



WELCOME TO OUR 2025 SUMMER NEWSLETTER

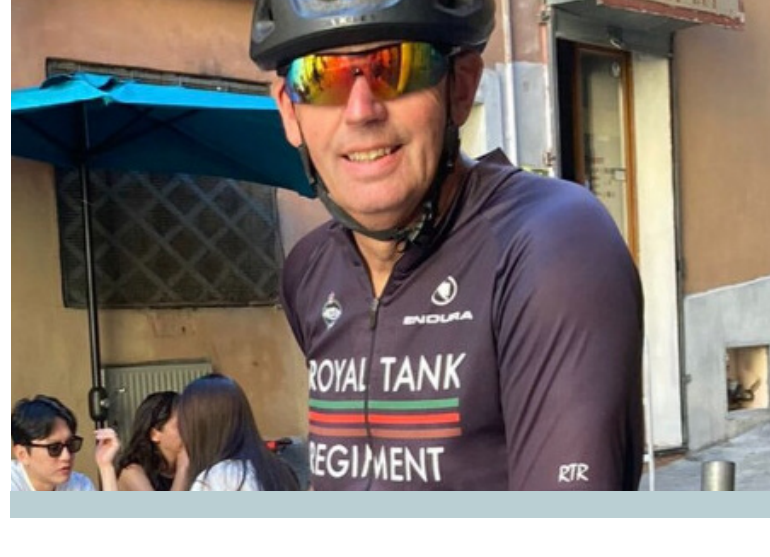
PEDALS, PLANTS & PARTNERSHIPS — WHAT'S NEW AT HIGHGROUND

Hello to all our HighGround supporters, volunteers and friends! As summer rolls on, we've been busy planting hope — physically, metaphorically, and through horsepower. From long rides and new funding to powerful stories from the garden beds, here's what's been going on and what's coming up.

HIGHLIGHTS

OUR CHAIRMANS WESTERN FRONT CYCLE

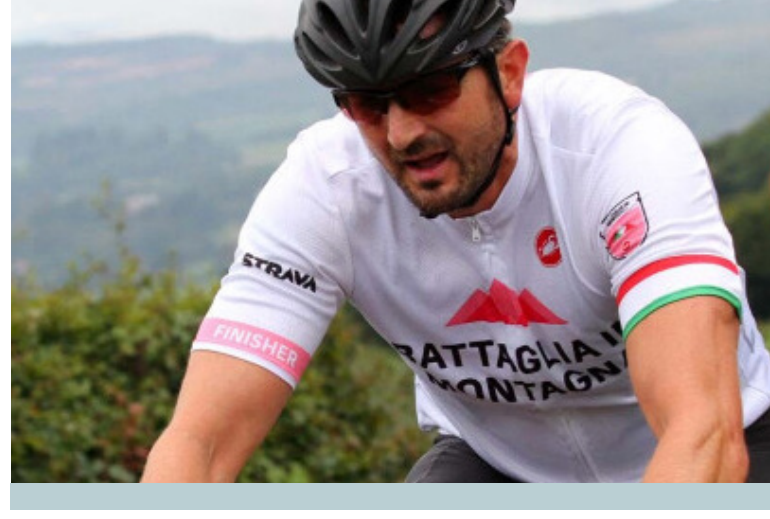
Our Chairman, Simon Caraffi, kicked off the summer cycling the length of the Western Front raising funds for HighGround. An epic 1100km ride and we thank Simon for his dedication through some tough conditions. Our Chair's ride raised £3,262.50 what an amazing feat and we thank all that so generously supported Simon. All funds raised on this epic ride will directly support our Service leavers veterans and reservists.



Simon Caraffi

CEO JAMIE CRISP'S 850 KM FUNDRAISING CYCLE RIDE

Jamie set off mid-August to ride the equivalent distance that linked key sites across our work — from Bicton College to **DMRC Stanford Hall**, on to **Sparsholt College**, and finally looping back to Bicton College. highground-uk.org. The key was to complete the route in **under five days**, covering 850miles. Having been knocked off his bike on day 2, Jamie continued completing the distance in 8 days. This fundraising challenge raised a total off £856.25 with all funds raised being used directly for our programmes supporting **veterans, service leavers and reservists** — including horticultural therapy, land-based training, Rural Weeks, and advocacy under the Armed Forces Covenant. Jamie's motivation: having completed many endurance challenges, he says this one is special because it ties together HighGround's mission, brings visibility, and honours what service leavers can bring to civilian life.



Jamie Crisp

NEW FUNDING & SUPPORT FROM GREENWICH HOSPITAL

We are thrilled that Greenwich Hospital has awarded a grant supporting both our horticultural **therapy work at DMRC Stanford Hall** and our **Rural Weeks programmes**. This boosts our ability to deliver hands-on therapeutic and vocational land-based work for people transitioning out of service. (You can read more on our website's news feed) www.highground-uk.org/horticultural-therapy



GREENWICH HOSPITAL
SUPPORTING THE ROYAL NAVY SINCE 1694

RECOGNITION FOR INSPIRATION & LEADERSHIP

Our **founder, Anna Baker Cresswell**, has been nominated in the Inspiration category of the **2025 Soldiering On Awards**, being celebrated at the House of Lords. A public vote determines the winner.

PROGRAMME UPDATES & IMPACT

Horticultural Therapy at DMRC Stanford Hall continues to be central to our rehabilitation work — both for the therapeutic benefit and the transferable skills participants gain.

The weather has been hot and dry and keeping up with the watering has been the main task this season. Everything has been planted out and the beds are full of flowers and edible plants which are much admired by patients and staff alike.

Fundraising efforts through plant and produce sales have raised a total of £1799.21 this year to date. We hosted the main farm shop event during May which was well attended and had cut flower bouquets made by the volunteers for the first time which were all very quickly snapped up. In addition, Steve and the volunteers had a plant stall at East Leake and the DMRC craft fair. Steve has been selling plants and produce to staff on a smaller scale each week. All of which has contributed to our grand total.

We are continuing to deliver staff health and well-being sessions most recently on hanging baskets with sessions planned for cut flowers and willow bird feeders during the rest of the summer. Jane and Grace delivered 4 interactive training sessions on herb identification and uses for Complex Trauma/Neuro nursing and therapy staff as part of a focus and development week.

Grace and Jane attended the annual Social and Therapeutic Horticulture conference hosted by Trellis in conjunction with Thrive in Perth, Scotland. An interesting and positive day with updates on professional accreditation for STH practitioners. We were able to visit Edinburgh Botanic Gardens also both of which gave us ideas for ideas for sessions with staff and patients.



The whole HighGround team from Stanford Hall went on a visit to St Ann's Allotments in Nottingham which is one of largest allotment sites in the UK dating back to Victorian times. Again, worthwhile to look at different garden spaces as useful inspiration and for team bonding.



We have of course continued to deliver Horticultural Therapy sessions to patients. These have varied from a physical focus incorporating specific postures such as kneeling and turning whilst lifting a load to replicate a work activity to sensory sessions using herbs to stimulate memory and the senses to mental well-being through engagement in mundane tasks such as weeding and creative tasks such as onion braiding.

Rural Weeks (residential & virtual) are running steadily. The virtual format remains important to reach those who cannot attend physically and is a positive way for serving personnel and veterans to 'dip their toes' into discovering land-based opportunities.

We ran our first Female Only residential rural week in July which was generously funded by the Lloyds Patriotic Fund. This week was a direct response to the needs of female military personnel and veterans providing support and a safe space to learn and develop knowledge and understanding of careers in the land-based sector. It was a great success with wonderful feedback from beneficiaries. We hope to run one of these a year.

"It is a realistic and authentic insight with honest, driven and passionate people. It was really good to be in a female only environment and have the perspective of women working in the sector."

We are deeply indebted to all the presenters on virtual and residential weeks who give so generously of time and knowledge. The encouragement and enthusiasm shown to beneficiaries is such a positive influence on their career decisions.

A mass email to beneficiaries has resulted in a better understanding of where they end up — watch the website for Good News Stories which will appear over the next few months.

We love knowing what HighGrounders end up doing and those stories help encourage more people to take part in courses.



Community planting & environmental work have featured heavily on our social channels — hedgerows, native planting, restoration, etc. These are both therapeutic and restorative for the land. We are delighted to have a relationship with Carma www.carma.earth/business/tree-planting-days who's tree planting days raise funds that directly support HighGround beneficiaries

FUNDERS, SUPPORTERS & SOCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

Thank you to Greenwich Hospital, The Veterans' Foundation, and our many partners whose funding allows us to expand HT at Stanford Hall, deliver more Rural Weeks, and reach more people.



Recent social media posts have shown the power of volunteer moments — hedgerow planting in Somerset, photos from Stanford Hall's therapy garden, participants' reflections.

We are developing our messaging on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [LinkedIn](#) and are seeing results with a wider reach.

If you don't already, look for HighGround, click follow and get more regular updates. Our coverage in the media has also grown: the Soldiering On Awards nomination; announcements of new grants.

The HighGround Advisory Panel met in early September giving us an opportunity to review programme content and quality. The group are drawn from various sectors and provide us with employer and industry knowledge and guidance which is essential in ensuring we remain relevant and have the best opportunities to provide information and guidance to those looking for careers in the rural economy.

STOP PRESS

2026 RURAL WEEKS DATES ARE NOW ON THE WEBSITE

We are delighted to be running a Female Veterans into Land-based Teaching qualification at Sparsholt College in Spring 2026 — details are on the [website](#).

GET IN TOUCH

DONATE NOW

GDPR AND OUR STANDARDS

GDPR came into effect on 25th May 2018. We had an extremely busy run up to this date, but our small team were able to pull out all the stops and get things in place in time. As a charity we take GDPR and the security of your information very seriously. To this end, we have ensured that all of our data processors comply rigorously to keep everything secure. You can read about our Standards [here](#).

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