



Welcome home The 1st Battalion Duke of Lancaster's Regiment

AFTER a two-year deployment in Cyprus, supporting UK operations and defending key UK Infrastructure abroad, The 1st Battalion The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment is now back in its ancestral home at Weeton Barracks, Preston.

The move back to the UK saw more than 500 service personnel and 222 families transported more than 3,000 miles back to their homes in the north west of England.

The operation took over a year of preparation, now 'back home' the Battalion has immediately sought to reconnect with its local area and has been busy settling its support network into the local communi-

ties. The welfare team of 1 LANCS has been especially pivotal in connecting the Battalion with local businesses and councils, providing opportunities for its soldiers and their families.

Already, the Battalion has been hosting and supporting a wide range of public engagements from attending sporting events to planned freedom parades in St Helens, Blackburn, Flyde and Workington.

After a long period of leave, the soldiers of 1 LANCS set to their first mission supporting the UK government in the rehousing Afghan refugees. 1LANCS are deployed to two independent sites and continue to support the home office in its mission to

assist Afghan nationals and their rehoming in the UK. This task is enduring and runs parallel to preparations for exercises and operations in 2025.



SEEDS SOWN AT BARRACKS

ON RETURNING to Weeton Barracks, The 1st Battalion Duke of Lancaster's Regiment found a new garden project had taken root.

In their absence, Roots to Branches Forest School Community Interest Company launched an Armed Forces Covenant- funded project to develop a New Force of Nature Wellness Garden on the site. The soldiers, and their families, were greeted by beds full of flowers, fruit and vegetables and a huge free barbecue – funded by a Lancashire County

Council grant – was held for the soldiers and Afghanistan community that also live on site.

Director Lisa Jones said: "Working with the Army Welfare Service (AWS), based at Weeton Barracks, we set up a forest school, and last summer we started thinking about things we could do on site. We developed the project, not just to introduce gardening, but also to create a community so that those based on the camp can take ownership of the project and feel a part of.

"Weeton is quite an isolated camp. Our original idea, just for gardening, has spiraled and now it is about growing a community. Where the garden is, the children walk through as they go to school so they see the flowers growing and watch the pumpkins getting bigger."

Contact rootstocranchesfs@gmail.com



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YOUR COVENANT AT WORK



LEST WE FORGET

ELEVEN veterans were left humbled after they walked in the footsteps of their forebears on an emotional four-day Battlefields tour of Northern France.

The experience was filled with sights and sounds, history and remembrance and all were moved by the final service at Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium. Members of Veterans In Communities, a charity which works throughout East Lancashire and Greater Manchester, had been planning a tour for the last four years, but the 80th anniversary of D-Day was the ideal opportunity.

They walked on Juno beach, where one of the veterans collected some sand and shells for VIC member Pat McEvoy, who subsidised his place. It was to be every bit as thought-provoking and hard hitting as they expected. They laid four wreaths with the last being at Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium, when Pioneer Corps veteran Phil Speddy paraded the VIC Standard while a pipe band played.

For Ray Sharkey, Scots Guard veteran, the most important part was visiting Pegasus Bridge as it was critical to defeating the Nazi army. Ray said: "Seeing that was second to none as it was so pivotal." Further trips are planned for veterans to the First World War Battlefields and Normandy Beaches. For more information contact 01706 833180.



FREEMAN GREGG

FORMER Commando Gregg Stevenson was delighted to add Olympic Gold in the Paralympics in Paris to his World Champion title.



Gregg, who lost both legs in an explosion in Afghanistan 15 years ago, will soon be honoured with the title Freeman of his home village of Foulridge, near Colne. He took up rowing after trying out for the Invictus Games and won Gold in mixed double sculls with partner Lauren Rowles from Worcestershire.

He spent two years in rehab after losing his limbs but he stuck to the programme and so got better at using his prosthetics. However he said he struggled when he returned home because he found it more challenging. Gregg now works for the NHS delivering Op Courage using his lived experience to help others. He is set to embark on a PHD.

He said: "The Paralympics were pretty mad. We were the favourites after the World and European Championships. I was still relatively new to rowing but Lauren had two previous golds."

Pendle Armed Forces Champion Kevin Salter, who is also a Foulridge Councillor and Chair of the Parish Council, said: "As soon as we heard of Gregg winning a gold medal, fellow parish councillors and villagers all wanted to do something to mark his outstanding achievement."

NAAFI BREAK

THE NAAFI Break at Blackpool Football Club continues to thrive and successfully functions as a mobile Armed Services Drop-In Centre.

This flexibility allows a wider audience to be reached as support is offered in various locations. Community Engagement Officer Ian McCleary has applied for membership of the Association of Service Drop-In Centres (ASDIC) which would provide a valuable



network and additional resources to better support veterans.

The involvement of local cadets has also been an invaluable asset as they assist in distributing food and drink for the veterans and the interaction fosters a sense of intergenerational connection.

YOUR COVENANT AT WORK



VETS ON BALL

TWO football teams from Lancaster are now competing in the Military Veterans' Football League.

The formation of the teams happened after Manager and Coach Shawn Duckers had a friendly chat with Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Project Lead, Ian Barber.

Shawn said: "Working-age military veterans quite often get overlooked once they disappear into work and family life, so this has been a great opportunity to develop a support network and redevelop the camaraderie through physical activity in ways they will remember from their military days."

The teams now have new sponsored kits thanks to Independent Contractor Services Accounting. For information on the team email Shawn at shawn.duckers2@gmail.com

A Remembrance Day Charity Match will be held on Monday November 11 at the Giant Axe Stadium. Kick off 7pm.

SANDBAG OPEN



THE Sandbag Cafe has opened at St George's Church, George's Road, Preston.

The Armed Forces joint venture between Lancashire Armed Forces Association and Veterans In Communities and is open every Tuesday 10am-12.30pm so please come along if you are in the area.

CANADIAN ADVENTURE

ARMY Cadet Millie Dunn was picked from 40,000 hopefuls to be one of just 20 cadets that went to a month-long camp in Canada.

Millie, *pictured centre*, is a student at Haslingden High School, was the youngest on the trip along with 20 Brits and 53 Canadian cadets. She hiked, abseiled, canoed, wild camped, saw black bears in the wild and marvelled at the scenery.



She said: "On the 12-day expedition, we could only shower if someone pumped the water, and it was freezing, and I only washed my hair once and that was when we ducked our head into the canoe dock while other cadets washed it. When we camped there was a lake nearby and we could see nothing but trees. On the four-day expedition we got to go into Banff city and we went on a hike for an hour."

Millie is now determined to join the Army College in Harrogate, either at 16 or 18.

NEW COV GUIDE OUT

THE second edition of Lancashire's Armed Forces Covenant Guide will be published this month in advance of this year's Remembrance period.

The Guide is a collaborative publication involving all Lancashire councils, Armed Forces charities and support organisations, and the business community.

Councils provide content which allows Forces people to understand what living in a particular borough might be like for them and their families after military service. They also detail the ways they support the Armed Forces community locally and what that local Forces activity looks like. Charities have added content on the services they provide, how Forces people can access them and volunteering opportunities. To see the Lancashire Covenant Guide visit our website at Lancashire.gov.uk/armed-forces. Hard copies will be distributed across the county via the local councils, service charities and businesses.



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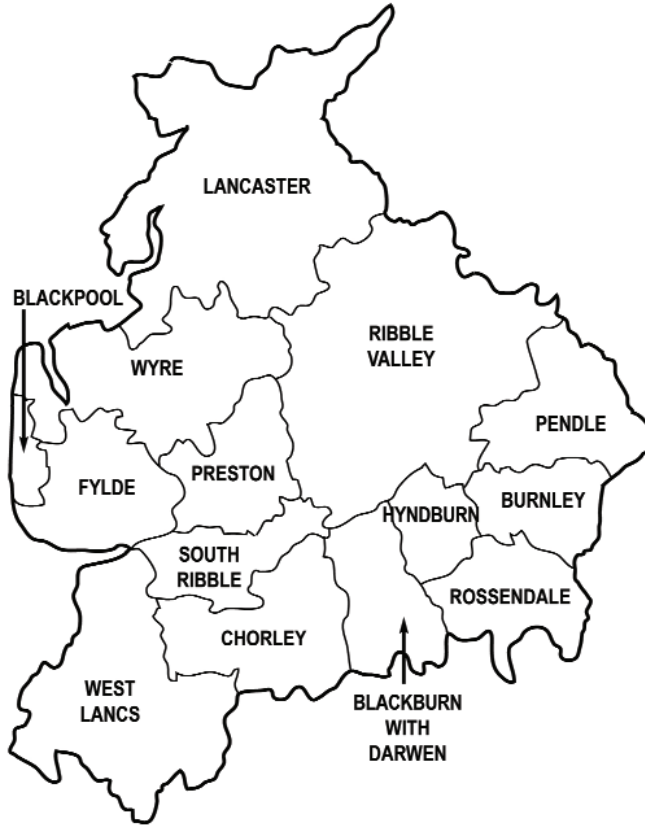
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FORCES APP MEANS HELP JUST A CLICK AWAY



A new app has been introduced to help Armed Forces personnel quickly and easily find support in their local area.

Forces Connect is available from wherever you download apps – Googleplay or Apple and arose from Armed Forces Covenant Funding awarded in the South East.

The resulting app was successfully trialled and has now

been taken up by local authorities around the country.

Once downloaded, users can quickly navigate by selecting England or Scotland and then their local authority name.

From there, a drop down gives areas of support eg Housing, Health and Wellbeing and a further section breaks issues down so links are given that go straight to the most appropriate organisation to offer assistance.

