



LIFE BEYOND THE MILITARY –
OUTDOORS

CHARITY OVERVIEW

January 2025

HighGround, C/O The Poppy Factory, 20 Petersham Road, Richmond, Greater London, TW10 6UR

Charity registered in England and Wales 1151225. Company limited by guarantee: 0823 6843.



VISION

Our vision continues to be the leading organisation for the provision of land-based opportunities for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans.

We were granted charitable status in March 2013 and as we look past our 10th anniversary we want to build partnerships with companies, organisations and institutions who share our vision to support ex-military personnel into employment and self-employment in the land-based sector where their skills, experience, and values will be appreciated and used to benefit themselves and their employers.

In particular, HighGround will:

- > Continue to provide a Horticultural Therapy service to patients at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) at Stanford Hall.
- > Continue to provide Rural Weeks for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to provide access to expert advice about land-based jobs, careers and vocational opportunities. A Rural Week is a 5 day fully residential course delivered at an agricultural college for a maximum of 8 service leavers and veterans, to give them an overview of the many and varied employment and self-employment opportunities in the land-based sector, and how to access them.
- > Continue to develop the Rural Experience Weeks model for serving personnel, reservists and veterans.
- > Continue to provide Virtual Rural Weeks, our initial starting point.
- > Provide ongoing formal and informal support for HighGround beneficiaries (HighGrounders) as they continue their journey through transition into civilian life.
- > Collect an evidence base to increase awareness of transition challenges, needs and outcomes
- > Expand our Residential Rural weeks to other landbased Colleges giving beneficiaries wider geographical support.
- > Expand our Provision Into Scotland to support any un met need and giving beneficiaries wider geographical support.
- Deliver on our new project supporting female veterans into Landbased opportunities.

“Horticultural Therapy has given me the confidence in completing activities whilst standing. I enjoyed the peaceful environment.”

Stanford Hall patient, amputee.



THE NEED

Approximately 16,500 members of the Armed Forces leave every year. It is well recognised across a wealth of research that employment is a critical component of successful transition to civilian life and more importantly that those [individuals] who choose a job as part of a career path, are more likely to be motivated and feel they are progressing. *Forces in Mind Trust, (2013) Understanding the transition process for Service personnel returning to civilian life.*

Those who join HM Forces are predominantly outdoor people and the land-based sector offers an ever-increasing variety of opportunities for Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to use their unique transferable skills learned in the military to pursue jobs, careers and vocational opportunities in the land-based sector in the UK and beyond.

One of the principal challenges to face Service Leavers, reservists and Veterans is to be able to identify their transferable skills and then market themselves effectively to employers. In addition, there are those for whom the transition to civilian life is not smooth and additional help, guidance and information is required.

“The most valuable thing I have done to support me when I leave.”

RN Leading Hand (In resettlement)

Rural Week Spring 2024





WHAT WE DO

Military life teaches motivation, problem-solving, teamwork, resilience and adaptability in sometimes rough and often unfamiliar environments.

HighGround helps Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to work out what military skills and experience they have, how they will map into the land-based sector and how to access the many opportunities it offers for employment and self-employment.

We have pioneered Rural Weeks, 5 fully residential days at agricultural colleges for 8 Service Leavers, Reservists and Veterans to learn about what the landbased sector looks like from subject matters experts; how to access them. Rural Weeks are run by our Rural Employment Manager in conjunction with the delivering agricultural college.

Since the first pilots at Plumpton College in 2014 we have delivered 44 Rural Weeks.

Thanks to funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust we pioneered Rural Experience Weeks in 2021 to improve the wellbeing and mental health of serving personnel and veterans and have successfully delivered 13 Rural Experience Weeks at Bicton alongside our Rural Weeks programme.

Outcomes following a Rural Week include identifying training courses, arranging work experience or volunteering or in the case of those who are still serving, gaining knowledge, information and contacts to assist with their decision-making during their resettlement and transition back to civilian life.

WHAT IS THE LAND-BASED SECTOR?

This is a generic term which covers outdoor industries including Land Management (including wildlife management, forestry and arboriculture, conservation); Environmental (outdoor) Design, Production and Leisure; Agriculture and Animal Care with a special focus on food production.

WORKING WITH LAND-BASED EMPLOYERS.

Our Advisory Panel helps us to connect with employers across the UK who want to offer work experience and employment opportunities to ex-military personnel and recognise the skills and experience they bring to the workplace.

Through Careers in Racing, BALI, the Arboriculture Association, Historic Houses, Forestry Commission and many more, our links and success stories are developing every day.

"Great to spend a week focusing on the future and discovering new possibilities. I wish the course had been available years ago."

WO1 Army (In resettlement)
Rural Week - Spring 2024

"The broad exposure to a wide variety of people and activities was first class. I've taken away the opportunity, positivity and variety that exists in the rural sector."

Brigadier, Army (Still serving)
Rural Week Spring 2024.

BALI is excited to be working with HighGround in promoting opportunities in the landscape industry. The men and women leaving the Military leave with many skills that can be easily transferred to the world of landscaping and are just what BALI employers are looking for.



HORTICULTURAL THERAPY

Can be defined as ‘The use of plants by a trained professional as a medium through which certain clinically defined goals can be met.’ (THRIVE conference 1999).

In 2014 HighGround started a 3 year pilot at the Defence Medical Rehabilitation Centre (DMRC) Headley Court to test Horticultural Therapy as an intervention to be used in the rehabilitation of injured service personnel.

It was proven to be highly effective with referring Occupational Therapists reporting in an independent service evaluation by Zoe Morrison, Professor of Human Resources and Organisational Behaviour at the University of Greenwich that they now consider Horticultural Therapy to be an important part of patient care. As an additional modality for treatment, mindfulness and for non-clinical (outdoor) skills development, Horticultural Therapy has now been fully integrated into the range of rehabilitation options available for DMRC Stanford Hall.

During the 3 year pilot funded by the Army Benevolent Fund, Westminster Foundation and several other generous donors, our Horticultural Therapist delivered 4,072 sessions of Horticultural Therapy to 1,316 patients and the Surgeon General, the Defence

Authority for Healthcare in the Defence Medical Services Department has now recognised Horticultural Therapy “As a valuable component of the holistic package of rehab interventions which DMRC delivers to its patients.”

Following a grant from the Chancellor’s LIBOR fund and support from Help4Heroes, HighGround has successfully transitioned from Headley Court to the new DMRC and the service is now fully operational.

There are three patient groups at DMRC:

- > Complex Trauma (amputees)
- > Neuro (head injuries)
- > Force Generation (joints and spines).

Everyone who attends Horticultural Therapy must be referred by their Occupational Therapist.

Reasons for referral include:

- > Improve standing tolerance and endurance
- > Increase fine motor skills and cognitive processing
- > Improve confidence and self-esteem
- > Encourage social interaction
- > Promote transferable skills.

DMRC patients commented:

“I could use my injured hand without even knowing. It is a calm environment where not only do you feel relaxed, but good about yourself.”

“The sessions allowed me to be mindfully absorbed in the simple pleasure of enabling living things to grow and flourish. I will cherish the peace and tranquility this provided. A new world of opportunities has been opened to me and are something I intend to pursue.”

“I have vastly improved physically and to concentrate on the physical. Horticultural Therapy has helped me with functional skills such as bending and picking things up from different heights. You find yourself talking to other patients as a bit of self-therapy too, it’s good to offer others an ear to just listen.”

WHO WE HELP



JAMIE

Having grown up in the rural environment, Jamie knew he wanted to return to this on leaving the Army. He completed a rural week and went on to set up his own successful tree surgery and countryside management business in Cornwall. He regularly speaks at both virtual and residential Rural Weeks, inspiring others about the possibilities. Truly Life beyond the military – Outdoors!



ROBYN

Robyn recently left the Royal Navy after 7 years' service. With a medical background she joined a Rural Week to look at options for potentially using her skills as a first aid trainer.

Conversations during the week presented possible opportunities and she is now planning to set up her own business.



TIM

Tim joined us for a Rural Week in 2019 has since been accepted by Bristol University to do an MSc in Construction Project Management.

Tim served in the Army in the 1980's and after he left, spent time in the construction industry and ran his own plumbing business.

He read about Rural Weeks in Pathfinder magazine and joined us to find out more about working in the land-based sector as you can see from the picture!

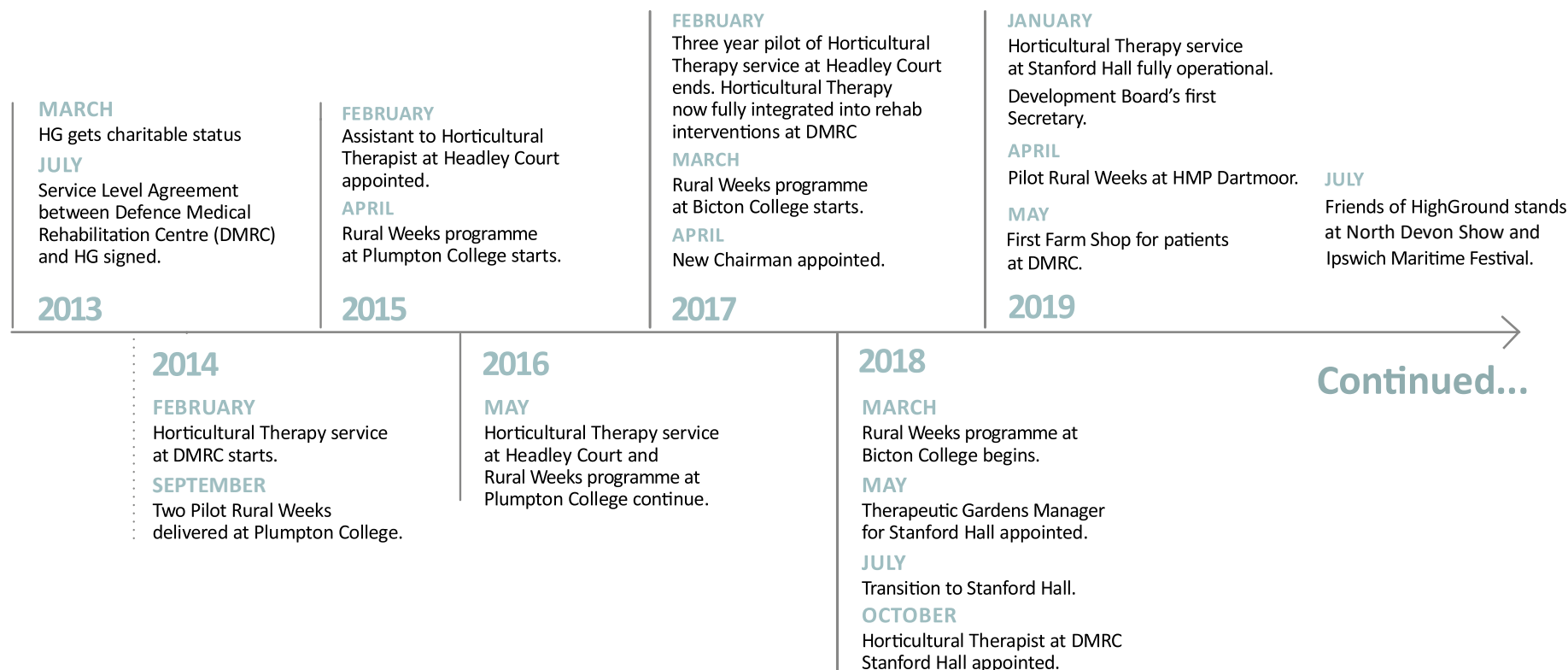
The Rural Week convinced Tim that his future lies in what he knows, Construction.

Tim added "I enjoyed the Rural Week; after volunteering at a CIC local to me reawakened my drive and enthusiasm, the Rural Week gave me time to think about what I really want. Buildforce pointed me towards this course and I'm looking forward to getting my teeth into my studies soon and relishing this new challenge."

You can read more about Rural Weeks [here](#) and the difference HighGround is making [here](#). -



TIMELINE OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



TIMELINE OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

JANUARY

Rural Business Improvement Manager joins the team.

FEBRUARY

Royal visit to DMRC Stanford Hall.

MARCH

CV-19 pandemic.

Rural Weeks taken online.

JUNE

First Virtual Rural Week.

Horticultural Therapy service at DMRC Stanford Hall adapted for CV-19 rehab patients.

SEPTEMBER

First Rural Week of 2020 at Bicton.

OCTOBER

Rural Weeks programme at Bicton cancelled.

Virtual Rural Weeks programme until Christmas 2020.

Richard Lungmuss appointed Hon Sec to the Trustees.



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2020



2021

JUNE

Rural Experience Week programme Starts at Bicton College

SEPTEMBER

Tim Lever joins as Rural Employment Manager.

2022

MAY

First single service Rural Week commissioned by The Royal Marines Charity.

JUNE

T Shirt Challenge launched.

AUGUST

Thanks to funding from the Veterans' Foundation Digital Marketing Co-ordinator appointed.

SEPTEMBER

Planting the new raised beds on the Village Green at Stanford Hall starts.

TIMELINE OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS CONTINUED

JUNE

Simon Caraffi joins as Chair of Trustees

OCTOBER

Jamie Crisp appointed as the first CEO

SEPTEMBER

Pilot Rural Week at Askham Bryan College

APRIL

Second pilot week at Askham Bryan College

MAY

Affiliation with Pen & Sword



OCTOBER

Grave Aldis joins as Occupational Therapist,
working at DMRC Stanford Hall

2023

DECEMBER

Heather Crawford joins as Operation Manager

2024

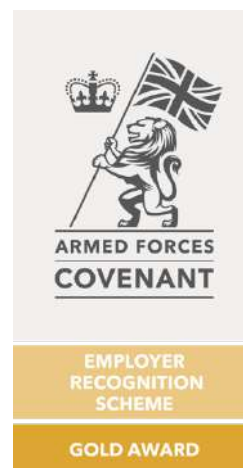
JUNE

Granted Life membership of CLA



SEPTEMBER

Awarded ERS Gold Award



GOVERNANCE

HighGround has four Trustees; the Board is chaired by Brigadier (Ret'd) Simon Caraffi and meets quarterly.

There is also an Advisory Panel drawn from a wide range of experts in the land-based sector which meets regularly to advise HighGround about opportunities and developments in their individual sectors to help HighGround with its mission in delivering Life beyond the military – Outdoors.

Jon Perkins chairs the Advisory Panel and Heather Crawford is Secretary.

Jamie Crisp is the Chief Executive of HighGround and responsible for the strategic direction and running of the Charity.

Anna Baker Cresswell is the Founder and Head of Income Generation. She is responsible for fundraising.

Accountants and auditors: Ryecroft Glenton

Legal advisors: VWV LLP

Company limited by guarantee: 0823 6843

We have found HighGround to be an amazing charity in so many ways. The advice on land-based careers they give military leavers is wide ranging and supportive and this is demonstrated in the quality of the employees who have come to Hi-Line via the HighGround Rural Weeks programme. Having been given the opportunity to look at the different work opportunities available in the land-based sector the people

Kirsty McNicol

Head of HR, Hi-Line Contractors SW Ltd.



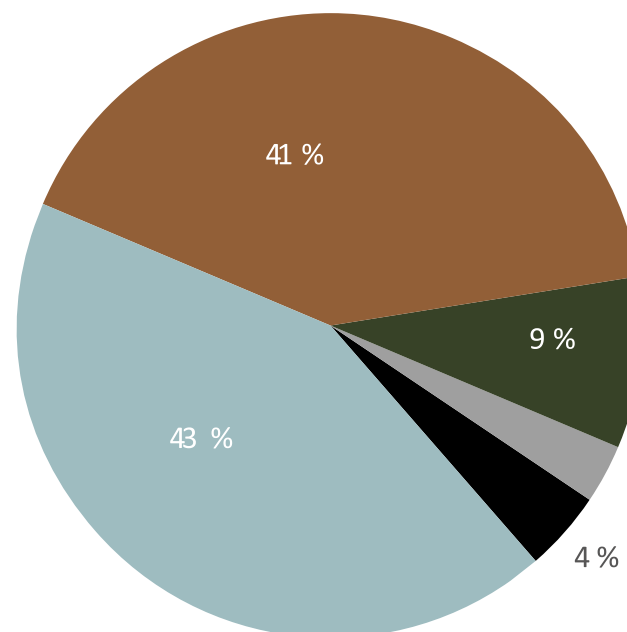


FUNDRAISING

As we move into our next ten years, the Board is focused on delivering a fundraising strategy which will take the Charity into the next decade with a blended range of income streams consisting of corporate support, grant-making trusts, public donation via the Friends of HighGround and legacies.

Our Board of Trustees includes individuals with experience at Director level, experts in charity fundraising, and entrepreneurs dedicated to contributing to ensure HighGround's long-term success to help those who have served their Country.

For more details, please contact Anna;
anna@highground-uk.org or Tel: 07951 495 272



- Core Services £162,000
- Workforce Costs £156,456
- Running Costs £34,397
- Fundraising £10,625[JC1]
- Governance £13,704

To build on the success of Step into Health, our inaugural veterans' employment programme, working in partnership with the NHS, we explored other employment sectors where we could replicate this accomplishment. We knew that the land-based sector was a popular post-service employment choice for military service leavers and veterans and from the onset of our research, it became obvious that HighGround was in a class of its own when it came to supporting the military community in this area.

The Royal Foundation and HighGround relationship developed from initially plugging some funding gaps and convening activities to supporting to an Employment Manager position. Anna, Ian and the team work incredibly hard, and I envisage that having an Employment Manager in post will lessen that pressure and will be a great boost to the career prospects of those who have completed the Rural Week course.

We have been proud to work with the HighGround team and to be able to support some of the truly remarkable work that they do, and we look forward to seeing this great organisation go from strength to strength in the future"

Karen Hodgson
Veterans Employment Manager, The Royal Foundation



OUR FUNDERS

We thank each and every one of our brilliant donors, without whom our work would not be possible.





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www.highground-uk.org

Become a Friend of HighGround and receive our free newsletter.

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