

# 110 years of Veterans Housing Scotland in Edinburgh

## VETERANS HOUSING SCOTLAND

Building Lives • Building Communities



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# Acknowledgements

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**BUCKINGHAM PALACE**

As Patron of Veterans Housing Scotland, I am delighted to introduce this booklet which illustrates the transformative work that the charity has delivered for 110 years.

Access to safe, secure, and dignified housing is not merely a fundamental need, it is the foundation upon which lives are rebuilt, opportunities are realised, and hope is restored. The values that were identified when the Charity was established in 1915 are still very relevant and remain at the forefront of the continuing work today.

I would like to extend my thanks to all those who make the work of Veterans Housing Scotland possible, from staff and volunteers to supporters and partners. Everything you do makes a real difference to the lives of our beneficiaries.

I send you all my warmest good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anne', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

## Surviving war and surviving peace

At the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 the Great War ended. While around a quarter of all Scots who fought had died, those that had survived 'the War to end all Wars', were hardly unscathed. They had endured insidious gas attacks, unrelenting aerial bombardments, vicious trench warfare, and devastating long-range naval gunnery. Many returned home damaged both mentally and physically to a country barely able to help them.

Employment was problematic at best. In a Scotland still dependent on strong bodies for heavy industry, fishing, coal mining and farming, those men with disabilities came a very poor second to physically able-bodied workers.

All too often with unemployment came despair, poverty, isolation and homelessness.

For those even only slightly impaired, survival in peacetime presented its own challenges, both physical and psychological. To urban Scots, typically housed in high-rise three and four-storey tenements, a series of stairs and landings presented a challenge to the able-bodied and particularly to the elderly and infirm. To the war-wounded such accommodation was simply unsuitable.

### The Veteran's Dream

The Veteran's Dream of returning from war, to a better life was a mirage. They were injured, dejected and often with their minds and bodies damaged. From the overcrowded and squalid urban tenements where many veterans had been born, brought up and had now returned there was little hope, and the country was in turmoil.

**Below:**

*A contemporary illustration of a forgotten, destitute war veteran.*



## The early days/in the beginning

In 1915, at a very early stage of the War, the Scottish Veterans Garden City Association (subsequently Veterans Housing Scotland) was created to respond to the growing number of injured servicemen returning from the battlefields of Europe. Many faced not just physical and psychological disabilities, also economic hardship and a lack of suitable housing.

In the years before 1914 the Garden City Movement was popular in England. It was based on an urban planning philosophy that promoted well-designed, low-rise, self-contained communities. The founders of the Association, included a concerned group of individuals within Edinburgh's business community, who sought to help veterans on their return home after suffering severe injuries on active duty. Far more than just offering a roof over their heads, disabled servicemen also needed help regarding self-sufficiency and support to rebuild their shattered lives.

At the outset various forms of assistance were considered before the group decided to focus on creating housing and employment solutions that would allow these veterans to rebuild their lives with dignity and stability.

The group was under the Chairmanship of Edward Salvesen, Lord Salvesen, Senator of the College of Justice who lived in Dean Park House in Edinburgh's west end. Still grieving the two sons the family had lost in the War the Salvesens played a crucial role in funding and supporting the establishment of the Association's first housing projects. Their financial contributions helped secure land and construct some of the earliest homes for disabled veterans. The family's commitment to social responsibility ensured that The Association had the necessary resources to expand its reach and provide long-term support to injured veterans, indeed the family still generously supports the charity to this day.

*Below: Lord Salvesen in his robes of office.*



### The founders

Under Lord Salvesen the group comprised:

**Norman J. Nasmyth**, a landed proprietor in Abernethy who was part of a coal mining and farming family

**Sir Henry Ballantyne**, a woollen manufacturer from Peebles who chaired the Royal Commission on Housing in Scotland that was appointed in 1912

**David Stewart**, a merchant of Monifieth

**John H.F.K. Scott**, a landed proprietor of Galashiels

**Thomas Henderson**, a clothing manufacturer of Hawick

**Hugh Mitchell**, a solicitor of Pitlochry

and **Alexander Sim**, a tailor and clothier of Craigmount, Edinburgh.



The first recorded meeting of the group was May 1915. The group identified a priority need to provide as many houses as they could for disabled veterans and their families. Efforts focused on securing land and funding to establish the first veterans' communities. Worldwide affection for Scotland and its people ensured donations poured in from various Caledonian societies globally and included native American tribes in the U.S.A. The London Road School in Edinburgh and the Caledonian Society of Bangkok also provided cottages.

Initial housing developments were established in Edinburgh and Glasgow with an emphasis on accessibility and comfort. The homes were designed to accommodate the mobility challenges faced by many wounded soldiers.

The veterans returning from WWI faced a wide range of injuries, from amputations and spinal damage to sight and hearing loss caused by gas attacks and artillery blasts. These realities shaped the early design principles—wide doorways, single-storey layouts, and adapted kitchens and bathrooms became critical features.

Such was the success of these developments that they led to further expansion. By the end of the 1920s the Association had built several hundred homes across Scotland. The Association's work not only provided housing, it fostered a sense of community among veterans many of whom had struggled with isolation when they returned.

Within a matter of months the Association was formally launched and steps were taken to extend the network of volunteers to other parts of Scotland.

Over the decades, as medical advances changed the nature of survivable injuries, the Association evolved its housing specifications. From installing ground-floor bedrooms in two-storey homes in the 1920s to incorporating modern mobility aids, heating technologies, and energy-efficient systems today, the homes have continuously adapted to the changing needs of disabled veterans.

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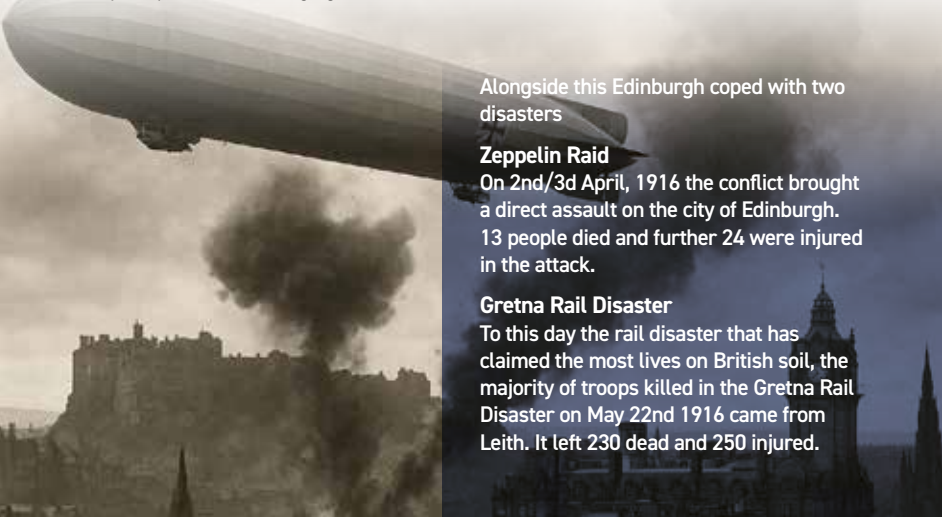
*Lord Salvesen*

*'I will not be satisfied  
until we have spent  
£250,000.'*

*Extract from  
Committee Minutes 1920*

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*Below: AI recreation  
of the Zeppelin raid.*



Alongside this Edinburgh coped with two disasters

#### **Zeppelin Raid**

On 2nd/3d April, 1916 the conflict brought a direct assault on the city of Edinburgh. 13 people died and further 24 were injured in the attack.

#### **Gretna Rail Disaster**

To this day the rail disaster that has claimed the most lives on British soil, the majority of troops killed in the Gretna Rail Disaster on May 22nd 1916 came from Leith. It left 230 dead and 250 injured.

## Post WW1, WW2 and into the 1950s and continued Salvesen support

The experience of war had dramatised the housing problems. Against the background of a significant level of Council housebuilding, the Association continued to expand its housing provision during the inter-war period in response to the needs of WWI Veterans. However, the outbreak of WW2 in 1939 brought an urgency to the organisation's mission. Once again, thousands of Scottish servicemen were injured or disabled in combat and the demand for suitable housing increased.

The Association increased its efforts, acquired additional land in Scotland and secured funding from Government sources, charities and private donations. The Salvesen family continued to play an active role in supporting the Association during this period providing both financial and strategic help. This backing helped the Association maintain its efforts despite the economic difficulties of wartime.

From its base in Edinburgh, the Association acted as the coordinating hub for early developments across Scotland. While the first flagship projects were concentrated in Edinburgh and East Lothian, homes were quickly established in Glasgow, Peebles, Hawick, Galashiels, and Pitlochry. These district committees operated semi-independently but drew financial, legal, and architectural guidance from the central office.

## Community within a community

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*Extract from Committee Minutes of Central Executive, 1st October, 1929... Lady Isobel Douglas Home wrote to SVGCA asking for help for a seriously disabled man, Mr A Laing, who was no longer able to collect his own pension. The Committee agreed this was a deserving case and recommended he was offered a vacancy at Earl Haig Gardens.*

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The initial objective was to create small settlements in rural settings with garden city style cottages that were specially designed to meet the needs of severely injured veterans. The vision was that those who had directly experienced the horrors of war would appreciate and benefit from a peaceful existence in the countryside. It was hoped that life in a rural setting would offer various opportunities for the development of new skills within a mutually supportive community. Community within a Community was born.

The Garden City concept was introduced to Scotland in the early 1900s. Homes were built on a shared equity scheme, on green land and managed by committees of volunteers.

These developments were built close to main cities and linked by good transport links. While the Association's early developments were ambitious, progress was not without challenges. Government wartime restrictions on bricks, timber, and other materials frequently delayed construction. At Longniddry, for example, only half of the planned 60 homes were completed, partly due to shortages and cost pressures. Lessons learned during these early projects influenced future designs and the pacing of later developments.



The foundation stone of the first Association development was laid by Mrs Parker, the sister of Lord Kitchener, on 23rd September 1916, at Longniddry in East Lothian. This key development is always acknowledged within the VHS story today.

Lord Salvesen donated land in the Trinity area and the Earl Haig Gardens built there became one of the Association's earliest prototypes for accessible veterans housing. Opened in October 1921 its blend of neo-Georgian and Arts and Crafts designs served as a model for other developments across Scotland, influencing architectural decisions well into the mid-20th century. The Edinburgh base acted as a proving ground where new design ideas were tested before being replicated elsewhere.

The firm of Henry & MacLennan prepared the general development plan for Earl Haig Gardens in Edinburgh which was built on this site. The plan involved a quadrangle of 31 houses around a small common green and was completed in three phases between 1920 and 1922. The first and third phases were designed in a neo-Georgian style by Henry & MacLennan. The second phase was designed in an Arts and Crafts manner by the Edinburgh practice of Burnet Orphoot, Frank Whiting and William Bryce. All of the houses at Earl Haig Gardens now have a listing of Category C.

**Top:** The first development at Earl Haig Gardens.

**Above:** Laying the first stone at Longniddry. The Countess of Wemyss, front left, and Mrs Frances Parker, Lord Kitchener's sister, front right, on 23 September 1916.



## Development of SVGCA and SGCHS

During the first four years of operation the Association was funded entirely by voluntary contributions. When the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1919 received parliamentary approval, the organisation decided to take advantage of the capital grants on offer to registered public utility societies. To qualify for this type of financial assistance, a subsidiary called The Scottish Garden City Housing Society (SGCHS - Society) was legally established as a public utility society operating under the general supervision of the Association.

The first Association development, located in the East Lothian village of Longniddry, was based on the organisation's rural vision. This initiative was launched in 1918 and implemented in phases over a 12-year period. A total of 33 cottages were built in Kitchener Crescent, Aberlady Road, and Wemyss Terrace together with a small community hall, a workshop, tea rooms, allotments, poultry runs, piggeries and a fruit farm. Although the cottage accommodation was greatly appreciated by the original occupants, other aspects of the initiative were regarded by the residents as less successful.

It soon became apparent that, for many of the veterans, the nature of their injuries would not allow them to carry out the types of work on offer in an efficient or enjoyable manner. In addition, a substantial number of the residents had grown up in urban areas and would have preferred to live near to their families in locations that provided a wider range of opportunities for education, employment and family connections.

**Below:** King George V and Queen Mary visited this development in the twenties.

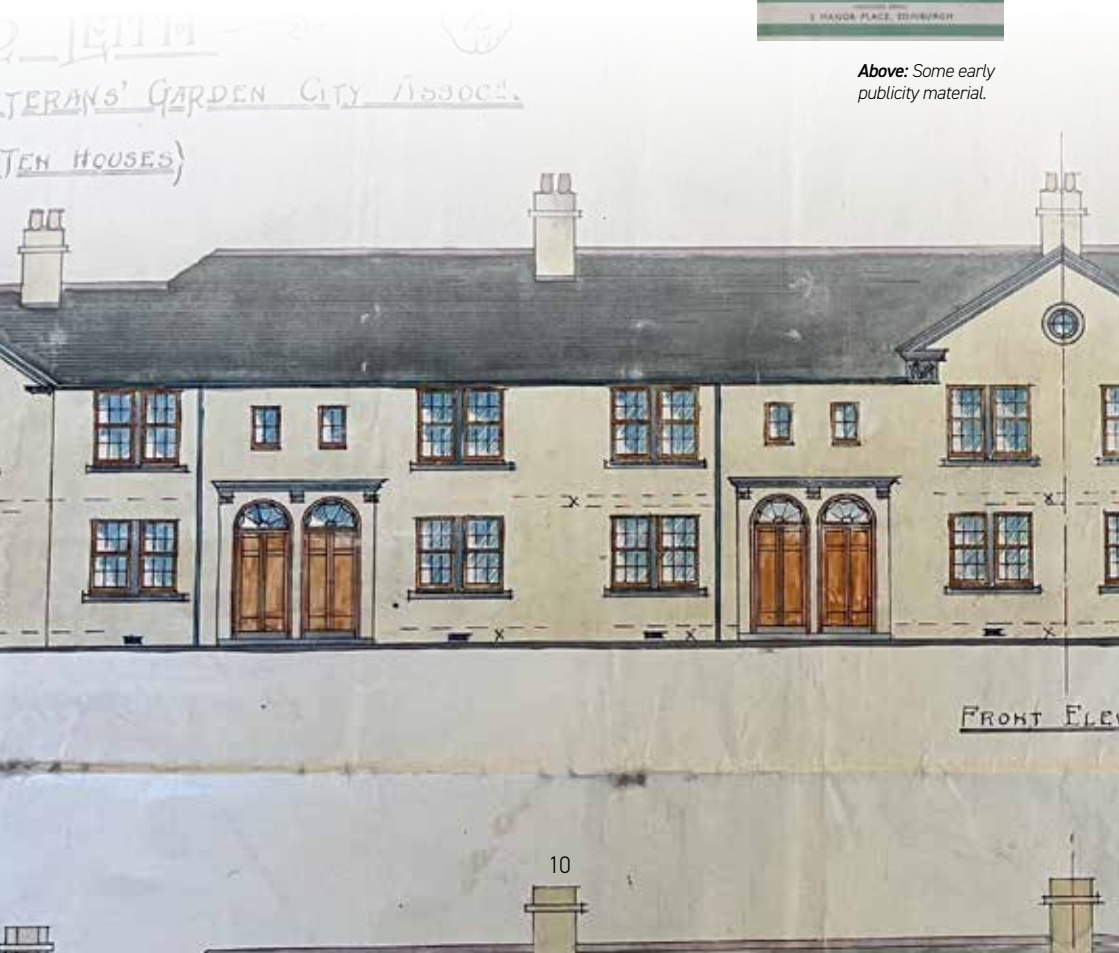


The Association's volunteers were committed to monitoring the satisfaction levels of the initial group of residents and this feedback generated a change of direction in the development of future projects. In light of the Longniddry experience, the bulk of the subsequent Association developments were located in more suburban settlements.

Although the district committees were free to choose their own architects, an impressive standard of housing provision was generally achieved. Careful attention was given to the design specifications for the cottages, as well as the layout of public and private open space. The cottages provided by the district committees contained features that were innovative for the times, such as generous doorways to allow easy access. Many of the two-storey properties also had a bedroom and a specially designed bathroom on the ground floor.



**Above:** Some early publicity material.





**Above:** The original plans for the development at Trinity.

In a number of cases, the architectural treatment of the early Association developments was particularly distinctive. The cottages at Longniddry were designed in an Arts and Crafts manner by the Edinburgh-based practice of James Henry and Thomas MacLennan. Most of these properties now have a listing of Category B.

By the late 1940s, after the end of WW2, the Association had expanded its reach, accommodating many more veterans including those who had served in both World Wars. The Association also strengthened its partnerships with key stakeholders. Collaborations with organisations such as the Royal British Legion Scotland and government agencies helped secure financial assistance for veterans struggling with the transition back to civilian life. Also, with the introduction of the welfare state in the late 1940s, war-disabled veterans had better access to medical care, pensions and social support. Many of these partnerships are still in place today.

Alongside this, the Association also evolved its architectural approach, integrating feedback from residents to improve the design of new housing developments.



ATION.



## 110 years of helping disabled veterans



**1915**

SVGCA  
was founded by  
Lord Salvesen

1914-1918 (WW1)

**1917**

Royal  
Commission on  
Scottish Housing  
reported

**1920s**

several hundred  
more homes  
developed across  
Scotland

1956 Suez Crisis

**1954**

HRH The Princess  
Royal opened  
three cottages at  
Muirhouse

1950-1953 Korean War

**1953**

five cottages  
completed in  
Stenhouse

**1952**

Cottages donated  
by Mary Erskine  
School completed

**1960s-  
1980s**

post-war transition  
and social housing  
integration

**1965**

fiftieth  
anniversary of  
the Association

**1969**

Air Vice Marshal  
Hughes visited  
Earl Haig  
Gardens

The Troubles'

**1996**

ratings subsidy  
discontinued in  
Edinburgh

199

Afghanistan/Iraq Wars 2001-2021

**2009**

VHS launched  
Houses for Heroes  
Appeal

**2015**

launch of  
fundraising  
campaign - £2M  
from libor



Our Patron,  
HM Queen  
Elizabeth II  
visited Salvesen  
site





**1926**  
Liberton  
tapes opened

**1930s**  
wartime  
continuity

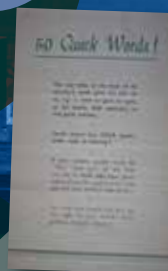
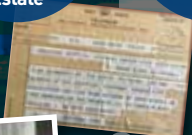
1939-1945 (WW2)

**1946**  
Salvesen  
funded housing,  
creates Salvesen  
Estate

**1940s**  
Association  
expanded its reach  
across Scotland

**1942**  
Lord Salvesen  
died

Northern Ireland



1982 The Falklands War

1992-1995 Bosnian War

1990-1991 Gulf War



**2018**  
strategic  
review

**2020**  
new homes in  
Cockenzie, East  
Lothian

**2021**  
joining of  
Association and  
Society, VHS was  
born

**2023**  
launched 25x25  
campaign offering  
more nomination  
rights properties

**2024**  
HRH The Princess  
Royal becomes  
Patron

**2025**  
25x25 target  
achieved

**VETERANS**  
**HOUSING SCOTLAND**  
Building Lives • Building Communities

**2022**  
HM Queen  
Elizabeth II  
died





## One hundred years and the new millennium

Kevin Gray, MM, Chief Executive

**One century on there are still parallels with the early days. Young soldiers are sent off to war on the promise of excitement and adventure. More recent conflicts include Northern Ireland; The Falklands War; both Gulf Wars; Korea; Suez; Malaya; Bosnia; Afghanistan; and Iraq. However, no-one really wants to know those who return, broken in body and mind. We safely depersonalise them with euphemisms like 'army personnel' and 'boots on the ground'.**

Our work goes on. No longer run by teams of volunteers, a full-time Central Office including, importantly, Visiting Officers operating in local areas.

In 2009, replicating the original aims of 1915, the charity launched a dedicated appeal to build a further 60 homes. It is depressing that we seem to have come full circle and have learned so little. Going to war is easy – picking up the pieces and dealing with the human cost of the aftermath is quite a different matter. We should all be thankful that some folk are still committed to doing it.

That appeal was successful and received a £2 million donation from the UK Government's fine on banks who were involved in fixing the Libor interest rates.

### Strategic review

More recently the Association and Society were considered in the context of a Strategic Review.

Carried out in 2018, the charity recognised it had to make some changes to better meet the needs of the disabled veterans and to address upcoming changes in legislation. The changes started in 2019 and the Association was closed in 2021 leaving the Society as the parent charity whilst adopting the name 'Veterans Housing Scotland' as the operating name. This, at a stroke, allowed the charity name to be more readily identifiable as to what it does.

The refreshed operation largely hinges on collaboration with other charities, local authorities, military support and housing groups. Importantly, the disabled beneficiaries and their families remain at the forefront of everything we do.

### Our challenges and plans for the future

That's why in 2025, to coincide with our 110th Anniversary, we launched an ambitious ten-year plan to raise £2 million per year.

This funding will allow us to:

- Continue upgrading our homes to modern standards
- Reduce energy costs
- Improve accessibility for ageing and disabled veterans
- Purchase new properties to expand our reach.



We're not doing this alone. We are building new partnerships with those organisations and individual donors who share our belief that disabled veterans deserve quality homes and a strong support network.

In 2024/25, we invested £2 million in essential improvements. In 2025/26, that figure is expected to be £4 million. This work is not optional.

VHS owns and manages 632 properties across Scotland – 145 of which are in Edinburgh with a further 62 across East and Midlothian. Most were built in the 1950s, some dating back to the interwar years. Good for their time, they now require significant investment.

### **What more does Veterans Housing Scotland do?**

We invest in the well-being of our beneficiaries through our network of Visiting Officers. They help beneficiaries secure support, manage health issues, and maintain stable tenancies.

We have also expanded our income maximisation service, helping beneficiaries claim the financial support they're entitled to. Many rely on Universal Credit or Housing Benefit. These benefits are often based on the Local Housing Allowance which can be more than double what we charge in rent. We never want to abandon the principle that veterans deserve affordable homes.

### **Who do we help?**

110 years on and our beneficiaries are diverse. Many carry the scars of their service — physical, mental or both. Here's a snapshot; 36% were medically discharged from military service, 37% live with physical disabilities, 31% manage mental ill health, 32% experience both physical and mental health challenges.

They come from all branches of the Armed Forces: 74% served in the Army, 7% in the RAF, 5% in the Royal Navy, and 5% in the Royal Marines. Another 14% are widows, widowers, or next of kin who have succeeded the tenancy.

Our community includes veterans of all ages, from young adults to individuals in their 90s. Many have long-established roots with us — 81 have held their tenancy for over 26 years.

### **Why it matters**

We will never abandon the principle that veterans deserve affordable homes. More than a housing provider, Veterans Housing Scotland is a lifeline. We give people more than just a home— breathing space, a sense of stability, and a chance to focus on their health and future.

## Beneficiaries stories

### I will always be indebted to VHS for their kindness

Alastair McLean describes discovering Veterans Housing Scotland as one of the best days of his life!



The former Army Qualified Nurse found himself homeless and sleeping in his car, "I was very lucky to know the CEO of The Royal British Legion Scotland (RBL) Mr. Kevin Gray." Kevin quickly established that Alastair needed help and introduced him to a local letting agency before identifying a perfect home for him within a VHS community. Alastair 'loves' it. 'I will always be indebted to Kevin and Veterans Housing Scotland for their kindness and friendship,' he said.

Having left the military after serving for 15 years regular and 10 years Reserve Service, he joined the Scottish Ambulance Service, a job he really enjoyed. However, he found himself among the first of those who went to Dunblane following the tragic shooting in the primary school, which after having been among those service personnel who helped search for articles and items related to PanAm flight 103 bombing, added to his mental health issues and he took medical retirement in 2005.

Alastair, a great gardener, has always been a strong supporter of veterans having worked; and Chaired a local branch of the RBL among many other roles. He is a great campaigner and raised veterans issues with both the Scottish Government and Westminster and started the 'TravelAid' within the RBL an initiative which helped fund relatives' travel and accommodation costs when visiting their families at military hospitals across the UK.

He sums up his experience with VHS: 'VHS got me off the street and gave me a secure home in which to live. Without this support, I would be in a sad way. I can never say 'thank you' enough.'

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#### **Kevin's Gray, Chief Executive VHS commented:**

*'As I continue my visits around our beneficiaries I see at first-hand how great the need for a secure home is. These homes must be fit for purpose and in the right area for our veterans. While they do pay rent it is set at a level lower than the district council in order to allow them funds to help with further education for instance to assist with their employment opportunities. 'In order to maintain our purpose and achieve our ambitious vision additional funding is key. Tomorrow's veterans are every bit as important as yesterday's and today's and we must be there for them all.'*

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### **Nicola loves her community**

As Veterans Housing Scotland celebrates its 110th Anniversary in 2025 so Nicola marks ten years since she moved into a VHS property.

Medically discharged from the Army after 13 and a half years as a Combat Medical Technician it was her Personnel Recovery Officer (PRO) at the Personnel Recovery Centre who introduced her to Veterans Housing Scotland.

'The process was simple and straightforward. They made everything stress free which, given my personal situation, was exactly what I needed,' said Nicola. I had a two year old daughter and providing her with a safe and secure home was of paramount importance to me. 'We have made our house our 'home' and love going there each evening after work and school. Over the years we have done some work to it and take great care of it. One day it will belong to someone else.

'The location is particularly special to me. Everyone in the street has a connection to the military and we all understand each other. It is a unique community and that's tribute to VHS and the thought they put into housing their beneficiaries.

'As a landlord they are totally supportive and totally unobtrusive. We have an annual inspection visit and our Visiting Officer, keeps in touch. We know they are always there if we need them.'



### **Thank you Veterans Housing Scotland**

Bery served in the RAF for 22 years. He was a physical training instructor and specialised in outdoor activities. On leaving he qualified as a social worker and worked in the social care sector as a therapist.

He and his wife, who cared for her mum, lived in a house that became too big for them so they decided to downsize. However, they found it hard to get help from the local authority so essentially they made themselves homeless in the hope of being rehoused. At that time they house-sat for a friend for a couple of months following which they lived with one of their daughters in the central belt. It was at that time that Bery met Stephen Elliot, VHS Deputy CEO.

Bery describes VHS as his 'Guardian Angel'. 'My wife and I regularly say how lucky we are. Someone was definitely looking after us the day we met Stephen. Together with the support from the charity, we know that if we need any repairs then help is on hand.

'Everyone really cares and goes the extra mile. On all levels this move has been absolutely perfect for us. We have four daughters, a son and eight grandchildren. As they live all around Scotland we are in a great location to be able to support everyone. Thank you Veterans Housing Scotland.'

## Edinburgh Central Office

**Veterans Housing Scotland is 110 years old and has helped more than 12,000 veterans and their families since 1915. The Central Office team of 15 work tirelessly from the office at South Gyle to ensure that the founding principles are implemented. These are based around the 'Five Ps': a philosophy integrating everything from people and properties to partnerships and promotions while keeping 'homes for heroes' at the forefront.**

With more than 100 years of service amongst them, many colleagues have trodden the paths of the beneficiaries they serve. For the Visiting Officers in particular, this provides a unique and valuable understanding of the challenges faced by disabled veterans and their families.

The Central Office team is led by Deputy Chief Executive, Stephen Elliot. He explained "the staff hold a range of professional qualifications which informs their daily work. This enables them to provide safe, accessible homes which ensures that VHS meets the Scottish Government's regulatory standards for letting agents".

Typically VHS receives around 500 general enquiries a year together with 250 direct enquiries and applications for properties. Of these around half are directly related to housing and introduced to other partner organisations, for example SSAFA.





## President

### His Grace, The Duke of Hamilton and Brandon



Alexander Douglas Douglas-Hamilton, the 16th Duke of Hamilton and 13th Duke of Brandon is President of Veterans Housing Scotland.

He assumed the role of President from his late uncle, Lord Selkirk of Douglas, in March 2024. His Grace comes from a family with considerable military connections which are valuable in this prestigious role.

He is very proud of the achievements he has witnessed "The charity has made significant progress in enhancing the lives of disabled veterans through outreach initiatives and partnerships, securing additional homes and support services for those most in need and, crucially, we have raised awareness of the charity's work."

## Trustees

Governance of the charity is the responsibility of the Board of Trustees under the leadership of Chairman, Group Captain Bob Kemp CBE QVRM AE DL. He is supported by a group of Trustees who bring a wealth of experience and skills across a broad range of sectors to VHS:

**Gordon Michie**, Treasurer

**Major Del Hamilton**

**Peter Henry**

**Lady Anne Dalton**

**Major Roland (Ronnie) Proctor** MBE OStJ FSASCOT

**Lt Cdr Gary Nicolson** MBE MCGI RN

**Wng Cdr Alison Moodie** OBE QVRM AE RGN RM

**Group Captain Clive Coombes** OBE

**Adam Dzierzek.**

## Salvesen legacy

### **It was privilege to be able to introduce Lord Salvesen's Great Grandson to Earl Haig Gardens.**

Leonard P. Harper Gow has been researching his family's history and was delighted to be able to add Veterans Housing Scotland to the mix. Philanthropy is still very much at the heart of the family today.

He said: 'It was a wonderful experience to walk around Earl Haig Gardens in Edinburgh with the Executives of Veterans Housing Scotland. This was one of many charitable projects started by my Great Grandfather, Lord Edward Salvesen. He lost two sons in WW1 and this increased his wish to support a wide variety of schemes, both here in Scotland and also in Norway where the Salvesen family had originated.

'I was so impressed by the care that all the residents have shown in keeping their houses and gardens looking so colourful and tidy. Some came out and welcomed us as we walked around. They told me how much they enjoyed staying there. Lord Salvesen would have been delighted.'

Chairman, Bob Kemp, added: 'In this 110th Anniversary year, it was a real pleasure to welcome Leonard to one of the first developments his Great Grandfather had created. The donation of the land was probably one of the most significant gifts the charity has received.

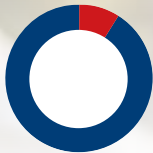
'Leonard generously shared with us some of his own memories of visiting the 'big house' as a child. Fascinating stories that all add to our own history.'

**Below:** Leonard Harper Gow and VHS Chairman Bob Kemp visit Earl Haig Gardens.





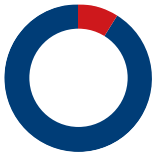
## Some insights into today's veterans



*Alcohol and drugs problems have taken a toll of 9%\**

**Many beneficiaries struggle with life after military service. Disability comes in many forms and is often hidden. Records show that from a sample of 652 disabled veteran beneficiaries they suffer from a very broad range of challenges.**

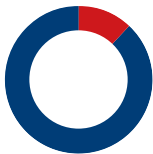
Retired veterans of today are much younger than the vision of years gone by, and Veterans Housing Scotland must stay relevant.



*Physical disability accounted for another 9%\**

Young soldiers in the army are fed, watered, housed and looked after when in uniform. Even able-bodied service people can find the transition to civilian life difficult, so when discharged with a problem, physical disability or mental challenge, many can struggle to look after themselves.

We have seen an increase in mental health problems – some 30%\* of our sample displayed elements of PTSD. Even worse, some 424\*, (65%) had at least more than one support need. That is why it is so important that we work closely with and signpost other charities who can offer further professional support.

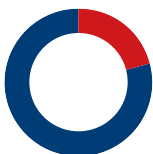


*11% suffered a medical condition\**

Integrating into civilian life can be an exciting new beginning for young veterans and having those close to you who can share your memories, understand your challenges and share your problems can be of great benefit. For this reason the 'communities within communities' approach is invaluable.

Six to eight homes close to each other and integrated into the wider community is a well-tested and proven formula.

For every vacant property the charity receives many applications. More properties are needed and as a non-profit making charity, VHS has developed other ways of increasing housing stock.



*21% struggled to live on their own\**

*\* 'Scottish Homelessness Statistics 2024'*

# How to acquire more homes for disabled veterans in the 21st century

**There are three basic models of home acquisition.**

Firstly, VHS owns and maintains many properties throughout Scotland. Forty-seven new homes have been built since 2007 and further acquisitions are planned for the future although cash purchases do not sit comfortably in a non-profit-making charity.

Secondly, by adopting a shared approach whereby the ownership of a property can be shared either between the beneficiary and the charity or by a third party and the charity. A small number of homes in Coatbridge and Edinburgh have been procured using this approach. In such cases rent is shared.

Finally, a unique way of expanding home provision has been initiated by VHS and developed between local authorities and housing providers who will grant exclusive nomination rights to Veterans' Housing Scotland. In these cases homes are managed and maintained by the housing provider while the veteran's well-being and support needs are looked after by the VHS team of trained Visiting Officers.

This final way of working means that with the co-operation of partners the number of suitable properties can be increased considerably although rental is collected by the local authority rather than the charity.

The exciting self-imposed challenge of acquiring 25 new homes in this way by 2025 was achieved with ease. Edinburgh played a major role in reaching the target.

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## ***Dorothy's Story...***

*Dorothy met her husband while working in munitions during the second world war. He was serving with the Glasgow Highland Light Infantry. They had to relocate from Aberdeen and leave their families behind. Dorothy became the charity's longest beneficiary living in her home for more than 70 years. As she approached her 100th birthday she was told she would live rent-free for the rest of her life. A true recognition of the service both she and her husband gave.*

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## Some royal memories from our Chairman

Group Captain Bob Kemp CBE QVRM AE DL



**HM The Late Queen accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh visited Earl Haig Gardens in 2007 and planted a tree. It was a very wet day but that did not deter a large turnout of supporters to view Her Majesty. The Queen's smile through a transparent umbrella captured the day.**

To mark our centenary in 2015 Her Majesty graciously visited the site of one of our Salvesen developments in Edinburgh. This was a unique visit as the new development was a building site with

duckboards having been laid to accept the arrival of the Royal Rolls Royce. The reception was held in a marquee that was a fairly basic tent. Her Majesty admired the plans of the new site on the wall of the tent as building had yet to commence.

Looking back a reputable charity would never have invited Her Majesty to view a building site but this was our Patron and we wanted her to share our plans, aspirations and ambitions. She left us with a smile - after planting yet another tree! Had her courtiers realised that the new build had not even started the visit might not have gone ahead. The departing sight of the magnificent maroon Rolls Royce, now splattered with building mud, was a sight to behold as it rumbled over the duck boards back on to a metalled road.

**Below:** HM The late Queen and Willie Sutherland.



On the occasions that the Late Queen visited us it was always a tremendous opportunity to present some of our disabled veterans. Petty Officer Willie Sutherland, a veteran of the Falklands War and sadly no longer with us, was hugely moved on meeting the Queen. Willie was a master at storytelling and would regale anyone at how he won the Falklands single handedly.

A more recent Royal visit to Earl Haig Gardens, February 2025, was by His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester. As a trained architect, His Royal Highness took particular interest in the neo-Georgian buildings that were built over 100 years ago. During the visit, Mr and Mrs Davie Armstrong, long time beneficiaries of the charity invited His Royal Highness into their home for refreshments accompanied by the Lord Provost of Edinburgh and His Grace the Duke of Hamilton, the President of VHS.

So, from these early days of a group of cottages with gardens set in a small community with its own Village Hall, Piggery and a basket weaving facility we now provide over 600 Homes for Heroes across Scotland. The original concept of a community within a community has continued although the Village Hall, Piggery and basket weaving has long gone.





**Old Edinburgh Club**

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