



Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

International Women's Day: Battle of Britain veteran who worked under Churchill's watchful eye

As part of its Veterans' Voice project, Royal Star & Garter is celebrating the extraordinary work and experience of a WWII veteran on International Women's Day (8 March).

Kay Thomas was a plotter in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and at 105 years old, is one of the last remaining women to have served during the Battle of Britain campaign.

She now lives at the charity's Home in High Wycombe. Royal Star & Garter provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia. It also has Homes in Solihull and Surbiton, and has launched services reaching out into the community and nationwide.



FKay, 105, at Royal Star & Garter

Veterans' Voice aims to give a platform to residents in Royal Star & Garter's Homes, and the people who use its services, ensuring they are not overlooked because of their disability or dementia.

Kay is one of several remarkable women at Royal Star & Garter who have served their country, during and after WWII.

After school she had started training as a nurse, but joined the WAAF when she was 20.

During the Battle of Britain in 1940, the country stood alone against Hitler's seemingly unstoppable military power and came under a large-scale attack from the Luftwaffe.



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Kay was working as a plotter, 60ft below ground in 'The Bunker' at RAF Uxbridge, and tracking enemy planes as they made their way to Britain on bombing raids. Receiving information from radar stations and the Observer Corps, they used a pusher on the end of a long rod to display the positions of the aircraft on a map drawn on a huge table.

Senior officers would observe tensely from the gallery above. Kay remembered on several occasions seeing Winston Churchill looking down on them as she and other plotters worked. She recalled that his face was "wreathed in cigar smoke."



Kay (standing, centre) served in the WAAF during WWII, and is one of the last Battle of Britain veterans

Kay was demobbed shortly after the war ended in 1945, and became a bookkeeper after raising her family.

In 2018, the bunker that she worked in at RAF Uxbridge was restored and opened as the Battle of Britain Bunker education and visitor centre. Kay was invited to the opening ceremony, and saw that her story was part of the exhibition display.

Kay is now living with dementia, but still has memories of that historic time. Recordings for her family, shared with Royal Star & Garter, also mean her remarkable story lives on and will not be forgotten.



Kay back as a plotter in The Bunker at RAF Uxbridge, where she worked during WWII and the Battle of Britain

Caley Eldred, Director of Supporter Engagement at Royal Star & Garter, said: "It is a privilege to care for remarkable women like Kay in our Homes, and to empower them to tell their stories. As this generation passes on, it's more important than ever that these stories are shared and celebrated."

Royal Star & Garter is welcoming new residents into its Homes. For more information on this, the services it offers, or to work for the charity, go to www.starandgarter.org



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Video: <https://vimeo.com/1062078973/9959d08021>

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About Royal Star & Garter

Founded in 1916, Royal Star & Garter is a charity which provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their families living with disability or dementia, and has three Homes in Solihull, Surbiton and High Wycombe. It has also launched services reaching out into the community including Lunch Clubs, Day Care and a national Telephone Friendship Service.

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Royal Star & Garter
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