



# Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Cyprus conflict 1974: RAF pilot recalls island's evacuation on 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

An RAF pilot who was serving in Cyprus when it was rocked by fighting has remembered the conflict, 50 years after it broke out.

Richard Haven had been based on the Mediterranean island for four years before fighting broke out between Greek and Turkish communities.

The 92-year-old was speaking ahead of the 50th anniversary of Turkey's intervention in Cyprus, on 20 July 1974.

Richard now lives at Royal Star & Garter in High Wycombe. The Home provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia, and has also launched new services into the community.



*Richard, at Royal Star & Garter, and (inset), while serving in the RAF*

Richard joined the RAF in 1950, and served for 27 years, rising to the rank of Squadron Leader.

He was based at RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus, with his family, when conflict broke out on the island. His tour had officially ended, and he was due to leave the island on 21 July, 1974. Richard had spent months organising a road trip with his family

through Europe to return home, but instead plans were cancelled at the last minute and he worked at the evacuation centre, carrying out administrative work to help repatriate British citizens.

He said: "People on Cyprus were worried and concerned about what was happening on the island. The British community were happy to be sent back home, given the circumstances. It was quite a violent time."

The great-grandfather continued: "It was a time of great uncertainty for people living on Cyprus. I imagine the British community felt a great relief to escape the island and



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return home to Britain. People were very grateful to us for helping them escape what was essentially a war zone. I think the majority of them flew home in RAF aircraft.”

Among those that left the island was Richard’s wife Emma, and their four children. Richard said: “It must have been a very difficult time for them as well, but it was a great relief for me when they returned home from Cyprus. My wife always supported me, and she was a very special and important person in our family.”

Richard himself stayed on in Cyprus a little longer, before being stationed at RAF Strike Command in High Wycombe. He said: “The only British people that remained on the island were service personnel, because so much was going on there, and maybe a few civilians as well.”

Richard moved into Royal Star & Garter in 2021. Speaking of the Home, he said: “In my whole life, this is one of the happiest times I’ve had. I think it’s absolutely terrific. I’d recommend it to anybody who’s able to come here. I love it here and I feel very happy.”

Royal Star & Garter in High Wycombe is welcoming new residents. For more information on this, the new services it provides, or to work at the Home, go to [www.starandgarter.org/hw](http://www.starandgarter.org/hw)

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**About Royal Star & Garter**

Our Charity provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia.



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## About Veteran Friendly Framework

The VFF is currently a two-year programme funded by Royal Star & Garter, the Armed Forces Covenant and Royal British Legion, running to April 2025. It aims to tackle loneliness and isolation, and deliver improved health and wellbeing outcomes for over 25,000 veterans living in care homes across England. It will support the practical, emotional and social needs for the Armed Forces community by providing care homes with resources to assess and improve their offer. <https://veteranfriendlyframework.org.uk/>

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