



Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Injured Iraq War veteran enjoys adventure holiday thanks to Armed Forces charities

An Iraq War soldier has enjoyed a memorable adventure holiday, with support from the staff at the care home where he lives.

Stephen Vause, who was left with severe life-changing injuries from a mortar bomb blast while serving in Basra, spent four days at outdoor activity centre Calvert Lakes in the Lake District.

The 36-year-old lives at Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton, and was accompanied by two Healthcare Assistants (HCAs) Sam and Phil, from the Home.



Stephen (centre) prepares for a trip out on the lakes with Royal Star & Garter Healthcare Assistants (l-r) Sam and Phil

The costs for the trip to Calvert Lakes were covered by Help for Heroes, which has previously worked with Royal Star & Garter and funded a bespoke wheelchair and specialist gym equipment to support Stephen's care.

Calvert Lakes provides adventure breaks and holidays for people with disabilities. The HCAs drove up to Calvert Lakes with Stephen on 4 September. During his trip, Stephen went hiking and swimming, enjoyed bike rides, sailed a catamaran, and tried canoeing too.

Stephen has been a resident at Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton since 2017. The charity provides loving, compassionate care to veterans and their partners living with disability or dementia, and also has Homes in Solihull and High Wycombe.

Stephen said afterwards: "I'm very lucky that Help for Heroes paid for this, and that Sam and Phil from Royal Star & Garter were able to come with me. Thanks to both charities, I've had the best time ever!"



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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 severely disabled.

During a Covid lockdown in 2021, Stephen raised money for Help for Heroes by taking part in a virtual London-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.



Stephen enjoys the stunning Lake District scenery

The Home Manager at Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton, Helena Maher, said: "Stephen lives with highly complex healthcare needs and I was happy to support this trip by asking Sam and Phil to go with him to manage his care. He shows huge resilience and courage every day so this was a well-deserved break for him and I'm delighted he enjoyed lots of amazing activities. It's lovely for Help for Heroes to do this for Stephen. We've worked together in the past for his benefit, and we look forward to doing so again in the future."



Stephen shares a joke with Sam, an HCA from Royal Star & Garter

Jennie Rumble, Operations Manager for Veterans Clinical Services at Help for Heroes, said: "Stephen is one of the Very Seriously Injured (VSI) veterans who will need specialist care and support for the rest of their lives. We want healthcare 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 enjoyed an

adventurous week experiencing the benefits of the great outdoors whilst having fun with other members of the Armed Forces community we support. The Calvert Lakes trip, his wheelchair accessible wheelchair hire and additional care costs were all funded by Help for Heroes' VSI programme. Stephen fights every day to manage his physical injuries, but every challenge is attempted with determination and humour – he had a great time."



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Royal Star & Garter in Surbiton is welcoming new residents. For more information on this, or to work for the charity, go to www.starandgarter.org/surbiton

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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



Royal Star & Garter
is a member of the
National Care Forum