

Last week was Armed Forces Day, and sadly due to ongoing restrictions we weren't able to commemorate the day as we normally would. However, working with local Armed Forces and Veterans groups we were still able to mark the day in a special way and pay respect to all who have served and who continue to do so.

Alongside the Mayor of St Helens Borough Cllr Sue Murphy and the Council's Armed Forces Champion Cllr Lynn Clarke I had the honour of taking part in a special service at St Helens Cenotaph in Victoria Square to unveil the name of Pte. Ralph Mercer, a St Helens soldier who was killed in action on 6 March 1943 at the age of 31.

Pte. Mercer served in India with the 13th Battalion, The King's Regiment (Liverpool) during the Second World War and was a recipient of the Burma Star. He is commemorated in Myanmar and I'm delighted that now his name has now been rightfully added to our Cenotaph here in his home town.

The event was attended by members of Pte. Mercer's family including his daughter Mrs Beryl Williams, who unveiled the name alongside the Mayor before all those present observed a minute's silence in honour of Pte. Mercer and of all The Fallen.

It was an emotional event, which included an exaltation of "For The Fallen" and "The Kohima Prayer" recited by Phil Carr, representing the Ashton and District Royal British Legion and supported by The Royal Naval Association bugler Arthur Gillon, Royal Air Force veteran Brian Finney carrying the Royal British Legion Standard, and Parachute Brigade veteran Gerry Foster carrying the Burma Star Association Standard.

Like everyone else I hope that for Remembrance Day later this year we will be able to hold services across the borough as we normally would.

As a council we're determined to do all we can to support the Forces and local Veterans. We're fully signed up to the Armed Forces Covenant, publishing an annual Armed Forces Covenant Report to demonstrate progress and support on issues such as housing, employment, and health, and we are also a Gold Award holder under the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme, which recognises those employers leading the way in employment of veterans and reservists.

We will always do everything we can to support our Armed Forces past and present.

Find out more about the events held to mark Armed Forces Day and lots of information regarding our local Armed Forces heritage and community at [www.sthelens.gov.uk/armedforcesday](http://www.sthelens.gov.uk/armedforcesday).