



BNTVA
the Charity for Atomic Veterans
Registered Charity 1173575

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Monthly Newsletter – August 2018

Welcome to the August 2018 edition of the BNTVA Monthly newsletter. This printed version will be distributed to anyone who requests it. We will aim to take the news items from Social Media and the Newsdesk and collate them together. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter, please contact us using the above contact details.

Signing up for Email

You can visit <https://www.bntva.com/latest-news> and enter your name and email, tick the privacy policy and subscribe.

You will receive this newsletter by email on the 4th of each month.

On this page you can also view previous newsletters and previous campaign editions.

Petition Success

In August we reached the 10,000 signatures on the online petition. This was a major achievement for the BNTVA and prompted the government to respond to the petition.

We do not want to stop at 10,000, the petition runs until November and we need as many as possible to continue the campaign.

The governments response was as follows:



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“The Government continues to recognise and be grateful to all Service personnel and civilians who participated in the British Nuclear testing programme.

Their selfless contribution ensured that the UK was equipped with the deterrent we needed during the dangerous years of the Cold War.

The Ministry of Defence has asked the Cabinet Office if The Committee on the Grants of Honours, Decorations and Medals (The HD Committee) would consider looking afresh at the previous information, and examine any new evidence presented by campaigners. If the Committee decides that a medal is appropriate recognition for veterans, a recommendation will be made to Her Majesty The Queen. It is envisaged that if the recommendation is supported any subsequent medal would be made available to all those who witnessed the nuclear tests.”

Ministry of Defence

Oldham man wants recognition for Nuclear Test Veterans



Terry Quinlan and his daughter are working hard on behalf of nuclear test veterans and their families to get them a medal and the recognition and support they deserve.



Terry, 79, was originally from Royton but now lives in Kent. He was stationed on Christmas Island in 1958 at the height of the Cold War. He was a B3 Specialist in the Army working with the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment (AWRE) and was there to move the equipment for the bombs back and forth.

Terry, along with the other 109 men in his unit, was witness to five nuclear blasts on the island. He was dressed only in a pair of shorts, boots,



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puttees and a jungle hat. The only thing he was told before an A Bomb was set off was to sit in the sand, nine miles from the blast, and put his fists in front of his eyes. It was 22 miles for an H Bomb.



Terry said: "It was terrifying hearing that countdown and then when the bomb went off it was so bright I could see through my hands, I could see my bones and the blast pushed us back along the ground. The blast and radiation flattened the palm trees in front of us and tossed the boats out of the water, it was terrible."

In the aftermath of the blasts Terry remembers dead fish for 50 miles in the ocean, the incredibly thick coral that they had driven heavy trucks over had been turned to mud and sand in parts of the island was scorched black and made like glass. Some men were asked to search the island to catch and kill birds, so they wouldn't fly away and spread radiation and they found the animals lying on the ground where they could easily pick them up.

The British veterans of Christmas Island and other nuclear test sites in the Pacific and around Australia have never been awarded a medal for their service or compensation for their ill health afterwards. It is thought around 21,000 British servicemen witnessed the tests.

Terry said: "So many died from radiation and cancer and more than that when they had children they were effected too. So many were born with unexplained ill health and some with congenital deformities, all kinds of diseases and we are now seeing that is being passed on to their grandchildren. It's dreadful.

"The MOD is insistent to this day that we had protection and that the bombs were exploding so high that they wouldn't bother us, but there were no safety measures. We were living in these areas in tents, pilots were flying through the mushroom clouds to collect samples with no protection whatsoever and they died. I believe we were guinea pigs really."



Terry was contacted by the British Nuclear Test Veterans' Association who told him there were not many from the island alive anymore which prompted him to try and find his colleagues. So far, he hasn't been able to locate a single person in his unit. He is now working with the charity to raise awareness and get recognition for the veterans and their families.

Terry continued: "Other countries who had people stationed at the nuclear test sites have compensated and recognised their veterans. New Zealand, Fiji, Australia, America, but not us."

Terry has suffered health problems since the tests too.

He explained: "I was always a very fit and healthy man, but a couple of years after I left Christmas Island a swelling came up on my side. It got harder and more painful and grew so large I could rest my arm on it. I went to Oldham Royal Infirmary and they operated on me straight away. The doctor described it as a tumorous growth like bunches of little berries and he cut it all out. I can't say for



sure, but I believe it is a result of what happened on Christmas Island because I found out later so many of my colleagues were dying of cancer.”

Terry also described an injury he received from one of the bomb tests saying: “I was hit in the soft part of my throat during a blast. I thought it was a piece of coral or something, but years later I was having pains and they discovered a foreign body. In 2004 during my triple heart bypass they took out a piece of 8x4mm steel shrapnel, pointed at both ends, which was only an inch away from my heart.”



After the nuclear tests on Christmas Island were over, the Duke of Edinburgh visited the island and Terry was asked to be his escort.

He remembers: “They didn’t take him to any of the radioactive sites. He came on the Royal Yacht and we were allowed on it in parties of 12. We had to wear white plimsles and there were musicians onboard and drinks and nibbles. They were playing dance music, but there were no women so there were a lot of soldiers and sailors just looking at each other. When he left some of

us were given certificates to commemorate our time on the island.”

Terry, along with the British Nuclear Veterans and his daughter Anne Quinlan are speaking out about the experiences of the veterans and their families and asking people to sign a petition to allow it to be debated in parliament so people involved in the tests can receive recognition and a medal for their service. Terry, an avid artist and musician, has even written and recorded a campaign song telling the story of Christmas Island.

Terry said: “We have been totally ignored and yet it is still effecting families to this day. It feels like they want to sweep it under the rug until there are none of us left, but there will always be voices and they won’t be quieted. We were young when we went out there and we trusted what we were told. We have been let down and it needs to be put right.”

Historian for the British Nuclear Test Veterans’ Association, Douglas Hern, 81, was also on Christmas Island. He flew out on his 21st birthday in 1957 and left in 1958 witnessing five bomb tests, one atom bomb and four hydrogen bombs.

He said: “We weren’t told anything until we got to the island. 87% of personnel there were national serviceman. I was drafted as part of the Navy, I didn’t have a choice in where I was or what I was doing, and I was just a number out there.”

Douglas worked on fishing boats catching fish for testing and was part of the clean-up groups collecting animals. He described his time on the island as ‘horrendous’ saying there was ‘no fresh food and no sanitation.’

He along with his wife, who is Vice President of the association, work out of their home supporting nuclear veterans and their families while also campaigning to get a medal for those involved with the tests.



Douglas said: "Over 18,000 of our colleagues have died, a lot before they were 50 and we maintain our illnesses and the legacy that our children have inherited are due to radiation from those tests. I have a catalogue of problems, I'm currently seeing four specialists. I have skeletal problems, bone spurs, kidney and heart problems, lymphatic gland issues to name a few from a very long list."

In 1977, Douglas also lost his daughter, which he believes is due to the radiation he was in contact with on Christmas Island.

He said: "My youngest daughter from my first marriage suddenly became very ill. At 11 her body shape and features changed, and she spent two years in hospital in Nottingham. Two years later she died of a cancer which has never really been identified even on her death certificate. We estimate 160,000 children have been affected, but the government don't want to admit what they did to us. We deserve to be acknowledged, we served our country. It's just a very sad state of affairs, it sometimes makes you wish you weren't born British."

National Atomic Veterans Awareness Day



National Atomic Veterans Awareness Day is where the community of British Nuclear Test survivors gather to remember those who have passed and to share their legacy with new generations. This year significant enhancements to the National Memorial will be unveiled and the BNTVA Chaplain, the Very Reverend Nicholas Frayling will lead a dedication service. Afternoon tea will be served to guests in the Marquee.



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The dedication event is free to attend but the Afternoon Tea and reception, which is also free, requires pre-registration.

If you would like to attend, please use this link:

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/national-atomic-veterans-awareness-day-tickets-43191385597>

The event is being organised by the NCCF so if you do not have internet access, please call them on 0115 8883442 or email office@thenccf.org for full details.

The All Tests Reunion will be held on the 24-28 of September in Sand Bay, if you are attending, the trustees of the BNTVA look forward to meeting you all and enjoying 4 days of activities and updates.



The registration for the Cenotaph parade has now closed, I am pleased to announce that 30 people have registered their interest and will be attending the parade in London.

The garden of remembrance will also be setup by Sandie Hern this year.

Hopefully this year, we will be shown on television, last year we were visible for around 3 seconds!

For anyone who is attending the parade, please wrap up warm and bring thick socks and gloves.

If you require any help or assistance from the BNTVA, please call 0208 144 3080 Monday to Friday 10am-4pm and we will help you as much as possible.



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