

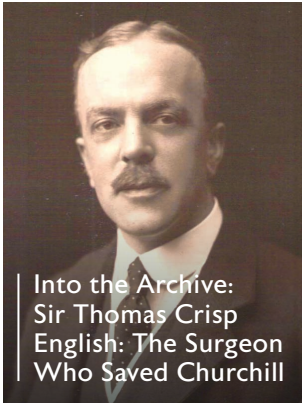


KING
EDWARD VII's
HOSPITAL

Friends Newsletter

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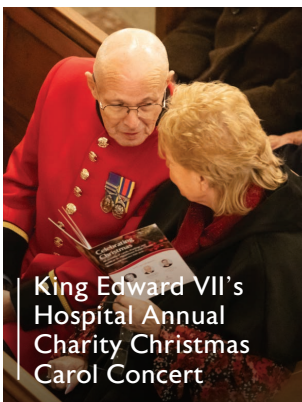
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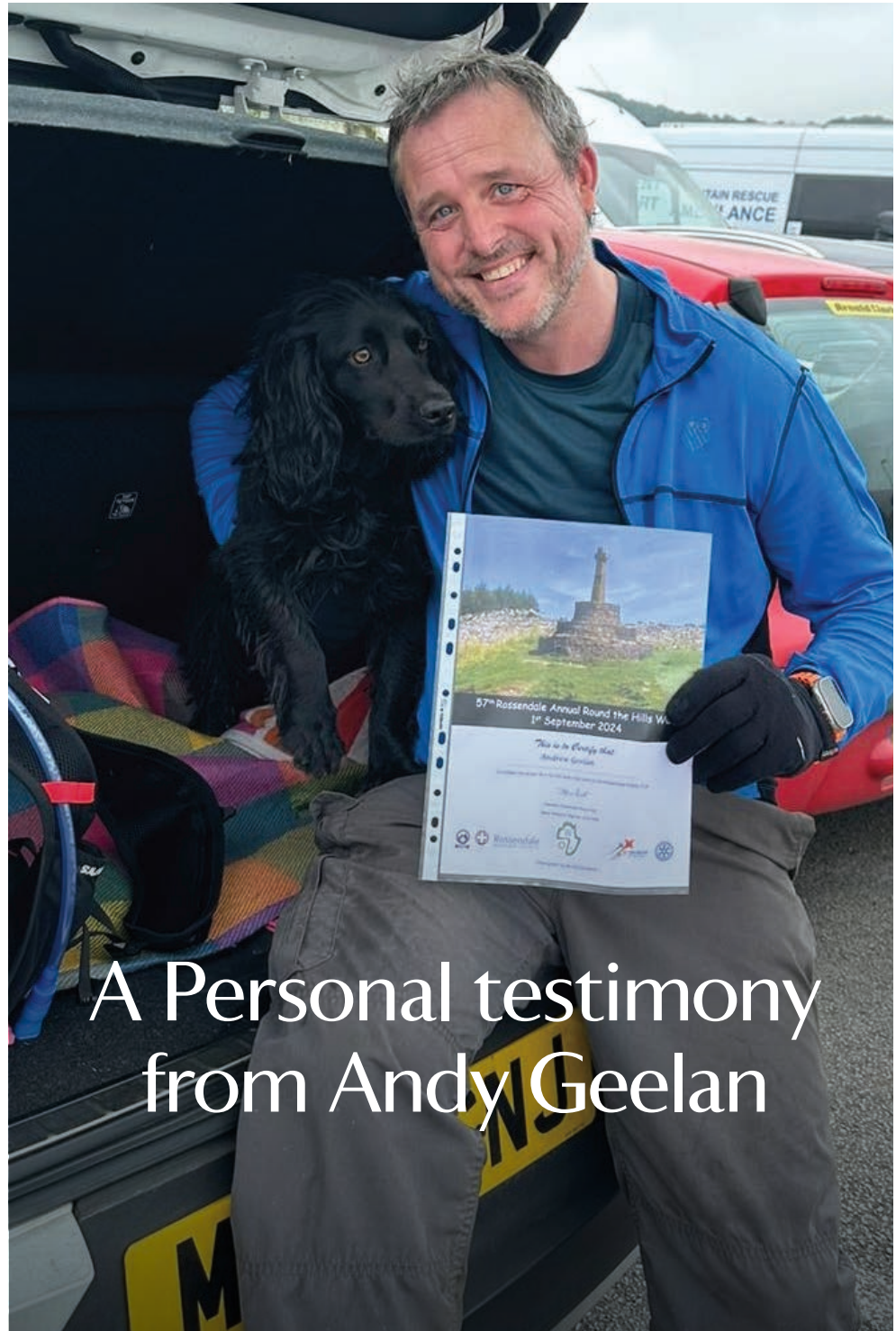


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Winter 2025 Edition



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Dear Friends

I hope this message finds you well and in good spirits as we begin another year of commitment to the health and well-being of our cherished Hospital and to Veterans who come through our doors. I am continually inspired by the generosity and compassion of our supporters—your unwavering dedication makes a profound difference in the lives of so many.

In this edition of our newsletter, I am thrilled to share a truly moving and inspiring story that demonstrates the impact of your support. You'll hear a compelling testimony from Andy, a veteran who recently completed our Veterans Pain Management Programme.

We're also excited to introduce you to James Rous, our Director of Philanthropy and Veterans' Affairs, who joined the King Edward VII's Hospital team in October last year. James brings a wealth of experience and as a veteran himself, he brings a deep passion for supporting veterans.

Looking back, we reflect on the joy and connection shared at our annual Christmas carol concert. It was a wonderful evening filled with music and community spirit—a true highlight of our year.

Thank you for your continued support and for standing with us as we strive to provide exceptional care and support to those who need it most. Together, we are making a tangible difference. Here is to another great year at King Edward VII's Hospital.

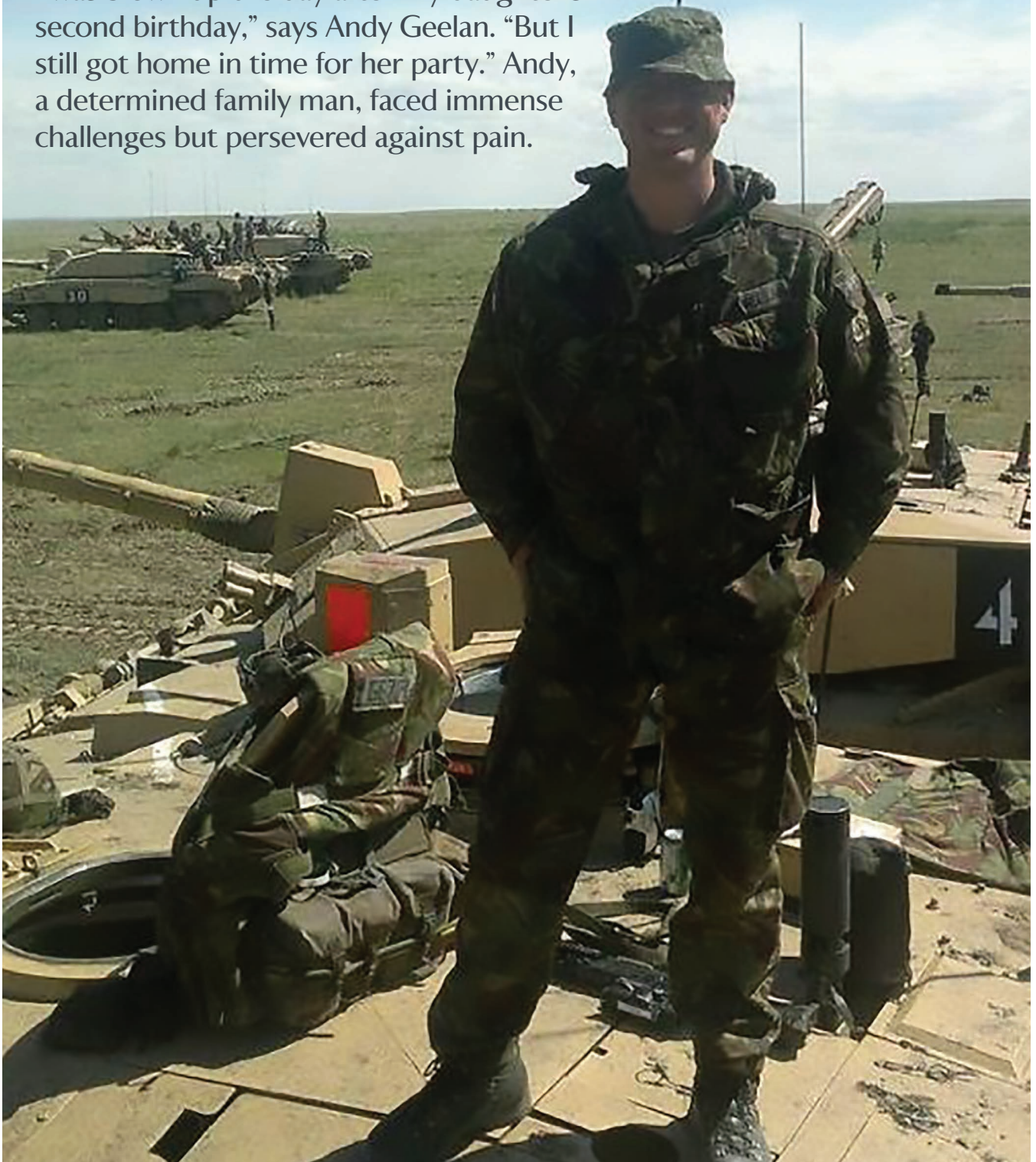
Warm regards

Sarah Colebrook
Acting Chief Executive Officer

Personal testimony

From Andy Geelan

“I was blown up the day after my daughter’s second birthday,” says Andy Geelan. “But I still got home in time for her party.” Andy, a determined family man, faced immense challenges but persevered against pain.





Bandit country

Andy joined the military in 2006, with The King's Royal Hussars Cavalry. "I was trained to be a vehicle operator, a weapon operator," explains Andy.

"I was posted to Afghanistan," he says. "I was on what they called a 'jackal' - an open-top machine gun carrier. We were down in Lashkar Gah in the middle of bandit country. It was a very 'kinetic' tour with firefights every day. We were always on the move.

"Then, three days before I was supposed to fly home for my daughter's birthday party, we were out on patrol when we hit a 40-kilo IED and just tore the vehicle to pieces."

In a spin

"It was the 8th July, 2012, the day after my daughter's second birthday," says Andy as he picks up the tale. "I was supposed to fly home in time for her party that weekend, but I got blown up instead."

The bomb blast sent debris flying. Something hit Andy's spine and back of the head, forcing his head into his shoulder so hard that he dislocated his jaw.

"I was heavily concussed, but I still made it home for my daughter's birthday."

In the dark

Though doctors initially underestimated his injuries, he was later diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury and spent years in and out of Headley Court. Andy endured chronic headaches, nerve damage, and vision issues.

"I'd had months and months of filling me full of drugs but none of them seem to work."

With the stoicism displayed by so many soldiers, he "refused to admit that I was broken" and tried to get back into his work as he weaned himself off the pain medication.

In February 2015, Andy got married, but despite hoping for a fresh start, went to mental health charity Combat Stress for support later that year. "My life had become a roller-coaster of ups and downs".

"My mental health had progressed, but I wasn't able to do much with my family," says Andy, massaging his temples. "Stress makes my brain malfunction. I tire, my PTSD takes over and I become quite insular.

"I felt like a terrible father," he says. "Then my own father died.

"Combat Stress had told me about King Edward VII's Hospital's Centre for Veterans' Health the Veterans and the Pain Management Programme, but, so soon after my dad died, I just wasn't ready."

In recovery

Andy started the Pain Management Programme in February 2024.

"The course? Let me tell you, just day one had a massive effect on me," says Andy and he rubs his arm. "The information I received on that first day alone put everything into perspective."

The Pain Management Programme (PMP) at KEVII is a group-based course led by expert clinicians, including a psychologist, nurse and physiotherapist. They provide the latest insights into pain science and offer practical strategies to help manage pain more effectively. The programme aims to introduce a variety of techniques designed for the daily management of pain while also creating a supportive environment where veterans can share their experiences and receive mutual support from fellow participants.

"The course taught me the relationship between your brain and your body - the role of nerves and the

nervous system. Everything that was happening to me suddenly made sense. Until that point, I'd thought the problem was me."

"I also realised that I was doing everything wrong," says Andy as he reflects on the stretches that he had been taught, that the course was able to correct.

"The therapist was saying, 'Andy, just be kind to yourself. Just stop and do things within your limits. You don't need to push yourself to the limits anymore'. I needed to hear that. I needed a stranger to tell me to be kind to myself and take it easy - I didn't need to push myself until I broke."

Andy tells us how he enjoyed the sessions and found them well-spaced - enough time to digest what had been said and start to implement the advice. Andy also valued the space to ask questions and the private conversations he was able to have with specialists.

In the here and now

We ask Andy how it's going, now that he's nearing the end of the course.

"Well," he begins and smiles as he stretches his neck. "I managed to go to get the train to London on my own. I stayed in London on my own for the first night and then walked across London from South Bank.

"How does it feel? It feels amazing. When I went to the train station, I was thinking, 'There is no chance I'll manage this!'. But I got on the train and I just clicked into the mindset the course had taught me. I was just like 'Let's do this. Because there's nothing you can't do'.

The course has helped Andy build a new routine that helps him manage his pain while being the dad he wants to be. He wakes up, exercises and sorts the family out ready for school. Then he sleeps. He wakes up and picks up his son from school before making dinner. He's also stopped needing to take some of his pain medication.

"My son wanted to go to see a Liverpool football match, so we jumped in the car and I drove to Liverpool City Centre - during rush hour. That would have been unthinkable before I'd done the course."

Into the future

Andy also took on the Lake District Three Peaks Challenge in honour of his late father, managing two peaks and almost 19 miles.

"I know that my dad would have been proud".

With the help of the pain management course, Andy Geelan's life has been transformed. Previously, he struggled with daily life, avoided physical activity and travel, and felt that he could never be the son and dad he wanted to be. Now, he's a family man running three miles every day on the road to recovery, his sights set on the peaks.

"The pain management program is not a golden ticket, a quick fix or a magic pill," says Andy. "It's about helping you to make small, informed lifestyle, physical and mental changes to enable you to live a better quality of life... and it has certainly changed mine for the better."



Into the Archive

Sir Thomas Crisp English

The Surgeon Who Saved Churchill

Sir Thomas Crisp English (22 July 1878 – 25 August 1949) was a distinguished British surgeon who served as consulting surgeon to Queen Alexandra Military Hospital, the Royal Hospital Chelsea, and King Edward VII's Hospital for Officers. He began his association with King Edward VII's Hospital in 1914 as a Consultant Surgeon.

During World War I, like many of the specialists at King Edward VII's Hospital, Sir Thomas worked without remuneration, treating wounded soldiers out of a sense of duty and compassion. Sister Agnes, the hospital's founder, had earned such a stellar reputation that the surgeons' voluntary work enhanced their own standing far beyond the value of any fee.

Sir Thomas is perhaps best remembered for saving the life of Winston Churchill on 18 October 1922, when Churchill was serving as Secretary of State for the Colonies. Churchill had been suffering from what he believed was persistent "indigestion" for nearly a week. However, Sir Thomas correctly diagnosed acute appendicitis and insisted on immediate surgery. The decision proved lifesaving, as Churchill's appendix had become gangrenous and had burst, requiring a challenging operation to remove it.

Churchill later expressed deep gratitude for Sir Thomas's expertise, though he humorously complained about one aspect of his recovery - the prohibition of alcohol at lunchtime, which he described as "a horrible infliction!"



An interview with James Rous

Director of Veterans' Affairs and Philanthropy

We are honoured to feature an interview with James Rous, Director of Veterans' Affairs and Philanthropy, in this latest edition of the Friends Newsletter. Since joining the Hospital in October 2024, James has been making a meaningful impact, and we are delighted to introduce him to our community. Join us as we learn more about his role, experiences, and vision in this insightful conversation.

Can you share a bit about your background and what inspired you to pursue a career in veterans' affairs and philanthropy?

I grew up in a military family and spent a number of years in the Army in my twenties. After that I worked for twenty years or so in investment management. At the same time I acted as a trustee for two military charities which allowed me to give something back and which I found extremely fulfilling. Given my previous experience, skill-set and knowledge of the military charity landscape I was excited to hear about the role here as I felt that it offered the opportunity for me to have a significant positive impact for British military veterans.

What is your vision/goal for KEVII's efforts in supporting veterans and engaging with our philanthropic community?

Simply put, I want us to be able to do more for veterans, and the more successfully we raise funds the more we will be able to do. At the same time I am keen to spread the word within the veteran community and increase awareness of how we can help.

What do you see as the biggest challenges facing veterans today, and how do you believe KEVII can help address them?

The vast majority of veterans face the same challenges as everyone else including the rising cost of living and difficulty in accessing healthcare. Of course there is a much smaller number of veterans whose needs are more complicated. In all cases however veterans are

people who at one point put themselves second to the needs of their monarch and their country, and therefore they should be owed something by society. As a charity whose objects are to support veterans and their partners we can help in various ways, including military grants, discounts and our pain management programme.

In the time you've been at KEVII, what do you think makes it special?

The staff and volunteers throughout the hospital are all wonderful. Everyone is helpful and kind, which means there is a lovely atmosphere here where everyone is welcomed and looked after beautifully. I was lucky to arrive in time for our annual Christmas Carol Service which was a marvellous occasion with many staff members as well as others from the broader King Edward VII's Hospital family.

What have you enjoyed most about your role so far?

Every day has been different! I have enjoyed meeting new colleagues and learning from them about their specialist areas. It is extremely rewarding to think that as a hospital and as a charity we are making a difference to the lives of so many people. It's a privilege to be working here and I hope that I can make a meaningful contribution.





King Edward VII's Hospital Annual Charity Christmas Carol Concert

On Wednesday, December 11, 2024, we welcomed guests to St. Marylebone Parish Church for our Annual Charity Christmas Carol Concert, a joyous evening filled with music, readings, and festive celebration. Each year, King Edward VII's Hospital hosts this special event to raise vital funds in support of our charitable initiatives for veterans.

The evening featured congregational carols, choir performances, and inspirational readings. We were honoured to welcome Sir Derek Jacobi CBE, Royal Air Force veteran and Invictus Games gold medallist Lucy Holt, and Lieutenant General Sir Simon Mayall KBE CB, among others, who delivered moving readings.

This year's concert raised funds for the Centre for Veterans' Health, which provides support and medical care, including a specialist Pain Management Programme for veterans. The event also celebrated the hospital's 125-year legacy of serving the armed forces community.

Following the concert, guests enjoyed homemade mince pies and mulled wine, adding to the evening's warmth and camaraderie. All proceeds raised will help fund consultations, surgeries, and healthcare services for veterans in need.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who attended, donated, or joined us virtually via our live stream. Your support makes a lasting difference in the lives of those who have served.



A grand total of
£6,057
raised







Get in touch

For more information on anything included in this newsletter, or to discuss how to best support the Hospital, please contact:

Fundraising Office
fundraising@kingedwardvii.co.uk



KING EDWARD VII's
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