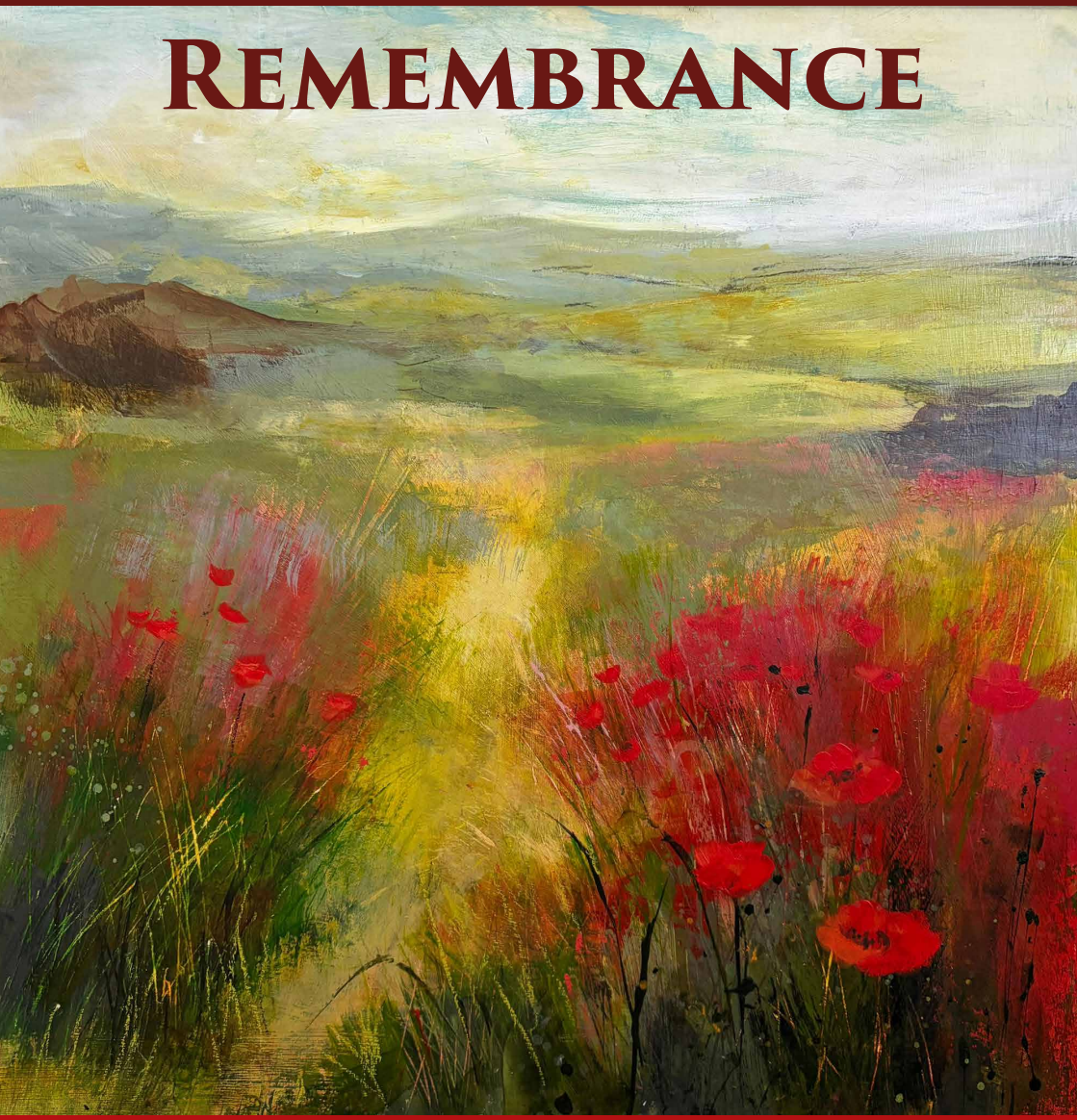
Routes to Remembrance



A brief selection of special memories from
recent community events with veterans
& Penistone Line Partnership



Routes To Remembrance

Introduction



Remembrance has always been an important part of PLP's community work. Each year, a wreath is laid at the memorial at Penistone Station in honour of local railway workers who gave their lives in service. Inspired by this tradition, Sarah Wells, PLP's Community Rail Officer, saw an opportunity to bring together poetry, remembrance, and local veterans.



PLP has enjoyed building a partnership with Kirklees Rural Veterans through its Travelling with Confidence project, and community collaboration. Inspired by East Midlands Railway's annual Routes to Remembrance initiative, PLP recognised an opportunity to combine remembrance, creative expression, and community engagement through poetry and storytelling.

This booklet is the result of that journey. It has been developed through an initial rail trip from Shepley to Harrogate with members of Kirklees Rural Veterans, using poetry and creative writing to reflect on service, sacrifice, remembrance, and personal experiences. The booklet also showcases artwork created by artists for the charitable Poppies for Purpose Proms in Penistone, hosted as a Penistone Arts Week fringe event, to raise funds for the Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal, and St John the Baptist Church Tower & Clock Renovation appeal.



PLP is delighted to share this keepsake with the veterans who participated in the project and helped bring it to life. Funding support from Creative Minds and Northern has made this work possible, enabling stories, memories, and reflections to be preserved and shared with a wider audience.

On 8 November 2026, PLP volunteers will travel along the Penistone Line, distributing booklets to rail passengers as a lasting tribute to those who have served and sacrificed.





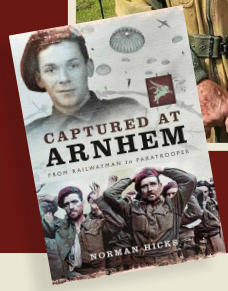
Left Page: *Veterans at Huddersfield station*
Top: *Writing poetry en-route to Harrogate*
Bottom: *Harrogate War Memorial, Prospect Square*

ARTWORK CREDITS: COVER: RACHAEL SINGLETON, **2.** Deb Hepplestone (Big Skies Art), **3.** Pam Goodison Glass Art, **4.** Catherine Embleton, **5.** Tracey Hawley, **6.** Joanne Molloy (JM Flora & Fauna Art), **7.** Andrea Daniels, **8.** Caroline Ballard, **9.** Ann McCall Evans, **10.** Jennifer Margaret Jones, **11.** Helen Davison, **12.** Linda Rudkin, **13.** Karen L Watson.

When Penistone held an Armed Forces Day, Penistone Line Partnership hosted a stand and activity for children to craft their own medals. PLP were delighted to meet with war veteran Tom Hicks who lived in Royston. Tom was a railwayman all his working life from calling up lad to engine driver. He had served as a Royal Engineer and was attached to the 1st Para Squadron. He fought in North Africa, Sicily and in the Battle of Arnhem where he was parachuted in on the 17 September 1944. After days of intense fighting he, along with many comrades, was sadly captured and forced to work in lead mines until the war was over. Tom lived to an amazing age of 101 and was an active member of Barnsley Breakfast Club for Veterans.

Norman Hicks, Tom's son wrote Captured at Arnhem: From Railwayman to Paratrooper, available from Amazon.





A poem by Veteran Poet
Cyril Crain

Take my hand and come with me
To a special place across the sea
A secret place in hallowed ground
A place where love and sorrow's found
It's not a church you'll understand
Just a part of home in another land
A place where gravestones stand arrayed
Like a phantom army on parade
Stand close by me and patience keep
And soon you'll see a brave man weep
He cries for his comrade beneath the stone
And you tell your friend he's not alone
Scenes like this are commonplace
In our special meeting place.
So, as you stroll down Memory Lane
Think of us who must remain
And now it's time to say adieu
But remember friend
We died for you.

4.



A Soldier's Remembrance
Keith Gardner

I've attended services across many continents,
each one different in place but united in purpose.
From peaceful towns to places still carrying the dust of conflict,
I bow my head for friends I've lost,
for those taken long after conflict,
for those who still carry the scars.
Faces I still see in the silence,
memories that stay wherever I stand.

A friend lost, eager to go home to see their loved ones.
Another close to retirement lost on operations.
A third who lost all hope after struggling to fit in after leaving the service.
These are just a few amongst the many who have paid the ultimate price.
I remember more than grieve.

I remember the good
our services brought
to the hardest corners of conflict.
That's where my pride rises,
steady and unshakeable,
because I've seen bravery,
compassion, and sacrifice with my own eyes.
Remembrance is the pause we share,
the honour we carry, and the truth we keep alive
for those who gave their tomorrow
so we all could have today.

The Penistone Line
Linda Rudkin

Before the dawn of D-Day's tide,
Through Penistone the freight trains sighed,
With Sherman strength and Churchill might,
They rolled unseen through depth of night.

At ramp and siding, crews stood near,
To guide the engines, calm and clear;
Then tanks moved on to Langsett Moor,
Where thunder shook the heathered floor.

There men prepared with grit and flame,
For distant shores and history's name;
And Penistone, in quiet pride,
Helped carry courage to the tide.



On The High Sea
Brenda Kirby

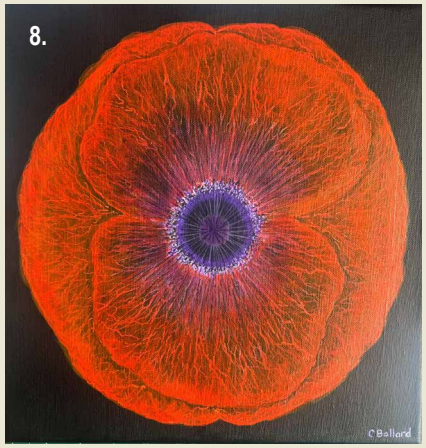
On June the sixth in forty-four,
The Allied navies sailed once more;
Operation Neptune crossed the foam,
To carry brave troops far from home.

Great ocean ships moved through the night,
Then, landing craft pressed on to fight;
Across the Channel, wave by wave,
They bore the bold, the strong, the brave.

The battleships, cruisers, destroyers too,
Sent thunder where the danger grew;
Their gunfire roared along the shore,
To guard the men who went before.
Nearly seven thousand vessels wide, moved together on the tide;
Warships, craft, and merchant crews,
All sailed on with hope to choose.




7.


8.


9.

Untitled
Yvonne Harding

How shall I remember those who fell,
and those once near who are here no more?
I walk through memorials and quiet graves,
past marble rows carved deep with sorrow,
each stone crowned gently with pride.
I wander through woods and along the shore,
where wind and sky lift my thoughts
to those who gave their lives,
and those whom illness carried softly away.
I stand in silence as poppies drift down,
remembering laughter, love, and happier days –
the lives once lived before conflict came,
before courage asked its final price.
And I remember what they gave,
So others might live, love, and hope: the ultimate sacrifice,
never forgotten.

Normandy
Brenda Kirby

In morning light, the poppies grow,
In solemn rows, where white stones show;
Beneath them lie the brave and true,
Who gave their lives for me and you.

On Remembrance Day, we speak their name,
And honour still their sacred flame;
Mothers, fathers, daughters, sons,
Wept for the lost, the cherished ones.

Some rest beneath a foreign sky,
Where gentle hands keep memory nigh.

The Beaches
Linda Rudkin

The beaches roared with fire and smoke,
Where mortar, gun, and shellfire broke;
Among the blood, the wreckage, cries,
Young voices called beneath grey skies.

Across five shores the price was paid -
Sword, Juno, Gold, where courage stayed;
Omaha, Utah, scarred the sand,
As thousands fell on foreign land.

They would not love, nor children hold,
Nor watch the years turn bright to old;
While mothers prayed through sleepless night,
For sons and brothers lost from sight.


10.

At Ardenne Abbey

Linda Rudkin

I came to Caen because sorrow had a name,
and it was spoken softly at Ardenne Abbey,
in St Germain-la-Blanche-Herbe,
where June had opened the earth
and left the living to listen.

Mrs Vico returned from the Gestapo
through the mercy of the Red Cross,
back to walls that had forgotten their shape,
back to an abbey broken open by war,
with her children beside her
and silence waiting in the fields.

Her son, Jean-Marie Vico,
a fighter of the Resistance,
stood with her among the ruins,
where every stone seemed to know
what men had tried to hide.

In September, Sergeant Dudka came,
a Canadian escaped from captivity,
carrying in his voice the weight of the others.
He spoke of the little Bayeux door,
of prisoners taken,
of bodies seen,
of a darkness that had not ended
when the guns fell quiet.

In early 1945,
children noticed the earth disturbed
beneath a small chestnut tree.
They dug down into the frozen truth
and found the first soldier
face down in the soil,
a uniform still clinging to him,
a wound at the nape of his neck
where mercy should have been.

Then more were found,
laid in the same sorrowful way,
and crosses rose above them,
thin and trembling,
as if the living could apologise
only with wood and prayer.

In March, Mrs Vico saw the snowdrops
growing strangely around the lawn,
white little bells in broken order.
She asked her sons to dig again,
and four more sons of Canada
were given back to the light.

In May, Jacques came home on leave
from the Leclerc Division,
and Father Gab searched the grounds.
The last hidden dead were found,
not lost after all,
only waiting beneath the grass
for someone gentle enough to seek them.

The British authorities named them,
and their names were carried away
to Bény-sur-Mer and Cintheaux,
cemeteries where the wind moves carefully
between the rows.

Twenty bodies in all:
twelve North Nova Scotia Highlanders,
six from the Sherbrooke Fusiliers Regiment,
the 27th Canadian Armoured Regiment,
and two from the Stormont, Dundas and
Glengarry Highlanders -
twenty lives ended far from home,
twenty mothers left with the sound
of doors that would not open.

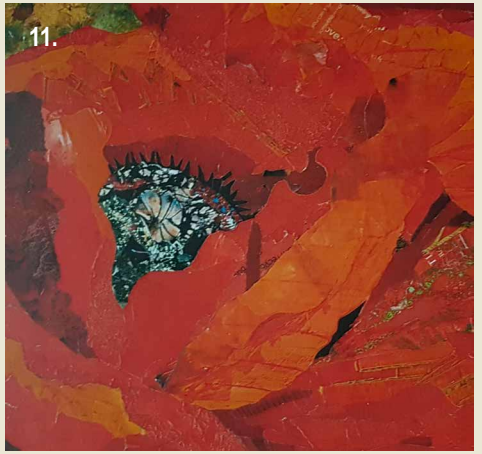
In June 1945,
an eyewitness gave his story to the authorities:
the questioning,
the voices,
the knowledge no heart should have to carry -
that prisoners had been executed
where they should have been protected.

The Canadian inquiry began,
and German accounts were gathered,
matching what Jesionek had said -
piece by piece,
truth rose from testimony
as it had risen from the ground.

The evidence against Kurt Meyer was
overwhelming.
The Geneva Convention had been broken,
and he was accused of the torture and murder
of Canadian prisoners of war -
men who had already laid down their arms,
men whose last battlefield
was a wall, a courtyard, a command.

He was sentenced to death,
then spared that sentence,
and sent to prison in Canada.
But no prison could hold
what had been taken from the dead,
or return the years
they never lived.

And people say,
before the shots,
the soldiers held hands.





The Flanders Watch

Reflections on Visiting Normandy in June 2018

Ranville Cemetery

Ranville was the first village to be liberated on 7 June 1944, after the bridge over the Caen Canal had been captured intact in the early hours of 6 June 1944 by the 6th Airborne Division, who landed by parachute and glider. At our hotel, I met a veteran who had entered Ranville by glider and landed among nettles.

The churchyard and cemetery contain 2,236 Commonwealth burials, including 90 graves of unidentified servicemen.

Seeing row upon row of immaculately kept graves in such a tranquil setting was deeply poignant. Many of these young men were denied the chance to build a life, have families, and experience the years that should have been ahead of them.

Some graves were unknown, leaving families without the comfort of knowing where their son, brother, husband, father, or uncle had been laid to rest. My heart went out to the mothers, fathers, grandparents, wives, children, brothers, and sisters who were left with uncertainty and loss.

Between 6 June and 30 August 1944, approximately 425,000 Allied and German personnel lost their lives.

Lieutenant H. D. Brotheridge, regarded as the first Allied soldier to be killed during the D-Day landings, is buried in the churchyard.

The cemetery is peaceful and beautifully maintained, yet it carries a sadness that is difficult to put into words.

I stood alone for a while, trying to take it all in, unable to fully comprehend the scale of the loss or the heartbreak endured by so many families.

Pegasus Bridge Anniversary Ceremony

I then went to the new Pegasus Bridge at Ranville for the anniversary ceremony marking the capture of the bridge. The service was extremely moving, and the sound of the bagpipes gave the occasion a solemn atmosphere.

Three veteran paratroopers received the French Légion d'honneur, France's highest honour. The moment was emotional, and the veterans told me that receiving this recognition from France meant more to them than any medal they had previously received.

Act of Remembrance

They went with songs to the battle, they were young, straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow

They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted, they fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old:

Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn

At the going down of the sun and in the morning,

We will remember them.

The Last Post was played on the bridge, followed by the silence and Reveille.

The wreath laying was deeply emotive, with veterans laying wreaths for their fallen comrades of the 6th Airborne Division, who were among the first liberators to arrive in Normandy on the night of 5 June 1944. The bridge was captured by glider-borne troops. I met veteran George Talbot, who had served in C Company, 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, and had arrived by glider.

The ceremony was attended by local civic representatives, French military representatives, and surviving veterans.

Café Gondrée and Final Reflections

After the ceremony, we were invited to Café Gondrée, where Madame Arlette Gondrée-Pritchett made an appearance. We were served lunch in Arlette's garden, where she shared stories of how her father had buried champagne beneath an apple tree and later dug it up to celebrate with the British troops after their arrival.

We then returned to Ranville Cemetery for wreath laying, prayers, and bagpipes. An opera singer sang Amazing Grace, and the pipers played Abide with Me.

One veteran, helped from his wheelchair to lay a wreath, became overwhelmed with emotion and dropped it. He sobbed openly, and it was one of the most heartbreaking moments I have ever witnessed. He later told me that he had been shot in the head, showed me his scars, and explained that he had been given the last rites before being taken to a field hospital, where he survived. He was 94 years old.

Linda Rudkin
Veteran Rural Veterans Hubs Kirklees

Normandy

Linda Rudkin

At Juno Beach I stood in quiet thought,
Where waves still speak of sacrifice and pain,
When a vicar came and gently asked
If I would honour one who came again.
His last wish was the shore he had once crossed,
The sand where all his fallen friends remained;
I said that it would be my privilege,
An honour offered, humbly, in his name.
He gave me poppies, barley from the fields
Around Courseulles-sur-Mer that very morn;
We walked beside the family to the sea,
Where grief and gratitude were gently borne.
With shells and pebbles gathered from the beach,
We shaped a heart upon the waiting sand;
Laid poppies in its centre, bright and still,
And spoke the Kohima with reverent hands.
A farewell drifted softly on the wind,
His ashes scattered where he wished to be;
Rest now, brave soul, who gave so much,
Yet never forgot his friends beside the sea.



05/11/18 (Rules Of Engagement)

Peter Waugh

In the kitchen you ask “Where have you been?”
I say “On my way.” It feels like far.
You put cups on a wall rack.

You say “There are fireworks later...” placing knives in a drawer.

I stand in amber midnight, it smells of smoke and Lucifer.
“...will you come?” but having placed a cordon-sanitaire
I carefully remind each man of his arc of fire,
arc of fire, left, right, left and right.

Your window flashes back dazzling blooms, spraying delight
in the night sky, and you coo, smiling.

I am dazed by the flashback, too – soon I see where his eyes were, embered embrasures in bone.
He stinks, charred pork, and is grinning. Gone.

“Will you come?”

Then there are arms around me, a kiss on my chin.
But from outside this love I whisper
“I think I’ll stay in.”

The Price of War

Colin Rudkin

Remember remember those heroes of yore
that left families behind as they marched off to war.
To cheers from the crowd and with smiles on their faces,
they set off to war in those far away places.
They answered the call when the chips were down,
men of all races, black, white and brown,
men of all faiths, men of all creeds,
answered as one in our hour of need.
Too soon they found out that blood and pain
had stolen their lives in glory’s name.
And filthy mud and bloody gore
Embraced the dead.
The price of war.
They never came home.



A Journey to Remember

June 6th, 1983 — Platform 4, Huddersfield Station

I didn’t have any kit back then — just what I’d been told to pack. A few clothes, a razor, the basics. Nothing that looked like it belonged to a soldier. My bag was small enough to pass for a weekend away, but I knew this journey was going to change my life.

About two weeks before, I had got engaged to my girlfriend my mum and dad had already said their things — the hints, & not so quiet comments that she wouldn’t wait for me once I joined the army. So, when I packed the night before, my fiancé sat beside me trying to be brave, but I could see she was a little scared, but I felt excited, determined, and completely unaware of how much that moment would shape the next three decades.

Platform 4 at Huddersfield felt huge that morning. The smell of diesel hung in the air, and the stone under my boots felt colder than usual. I’d never travelled that far before —Huddersfield to Leeds, then King’s Cross, then Waterloo, & finally to Aldershot. Each connection pulling me further from home.

My fiancée stood beside me, beautiful and scared. She held my hand so tightly I could feel her pulse. When the train rolled in and the guard blew the whistle, her face saddened. As the train pulled out, I could still see her crying as the train pulled further away, and I felt my excitement drain as I settled into my seat that would take me onwards on a journey which would last 31 years.

That image stayed with me. It followed me to Leeds. It followed me to King’s Cross. It followed me all the way to Aldershot.

And it stayed with me for the next 31 years.

A Life in Uniform — 31 Years of Service

That journey didn’t end at Aldershot. It was the beginning of a life that took me around the globe — sometimes with my family, sometimes alone into places where the air felt heavy and the stakes were high.

That young girl who cried at Huddersfield station became my wife. She stood by me through postings, moves, long separations, and the quiet dread that comes when you watch someone you love pack full kit into a bergen and head into areas of conflict.

I learned to recognise the look on her face each time I left — not fear of losing me, but fear of what the world might demand of me.

I carried her love into every deployment. I carried her strength into every posting. And I carried that moment on Platform 4 — her tears, my excitement, the uncertainty — like a compass pointing home.

Thirty one years of service. Thirty one years of duty. Thirty one years shaped by that single morning in Huddersfield.

Keith Gardner

While Travelling by Train

From the window I notice an old building.
It reminds me of travelling as a child in London on the old-fashioned train.
A journey I remember is travelling to Manchester Airport. The train was absolutely packed, but someone grabbed our cases, then grabbed my husband, then me. It confirmed a belief that most people are good and kind!

Memory of Remembrance

Travelling from Little Chalfont on the London Underground to Tower Bridge, to see all the poppies displayed at the Tower of London.

One poppy for every service person killed in war. The beautiful waterfall of poppies from a window, and everyone being so respectful.

Lorna MacDonald

My Childhood Memories of WW2
by Malcolm MacDonald

My earliest recollections are of eating Kellog's Rice Krispies for breakfast in my grandmother's kitchen. At that moment, a hen walked in. That's what sticks in my mind!

For my grandparents living in a rural part of the Manx countryside, this was a common occurrence. This preceded the outbreak of war by a few weeks. By 1945 I was 7 years old and had known only of war!

I lived with my parents at Crosland Moor, one night I was awakened by an aircraft flying low. I asked my dad, "is it one of ours?" It was common practice to put aircraft into two groups, 'ours' and 'theirs'. Dad replied, "it's one of ours". I asked, "what do they call the driver?" Well, at the age of 3 we still believe our Dads know everything! The truth was it was one of 'theirs' on a bombing raid to Manchester. However, I fell blissfully asleep, unaware of the loud thuds as the bombs hit their targets.

Bombs were dropped all over the Huddersfield area. Most fell in rural areas and, thankfully, few residents were affected. Lots of incendiary bombs were dropped to light up the skies for the following bombers. However, due to the heroism of Air Raid Wardens, fire watchers and fire fighters, most of the fires created by incendiary bombs were quickly put out using stirrup pumps. Wellington Mills at Oakes, suffered severe bomb damage by two parachute bombs.

One fell into the mill dam and did not detonate but the other destroyed part of the building and scattered textile machinery over a wide area. The bombs were huge! Nine feet long and weighed 1,000 to 2,000 kilos. The parachute retarded the descent to the ground, and an electronic device retarded detonation by 25 seconds enabling the bomber to fly low, take a good aim and get well clear of the blast area. Donald Trump recently announced that the U.S. had designed a plane that could hit a target as big as a fridge from 52,000 feet.

Coastal shipping was under threat from sea mines during the war, so instead of sailing to the Isle of Man for our holidays, in 1942 we went to New Brighton. I had only seen bomb damage and shipwrecks on Pathe News at the cinema and pictures in the News Chronicle, so I was excited to see it, myself, for real! There were masts and sterns sticking up out of the Mersey at every angle.
We used the Liverpool underground to go to and from New Brighton. My excitement was tempered by the man at the ticket office at James Street Station. It was a very low building with a single entrance, surrounded by debris. The man told us that when the Liverpool Blitz was in progress, staff on fire watching duty, occupied the tower above the ticket office. As the Blitz got worse, it was decided it was too risky to spend the night, and on the first night not to do so, the tower was blown up! No one was hurt. I wondered why my parents had decided to take me on holiday to a war zone, but apparently it had been declared safe in the summer of 1942?

Supermarine Spitfire parts were manufactured in David Brown's 'Aero' Building at Meltham Mills. Dad made cartridges to 'kick start' their Rolls Royce Merlin engines. Hidden deep in the valley, the Aero Building escaped enemy bombing although Meltham itself was bombed.

When I was 4 years old, my mother played a cruel trick on me. An official envelope arrived through the post addressed to her. She told me she had received her 'Call Up' papers, which was true, but, initially, she declined to tell me that she was exempt as she was looking after a young child, ME!

Dad was not comfortable being in the Home Guard! He worked long hours in a 6-day week, often on night work and his only free time was on a Sunday. Even this day was often taken up by Home Guard duties. I remember him wearing his uniform for the first time. He took good care of his appearance and as he was about to depart, he nervously sought Mum's approval of his new attire. He was a short man, wearing a standard sized greatcoat. Mum, not known for her tact, fell about laughing, exclaiming "it suits you down to the ground". Dad was also deaf, which didn't help when trying to follow drill instructions. He fell out of step when marching in a column. Focusing on the back of the head of the man in front, he was unaware that the drill instructor had fallen back to be level with him as he bellowed in his ear "you will not get out of the Home Guard by acting the silly bugger!

continued ....

Boggy moorland around West Nab provided the ideal location for rifle shooting and maneuvers training. Two opposing sides were chosen and warfare commenced, which involved the attacking forces crawling along the ground trying not to be noticed. There was a major physical hazard. They had to cross the conduit which collects water from hill streams and carries it into Deer Hill Reservoir. To avoid wading or crawling through water, some men used the bridges to cross the conduit, exposing themselves to defenders. I guess Dad was one of these as, on returning home, he told us he had been captured and proudly produced a small parcel containing some jam tarts that he had been detailed to make in the 'enemy' cook house. The jam was fine, but the pastry was ceramic!

Standard Fireworks were involved in producing pyrotechnics for the war effort. One involved a projectile which concluded with a small silk parachute descending. This was great sport for children to chase and catch as they were rewarded by young ladies who used them to make knickers. Derek Ibbotson, the local international runner, was one such child, he could outrun the rest.

In the grimmest days of the war, Dad had a tearful and very serious talk with me. It was bad enough to see Mum leave home, suddenly, in an ambulance, but to be told to prepare myself for her to die was too much to take. The emergency was due to her having a burst appendix. She was operated on by a Canadian Army medic, successfully, fortunately. She was 38 at the time and went on to live until she was 101! During her time in St Luke's Hospital, I was cared for by friends across the road and continued to attend Crosland Moor County School a short distance away in Blackmoorfoot Road. It was business as usual.

After breakfast I walked to school with my pal, each clutching our gas masks and straws for our orange juice when we got there.

Dad always liked his wireless. He would scroll through the radio channels far and wide across Europe. Inevitably he would arrive at the German propaganda station featuring Lord Haw Haw. The broadcast commenced with the signature "Bong, bong, bong, b ••••ong", repeated, and then "Germany Calling, Germany Calling" in a posh, mocking accent. It was intended to destroy our morale, by trying to persuade us how futile our war efforts were. It was very disarming for me to see the fear in Dad's eyes. It was obviously addictive for him as Lord Haw Haw would make veiled predictions of which towns and cities, and even buildings, would be bombed next.

He carried on with his broadcasts until the day Hitler committed suicide on the 30 April 1945, 8 days before V.E. Day. Lord Haw Haw was born in America, took out British citizenship before moving to Germany. In 1946 he became the last person in the country to be hanged as a traitor.

I started school just before my 5th birthday in September 1942. Our reception class teacher was called Miss Beaumont. She was another person who knew everything and we all loved her! Those were dark days in the war and bombing raids were frequent. In the event of an air raid during the day Miss Beaumont had a cunning plan to keep us safe. For practice when the sirens sounded, she would clap her hands to indicate we should dive under our desks. This was the way that Miss Beaumont was going to save us from the Luftwaffe!

Towards the end of 1944 it seemed that the Axis powers were heading for defeat. However, it came as a shock when not only London and the South East, but the Manchester area came under considerable bombardment, not by enemy bombers this time, but by flying bombs, V1's. They were unmanned guided missiles which carried a huge war head and could travel up to 360 mph, causing tremendous damage. They created craters up to 40 feet across and 5ft. deep. They were known as doodlebugs because they sounded like loud motorbikes. When their engines cut out, they became silent and no-one knew where they were going to land.

In one huge operation V1's were launched on Christmas Eve 1944. This was a desperate attempt to regain control of the air. The allies had overrun their launching sites on the channel coast and so, instead, they were launched from Heinkel bombers. The paths of the rockets were very erratic. One fell at Grange Moor, one at Sowerby, several at Oldham and the rest in Greater Manchester. On hearing a rapidly approaching loud noise, Mum opened the bedroom curtains and exclaimed that she could see green and red lights of an object flying overhead. "Come away from the windows" my dad shouted. It didn't land in our area, more likely in Greater Manchester. In the morning everyone said the same thing, "It came straight over our house"!

Thankfully that was the last major threat that I can recall in the war, 6 years after we heard the first sirens sound in 1939. Legend has it that one local man, on hearing the sirens for the first time, said to his wife "The buggers! Fancy picking on Shelley the first night!"

Malcolm MacDonald



Rural Veterans Hubs

Charity No: 1204103

For many years, I have campaigned to raise awareness of the limited support available to veterans when they leave the Armed Forces. I have spoken publicly about this issue through television appearances, interviews for the Legasee Project, newspaper articles and British Forces Broadcasting Service features, particularly highlighting the need for additional support for veterans experiencing combat-related PTSD and other mental health challenges.

My involvement in establishing the Rural Veterans Hubs began when our local GP, Dr Walker at Shepley Surgery, asked whether I would be interested in helping to create local support for veterans. The practice had identified health inequalities within the veteran community, and this was a cause very close to my heart. My husband lives with complex PTSD following five tours of duty in Northern Ireland. Decades after leaving the Army, contact from the Historical Crimes Unit triggered traumatic memories that he had tried to contain for many years. His experience reinforced for me how profoundly service-related trauma can affect veterans and their families long after active duty has ended.

I met with Dr Walker, the social prescribers and Paul Jones, then the Local Anchor at the Denby Dale Centre, to discuss what practical support could look like. I shared my notes, ideas and vision for the hubs, and was encouraged by their enthusiasm and commitment to helping make the project a reality.

Why the hubs are needed

From personal experience and local knowledge, I knew there were many veterans living in nearby villages who had served in different theatres of war, including Bosnia and Iraq. Some were living with complex PTSD, anxiety, depression, bereavement, loneliness, isolation following Covid, alcohol dependency, physical disabilities, or a deep sense of loss after leaving the camaraderie of service life. The hubs were created to offer peer support, practical help and a welcoming place for any veteran who comes through the door.

Establishing the hubs

Choosing the right venues was essential. We initially identified Shelley Village Hall for a lunchtime session and Denby Dale First and Nursery School Community Room for activities and wider engagement.

Local GPs then sent invitations to the first meeting, and we reached out to local councillors, the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and veterans across the area.

We also distributed posters widely to help ensure veterans and their families knew the hubs were available.

What the hubs provide

The hubs have grown steadily, and we now have around 40 veterans on our books. Not everyone attends every month, but they know support is there when they need it. The hubs provide far more than a meeting place: they offer advice, signposting and practical support tailored to individual needs. We also invite regular speakers on a range of subjects, with veterans helping to shape the programme.

At Shelley Village Hall, we hold regular sessions focused on connection, information and support. At Denby Dale, we have offered creative and social activities including wood whittling, leather marbling, Jesmonite workshops, leather keyring making, Remembrance wreath making, quizzes, art, singing and themed social evenings such as a German evening with bratwurst and frikadellen.

The hubs have also helped veterans build friendships and take part in trips to places including the National Memorial Arboretum, the Imperial War Museum, the National Railway Museum, Elvington Air Museum, Southport, Filey, the Wetherby Whaler, Cawthorne Park and the Pear Tree for steak pie and peas. We have already begun planning trips for 2027.

We are extremely grateful to the Army Benevolent Fund, the Co-operative Society, British Forces Broadcasting Service Big Salute, South West Yorkshire Mental Health, Inner Wheel, Kirkburton Parish Council and Shepley Women's Institute. Without their support, it would be much harder to provide these opportunities for local veterans.

Remembrance and the need for continued support

We attend All Hallows Church in Kirkburton every Remembrance Sunday to pay our respects to fallen colleagues, not only from the First and Second World Wars, but from every theatre of war since.

I believe more should be done to support veterans. Over the years, several places that once offered sanctuary and practical help have closed or changed their services. Combat Stress has closed two sites; the Royal British Legion has closed its respite hotels and Help for Heroes has changed the way it works. The support we previously received at the hubs from Help for Heroes has also stopped because of funding pressures. This makes local, accessible support even more important for veterans and their families.

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Remembering Shepley Men Who Served In The Great War

Private Oliver Cowling 3/2341, of the 2nd Bn, Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

He was born 29 April 1887 in Wakefield, and lived at Railway Cottages, Abbey Road Shepley.
On enlistment he worked as a Shunter at Shepley Railway Station.
Died of wounds on Sunday 13 January 1918, aged 30. He is at rest in Mendinghem Military Cemetery in Proven, Belgium, grave reference IX.C.11.
Local memorial Shepley War Memorial.
Medals: 1914-1915 Star. British War Medal 1914-1918. Victory Medal.

Sapper Radford Hawes 390, of the Railway Operating Division, Royal Engineers, in the former York & Lancaster Regiment.

He was born in 1892, Midhope, Penistone, and lived at Gatefoot, Shepley.
He was enlisted in Penistone and worked on the railway as an Engine Cleaner.
Died of wounds on Friday 31 May 1918, aged 26. He is at rest in Longuenesse (St Omer) Souvenir Cemetery, France, grave reference V.B.50.
Local war memorial Penistone & Shepley War Memorial.
Medals: British War Medal 1914-1918. Victory Medal.



Scan the QR Code
for further reading

All the information in this booklet is available to view online on the Penistone Line Partnership website.

Visit: www.penline.co.uk/routes-to-remembrance/

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