

01 MAY 2026



FLEETWOOD ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER



This month's newsletter shines a spotlight on the incredible Armed Forces organisations that continue to bring positivity and support into our community. Their unwavering commitment reflects a deep sense of care and respect for those who have served, as well as for their families. We recognise the vital role these organisations play in supporting the welfare of veterans, offering guidance, connection, and opportunities that help individuals navigate life beyond service. From promoting mental health and wellbeing, to creating inclusive spaces where experiences are acknowledged and valued, their work makes a lasting difference every day. By recognising the diverse journeys and experiences of veterans and their loved ones, these organisations foster a sense of belonging, resilience, and hope. We are proud to highlight their efforts and celebrate the meaningful impact they continue to have across our community.

STRONGER TOGETHER: BACKING OUR VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Charities play a crucial role in providing vital support around mental health and PTSD, particularly for veterans who often face complex and deeply personal challenges. Many individuals struggle to access consistent support that can help them find a sense of understanding and closure, especially when funding limitations mean services are reduced or come to an end.

The nature of military experiences and ongoing commitments can make it even more difficult for veterans to seek or maintain the help they need. That's why sustained, accessible support is so important.



Locally, we recognise the outstanding work of Tia's Crown Charity, which is dedicated to ensuring that support remains continuous and readily available. Their commitment means that service users do not face long waiting times or gaps in provision, offering reassurance and stability to those who need it most



The Grass Beneath the Surface

In a world that constantly pushes for visible progress, it's easy to believe that if you can't see results, nothing is happening. I was reminded recently just how wrong that thinking can be. Standing in my garden, I noticed something unusual. Beneath a layer of artificial grass - neat, controlled, and designed to replace the real thing - small patches of natural grass were pushing through. Not in large areas, not dramatically, but enough to be noticed. Despite being covered, despite the intention to suppress it, it was still growing. That moment carries a simple but powerful message. Real growth doesn't happen on the surface first. It happens underneath, quietly, gradually, without recognition.

Much like the early stages of any meaningful change in our own lives, whether it's building discipline, improving mindset, or working towards something bigger, the most important developments are often the least visible. They take place out of sight, in the background, long before any results appear externally. The problem is, we've become conditioned to expect immediate feedback. We start something new and, within days, look for evidence that it's working. When that evidence isn't there, doubt creeps in. We question the process, lose patience, and often stop altogether, not because it wasn't working, but because it wasn't working fast enough.

The grass beneath that artificial surface didn't stop growing simply because it wasn't visible. It didn't need validation or reassurance. It continued regardless, building strength beneath the surface until eventually it found a way through. That's how genuine progress works. The effort you're putting in, even when it feels unnoticed, is not wasted. The habits you're building, the mindset you're developing, the small actions repeated daily, they are all contributing to something beneath the surface, and given enough time, consistency, and patience, they will show.

The danger lies in stopping too early, in abandoning something that is quietly working simply because it hasn't yet become visible. So the question is worth asking - what have you given up on simply because you couldn't see it working? Because growth isn't always obvious in the moment. Sometimes it looks like nothing at all. until one day it doesn't. Smiling is healing.

Gregg Norton



Tony Codling

Armed Forces Project Coordinator

Fleetwood Town Community Trust



A tremendously proud former Royal Pioneer Soldier, Tony was voted Pioneer of the Year within his Corps in 2025. Tony now leads at Fleetwood Town Community Trust as the Veteran Coordinator, where he brings together veterans from all three services, continuing his commitment to supporting others with dedication and pride.

Tony's attention to detail and enthusiasm are consistently demonstrated during the weekly "Men's Weight Management Programme." At a time on Tuesday evenings when most people are winding down after their working day, Tony instead brings energy and motivation, inspiring a group of senior gentlemen to stay active, engaged, and committed to their exercise. His dedication does not go unnoticed, and he truly deserves recognition. From visiting veterans in hospital or at home, Tony also plays a key role in bringing together women who have previously undergone cancer treatment. He leads this exercise group with great passion, creating a supportive space that promotes both physical wellbeing and mental health.

An outstanding achievement, made possible with the support of those with the skills and knowledge, was the establishment of the Community Veterans Garden. This peaceful space brings together members of the veterans' community, both young and old. The garden is about far more than gardening, it is about connection and community. Volunteers and visitors alike come together to enjoy a hot brew and homemade cakes, sharing stories, laughter, and companionship.

In October 2025, Tony undertook the arduous challenge of a 24-hour "Spinathon," cycling continuously to raise funds for the Community Trust for veterans. It was no easy feat, but with the support and determination of fellow veterans, the mission was successfully accomplished. Tony is supported in his role by his good lady Susan and his mother-in-law Anne, who play a huge part by offering their time, encouragement, and behind-the-scenes support, helping ensure the success and smooth running of the programmes he leads.

Tony, thank you for your service and for your unwavering commitment to supporting veterans on the Fylde Coast. Your efforts are deeply appreciated. Tony gives a presentation in local school about Remembrance Day enlightening the youth of today about their freedom. Fleetwood Town Community Trust and Morecambe Community Foundation joined forces to march 24 miles for the Veterans Community. On Saturday 1 February, 38 veterans, alongside business owners and volunteers took on the challenge of walking 24 miles from Highbury Stadium in Fleetwood to the Mazuma Stadium in Morecambe, all done ahead of the 3pm kick-off. For further information regarding the community focussed projects delivered by the Trust, please contact 01253 208442 or email: community@fleetwoodtownfc.com. Or Tony Email – Tony.Codling@fleetwoodtownfc.com.

Written By: John Bradshaw

The Lights Are Back On: The Return of the Fleetwood RBL

David Jones, Fleetwood Branch RBL

For a few years, there has been a gap in our community where the Fleetwood Branch of the Royal British Legion used to be. Today, we are proud to announce that **we are back**. The Fleetwood Branch has officially reformed as a modern, proactive organisation dedicated to ensuring every veteran in our town has access to the support they earned. Our mission is simple: **Service Not Self**. But for this new chapter to succeed, we need the people of Fleetwood to stand with us.

A Modern Support Network

We aren't just back; we are a more connected organisation than ever. We are here for the local veteran community in its entirety, Army, Royal Navy, and RAF. While we are currently operating as a community-based network rather than a physical club, we provide a direct link to the RBL's national support infrastructure. This allows us to help local veterans navigate everything from **pension claims** to **mental health support**. We also recognise the global nature of our Armed Forces. For our **Commonwealth veterans** who served in the British Forces, we provide a vital bridge to the RBL's **Specialist Settlement Team** for guidance on residency and transition. If you served under the Crown, this organisation is here to serve you.

Out and About in Fleetwood

We are excited to announce that we will be present at a number of upcoming events across the town in the coming months. We are looking forward to being out and about and meeting the people of Fleetwood face-to-face once again. Whether you have a question about support or just want to see what the reformed branch is all about, please do come and say hello!

A Seat at the Table for Everyone

You don't need to be a veteran to help us rebuild. We welcome family members and civilian supporters who want to keep the spirit of Remembrance alive in Fleetwood. We are building an organisation where every generation of the "Legion family" feels welcome, from those who served decades ago to those just starting their civilian journey.

The "No Pressure" Promise

Many people hesitate to join because they worry about a heavy time commitment. However, after being closed for years, what we need most right now is membership numbers. Becoming a member is, first and foremost, a vote of confidence in the branch's future. Whether you want to be an active volunteer or a "silent supporter" who simply carries the card with pride, your membership ensures that Fleetwood never loses its RBL presence again.

Help Us Build the Legacy

The Fleetwood Branch is back, but we are just getting started. If you want to help us look after our own and ensure our town's veterans are never forgotten, please join us today.

Join Online: <https://selfservice.britishlegion.org.uk/>

Remember: Select 'Fleetwood' as your local branch to keep your support right here at home.

Service Not Self.



David Jones LCGI EngTech MIMechE MIoL
Vice Chair
Fleetwood Branch

E: Fleetwood.ViceChair@rbl.community





For over four years, Adam Diver MBA has worked tirelessly behind the scenes, engaging with representatives across political parties to raise awareness of the need for consistent and effective veterans' welfare checks. His dedication to this cause continues to gain momentum, and this year he has been supported by Dr Julian Nesbitt and Andrew Powell, further strengthening the campaign. Their shared aim is clear: to ensure veterans receive continuous, uninterrupted support, without the gaps that can so often leave individuals vulnerable.

Through their work, they have witnessed the reality many veterans face, with crisis situations arising on a weekly basis, including struggles with PTSD, depression, and drug or alcohol addiction.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks to Adam Diver MBA, Dr Julian Nesbitt and Andrew Powell and not forgetting Kevin Gray for their commitment and hard work in supporting our veteran community. Their efforts highlight not only the urgency of these challenges but also the importance of long-term, reliable support systems that truly meet the needs of those who have served.



Fleetwood Town Community Trust are delighted to announce the appointment of Tom Hutton as Chief Executive Officer. With over 15 years' experience in the football charity sector, Tom brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership to the role. He joins from Foundation 92 and has previously led AFC Fylde Community Foundation, building a strong track record of delivering impactful community programmes.

His appointment marks an exciting new chapter as the Trust continues to grow its reach and impact across Fleetwood and Wyre. Tom will lead the Trust's strategic direction, strengthen key partnerships, and further enhance programmes that support health, education, inclusion, and wellbeing. Having met Tom at a careers fayre held at Weeton Barracks few years ago, it was clear he is a man of integrity with a genuine passion for supporting the Armed Forces community.

We look forward to welcoming him to Fleetwood and building strong connections through continued networking and collaboration.



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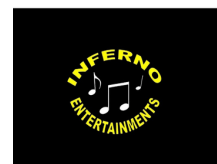
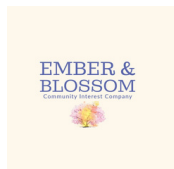
FLEETWOOD ARMED FORCES DAY EVENT



27 June 2026
Fleetwood Memorial Park
10am - 4pm



Fleetwood Armed Forces Day event will take place on 27th June 2026 at Fleetwood Memorial Park. Everyone is welcome to attend, with a variety of stalls located around the cenotaph, creating a space for the community to come together. Join us as we celebrate and show our appreciation for all those who have served, while also taking a moment to remember those who are no longer with us.



FLEETWOOD ARMED FORCES CHAMPION'S STATEMENT AND VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH OF APRIL 2026

Greetings from your Armed Forces Champion,

I would like to inform you that I am currently out of the office due to family commitments. During this time, Councillor Alice Jones will be acting as your point of contact for any Armed Forces-related concerns or events. I will continue to provide support in the background as she takes on these responsibilities, ensuring continuity for our community.

I kindly encourage you all to support Councillor Jones in this role. Should you have any questions or require assistance, please do not hesitate to contact her directly.

Thank you for your understanding and continued support.

Cllr Jimilai Kuruvakadua



Armed Forces Champion's Volunteer of the Month – April 2026

I am proud to recognise Mr Iain Johnstone (former Police Constable for Rutland and Leicestershire) as our Volunteer of the Month for April. Iain is a familiar and highly respected figure across Fleetwood, consistently supporting community events and initiatives. He serves as Chair of the Friends of Fleetwood Memorial Park, Treasurer for the Fleetwood Civic Society, and is an active member of The Royal British Legion, Fleetwood Branch, alongside his involvement in many other local organisations.

His dedication to the town is truly remarkable. Iain gives his time selflessly, attending meetings, offering guidance, and working tirelessly for the benefit of the community. His knowledge, kindness, and positive outlook make a genuine difference to those around him. Although he never seeks recognition, it is only right that we acknowledge his outstanding contribution. On behalf of the entire community, Iain, thank you and to Mrs Johnstone for everything you both do in supporting Fleetwood and especially to our veteran community.