



# Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Seriously injured Iraq War veteran enjoys adventure trip thanks to veterans' charities**

A soldier left with severe injuries following a mortar attack while serving in Iraq has returned to an outdoor activity centre in the Lake District.

Stephen Vause enjoyed another memorable adventure trip at Calvert Lakes, in Keswick, following the success of his last trip in 2023.

The costs for the five-day trip was met by Help for Heroes. The 37-year-old was accompanied by Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) Valdas and Phil from Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton, where he lives, and his friend Paul, who is a Help for Heroes volunteer.



*Stephen takes to the lakes during his outdoor activities holiday*

Royal Star & Garter is a charity which provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia, and also has Homes in Solihull and High Wycombe. The charity has launched new services reaching out into the community.

The HCAs and Stephen drove up to Calvert Lakes, which offers adventure breaks and holidays for people with disabilities, on 16 September. During his time there, Stephen enjoyed canoeing and catamaran sailing on the lakes, hiking, cycle rides, games of boccia and swimming.

Stephen was just 19 when he suffered major brain injuries while serving with 4th Battalion The Rifles, in Basra in 2007. He was on his first tour of duty, and the attack left him living with severe disabilities.

He has been living at Royal Star & Garter since 2017, where he receives 24-hour specialist care.



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After returning from his latest adventure, Stephen said: "It was so nice to be back in the Lake District. I had a great time, and I'm really grateful to Royal Star & Garter and Help For Heroes for helping make this happen."



*Royal Star & Garter HCAs Phil and Valdas, with Stephen and pal Paul*

Help for Heroes has also previously worked with Royal Star & Garter to fund a bespoke wheelchair and specialist gym equipment for Stephen, to support his care at the Surbiton Home.

During a Covid lockdown in 2021, Stephen raised money for Help for Heroes by taking part in a virtual London to Brighton 60-mile bike ride from his Royal Star & Garter room. Supported by staff at the Home, the gruelling challenge took him six weeks to complete on his adapted static bike, and he raised £5,000 for Help for Heroes. His fundraising exploits saw him win the Inspiration category in the Soldiering On Awards.

The Home Manager at Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton, Helena Maher, said: "Stephen lives with complex healthcare needs and challenges, but we see him demonstrate strength and courage every day at Royal Star & Garter. I'm thrilled he had such a good time and was able to take part in so many fun and exciting activities. This was a well-deserved break, and I was happy to support it by arranging for staff from the Home to accompany him and manage his care. We've worked with Help for Heroes before to support Stephen, and we look forward to doing so again."



*Stephen at Lake Windermere*

Carol Betteridge OBE, Deputy Services Director at Help for Heroes who heads the VSI Service, said: "Stephen is one of the Very Seriously Injured (VSI) veterans who will need specialist care and support for the rest of their lives. Working with Royal Star & Garter, we want to enhance Stephen's life - enabling him to thrive, not just survive and that's why his residential stay at Calvert Lakes was so

important. Stephen is still young man and craves adventure. He got that this week and experienced the benefits of the great outdoors whilst connecting with the other members of the Armed Forces community we support – including his 'buddy' Paul, who volunteers with Help for Heroes. The Calvert Lakes trip, his wheelchair accessible



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vehicle hire, and additional care costs were all funded by Help for Heroes' VSI programme. Stephen, and all the veterans who attended, had a great time and were able to take part in a host of fully accessible activities. I am sure he is already looking forward to his next adventure."

Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton is welcoming new residents. For more information on this, the new service it provides, or to work for the charity, go to [www.starandgarter.org/surbiton](http://www.starandgarter.org/surbiton)

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**For further information please contact:**

Goolistan Cooper  
Communications Officer  
[goolistan.cooper@starandgarter.org](mailto:goolistan.cooper@starandgarter.org)  
0208 481 7669 / 07391 868796

Cally Madden  
Marketing & Communications Manager  
[cally.madden@starandgarter.org](mailto:cally.madden@starandgarter.org)  
020 8481 7692 / 07881 017299

**About Royal Star & Garter**

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

**Twitter:** @starandgarter

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**Website:** [www.starandgarter.org](http://www.starandgarter.org)



Royal Star & Garter  
is a member of the  
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