



News Release

Media team: gavin.k@ssafa.org.uk 020 7463 9258

Sewing Soldier workshops and talks at the Cathedral in aid of SSAFA

This November, the Wiltshire branch of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, has joined forces with 'Sewing Soldier' Lt Col Neil Stace (finalist on the Great British Sewing Bee), to launch the '100 Hearts for 100 years' project based on the military Love Heart Pin cushions of WW1.

The 100 pin cushions have been lovingly made by Neil along with the Royal School of Needlework, the Academy Quilters from the Defence Academy (Shrivenham), Fine Cell Work, and several other groups and individuals in a bid to raise money for SSAFA's vital work supporting people in the local Armed Forces community.

To celebrate the '100 Hearts for 100 years' project on 6 and 13 November there will be family sewing workshops at Salisbury Cathedral. Families are invited to join the Sewing Soldier in making their own commemorative WW1 Sweetheart Pincushions and to learn how the injured soldiers used sewing and embroidery to help them recover from the physical and psychological traumas of fighting in the trenches. Attendance is free however a donation to SSAFA Wiltshire Branch is encouraged.

In addition, on 11 November Lt Col Neil Stace will give a presentation at Salisbury Cathedral called "Sewing on the Front Line". Neil will talk about how these exquisite pincushions, made by injured soldiers were an early form of occupational therapy, helping them cope with the traumatic experiences of fighting in the trenches. Neil will also talk about his own experiences and how sewing has helped him through difficult periods whilst serving on the front line in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Northern Ireland.

'Sewing Soldier' Lt Col Neil Stace says: "I joined the Army at the age of 18 and the job has taken me on operations all over the world. Throughout my career sewing has always been a part of my life; my sewing machine went with to Northern Ireland and Bosnia and my sewing skills were put to

good use on several occasions in Afghanistan. I have been known to use knitting to calm down after rugby matches and I have taught sewing to homeless veterans too.

“100 Hearts for a 100 years is a fantastic project and I am supporting it for several reasons. As a young platoon commander and a company commander I depended on the services of SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity, for welfare support for my soldiers and families. SSAFA was such a part of my day to day job that I honestly thought they were employed by the Forces, so I am keen to raise awareness of what SSAFA does. I also passionately believe in the therapeutic value of creating things and the hearts are perfect for this. Sewing projects have helped me during some very demanding and stressful times on operations allowing me to focus and deal with pressure. “

The love heart pin cushions originate back to the Boer war, during WW1 they were given to injured soldiers to decorate whilst recuperating in hospitals in Northern France. They were seen as romantic objects made with regimental felt, buttons and badges and would reflect things the soldier held close to his heart, often with the regimental insignia at the centre. They were also often decorated with poems and messages that were printed on small silk patches that came in cigarette packages with the soldier's rations.

Ends

Notes to editors

About SSAFA:

SSAFA, the Armed Forces charity (formerly known as the Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen & Families Association), provides lifelong support to anyone who is currently serving or has ever served in the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force including reservists, and their families.

Each year, our professional staff and network of more than 7,000 volunteers help 60,000 people, ranging from World War Two veterans to the families of young servicemen and women wounded or killed in Afghanistan.

For more information visit www.ssafa.org.uk and follow us on Twitter: [@SSAFA](https://twitter.com/SSAFA)