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exposure

December 2022

The combined magazine for the nuclear community

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Foreword

Hello and welcome to the new edition of exposure magazine. Firstly let us wish you a Happy New Year an hope that you and your loved ones had a very Merry Christmas.

In November the NCCF were invited to a commemorative event hosted by the Office of Veterans Affairs at the National Memorial Arboretum. At this event it was announced that a Commemorative Medal would be awarded to participants of the tests, on the day that marked the 70th anniversary of the first UK atomic tests, the NCCF welcome this decision. The event was only marred by the weather which would be best described as nice for ducks. I decided to visit the NMA in better weather to get some pictures and to write a short guide on what to see there which can be found on p04.

As times are hard for all at the moment we have 3 articles in the NCCF section on where to access healthcare and welfare support, the new Armed Forces Compensation Service and how to boost your retirement income with Pension Credits, see p12 onwards.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the magazine.

Editor - Exposure

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CHRC

Centre for Health Effects of Radiological and Chemical Agents

Exposure Online

See the magazine website at: www.exposure.press

A guide to The National Memorial Arboretum

Over the many years I have been involved with the Nuclear Community, I have visited the NMA many times. Usually for memorial events and occasionally just to have a nice walk and a look around. It occurred to me that we should publish a small guide on what you can expect from a visit.

A short History of the NMA

The Arboretum was the idea of Commander David Childs CBE who was inspired for the need of a national centre of remembrance after visiting Arlington Cemetery in Washington USA.

In 1994 an appeal was launched to the then Prime Minister John Major, supported by Group Captain Leonard Cheshire VC. The National Lottery granted 40% of the funds needed for the project which was matched by thousands of donations from various military, private, and corporate organisations.

The site at Alrewas, originally a gravel works, was gifted to the charity by Redland Aggregates (now Tarmac). Planting began in 1997, with the Polar Bear Memorial placed in 1998.

The Arboretum was officially opened to the public in 2001 by Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent. The Armed Forces Memorial was dedicated six years later in 2007.

Plan your Visit

Before arriving at the NMA, Its wise to book your visit in advance. The NMA hosts 250 events per year and tries to limit visitors on days that they know will be busy. Entry to the Arboretum is free but an all day car park ticket is £4 and can be booked at **https://www.thenma.org.uk/visit-us/plan-your-visit/book-tickets**

The BNTVA Memorial

The Car park is situated just a short walk to the front of the Remembrance Centre, on very busy days there is an overflow car park to the west of the centre but there are parking attendants to help you find where to go.

When entering the Remembrance centre you will be greeted by a guide who will tell you where you need to go and the facilities available. I recommend picking up a map of the Arboretum here as it definitely helps navigating the large site with one, the NMA sell these for a £2 donation in the shop or reception. A guidebook is also available from this location.

Whenever I visit the NMA I always make the BNTVA memorial my first port of call as its an easy memorial to get to from the remembrance centre by walking through the Blesma Memorial Garden onto Yeomanry Avenue where its situated.

The BNTVA memorial is currently draped with many flowers from a commemorative event held by the Office of Veterans Affairs which was attended by the Prime Minister and other dignitaries.

We have published information in the past regarding the BNTVA memorial so I won't repeat myself. One note of interest is that all of the stones from the original memorial we placed in the foundations of the new memorial when it was redesigned and updated in 2012.

All photographs - Steve Bexon / BH Associates

The Naval Service Memorial - Designed by Graeme Mitcheson

The Arboretum is home to nearly 400 memorials which are diverse in nature, and represent a broad population of society, from military associations and charities to the emergency services, fraternity groups and individuals. Every year, new memorials are added so there's always something new to see. With that many memorials to look at, I have chosen a few of that caught my eye as I made my way around the grounds.

The next memorial I visited was the Naval Service Memorial, designed by a gentleman from my hometown of Castle Donington, Graeme Mitcheson. This high concept design shows a figure facing to the setting sun, head bowed in respect to Shipmates. The colours of the panels represent the 5 oceans, steel grey Atlantic, turquoise Indian, ultramarine blue Pacific; and with white for the Arctic and Southern Ocean. Yellow is for the rising sun and red is for the setting sun and for the blood spilled at sea in the defence of our nation. Green for the Royal Marines and dark colours for dived submarines. The glass panels cast a shadow onto a white limestone pavement suggesting the shape of a warship.

The Submariner Memorial - Designed by Paul Day

Close the Naval memorial is the Submariner Memorial. This is a 3500kg of bronze sculpted into a divided fin of a submarine with the lone figure of a submariner standing between the two halves looking to the surface. On one outer side of the fin is a frieze of families waiting the return of their loved ones and on the other fin a Churchill quote: "Of all the branches of men in the forces there is none which shows more devotion and faces grimmer perils than the submariners."

The memorial is on long low mound to give the idea of the rest of the boat just below the water. An interpretation board is sited by its 'starboard bow'.

The board has a QR code which links to this new Online Book of Remembrance gifted to the Submarine Family by the Friends of the RN Submarine Museum. **https://www.rnsubmusfriends.org.uk/submarine-book-of-remembrance/**

Continuing along Millennium Avenue I came across the Royal British Legions Poppy Memorial. All of the poppies on the memorial have been dedicated by loved ones to those they have lost. Anyone can have a poppy planted for a year by visiting **https://donations.britishlegion.org.uk/in-memory-dedication/oneoff?pm=true&seg=XAYW3F**

The Royal British Legion Poppy Memorial

Next up was the impressive Royal Airforces Association Remembrance Garden. The garden is dedicated to all those who selflessly devoted their lives to their country. The statue is made from over 1,000 individually crafted feathers and stands three metres high on a black marble plinth.

Royal Airforces Association Remembrance garden

At the end of Millennium Avenue is the South Atlantic Medal Association Memorial. The memorial was unveiled on the 20th May 2012. Its design is very similar to the memorial at the Blue Beach Cemetery in San Carlos, where some of the British casualties are buried.

The design is a curved wall of Cotswold Stone bricks with a central dedicatory tablet, headed by Armed Forces emblem, and flanked by six smaller tablets with emblems of the Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Army to the left, and RAF, Royal Fleet Auxiliary and Merchant Navy to the right.

The South Atlantic Medal Association Memorial

All photographs - Steve Bexon / BH Asscociates

The Armed Forces Memorial

No Visit to the NMA would be complete without seeing the Armed Forces Memorial. This national memorial is a focus for remembrance and was created to recognise all who have given their lives in the service of the country since the end of the Second World War.

The memorials creator architect Liam O'Connor was inspired by the ancient burial mounds of our ancestors resembles monuments like Silbury Hill.

The memorial sits on a six metre high earth mound, 100 metres wide at the base reducing to 50 metres at the top, which is based on early British barrows.

The two bronze scuptures, the central bronze wreath

They died serving their country we will remember them

The Stretcher Bearers sculpture shows a wounded serviceman borne by comrades, watched by grieving family

At the top stands a 43 metre diameter stone structure. Two curved walls and two straight walls are made from bricks covered with Portland stone panels. At the centre of the Memorial are two bronze sculptures created by Ian Rank-Broadley.

A gap has been left in the two southern walls of the Memorial. The structure is aligned so that at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the sun's rays will stream through the gap to illuminate the centre of the Memorial. The light can be seen on the picture left.

The Gates sculpture group shows the body of a fallen serviceman taken into the arms of his comrades, and a figure pointing through the Great Gates of Eternity to Paradise

The names of the 16,000 service personnel are carved into the Memorials stone walls, with space for an additional 15,000 names to be added. The names of all those killed in combat, in training, on peacekeeping operations and on exercise are included. It includes the dead from operations in Palestine, Korea, Malaya, the Falkland Islands, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Northern Ireland.

The names on the hundreds of panels that you will see are recorded in the same way, first by year, then by service – Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force, then in date order. Colleagues who died in the same incident are remembered together. Over 15,000 names were carved by computer when the memorial was created. There is space on the empty panels for 15,000 more names. Since 2007, the names have been engraved by hand on the memorial on a yearly basis. Its an immensely impressive memorial to see and walk around.

For those who may struggle with the steps getting to the top of the memorial, don't worry. There is a pathway that spirals around the memorial all the way to the top which is 2m wide for wheelchair access. There is also a golf buggy at the base of the memorial for anyone who needs extra assistance.

The view back to the Remembrance Centre from the Armed Forces Memorial - a 5 minute walk.

The Millennium Chapel

Aside from just walking around and discovering things for yourself, there are numerous daily activities that you are able to do. Each day in the Millennium Chapel there is an act of remembrance. Visitors need to be seated by 10.50 where an Act of Remembrance and a moving two-minute silence will be observed.

All photographs - Steve Bexon / BH Associates

The remembrance Centre courtyard adjacent to the restaurant

The Landtrain guided tour with commentry

The Remembrance Centre Restaurant

The Main entrance

You can join one of the arboretums expert guides on a walk to discover stories behind some of the memorials that include: Far East Prisoners Of War Talk - Armed Forces Memorial Talk - Shot At Dawn Talk. Talks can be booked at the centre reception and cost £4 per person and start at 11.15 each day.

Land Train Tours on the arboretum can be booked. Each tour has a pre-recorded commentary that plays as you visit the various memorials. It takes around 50 minutes to complete a tour and costs £7 per adult, £3.50 for children or £17 for a family ticket of 2 adults and 2 children. The land train tours run between February and December but its worth checking with the NMA before travelling.

Buggy Tours are also available with one of the guides to accompany you. The tours take 40 minutes and cost the same as the Land-train tour.

Tailor Made Tours are for groups of up to seven people and include a personal tour with your own buggy and host with a two-course meal in the restaurant. These tours need to be booked in advance with the NMA.

Christmas events consist of illuminated walks of the grounds with an outdoor trail activity which is perfect for families. There is also a festive dining menu in the restaurant.

At the end of my visit I popped into the restaurant for a tea ans a mince pie and to warm up from being out in the cold.

My next visit will be with my wife and daughter and we will be taking our dog for a nice walk around the grounds. Ill just wait for it to warm up a bit first.

Editor

How to get to the NMA

Location

The National Memorial Arboretum
Croxall Road
Alrewas
Staffordshire
DE13 7AR

Telephone

01283 245 100

Email

info@thenma.org.uk

Website

www.thenma.org.uk

BNTVA memorial location What 3 words

canines.divide.reissued

ArthurStock / Shutterstock

Send us your Story

If you have a story that you would like to share and be published in exposure magazine then get in touch with us.

If you have something to say that would be of interest to our reader then why not write about it and send it to us. It doesn't necessarily have to be about your service or the tests, any experience or information you think would be interesting to the community would be welcome.

You may run Marathons, help with a local charity, or walk the Pennines or grow prize winning vegetables, whatever you do we would like to hear about it.

Don't worry if you don't have a computer we will accept hand written stories and type it for you. Don't worry about spelling or grammar we can check that and amend it too. If you have photographs that accompany your story you can send those and we will scan them and send back the originals to you.

If you do have a computer and would prefer to send us your story and pictures via email the details are below.

This is your chance to have your voice heard and share your experience with the rest of the community. Each magazine story also goes onto the exposure.press website which is then shared across social media for even more people to read it.

Once published a copy of the magazine is sent to the British Library and held in their archives, immortalising your story for future reference.

Email

editor@exposure.press

Or write to

The NCCF
PO Box 8244
Castle Donington
DE74 2BY

If you are unsure or need help or advice please call:

0115 888 3442

Please clearly leave your name and telephone number and we will get back to you.

Wikimedia Commons / Royal Engineers construct the airfield runway on Christmas Island

Barabas Attila / Adobe Stock

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Making that difference

Healthcare and Welfare Support for Veterans

All veterans and their family members and carers can access a range of specialist healthcare and support created to provide treatment and care for many different problems.

Who counts as a veteran?

You are a veteran if you have served in the armed forces for at least one day either through National Service or traditional enlistment.

Waiting lists and priority treatment

If you have a health problem not caused by your time in the armed forces, you are likely to go on a waiting list before you can get the full treatment from the NHS. This is the usual process for NHS treatment.

If you have a health problem caused by your time in the armed forces, you are also likely to go on a waiting list. However, you may be able to get NHS care quicker than usual through priority treatment for veterans.

Priority treatment is not guaranteed. Getting priority treatment depends on your situation and the nature of the treatment required.

This includes:

- If other people have a higher clinical need than you
- The urgency of your treatment
- The type of treatment you need.

Check with your GP if you can get priority treatment for the NHS service you need.

As a veteran you should make your GP aware of your service and ask it be noted in your medical file that you are an armed forces veteran. This can help should you need medical treatment in the future.

Support for physical health problems caused by service

The Defence Medical Service and National Health Service are dedicated to treating and supporting veterans who have physical health problems caused by their time in the armed forces.

Veterans Trauma Network (VTN)

The Veterans Trauma Network (VTN) is an NHS service that provides specialist care and treatment to veterans who have physical health problems as a result of their time in the armed forces. The VTN does not provide veteran mental health support, but works alongside Op COURAGE: the Veterans Mental Health and Wellbeing Service.

How the Veterans Trauma Network can support you?

The VTN works closely with many organisations, including:

- GP surgeries
- Specialist NHS services
- Military and non-military charities

The VTN can support you by:

- Providing personalised treatment within the NHS
- Treating you through military and civilian clinicians who understand the military environment and specialise in the type of physical health problems you have
- Helping families and carers of veterans with physical health problems access appropriate support services.

Who the Veterans Trauma Network can help

The VTN can support you:

- If you have a physical health problem of any type or severity
- If your physical health problem is a result of your time in service
- No matter when your physical health problem first appeared
- No matter when you left the armed forces.

Accessing the Veterans Trauma Network

Ask a GP to refer you to the VTN. They can do this by emailing **england.veteranstraumanetwork@nhs.net** (GP's can refer you even if you were not medically discharged.)

Veterans Welfare Service (VWS)

The Veterans Welfare Service (VWS) provides one-to-one support to all veterans, their dependants and carers. It is run by Veterans UK, which is part of the Ministry of Defence (MoD). The focus of the service is to provide assistance following a change in situation that may have resulted in a welfare need, such as:

- Leaving the services
- Bereavement
- Changes in disablement.
- Changes affecting income or finances
- Changes affecting housing.

Who do they assist:

- Veterans (anyone who has Served in HM Armed Forces, regular or reserves including National Servicemen), their families and dependants.
- Anyone who is eligible for, or in receipt of compensation from the Armed Forces
- Compensation Scheme (AFCS) or the War Pensions Scheme (WPS).
- Service personnel who are to be medically discharged or have an enduring welfare requirement on discharge.
- Bereaved families of service personnel.

How the VWS can help:

Help and guidance can be given through either telephone contact or face to face via a national network of Welfare Managers. Initial contact should be made by telephone to one of the Veterans Welfare Centres. Once contact has been made, a Welfare Manager will be allocated to become the individual's caseworker

Contact the VWS

Centurion (London, SE and SW England) Tel **02392 702 232** Email: **Veterans-UK-VWS-South@mod.gov.uk**

Kidderminster (South and Central Wales, Midlands and East England) Tel **01562 825 527** Email: **Veterans-UK-VWS-Wales-Mid@mod.gov.uk**

Norcross VWC (NW England, Yorkshire and Humber, North Wales and IOM) Tel **01253 333 494** Email: **Veterans-UK-VWS-North@mod.gov.uk**

Glasgow (Scotland, NE England, NI and ROI) Tel **01412 242 709** Email: **Veterans-UK-VWS-Scot-NI@mod.gov.uk**

Veterans UK helpline - Freephone (UK only): **0808 1914 2 18** Email: **Veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk**

Veterans Gateway

The Veterans' Gateway service is the first point of contact for all Tri-Service veterans, and their families. Its expert content covers welfare areas: housing, employment, finances, living independently, mental wellbeing, families and communities, and physical health.

Its unique support (both in the UK and abroad) is funded by the Armed Forces Covenant. And supported by charities and organisations and individuals, including the National Health Service (NHS), the Government of the United Kingdom (GOV.UK) and the Ministry of Defence (MOD).

Tel: **08088 021 212**
Web: **www.veteransgateway.org.uk**

Support for disabled veterans

There are many different NHS, MoD and charity services that are dedicated to providing support and treatment to veterans with disabilities.

Disablement Service Centres

If you lost a limb during your service, Disablement Service Centres (DSCs) can offer you specialist prosthetic and rehabilitation support. You can be referred to a DSC during your regular medical treatment if the service will benefit you. Ask your GP if you want more information about DSCs.

Veteran's Prosthetic Panel (via DSC)

If you need to apply for funding for a high-quality prosthetic limb, DSCs can apply to the Veteran's Prosthetic Panel on your behalf. You cannot apply for funding by yourself.

For the application to be considered, you must have either:

- Lost a limb during military service
- Lost a limb due to an injury caused in service.

Blesma

Blesma offer advice and support to veterans who have lost a limb, the use of a limb, an eye or the use of sight during military service. They work closely with NHS and MoD services for disabled veterans and can refer you to useful services. They also offer advice on financial benefits and support as well as help you find appropriate community groups.

Blesma, The Limbless Veterans,
115 New London Road,
Chelmsford,
CM2 0QT

Tel: **020 8590 1124**
Email: **info@blesma.org**
Web: **www.blesma.org/blesma-bsos/**

Blind Veterans UK

Veterans with sight loss can get help and support from Blind Veterans UK. They offer a range of support, including rehabilitation services, practical advice and emotional support.

Blind Veterans UK
126 Fairlie Road
Slough SL1 4PY

Tel: **0300 111 22 33** Email: **supporter.services@blindveterans.org.uk**

Other Organisations Offering Help

There are many organisations that offer financial advice and support to veterans and their families or carers. This includes charities dedicated to supporting the armed forces community.

Veterans UK

Veterans UK is part of the MoD. They provide free support for serving personnel, reservists, veterans and their families, including:

- An urgent helpline
- Running the Veterans Welfare Service and Defence Transition Services
- Helping access support from government, local and charity organisations
- Funding compensation scheme payments.

Find more information about Veterans UK

Veterans UK
Ministry of Defence, Norcross
Thornton Cleveleys
FY5 3WP

Email: **veterans-uk@mod.gov.uk** Tel: Freephone (UK only): **0808 1914 218**
Web: **www.gov.uk/government/organisations/veterans-uk**

Combat Stress

For serving personnel, veterans and armed forces families. The charity Combat Stress provides self-help advice on its website. They offer mental health helplines for 24/7 confidential advice and support Combat Stress website **www.combatstress.org.uk**

Veterans and their families helpline: **0800 138 1619** You can also text on **07537 173 683** and email **helpline@combatstress.org.uk**

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS) provides practical and emotional support to military personnel, veterans, their families and other entitled civilians when they're in hospitals, rehabilitation or recovery centres.

DMWS
The Old Stables
Redenham Park
Andover, Hampshire
SP11 9AQ

Tel: **01264 774 000**
Email: **info@dmws.org.uk**
Web: **https://dmws.org.uk/**

The DMWS also provide a UK-wide telephone welfare support service via their DMWS National Response Service. This enables them to reach those needing support who are receiving treatment in a hospital where there is not a DMWS welfare officer in residence.

National Response Service
Tel: **0800 999 3697**
Email: **referrals@dmws.org.uk**

Royal British Legion

The Royal British Legion gives advice and support on wellbeing on its website and through its community branches. For additional advice and support, the Royal British Legion also have an online chat and helpline that is open 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

Web: **www.britishlegion.org.uk**
Tel: **08088 028 080**

SSAFA

SSAFA understand the unique demands of service life, whether it's on UK soil or overseas. Support is available for people at any stage in their military career; from the youngest recruit to the oldest veteran – no one's service is ever forgotten. We have more than 4,000 trained SSAFA volunteers who provide personalised, face-to-face support to those in their local area. Whatever you are facing – from debt or addiction to mental health problems – our Forces and their families can rely on SSAFA and their personalised support to help them through it, for as long as it takes to get that person's life back to where they want it to be. To get support, call their helpline or use their online chat Monday to Friday, 9 to 5.30pm.

Web: **www.ssafa.org.uk**
Tel: **0800 260 6767**

STOLL

For veterans who struggle to live independently. STOLL are the leading provider of supported housing to vulnerable veterans. They provide affordable, high-quality housing and support services to enable vulnerable and disabled veterans to lead fulfilling, independent lives.

Tel: **020 7385 2110**
Email: **info@stoll.org.uk**
Web: **www.stoll.org.uk**

Togetherall

Togetherall is an online mental health support service that provides anonymous, round-the-clock online support, with trained counsellors available at all times. There's a supportive community and lots of free resources that all armed forces personnel, reservists, veterans and their families can use at any time.

Web: **https://togetherall.com/**

New online Armed Forces compensation service goes live

Veterans UK has launched a new online claim service to help people to access injury and illness compensation more easily. Responsible for administering compensation and pensions schemes for both serving personnel, veterans and their families. The new service is part of their commitment to modernising the services provided to the Defence community.

Before launching the service, the Veterans Modernisation Team had to successfully complete a Cabinet Office Beta Assessment and provide evidence to show they had met a 14-point service standard.

How will the new online service help customers?

Although the paper claim form can still be used if customers prefer, the online service has been developed entirely using a 'user needs' approach, identifying what users want and need and providing a digital solution. It has the following added benefits for customers:

- The online form takes less time to complete in comparison to the paper form
- The online form is more intuitive, meaning it only asks questions relevant to the individual's claim and is based on previous questions
- Individuals can submit multiple claims on one application
- There is an option to save progress and take a break
- It allows individuals easily upload supporting documents relevant to their claim
- The online form can be accessed via any internet device, including phones

> Our digital transformation and business innovation is fundamentally raising and meeting our customers' elevated expectations. This vital work elevates the business to a new level of effectiveness, heralding a new culture which is now fundamentally and profoundly changing our people and our processes. The services that the team have developed are agile, enhance the reputation of DBS but most importantly, they are demonstrably improving customer service.
>
> **Tom Stewart**

The Project

The Project began in 2019 following a review of the current, mostly paper-based, approaches to delivering their services and how digital enhancements could improve the customer experience. The online claim service was one of several initiatives, all of which have been completed including:

- Reviewing and re-writing the Veterans UK web pages on GOV.UK
- Providing voice-to-text software for our staff
- New iPhone technology for our Welfare Staff
- Introducing file barcoding and scanning/tracking service

DBS passed an Alpha assessment in July 2020 and have recently completed the Beta Assessment which involved producing 120 slides of evidence, a four-hour interview with an independent panel outside of DBS and giving evidence to illustrate responses.

This challenging assessment process ensures important Government transaction services are fit for purpose and DBS is delighted to have passed all required stages to be able to officially launch the digital form.

This achievement would not have been possible without the many DBS teams and individuals involved. Special thanks are also given to the charities and 1400 customers who volunteered to help.

You can access the new service at: **www.gov.uk/guidance/apply-for-armed-forces-compensation-or-a-war-pension**

Pension credits -

Boost your retirement income with a state top-up

Pension credit is a benefit aimed at retired people on low incomes and can be worth £1,000s a year. Plus, if you claim it you can access a whole raft of other benefits including council tax discounts and free TV licences for over-75s. However, about 800,000 eligible households don't claim – often because they don't know they can or that they need to.

What is a Pension Credit?

Pension credit is a benefit aimed at people over state pension age offering a top-up to their income. It's made up of two parts, and while some people get both, many can qualify for just one of the two:

Guarantee credit – this is the main part of pension credit, giving you a top-up of your weekly income to a minimum guaranteed level. For 2022/23, this is £182.60 a week if you're single, and £278.70 a week if you're in a couple.

Savings credit – for those who reached state pension age before April 2016, there's an extra boost available if you've made provision for your retirement via savings, work or a private pension. This gives you up to £14.48 a week if you're single, and £16.20 if you're in a couple. To qualify, you've got to earn above a threshold amount of £158.47 if you're single and £251.70 if you're in a couple.

To qualify for pension credit you must:

- Live in the UK – England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland
- Have reached state pension age
- Have a weekly income below £182.60 if you're single, or £278.70 if you're in a couple
- If you're in a couple, you'll BOTH need to have reached state pension age. You don't have to be married or in a civil partnership, you're considered a couple if you live together. For couples, one partner applies and then provides income and savings details for both partners.

Extra criteria for savings credit:

- To qualify for the savings element as well (if you're making a new claim) you also need to have reached 65 if you're a man, and 63 if you're a woman, before 6 April 2016 – the state pension ages back then
- You need to earn above the threshold amount of £158.47 if you're single, or £251.70 if you're in a couple
- However, if you're part of a couple and just one of you satisfies ALL of these conditions, you could still qualify for savings credit as a couple. You or your partner must:
  - Have been awarded savings credit before 6 April 2016.
  - Have remained entitled to savings credit at all times since 6 April 2016.

Check Entitlement and Claim

Pension credit is complex, so rather than trying to work out if you can get it, just get in touch online or by phone to see if you're eligible.

It only takes a few minutes and can be worth thousands.

If you're comfortable using a computer, the quickest way to find out if you qualify for pension credit is by using the Government's free pension credit calculator at this link: **https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator**

To do this, it's easiest if you have details of your current earnings, benefits and pensions to hand (for you and your partner if you live with them). It'll then give an instant estimate of how much you're due.

There are free Government helplines you can call up to talk it through. Again, it's best with details to hand, but if you've not got them or need help with that... don't stall, just call.

- England, Wales or Scotland. Pension Service helpline: 0800 99 1234 (8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)
- Northern Ireland. Pension Centre: 0808 100 6165 (9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday)

This article is abstracted from an original article by Rosie Hamilton published 28/11/22 on **https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/savings/pension-credit/**

Stop Spending Money!

Following on from our previous article on help with debt we look at the issue of spending and how to bring yours under control to manage your way out of debt.

Are you in debt?

If you are, and can't answer the question 'What are your debts from?' There's a problem. If you didn't buy, for example, a car or a conservatory, but you've used cards or loans to fill gaps, an ear-piercing alarm should ring.

Debt is fine if it is planned, rational, budgeted for and as cheap as possible. But if you consistently need to use credit cards to supplement your monthly spending, you have a problem. Failing to tackle this can have life-destroying consequences.

Do a budget to work out where you're WASTING cash

When the NCCF assess a person's financial position to help decide if they are unable to fund the measures needed to alleviate their particular issues, we are effectively creating a budget. Our applicants come from across the social scale, some feel they are comfortably wealthy whilst others seem to be living hand to mouth. When we draw out all the key things they have to spend their money on and compare that to their incomes the real picture emerges.

It is probably not surprising that many of our elderly veteran couples and even more widows are living on the cusp of debt. Despite this, the Veteran generation rarely slides into real debt, they were mostly schooled during the war years so are well aware of living within their means.

The situation makes an abrupt change when you get to members of the next generation, the 'boomers' as they are referred to nowadays.

If you are under retirement age you have grown up in a relatively safe protected society which has seen an explosion in credit availability and hard marketing of 'lifestyle essentials', which has created a 'want it, want it, must have it' culture.

Many people look at the shiny new thing and think 'why that's only £30 a month and it can be all mine'. This is how you start to spiral into debt! That £30 a month is, for however long it takes to pay off the purchase price plus the cost of borrowing. For many items by the time the credit is cleared that shiny thing is either in the back of a cupboard gathering dust or well over halfway through its planned service life.

Adding the next purchase to the £30 a month as it seems easy to buy is yet another step down the spiral. Before long you are putting a whole holiday on the card, 'well you deserve a break don't you?'. Then comes the crunch and you start using credit for essentials; the tank of fuel, a weeks shopping...

The slide into debt is so subtle in the current climate, everything is delicately stacked so if something like a hike in the mortgage rate or fuel prices comes along that gentle slide becomes a hurtling plunge.

The only way to take control is to realise what you do and don't have - make a budget!

Even if you think you are ok and don't really have any worries, doing a budget is really as important as a health check from a Doctor. You can find if something is going wrong in the early stages, you may even find you are doing well and can stash some cash in a decent investment for a real treat or to help the kids out.

There are many budget tools on the web. Money Saving Expert has some great tools and information. At the end of the day a budget is just a list of everything you have coming in and everything you have going out. Compare the two over a period of time, usually a year, and see what you do or don't have left. Doing a budget over a year allows you to see the impact of seasonal costs; Birthdays, Holidays, MOT and Servicing for the car and so on.

The next an most important thing in doing a budget is be realistic and honest with yourself. This is painful and hard! All the advertising hype and the way society encourages you all run contrary to being self honest.

Self Honesty - The Most Important Tool to Get Out of Debt

As we have said society and advertising twists your perception and stops you being really honest with yourself: Do you need that new mobile? What's wrong with driving around in the same car for another year if its working fine?

Pushing the facts to the back of your mind, however easy it seems, is not a solution. There is no magic 'Debt Fairy' that comes along and pays your bills at the end of the day. There is a burly court appointed Bailiff who levies on your once shiny new things and wrings even more cash out of you.

Worst case you kiss goodbye to your home. We have seen people deep in debt with nice new cars and mobile phones all on credit while they are not paying their rent or mortgage. This is a desperate situation to have got yourself into! Yes it is you that is responsible, if you are totally honest with yourself. Keeping a roof over your head is the most important thing you can do. People can help with food, clothes, transport and even holidays but they cant put a roof over your head.

A few more home truths

Realise the true cost of credit, earlier we looked at the £30 a month purchase. When you are doing your budget or considering buying something look carefully at the actual cost including all the interest you will have to fork out. With a long period loan extend your budget to see how the repayment will impact across its life.

One of the best examples of this is used cars, currently in the UK the average three year old car is selling for around £14,000. Lots of people go with the dealers credit offer rather than raise their own finance. Dealer HP credit is around 10.9%. Personal loan rate for a £15k loan over five years is 4.9%.

Straight away you can see there is a great difference in the interest rate so lets look at it in cash terms: £15k car over 5 years from a dealer is around £304 a month where a bank loan is £262. Doesn't seem that much more but that is actually your cash you are paying out.

Taken over the five years of the loan and you would have repaid: £18,221 on HP or £15,699 on a personal loan. That's a difference of £2,522 - Look at the car you want and put a basket of two hundred and fifty crisp new £10 notes on the front seat and that's what you are buying using a personal loan.

The other good thing about using a personal loan is that your car is not tied to the finance package.

This sounds great but after three years you will be tempted to buy another new car so its back to the bottom of the ladder you go again.

Wait one minute, have a good look at your old faithful motor, most of them will last in excess of 10 years now days. Spend a few quid on repairs and servicing and a boot full of one thousand eight hundred crispy new £10 notes could be yours. Now that's a deal changing amount of money.

Credit Cards, Store Cards = Debt Cards

One of the best con's the financial industry has pulled off it the Credit Card. It should actually be called a Debt Card. The only time you should use one is if you are going to clear the balance in full every month. You can get ones that give you cash back for this and you benefit from the purchase protection. Carrying debt over to the next month incurs interest and it quickly multiplies.

A Store Card is simply a Credit Card fixed to one particular retailer so they are an even worse option.

Stop spending on the card. Pay as much as you can back and get a personal loan to clear the balance. Once you have done that shred the card. Pay off the loan as quickly as you can.

Ways to Save Cash

Its not going to be easy but using your budget identify all the areas you can reduce spending, increase paying off debt and keep things manageable as you work toward solvency.

Money Saving Expert has published the following top tips to save cash:

Check if you're leaking money via unused subscriptions & payments

Many have costly subscriptions for gyms, streaming services, magazines, packaged bank accounts and more, yet rarely or never use them – or with time and home moves, forget about them altogether.

First, check for regular payments going out of your bank account for services you no longer use – then CANCEL them. You may even be able to get a refund.

Then take it up a notch and ask yourself if you REALLY need it - Even if you DO occasionally use that pricey gym/Spotify/Netflix subscription, if you're overspending right now, it may be a luxury you can't afford. Look for cheap alternatives – see Free Gym Passes, Free Music Streaming and Free Movies & Box Sets.

Block phone notifications and unsubscribe emails from shops, takeaway services and more

You can stop notifications in your phones settings and unsubscribe using the link at the bottom of most emails. It's also worth unsubscribing from marketing emails, if you find yourself tempted by sales and discounts. It's worth noting this may mean you miss out on the odd exclusive discount code for a planned purchase. An alternative is to set up a separate email account, just for marketing emails... provided you have the self-control to avoid scrolling through these until you need them.

Stop spending so much on food – plan, plan, plan

Set a budget, write a food plan and take a calculator with you when you go food shopping. And never go when hungry – it's too tempting to overbuy. By going just once a month you'll be less likely to buy on impulse and for convenience. Top up with milk and bread in between.

Leave debit/credit cards at home

Only take the cash you absolutely need with you and don't have a cash card with you to take extra out of the hole in the wall. That way, however tempted you are, you have to walk away in the end.

Work out what it costs in work time

If you're tempted by an impulse buy, work out how long it would take you to earn that money in hours worked, so if you get paid £10 an hour and it costs £150, that's an extra 20 hours you'll need to work to fund it, taking into account taxes.

Focus on your debt/savings

Work out how much longer it will take you to pay off your debt or increase your savings if you give in. To put it into perspective, if you're saving for a holiday, think "that costs one day in Miami"...

Sleep on it

If you really want something, sleep on it for a night. You may find it doesn't seem as attractive the next day.

Avoid temptation – don't go shopping

If you don't go to the shops, you can't be lured by nice things. Stay at home – simple as that. Of course, you may also need to stay off your phone, laptop or computer so you aren't tempted to shop online. If you like to while away your leisure time by going shopping, do something else instead. Keep busy and you won't be tempted to get out your wallet.

For every new thing you buy, try to get rid of an old thing

If you really want to buy something new, see if you can sell something you don't use any more to cover the cost.

Make a list and stick to it

Always make a shopping list before you go to the stores and see tempting goodies. Then once you're out – don't stray from it.

Try online grocery shopping

If you can't stick to a shopping list, try ordering your shopping online. It's easier to stick to a budget as you get a running total, plus you won't be tempted by the sights and sounds in the shop.

Keep a list of your debts/savings targets in your wallet

Every time you open your wallet for a potential purchase you'll be reminded of why you shouldn't be spending money.

Get free sofas, coffee machines, baby clothes & more on Freecycle

If you really need to replace something, try giveaway sites Freecycle or Facebook Marketplace, or take up offers of hand-me-downs from friends and family.

Challenge yourself

Make it a challenge to come up with creative nights out or in on a budget. It could be a picnic in the park or a movie night at home. Or if there's something particular you want to buy, see how quickly you can raise the funds through extra means.

Take a packed lunch to work – keeps you out of harm's way

It's an old one but a good one. Making a packed lunch doesn't just stop you being tempted by expensive sandwich shops, it also keeps you from the pub or easy trips out with friends where money flows out.

Start a new hobby

Spend time on a new (free) activity like running or do some volunteer work. This leaves less time for spending, you can learn something for free, such as a language, Open University courses, history through virtual museum tours and more.

Create magical holiday memories with the kids for FREE

You don't need to shell out a load of cash to give your kids the perfect summer hols or Christmas experience. Money Saving Expert has plenty of tips and tricks to help you create magical family memories for free: **https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/team-blog/2019/07/tricks-for-summer-magic/**

Pay yourself pocket money

Set up another account for bills and use this to make sure all your bills are paid. With the money left over you can pay yourself a set amount which is yours to spend as you like. Stash your shrapnel to save
Stick loose change in a savings jar. You'll be less likely to break a note to spend and once the change has built up, pay it into your account or off a credit card.

Keep a debt diary

Write a note of when you're likely to overspend. If you can identify trends that lead to overspending you might be able to prevent them or vent in some other way.

Make your own at home

Whatever your vice is, whether it's pizza, beer or frothy cappuccinos, try making it at home for a fraction of the cost.

Take the 'No-Spend Day' challenge

Once or twice a week have a day where you spend nothing other than budgeted-for things. Quite often just spending once can break the cycle for the rest of the day.

Stop wasting food

Are you always throwing out food that's gone off? Plan the weeks meals, only buy what you need and store any surplus properly.

Take the Next Step

If you have got this far then you are well on the road to clearing your debts and enjoying a life without worrying about money. Getting here means you have been brutally honest with yourself and started to develop habits to avoid the wrong sort of debt.

Congratulations! Now you really have nothing to loose so go see a debt advisor.

This article is abstracted from an original article by Sarah Monro and Jenny Keefe published 18/03/22 on **https://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/stop-spending-budgeting-tool/**

NMA Commemorative Event

In early November the NCCF were invited to attend the National Memorial Arboretum to mark the service and contribution of the Nuclear Veterans of the United Kingdom.

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Defense Secretary Ben Wallace

Representatives of the Navy, Army and Air Force

NCCF Trustee Ian Hall lays a flower on behalf of the NCCF

The Event took place at the National Memorial Arboretum on Monday 21st November 2022. Upon arrival we made our way to the Aspects building to attend a welcome reception where tea and coffee were served.

At 11.30 we made our way to the BNTVA memorial with the Very Revd Dr Nicholas Frayling and officials from the NMA. Due to the wet weather the NMA had set up a series of adjoined covered areas to keep us sheltered during the event.

A little before the ceremony started the Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Defence Minister Ben Wallace, Veterans Minister Johnny Mercer and the Director for the Office of Veterans' Affairs Jessie Owen, made their way along Yeomanry Avenue towards the BNTVA Memorial.

With all attendees now assembled the **Very Revd Dr Nicholas Frayling**, BNTVA Chaplain, whose address Faith in our Veterans were very fitting words for such an occasion.

At this point we moved away from the printed programme and the **Director for the Office for Veterans' Affairs Jessie Owen** spoke and then introduced the **Prime Minister Rishi Sunak** who thanked the veterans for their service and announced that a commemorative medal would be given to test veterans. **The Rt Hon Ben Wallace MP** gave a special message of thanks to the contribution of the nuclear veterans.

The next part of the service were Reflections from Veterans and Descendants. The speakers were:

Sqn Ldr (Retd) John Bankier Robinson - AFC and Bar, FRAeS, RAF, Operation Grapple and Buffalo Veteran.

Steve Purse - Descendant of Maralinga Veteran.

John Morris - Operation Grapple Veteran.

Derriss Whiston - Descendant of Christmas Island RAF Veteran.

Sqn Ldr (Retd) Dr Robin Woolven Operation Grapple Veteran.

The Rt Hon Johnny Mercer MP Closed the ceremony and dignitaries followed by the attendees were invited to lay flowers on the memorial. Trustee Ian Hall laid a flower on behalf of the NCCF.

The Prime Minster met and greeted veterans and left for another appointment while we were invited for lunch at the Aspects Building. We had the opportunity to catch up with some of the veterans who had attended as well as Trustees of the BNTVA.

The Office for Veterans Affairs (OVA) will release more details in 2023 on the eligibility for the medal and how veterans can apply for it. As soon as we have this information we will publish it online and in the next issue of the magazine.

The website for the Office of Veterans' Affairs can be found at: **https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/office-for-veterans-affairs**

Steve Bexon / BH Associates

CHRC
Centre for Health Effects of Radiological and Chemical Agents

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Exposure Editorial Winter 2022

CHRC
Centre for Health Effects of Radiological and Chemical Agents

The Genetic and Cytogenetic Family Trio (GCFT) study remains an active body of work being undertaken by the CHRC. As many of you are aware, the study seeks to examine if there is any evidence to support there being a genetic legacy from participation at historical British nuclear test sites.

As previously highlighted, peer-reviewed manuscripts of parts of this study are being published (see below) and are also being made available in different formats through **www.chrc4veterans.uk**. We anticipate publication of further work, including those involving chromosomal analysis of veterans, to take place through 2023.

As part of the GCFT Study (previously known as Chromosomal study), we invited veterans who originally provided a blood sample, to provide a urine sample for the purpose of assessing for long-lived radionuclides that may be present in the body. The reason why we requested this is because veterans who were present at nuclear testing sites may have internalised radionuclides or other elements associated with nuclear testing within their bodies to the present day. If present, then bodily excretion of such atoms may be measurable by analysing the urine of veterans.

I am pleased to say we have now received all of the samples and they are currently being processed for analysis. Please note, as with the other parts of the study, we will not be reporting back to individuals who have taken part, but the results will form part of future publications which we can share after they have gone through the scientific peer review process.

We would like to say a big thank you to all those who have participated in all parts of the GCFT study by providing blood samples and to all those who have recently supported us by providing urine samples. We are truly grateful to all of you for your time and patience.

I would like to finish by wishing you all well and reminding you of our publications (below) and the 'Basic Information' series which is available as either flip-books or interactive versions, through our **Knowledge Hub** page on our website **www.chrc4veterans.uk**. Thank you again to all our volunteers who have contributed to all of our projects and published works. CHRC staff are contactable via email at **CHRC@brunel.ac.uk**.

To read the lay summaries and links to the published papers on the outcomes of our most recent studies.

British nuclear test veteran family trios for the study of genetic risk. **https://chrc4veterans.uk/articles/peer-reviewed-articles/11526-2/**

No evidence of increased mutations in the germline of a group of British nuclear test veterans **https://chrc4veterans.uk/articles/peer-reviewed-articles/11545-2/**

"Is that a coincidence?": Exploring health perceptions and the causal attributions of physical health conditions in British nuclear test veterans **https://chrc4veterans.uk/articles/peer-reviewed-articles/is-that-a-coincidence-exploring-health-perceptions-and-the-causal-attributions-of-physical-health-conditions-in-british-nuclear-test-veterans/**

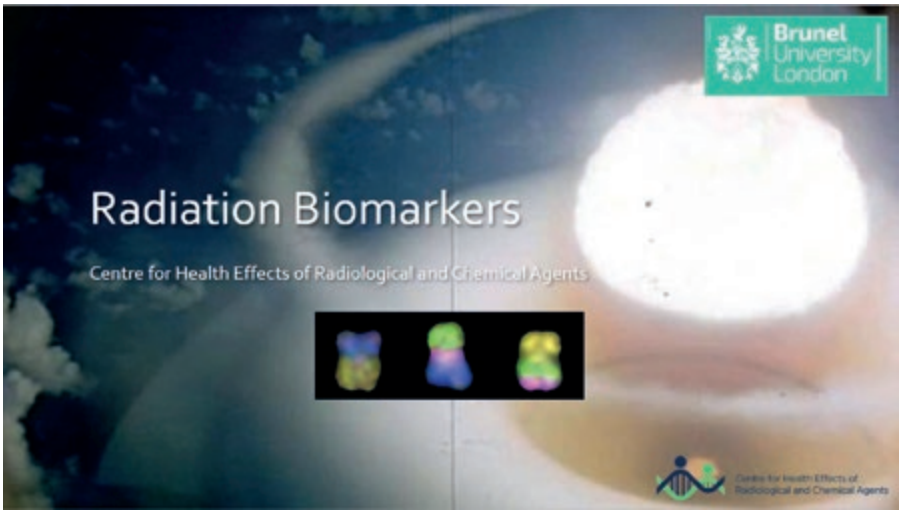
Exposure Worry: The Psychological Impact of Perceived Ionizing Radiation Exposure in British Nuclear Test Veterans. **https://chrc4veterans.uk/articles/peer-reviewed-articles/exposure-worry-the-psychological-impact-of-perceived-ionizing-radiation-exposure-in-british-nuclear-test-veterans/**

Dr Rhona Anderson, Director, CHRC

CHRC and Brunel University London STEM Bioradiation Sessions

In a previous edition of Exposure, we described a collaborative venture between CHRC and Brunel University London's Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) Centre, which was aimed at sharing CHRCs research with secondary school children.

For this, we undertook a pilot programme where we worked with 14-16-year-old pupils over a period of 6 weeks in their School, providing them with opportunities to learn about the historical aspects and personal stories of the nuclear testing programme, the potential adverse effects of radiation and, to get a flavour of CHRCs current research. This pilot was a huge success with both the School and the pupils engaged in the project and, in their development of valuable knowledge and skills.



Since the pandemic, our approach has changed slightly and this summer we re-designed our STEM Bio-radiation module for delivery as part of Brunel STEM Master classes. This is where students from local Schools come and attend specialised sessions.

Feedback from participating students and teachers was excellent and with their useful contributions we have developed training sessions on the effects of ionising radiation on DNA and the biomarkers of radiation exposure that scientists use to investigate past exposures which will be available for scheduling into the ongoing STEM Masterclass and Summer School sessions.

The potential reach in sharing nuclear test veteran's stories and CHRCs research is increasing through this.

The CHRC hopes that these sessions will provide an important insight into the British nuclear testing during the Cold War, the stories and concerns of veterans, and the effects of ionising radiation exposure.

We also hope they may spark an interest in radiation biology and radiation protection, and that these young students may consider careers in science and radiation biology.

From academic research to audio drama:

The impact of nuclear testing on wellbeing, ageing, and identity within the British Nuclear Test Veteran community.

Steve Bexon / BH Associates

Dr Amy Prescott

This doctoral research, undertaken in 2017-2021, by Dr Amy Prescott explored the role of cultural, community, leisure and physical activities on quality of life among British veterans. The primary aim was to understand the complex ways cultural, physical, and/or leisure activities create meaning which may contribute to improving overall health and wellbeing. To do this, twenty-nine members of the community were recruited over two phases of life-history interviews. For context, a life history is the telling/recounting of a string of events; it speaks to a turning point in one's life. Reflecting on the past provides an opportunity to relate events to social contexts and weave personal experiences within the wider social fabric.

Importantly, these experiences and events are not understood as some timeless phenomenon, but are deeply located in time and space. Given the lack of academic knowledge of the BNTV community, it was pertinent that important experiences be captured and explored. The first round of interviews was conducted over the telephone, while the second round was mainly conducted in the homes of the participants in the summer of 2019.

After a period of extensive immersion in the data (listening and relistening to the audio recordings, transcribing them, re-reading), it became clear that the words of the BNTV community had to be shared through storytelling. Sitting in the middle of the fact and fiction continuum is creative nonfiction (CNF); this method is described as being based on real people and capturing the real events described during the interview process. Using CNF allows articulation of the BNTVs' experiences and the deeper meanings they had attached to them; overall, showing the reader the meaning of these experiences rather than just telling them.

Three stories were developed and titled: **An Unlikely Meeting**, **In Sickness and in Health**, and **Age is Just a Number**.

Our work showcases the value of CNF for challenging the concept of truth and understanding lived experiences of marginalised groups. We argue that CNF provides a rigorous and systematic method for the creation of authentic stories which may have never been voiced before.

Summaries of the three Creative non-fiction stories

Image Pexels Flickr

An Unlikely Meeting

On most days, usually around midday, Henry ventures into a café on a busy high street to read the newspaper, have a cup of tea, and eat a slice of lemon cake – his favourite. Today is the day that he decides to wear his blazer with the BNTVA emblem sewn on. He's never worn it there before. The café's owner, John, spots this and immediately recognises it. John informs Henry that every day at 1 o'clock, another British nuclear test veteran, Sam, comes into the café for a coffee and a piece of cake. In this story, two strangers meet by chance and engage in hours of conversation about their experiences of being part of the nuclear testing programme sixty years ago and life in the forces, love and loss, their ageing bodies, loneliness and feeling like outsiders. Over tea and cake, one national serviceman and one naval officer put the world to rights.

https://chrc4veterans.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/AN_UNLIKELY_MEETING_V4.mp4

Image George Hodan Publicdomainpictures

In Sickness and in Health

Life for Bernard and Gladys is difficult. Four years ago, Bernard lost his ability to walk, drive, and enjoy his retirement. He lost his independence. Every day he feels like a burden on his wife for having to taking care of him. In sickness and health, that's what Gladys reminds him. He, at this point, feels as though he's just existing. He blames the radiation he was exposed to while being part of the nuclear tests, yet the government are not interested in helping. Gladys too, is struggling. Not having any help is isolating and the constant lifting and pushing causes her body to ache. Enough is enough, she thinks. Gladys makes an appointment for Bernard to see the local doctor, not that the NHS care, he says. At the same time, in the same GP surgery, Muriel, visits her doctor for a routine check-up. The conversation quickly turns to the passing of her veteran husband, causing the doctor to ask her, have you ever felt lonely? Muriel does feel lonely, but how will having a hobby help?

https://chrc4veterans.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/IN_SICKNESS_AND_IN_HEALTH_V4.mp4

Image by wirestock on Freepik

Age is Just a Number

In Little Hamwell, a quaint countryside village, Percy and Dawn are key members of the community. For thirty years, they owned and run the post office – Percy was also the village postman. They then decided to sell it, retire, and spend more time together. That was the plan anyway. Instead, they have both never been busier; they do village transport for the older members of the village, set up and organize church events, visit people in care homes...their list of jobs is endless! As Dawn would say, why sit indoors, watch TV and moan at each other? Just as they are setting up the church hall for the Monday group exercise, bingo, and gardening club, they meet Jean. Jean has only lived in Little Hamwell for a month; she had moved there to be closer to her daughter after her husband died last year. Although her daughter wanted her to move so she wouldn't be alone, Jean now has no one in the village she knows. Percy and Dawn can't wait to show her that keeping busy and making new acquaintances will be more important than ever.

https://chrc4veterans.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/AGE_IS_JUST_A_NUMBER_V4.mp4

From story to audio drama: creating impact

Members of the Brunel Older People's Reference Group (BORG)

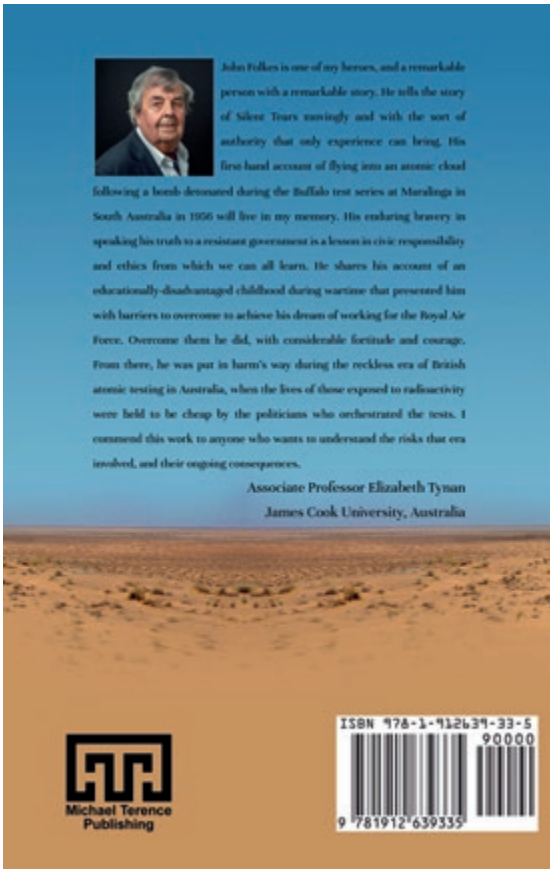
The three creative non-fiction stories became the foundation for the creation of three audio dramas as a medium for sharing the lived experiences of leisure, community, personal relationships, loneliness, and physical activity in later life.

Through collaboration with Squeaky Pedal (a multi-award-winning independent film production company), Alex Perry (scriptwriter), Julie Whittaker (CHRC centre manager), and members of the Brunel Older People's Reference Group (BORG), three dramas were scripted and recorded in May 2022. In the style of 'The Archers', each drama features three to four characters and focuses on a specific community issue. These are available to listen to on the CHRC website **https://chrc4veterans.uk/knowledge-hub/11656-2/**.

Over the summer of 2022, Amy attended and presented at three academic conferences. Amy's presentations featured playing the audio dramas to gauge the response from scholars working in a range of disciplines. The feedback received was overwhelmingly positive; moreover, many left the sessions with an understanding of a group they had not come across before.

New Book – Silent Tears

The Life and Times of a Nuclear Test Cloud-Chaser – John Folkes



Synopsis

My book Silent Tears is a true story never told before born out of my personal experience as a nuclear cloud chaser during the 1956 British nuclear trials in South Australia at a testing site in a remote desert area called Maralinga.

For many years I have had thoughts of guilt about surviving where so many innocent tri-service young men did not and has played on my mind ever since. Silent Tears is a modest record compared to the scale of the operation but is a voice for the many who have not lived to tell the tale for themselves of the harmful radiation exposure they were subjected to and the subsequent health issues they and in many cases, their family has suffered and died from.

It is in their memory and unrecognised service to their Country that I dedicate this book Silent Tears.

John Folkes

Johns book was published on the 24th of October 2022 and is available from Amazon as:

Silent Tears: The Life and Times of a Nuclear Test Cloud-Chaser

Paperback - £9.99
Kindle e-book - £5.99

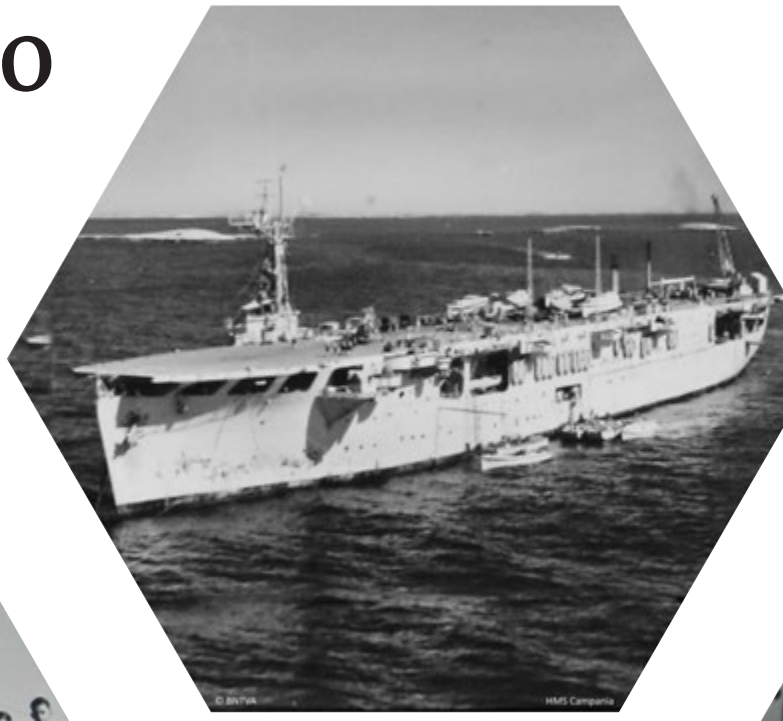
ISBN 978-1800944299

If you search for the ISBN number in Google it will bring up a link to the book on the Amazon.

We have been asked by a couple of veterans who have written books on how to get their work published, so in the next issue of exposure, we will be writing a guide on the options you have whether it be self publishing or through a publisher.

Editor

Plym to Pamlico Exhibition



©BNTVA HMS Campania

©BNTVA Maralinga atomic participants invloved with Kittens and Tims, Minor trials conducted from April 1955. Dr Dowson, British Scientist in charge of his team (fourth from the left second row from the front).

'Plym to Pamlico' is a unique exhibition which commemorates the anniversary of Churchill's first atomic test, initially referred to as Operation Havoc, later renamed Operation Hurricane; this became the first Commonwealth atomic test.

The atomic bomb was placed aboard the target ship HMS Plym and detonated at the Monte Bello Islands on 3rd October 1952.

The atmospheric testing programme was developed and led by Dr William Penney of Tube Alloys and the Manhattan Project.

The tests were attended by the British Army, Royal Navy, Royal Air Force, Royal Fleet Auxiliary, Merchant Navy, members of the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) and civilians. 21,357 men participated in addition to military forces from around the world.

Their duties ranged from building bases in desert conditions to flying through radioactive plumes directly after detonations.

British servicemen were present at atomic testing sites at the Monte Bello Islands, Emu Field and Maralinga, Australia.

In 1957, Penney tested new thermonuclear devices by balloon and airburst and at Malden Island and Christmas Island in the Pacific Ocean. UK service personnel also participated in foreign testing programmes around the world, for example Operation Brigadoon (Dominic) 1962.

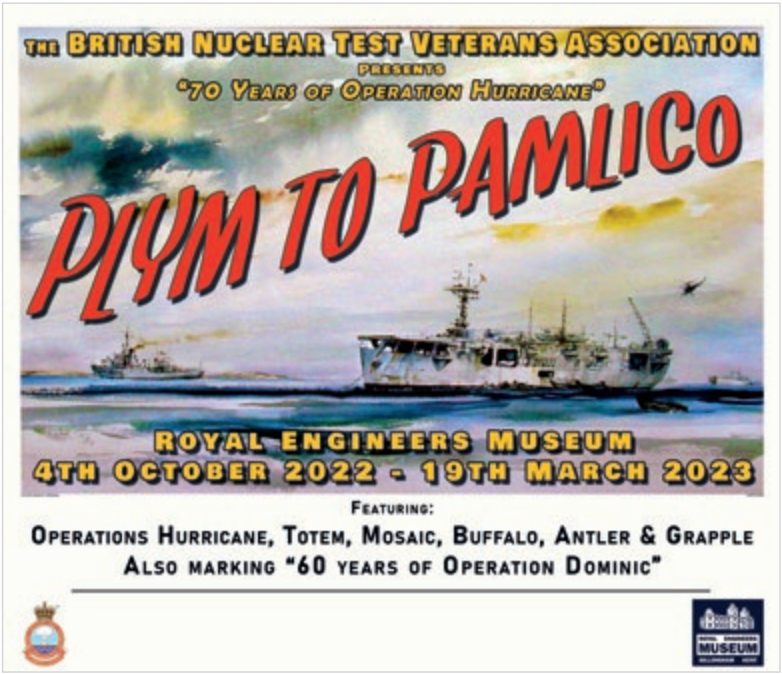
2022 also marked the 60th anniversary of Operation Dominic (otherwise known as Brigadoon or Joint Task Force 8), Pamlico was the final United States atmospheric test at Christmas Island.

British servicemen were present during the 25 American nuclear tests at this location between April and July 1962 and were familiar with the countdown from "Mahatma" over the Tannoy system. This included the 'Frigate Bird' shot, the only live nuclear test of the new Polaris missile.

This exhibition looks at items from the men who bore witness to Britain becoming the 3rd Nuclear Superpower, throughout the atmospheric nuclear testing period. This is their stories from one of the most compelling periods of modern history.

©Lt Cdr Julian Howard Antiflash gear issued to the crew of HMSZS Roitti

©BNTVA William Penney arriving at the EMU Claypan



This exhibition is collated by the British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association (BNTVA), which was established in 1983 to gain recognition and restitution for the British nuclear test veterans who participated in the British and American nuclear testing programmes. It includes many previously unseen items from the BNTVA Collections & Archives. The Association is thankful to its members for their kind donations towards the exhibition.

Wesley Perriman BA(hons) MA
Curator, BNTVA Collections & Archive

The exhibition is in the Forbes Gallery and runs till the 19th of March 2023. See the Royal Engineers website for details **https://www.re-museum.co.uk**

Royal Engineers Museum, Prince Arthur Rd, Gillingham, ME7 1UR

GUINEA PIGS – a hutch inspection

A couple of months ago, I wrote a piece about our upcoming production of GUINEA PIGS, a new play highlighting the emotional and physical legacy of Britain's nuclear tests.

Well, we did it! GUINEA PIGS had its premiere at The Space in London as part of hugely encouraging 5-night launch.

Putting your own creative work out there for public scrutiny is extremely exposing. As actors we do it all the time; right from drama school where for three years of training we are constantly scrutinised, right through to the rejection of casting after casting for the entirety of our careers. We get pretty robust. But GUINEA PIGS was exposing on a whole other level.

It was the first time I have ever written a full-length play, let alone produce it, perform in it and do every other job including fund-raising, marketing, design, sound design, tea-maker, diplomatic relations and agony aunt. Added to this the semi-autobiographical nature of the play and its deeply personal subject matter to not only myself and my family but also to the whole of the nuclear community - I was not only exposing myself as an actor and writer within the creative context but also to scrutiny from fellow test veteran families. To call it intense is an under-statement!

The seeds for GUINEA PIGS had developed from a 5-minute stand-up comedy set I performed in 2018, which then grew into a longer solo show. At this stage, it had nothing to do with the nuclear tests but as I wrote my focus shifted to my dad and the loss of him almost 20 years ago, an event that had a dramatic impact on my life. I eventually landed on thoughts around my teenage relationship with Dad and thus my relationship with the nuclear tests through my relationship with him.

Coral O'Malley - Elin Doyle

Gerry O'Malley - Jonny Emmett

One thing I've come to appreciate is how our test veteran community is a diverse group; through our personal experience, our values and beliefs, our politics, our relationship to the tests and with our parents - how all of that influences how we think and feel about it today and our opinion on what needs to happen next.

Take the medal campaign, for example; had Dad been issued with a medal when he was 19, I've no doubt he would have been as pleased as punch but if he was alive today, he'd be very much against. Too much water under the bridge, too many men gone before receiving it. I feel the same way. But I also recognise and respect there are many others who will draw great comfort from receiving a medal. Like I said, we are a diverse group.

I knew that in one play I couldn't possibly attempt to speak for all of us and so I wasn't going to even try. All I could do was shine a light on the test veterans by telling my truth and my story about growing up with a nuclear test vet dad and about being a young girl who was witness to the impact the tests and the early days of the BNTVA struggle had on him. So that was the story I was going to tell, and it became GUINEA PIGS.

Out of respect for my family's privacy, I wrote an entirely fictional story about fictional characters whilst borrowing heavily from my parents' story and my own experiences. My dad was very similar to Gerry and also nothing like him, as I was very similar to younger Coral and also nothing like her.

All Photographs - Damian McFadden - www.damianmcfadden.com

Coral O'Malley with aunt Maureen - Caron Kehoe

The arts are an industry where people are hugely under-valued. We are often expected to work for free and when paid, it is low pay - so I had vowed early on that anybody involved in the play would be properly paid (and managed it for everyone but myself!) In doing so, I made a rod for my own back as this significantly increased the cost of production. There's a reason why one-person shows are so popular! It's also why my workload was so intense because I had to learn to do the roles I couldn't afford to pay.

In the spring we were programmed by The Space in London for its autumn season to coincide with the anniversary of Operation Hurricane. Having begun its life as a chapel in the old docklands of the Isle of Dogs, The Space is a lovely, characterful theatre and the team there are hugely supportive whilst running it on next to nothing - it's a little ramshackle and low-tech, though perfect for a low-key launch.

The only downside is its location and not having a natural local audience. It can be difficult to entice people there from other parts of London.

After 6 months of seriously hard work, what if we ended up performing to an audience of 2 people?

I'm incredibly grateful to work with some great professionals and very proud of what we achieved; Jonny Emmett playing Gerry, Caron Kehoe playing Aunty Maureen and brilliantly portraying a thousand other bit parts, Zoë Browne who collated costume, props and set, Kitty Van der Hoven our lighting and sound technician and Laura Kirman who stepped in as director at the eleventh hour and did a brilliant job.

I think it's fair to say we achieved what we set out to achieve:

We were able to get some press and social media interest and despite two days of national rail strikes and one night where the entire DLR (Dockland Light Rail) was down, we completely filled the theatre on all but one night. The Space bar manager was also very pleased – new writing pieces are generally much shorter and don't have an interval!

In the same house, we had former Greenham Common protesters and CND members along with test veterans and their descendants and members of the wider veteran community. We had people both for and against the nuclear deterrent, people in their 20s and 30s, as young as 15 and right up to the older generations. People who remembered the tests, people who remembered the 80s and people for whom both eras are part of a distant past from before they were born.

Some had never heard of the nuclear tests and were moved by the story and some audience members have been directly affected by the tests. This is exactly what I wanted – for the story to spread and for the nuclear community to feel seen. We're extremely grateful to the NCCF (Nuclear Community Charity Fund) who paid for a number of London-based members of the nuclear community to see the show.

The loveliest comment came from a woman whose father was on Christmas Island and died when she was just 15 years old. Now in her 60s, she had never before engaged with the nuclear test veteran community or campaign. Her words to me were, "I feel as though I know and understand my dad much better as a result of this play." She brought her family back to see the show, saying it was a piece of her history she had never discussed with them before.

Writing that makes me well up again. You see the power of theatre? That's why we do this. That's why the arts are important.

The play was also a huge learning curve and I have two main regrets that as a note-to-self will improve upon in future runs:

Firstly, as an actor I wasn't happy with my own performance. Ironically, it's the only thing I am actually qualified and trained for! I was just so busy with everything else all the way through that I just didn't have the space to do the character work I wanted to do and nail the role as I could have - I'm told this is a common problem for people who self-produce a full theatre or film production in which they are also performing.

Secondly, on our live-stream night we had a post-show Q&A that on review I wasn't happy with. Ceri McDade of the BNTVA had kindly agreed to participate and with some test veterans and descendants in the audience that night but they weren't given an opportunity to speak, which I deeply regret – especially as I can now see from the live-stream that some hands were raised to contribute. The topic of the Q&A went off at a tangent and it's clear in future that it needs an experienced hand to MC these things (and stop me from rambling on!)

Equally, some of the older veterans had difficulty hearing and I want to make sure the play is accessible to them.

The cost of captioning services for theatre is exorbitant and I had unsuccessfully applied for Arts Council Funding to cover this – but it's something I'll try to address moving forwards.

So what's next?

Well, a bit of a rest first! Then maybe some rewrites and in the new year, we will be looking at producing a national tour of GUINEA PIGS. That will need significant funding and producing a tour will be a massive piece of work, which I definitely won't be able to pull off on my own. But as it was always my ultimate aim for the play to be seen and for profile of the nuclear community to be raised across the UK and not just in London - watch this space.

Elin Doyle

All Photographs - Damian McFadden - www.damianmcfadden.com

If there is any justice, Guinea Pigs will be back on stage in the near future (5 stars)

Breaking the Fourth Wall

https://breaking-the-fourth-wall.com/2022/10/12/guinea-pigs-the-space-livestream-broadcast-review/

An absolute Gem (5 stars)

Dress Circle Reviews

https://www.dresscirclereviews.com/post/guinea-pigs-review

Always watchable and incredibly important

British Theatre Guide

https://www.britishtheatreguide.info/reviews/guinea-pigs-the-space-21405

Every element is considered, leaving the audience galvanised into an acute understanding of the injustice that still affects real people living today (4 stars)

The Reviews Hub

https://www.thereviewshub.com/guinea-pigs-the-space-london/

As soon as information regarding a Guinea Pigs national tour is available we will report it online and in the magazine.

CWI Fund
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Making that difference

exposure
The combined magazine for the nuclear community

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