



Royal Star & Garter

Care with courage

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

RAF veteran explains why Remembrance is more important than ever

A veteran who served in the RAF for 32 years has spoken about the importance of observing Remembrance.

Bill Wheeler, who rose to the rank of Squadron Leader during an RAF career which saw him based in Canada, Pakistan, Kenya, Germany and the Middle East, said "it was more important than ever" to remember the sacrifices made by the Armed Forces.

The 98-year-old is preparing to mark Remembrance at Royal Star & Garter's Home in Solihull, where he now lives.

The charity provides loving, compassionate care and support for veterans and their families, living with disability or dementia, through its Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe and Worthing. It also provides services reaching into the community, including Lunch Clubs, Day Care and a national Telephone Friendship Service.



Bill at Royal Star & Garter

Bill joined the RAF in 1943 at 15 and went on to become a navigator, before leaving in 1975. During that time, he helped train fledgling Air Forces in Pakistan and Kenya, flew photographic reconnaissance missions in the Persian Gulf and along the North African coast, and worked on nuclear deterrence.

He said: "During Remembrance I like to think back on my time in the RAF and the people I served with. I think Remembrance has always been important but it's probably even more important now with all these small campaigns that the military get involved in. Unless we have some sort of remembrance afterwards they will be forgotten completely. I think it's important to remember the sacrifices that generations have made for this country."



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After leaving the RAF aged 48, he retrained as a teacher and taught maths and computer studies. He and his wife Betty had a smallholding which allowed them to live self-sufficiently.

In their later years Bill and Betty moved to Birmingham and when his wife died in 2022, Bill was able to remain in the house and live independently. He kept fit and active and went on three-mile walks daily. However, when he required an operation on his leg which affected his mobility, Bill chatted to his sons and chose to move to Royal Star & Garter, becoming a resident at the Solihull Home in 2024.



Bill in Winnipeg, Canada, in 1952

He said: "I wanted to come here because of its links to military service, which really appealed to me. And I enjoy being with other people who have also served and have similar experiences to me."

Bill also said he values the emphasis the Home puts on key dates in the military calendar, such as Remembrance, Armed Forces Day and VE Day, and enjoys the visits from service personnel, plus outings to the nearby National Memorial Arboretum and other venues with military connections. "I feel that the shared experience and history of veterans and their partners is understood here, and it helps me feel connected to the past," he said.



Bill with physiotherapist Nickie at Royal Star & Garter

The Home has been able to provide specialist support to Bill, and he regularly uses its in-house Physiotherapy room. He said: "The physiotherapists here take a personal interest in my progress, setting targets to maintain and improve my fitness. I've even been referred to the local gym for more advanced exercises. The support and encouragement I receive here is outstanding."

Bill continued: "I think the home is absolutely marvellous. I've never met such a caring group of people in all my life. It really is a great place. I never wanted to



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move out of my house but if I had to move anywhere, this is the place I'd want to move to."

Remembrance will be marked in each of Royal Star & Garter's Homes, with some residents attending the National Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday (9 November).

The Solihull Home will mark the event with a service on Monday 10 November, which will feature a bugler and bagpiper and include readings from residents. Bill is expected to lay a wreath during the service.

To make a donation to Royal Star & Garter this Remembrance, go to www.starandgarter.org/remembrance

Royal Star & Garter is welcoming new residents into its Homes. For more information on this, its other services or to work at the charity, go to: <https://starandgarter.org>

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About the Royal Star & Garter group

Founded in 1916, Royal Star & Garter provides care, support and friendship for



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veterans and their families so that they can live well. The charity delivers nursing and dementia care through Homes in Solihull, Surbiton, High Wycombe, and now in Worthing, having recently merged with the military charity Care for Veterans. It also offers a range of services reaching 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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