WELCOME

Welcome to this special edition of the Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership newsletter.

Saturday 28 June marked the sixth annual Armed Forces Day and we have pulled together some of the events that took place up and down the county to celebrate this occasion.

Armed Forces Day was an opportunity to do two things. Firstly, to raise public awareness of the contribution made to our country by those who serve and have served in Her Majesty's Armed Forces. Secondly, to give the nation an opportunity to show your support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community: from currently serving troops to service families and from veterans to cadets.

Many thanks to everyone who supported this year’s Armed Forces Day and also for your continued support for the Armed Forces community working and residing in Worcestershire as we celebrate our second anniversary of the Community Covenant.

Cllr Rob Adams
Chair of Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership

FLAGS RAISED FOR ARMED FORCES DAY

Across the county on Monday 23 June flags were being raised to mark the sixth Armed Forces Day.

At the Guildhall in Worcester (pictured right), the Royal British Legion and the Deputy Mayor of Worcester, Cllr Roger Knight were on hand to see the flag raised.

In Redditch, Cllr Pat Witherspoon, Major of Redditch, was on duty to raise the flag, whilst in Bromsgrove, civic dignitaries and community representatives, including the civic head Cllr John Ruck, attended a special ceremony at Crown Green.

Cllr John Ruck said: "By flying the flag in our community, we are showing our support for the men and women of our Armed Forces, past and present, who continue to rise to the very difficult challenge of maintaining the defence of the realm.”
In Wychavon, District Council Chairman Cllr Lynne Duffy hosted a ‘raising of the flag ceremony’ at the Civic Centre in Pershore to recognise the contribution made by the military community.

**Cllr Lynne Duffy said:** “In the year when, as a nation, we commemorate the 70th anniversary of the D-Day landing and the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, it’s more important than ever to reflect on these contributions, past and present.”

Cadets, ex-military personnel, members of the Royal British Legion and civic guests gathered together, around Wychavon’s flag pole and after prayers, blessings and the Last Post, there was a minutes silence followed by the raising of the flag.

A special flag flying ceremony in Bewdley organised by Wyre Forest District Council was attended by members of the public who had come out to show their support. The ceremony started with standard bearers and members of associations led from QE11 gardens to the front of Bewdley Museum where they were formally welcomed.

Prayers were then led by Reverend Chris Allen before the flag was raised by the chairman of Wyre Forest District Council at 10.30am.

After the raising of the flag, St Anne’s Primary school performed a few songs. Among those attending the event were members of the Royal British Legion within Wyre Forest, the RAF Association, the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Association, the Royal Naval Association and many more.

Worcestershire County Council paid tribute to the brave servicemen and women in Her Majesty’s Army by raising a flag to mark Armed Forces Day.

**Chairman of Worcestershire County Council, Cllr Pam Davey said:** "I speak for the county when I say that we raised the flag in honour of the bravery and dedication of our Armed Forces. In this centenary year the events of the First and Second World Wars have been brought to life with vivid images on the TV. Sadly we now see images of the growing tensions in Iraq and the war in Afghanistan. It is vital that we hold such ceremonies to ensure that we show our support to all our armed forces."
Cllr Pam Davey, the Chairman of the Council was joined by the Lord-Lieutenant of Worcestershire, Leader of Worcestershire County Council, Adrian Hardman, Cllr Liz Tucker, Leader of the Liberal Democrats Group at Worcestershire County Council, Cllr Rob Adams, Chair of Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership, Chief Executive of Worcestershire County Council, Clare Marchant and Worcestershire Partnership Manager, Alan Smith.

WEAR YOUR UNIFORM TO WORK DAY

Worcestershire County Council also honoured the lead up to Armed Forces Day by supporting staff to get involved in Wear Your Uniform to Work Day on Wednesday 25 June.

Major John Hobbs wore a caubeen provided by One Royal Irish. This was of particular relevance as it was the One Royal Irish division that helped the highways team at Worcestershire County Council during the floods in February of this year.

Major John Hobbs said: "I am proud to be associated with the One Royal Irish today as they helped the county out tremendously when they were deployed here in February. The soldiers were hardworking and conscientious, helping to defend against further flooding and helping residents who found themselves stuck in their homes."

Also in uniform was Sergeant (ATC) Rebecca Pritchett, Senior Non-Commissioned Officer in the Air Training Corps (ATC). Rebecca currently serves as a volunteer in 233 Pershore Squadron within the West Mercian Wing.

Rebecca said: "It was a real honour to wear the uniform in the run up to Armed Forces Day."

"This event raises the profile of those who volunteer with the armed forces so civilians gain awareness and understanding of commitment and dedication that is involved in volunteering. In my role I am responsible for helping to offer hands on experience to young people from the ages of 13 to 20 to achieve and develop a wide range of skills they can employ in whatever they wish to do in the future."
A GROUP of volunteers from Malvern invited the community to celebrate its links to the armed forces at Victoria Park in Malvern Link on Saturday 28 June.

Malvern Armed Forces Day which marked the centenary of the start of the First World War and the 70th anniversary of D-Day, started at noon with a drumhead service accompanied by a military band which was attended by representatives from the Royal British Legion, Western Front Association, and the Army, Navy and Sea Cadets.

Among the highlights included an air display above the park by a biplane, music from the Malvern Hills Brass Band, a lone piper, games for kids, face painting and a group called the Trench Raiders, who sang WW1 songs.

Among the special guests was ex-serviceman and guide dog owner Konrad Galen-Bisping from Carmarthen, who lost his sight after suffering a training accident in the Army.

Until he was assigned a guide dog, Mr Galen-Bisping had 24-hour carers and never went anywhere alone. But since he teamed up with guide dog Radley, his confidence returned, his independence increased and he met his wife.

Mr Galen-Bisping was named inspirational Guide Dog Owner at last year’s Guide Dogs annual awards and he appeared at the armed forces day event as the guest of Guide Dogs Ledbury and Malvern.

Town councillor Pat Mewton, one of the event’s lead organisers, said: “After the tremendous success of our first armed forces day last year, and with the focus on the First World War and D Day commemorations this year, there were many links which we wanted to highlight as well as show our support for our armed forces and associated groups.

The event was held to express appreciation for the work and sacrifices of the armed forces and to raise money for the charity SSAFA, which supports service personnel in need.
EVESHAM CELEBRATES ARMED FORCES DAY

Hundreds of people came together at the Evesham campus of South Worcestershire College to celebrate Armed Forces Day on Saturday 28 June. The highlight of the event was the military parade led by the veterans of the Royal British Legion and joined by the RAF, the Scouts and the Evesham Sea Cadets. The bugle was played by Sue Sollis and there was a minute silence to remember the fallen.

The afternoon continued with lots of fun activities for the visitors including a dog show, dancing displays, 40s style music, BBQ, fun rides and special events. The highlight was the fabulous aerobatic display by Richard Goodwin. The event raised £1200 for Help for Heroes and other military charities.
MEMBERS of Redditch's Army Reserve unit have accepted the Freedom of the Borough with a pledge to continue to 'go wherever we are sent and do what is required'.

The 37th Signal Regiment, which has its headquarters in Moons Moat, marched through the town centre on Saturday 28 June in recognition of the honour which was first awarded in March.

About 100 officers from the regiment's units across the country took part in the parade which also coincided with Armed Forces Day.

Troops were presented to Mayor Pat Witherspoon and Lord Lieutenant of Worcestershire Lt Colonel Patrick Holcroft outside the Town Hall before a ceremony of thanks was held for the work of the regiment and Britain's Armed Forces both home and abroad.

Cllr Witherspoon said: "Here in Redditch we are proud to be the home of the 37th Signal Regiment and the 54th Signal Squadron and we recognise the role these men and women play in being prepared to deal with terrorist incidents and natural disasters such as last year’s floods."

"On behalf of the citizens of Redditch I endorse the Freedom of the Borough of Redditch to the 37th Signal Regiment. Thank you all."

Despite heavy rainfall about 200 people lined the route to show their support. After the parade the regiment presented the town with the gift of a statue of a winged lion.

Commanding Officer Lt Colonel Dominique Cairns said: "For us Redditch is our main home, we have a number of soldiers and officers from the borough, so by the town and the borough honouring us today it means a lot to those servicemen and women, reserves and regular, in all those things they do. It’s a welcome thank you."

The regiment has a dual role in supporting the regular army in overseas operations including Afghanistan and United Nations exercises around the world, as well as responding to major incidents in the UK such as flooding and key sporting events like London 2012 and the Commonwealth Games.

Council Leader Bill Hartnett added: "I have spoken to many of those who took part in the parade and they told me they would take away great memories of their day in Redditch. The rain could not dampen the pride and enthusiasm of those that took part or witnessed this spectacular event."
EVENING CONCERT FOR FALLEN HEROES

Worcestershire County Council along with Music 4 Heroes and the Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership sponsored a very special evening concert on Saturday 28 June in aid of Armed Forces Day.

Cllr Rob Adams who chairs the Worcestershire Armed Forces Community Covenant Partnership contributed to the event through his County Councillor Divisional Fund.

Cllr Rob Adams said: "We are delighted to be able to support this Armed Forces Day concert which coincides with the second anniversary of the signing of the Community Covenant in Worcestershire."

The concert was made even more poignant as one of the pieces has been scored by an ex-serviceman. The piece called Colours had been composed by Robert Plant, an ex-Gunner who served with 214 Battery, 104th Regiment Royal Artillery, 5th Division (v).

The emotive piece had been composed to highlight Armed Forces Day and in support of ABF The Soldiers’ Charity, dedicated to those who stand to make the ultimate of sacrifices; those who serve and families of those who serve.

Robert Plant said: "I find it an honour to be able to score a piece of music for such a fitting concert. The army was a large part of my life and I, like the rest of the country, am in gratitude to those who lost their lives some seventy years ago. Music always plays an important part in services and concerts as it helps to bring imagery and memories to life and we can only just imagine what it must have been like for the service men and women of the Second World War."

Press Officer and 1st Horn player for Worcester Concert Brass and ATC 785 Squadron (Tewkesbury) Air Cadets, Marianne Cottee said: “‘Colours’ features an ensemble of voices including brass, string and percussion with a vocal part to aptly frame the sentiment of the piece. It was composed in highlight of Armed Forces Day in support of those who stand to make the ultimate of sacrifices. A lot has gone into the writing and performance of this piece and this concert is an excellent opportunity to promote the work for the benefit of the Army family.”
LOCAL BUSINESS SHOWS SUPPORT FOR ARMED FORCES DAY

Local training company Quanta joined forces to hold a charity event to mark this year’s Armed Forces Day.

Quanta held a Great Big British Tea Party on Monday 30 June at their headquarters in Worcester to celebrate those service men and women currently serving across the world.

During the event there was a cake stall, a raffle with prizes donated by Malvern Spa and Worcester Race Course and some light hearted games to keep the guests entertained, including Pin the Medal on Prince William!

A total of £168 was raised from the event which was presented to The Royal British Legion.

David Waldron, Worcestershire’s and Claine’s Branch Chairman of The Royal British Legion was among those who attended, along with his wife, Jean Waldron.

David Waldron explained: “The Royal British Legion was formed in 1921 following the great World War One. In the county last year we collected just over half a million in beneficiaries, with Claines raising £26,000 alone. I have been to a few events over the weekend to mark Armed Forces Day but they have been a bit different compared to previous years with it being the 100th anniversary of WWI this year.”

Alan Smith, a representative of Quanta’s Community Covenant Partner at Worcestershire County Council added: ”As a Corporate and Community Covenant member, Quanta know the importance of spreading the word and doing their bit to help those during and after their time in the forces.”

Quanta will continue their support for Armed Forces personnel and will always act as a safety net for those looking for a smooth and easy transition into civilian life.

If you have any feedback or comments on this issue or would like to contribute or have suggestions for future issues please email wafcc@worcestershire.gov.uk or call Alan Smith, Worcestershire Partnership Relationship Manager on 01905 822836.