

Veterans newsletter

Number 3/2009

Angela Smith MP



Welcome to the latest edition of my Veterans Newsletter. Over the past six months, it has been a honour to meet a wide variety of veterans who have served our country in so many ways, from military exercises abroad to land army girls at home.

It is one of the most rewarding parts of my job as your MP. I hope you will find this informative as we look towards Remembrance Day 2009. Please do let me know of anyone you know who might like to receive a copy.

ANGELA SMITH MP

Armed Forces Day 2009

To celebrate Armed Forces Day 2009, Angela Smith MP invited Normandy Veteran Don Sheppard from Basildon to meet the Prime Minister at a special reception at 10, Downing Street.

Mr Sheppard is a mainstay of the Normandy Veterans Association, and visited the sites of the D-Day landings earlier this year, to commemorate the 65th anniversary of the event.

Angela said, *"It was a privilege for me to introduce Don to the Prime Minister, as it is essential we continue to honour those who fought for our freedoms against the threat of fascism. The Prime Minister asked Don about the medals he has been awarded when they met in the garden of 10, Downing Street."*



Afterwards, Mr Sheppard said, *"to have walked through the portals where so many great statesmen have passed was indeed a pleasure."*

Armed Forces Day is an annual opportunity for the nation to show our support for the men and women who make up the Armed Forces community - troops currently serving, their families, veterans and recruits.

First Elizabeth Cross Awarded

The first Elizabeth Cross, awarded to families of service personnel killed on operations, was presented in August. The family of Warrant Officer Class 2 Sean Upton, who was killed on duty in Afghanistan, received the medal from Her Majesty The Queen.

The Elizabeth Cross follows in the tradition of medals being awarded in the name of the monarch, with the George Cross being instituted by her father King George VI for acts of bravery by both civilians and the military, and the Victoria Cross being awarded for acts of gallantry by the armed forces.

The silver cross depicts representations of the whole of the United Kingdom - the rose of England, the Scottish thistle, the Irish shamrock, and the Welsh daffodil, along with the laurel wreath for peace.



Angela Smith MP working hard for Basildon & East Thurrock

Basildon: Fryerns, Kingswood, Lee Chapel, Laindon (part), Langdon Hills, Pitsea (part), Vange.
East Thurrock: Corringham, Fobbing, Bulphan, Horndon on the Hill, Orsett, Stanford le Hope

Supporting the Royal British Legion

Angela has pledged to do her bit for the British Armed Forces family. Angela met with representatives from The Royal British Legion recently where she was presented with a copy of the Legion's manifesto for the next general election.

The manifesto sets out priorities for the next Government to improve conditions for the British Armed Forces past and present and their families.

Kevin Shinkwin, the Legion's Head of Public Affairs, said, *"We're really grateful to Angela for making the time to meet with us and listen to our concerns. Our message to every candidate standing at the general election is very simple: 'It's time to do your bit.'"*



Injured war veterans win priority for housing

Angela Smith has hailed the landmark Government decision to give priority for social housing to war veterans with serious injuries.

Councils have been instructed to ensure injured ex-service personnel are made a priority for specially-adapted housing, such as that with entry slopes for wheelchairs, wider door frames and lowered light switches. The decision has been welcomed by the Royal British Legion, which said it, *"will be of real benefit to those who have given so much for their country."*

Following the announcement, Angela Smith said, *"it is right that our servicemen and women who are injured fighting for their country are treated in a decent manner on their return home."*

In addition, four million former service personnel are to be given veterans' 'identity cards' to ensure they can also access priority NHS treatment and receive discounts for services such as transport. This all forms part of the Government's commitment to the Military Covenant between the nation and its armed forces.

Local Veterans events

Angela was delighted to again be invited to the Normandy Veterans Dinner and Dance in March, which gave her the opportunity to pay tribute to the comradeship the group provides for its members.

If you would like Angela to come to any event your group is organising, or discuss any issues in this newsletter with her, please call her parliamentary office on 020 7219 6273.

ORDER FORM: The Southend branch of the Normandy Veterans Association wrote to thank Angela for copies of the last edition of her Veterans Newsletter, pointing out that "it was very interesting and there were some items we were not aware of."

If you would like bulk copies for your veterans or community group, please complete the form below:

Name: **Organisation:**.....

Address: **Quantity required:**

If you received this copy from your local group, and would like to have it mailed to your home, please fill in your details and mark "1" in "Quantity".

Please return to: **Angela Smith MP, Cornwallis House, Howard Chase, Basildon, SS14 3BB**
or email flackk@parliament.uk

Veterans Lapel Badges

Across the UK, over 650,000 veterans are now proud wearers of the Veterans Lapel Badge. The Service Personnel and Veterans Agency contacted Angela after they saw her last Veterans Newsletter, to ask her to tell her readers, *"it has now become a symbol, identifying veterans as a distinct group within the community and one that deserves special recognition and thanks,"* and to encourage veterans to apply.

Anyone who has served in the Armed Forces can apply, as can anyone who has served in the Cyprus Regiment, the Home Guard, Polish Forces under UK Command, War widows and widowers in receipt of a war widows pension paid by the Service Personnel & Veterans Agency and those who have received an award of Survivors Guaranteed Income Payment (SGIP) under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme. Recognition badges are also available for those who served in the Merchant Navy, Women's Land Army, the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) and former Bevin Boys.



**If you think you (or someone you know) is entitled to a badge please write to:
ANGELA E SMITH MP, HOUSE OF COMMONS, LONDON. SW1A 0AA**

Service Personnel & Veterans Agency

The Ministry of Defence's Service Personnel & Veterans Agency has expanded its information and advice service.

"Support for our armed forces and veterans must rightly be of the highest standard," writes Angela Smith MP. *"the Veterans Welfare service currently provides one-to-one welfare advice through around 13,000 home visits each year."*

The Service Personnel & Veterans Agency provides pay and support, casualty and compassionate leave advice to serving forces, covers compensation schemes and war pensions, the MoD Medal Office and support and advice for veterans.

The Veterans phone helpline provides sound advice on issues ranging from benefits, pensions, financial advice and emergency accommodation, through getting a job and re-training to contact details of over 500 ex-service organisations and voluntary groups working with veterans. Veterans' relatives and friends, and professional advisers working on their behalf, are welcome to use the service.



Picture: MOD

Veterans:UK
Bringing together services for veterans

The Service Personnel & Veterans Agency - 01253 330451

The MoD Medal Office - 0141 224 3600

The Veterans-UK Welfare Service - call free on 0800 169 2277

News in Brief... News in Brief... News in Brief...

The Polar Bear Association

Following an approach from a veteran of the 49th (West Riding) Infantry Division, Angela joined neighbouring MP Andrew Mackinlay to support their application for a grant towards the cost of their pilgrimage to their war memorial site in Belgium.

The veterans have formed the Polar Bear Association and can be contacted by writing to the Secretary, **Mr D Dimond, 54 Heath Road, Grays, RM16 4UT** or via their website at www.polar-bear-association.org.uk



Veterans World newspaper

Veterans World is an informative guide to new developments that can help veterans and is particularly useful to those who work professionally with veterans.

It will also be of interest to veterans' organisations. To receive a copy, please write to:

Veterans World, Room 6303, Service Personnel & Veterans Agency, Norcross, Blackpool, FY5 3WP



Army Recovery Centre

A new state-of-the art, 12-bed wing has been built at Erskine Edinburgh Home. The £8.6 million centre is designed for injured soldiers and as the first of its kind is hoped to lead the way for future units, including one at Colchester in Essex.

The centre will allow injured personnel to recover in a residential environment, and provide rehabilitation, gym, career management and counselling services. *Veterans World reports that "the centre will also cater for families as they support their loved ones."* Veterans minister Kevan Jones MP explained, *"we are constantly reviewing how best to support our injured people, and this is an important new initiative."*

Useful websites:

Ministry of Defence

www.mod.uk

Royal British Legion

www.britishlegion.org.uk

RAF Association (RAFA)

www.rafa.org.uk

Veterans-UK

www.veterans-uk.info

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association

www.ssafa.org.uk

Royal Naval Association

www.royal-naval-association.co.uk



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Here to offer help and advice all year round

Angela's website can be viewed at
www.mpangelsmith.org

This site includes details of local activities around and about Basildon and East Thurrock. Please pass on or recycle your copy when you have finished with it. If you would prefer to receive future copies by email rather than by post, please email

flackk@parliament.uk



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