and 'work together' for an afternoon of discussion and design to inform and influence the way veterans services 'work together' in the future!

Strength in numbers

Contact:
steven@capsadvocacy.org
text: 07929751911

**Scotland's
Veterans
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Alliance**

THRIVE TOGETHER
Empowering Veterans and Families:
Creating Connections, Building Futures



<https://capsadvocacy.org/collective-advocacy/veterans-collective-advocacy/>



CREATIVE FAMILY WEEKEND

In partnership with Cyrenians, Stand Easy are delivering two days of outdoor, creative workshops for veteran/military families!

- Over 2 days you will work with others in creative workshops, including filmmaking, movement, drama and scriptwriting.
- The final day will end with a sharing of work created in the workshops.
- All travel, accommodation and meals provided for free.



FREE



Who's it for?

- ➡ Veterans, partners/ex partners, widow/ers
- ➡ Children & young people

Dates/times

- ➡ 30th/31st Aug 2025
- ➡ 11am-4pm daily

Venue

- ➡ Linburn Walled Garden, Wilkieston, Kirknewton EH27 8DU

To sign up or find out more contact Hannah Uttley:
standeasy.livelifelife@gmail.com, 07833 750937

New Frontiers Schedule

Issue No	Content Required by	Publication Date
2.	18 July 2025	28 July 2025
3.	18 September 2025	28 September 2025
4.	18 November 2025	28 November 2025
5.	18 January 2026	28 January 2026
6.	18 March 2026	28 March 2026