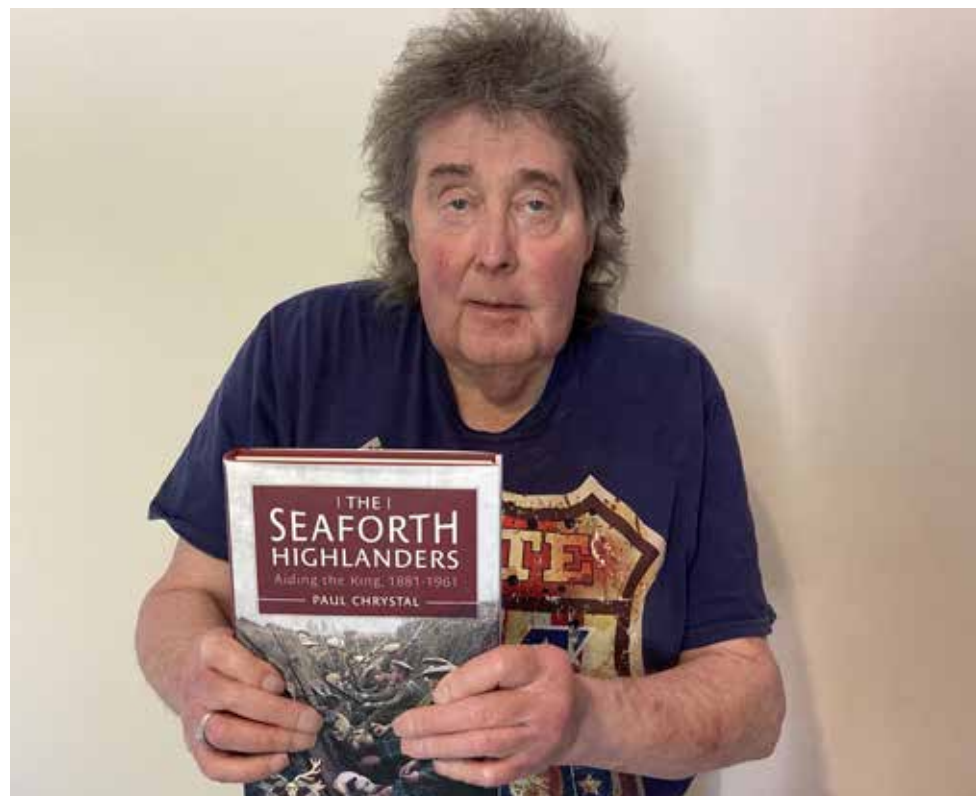


NEWS



Author Paul Chrystal with his new book *The Seaforth Highlanders: Aiding the King, 1881-1961*.

# Stirring tale of war vet

**Mark Payne**

mark.payne@nationalworld.com  
@MarkPayneJourno

The experiences of a Hartlepool Second World War veteran captured at Dunkirk has proved the inspiration for a new book.

Eric Priest, from West Hartlepool, features in *The Seaforth Highlanders: Aiding the King, 1881-1961* by military historian Paul Chrystal.

Paul has a personal connection to Eric, being his nephew, and was inspired to write the book after Eric's granddaughters presented Paul with a suitcase full of personal letters, photographs, postcards and telegrams.

"I thought 'there's certainly a book there'", said Paul, 70, who has written approximately 200 books since he retired.

He added: "There's stuff from his time in India which is quite interesting. It's all first-hand material that's never been seen outside the family."

Eric served in the Seaforth Highlanders, a line infantry regiment, from 1925 to 1945, including on the North West Frontier in India, and later in the Battle of France at Dunkirk early in the Second



Eric Priest spent five years in a German prisoner of war camp.

World War.

Paul said: "He wasn't fortunate enough to be one of the thousands of troops that were lifted from the beaches.

"His regiment was further west at St Valery-en-Caux. Their job was to try to hold off the German tank regiments from getting to the evacuation beaches at Dunkirk.

"The Germans surrounded them and over a thousand men were taken prisoner."

Eric, a father of two married to Florence, who lived in Weldeck Road, Hartlepool, spent the rest of the war in a German prisoner of war camp when he was forced to work in mines.

It left him with a damaged spine and chest conditions

for the rest of his life. He died in the early 1980s.

Paul, of York, added: "It's quite a tragic story. I can remember going to visit him in Hartlepool.

"He didn't talk about it very much. Like many of his comrades it was something, by and large, they kept to themselves."

Paul's book is also a comprehensive history of the Seaforth Highlanders from its formation in the 19th century to its amalgamation into the Queen's Own Highlanders in 1961.

The *Seaforth Highlanders*, published by Pen & Sword, is out now with a recommended retail price of £29.99. It is also available on Kindle for £14.99.

## Fines issued

A man convicted of fly-tipping household waste is now more than £600 out of pocket.

Roma Jordan, 27, of York Road, Hartlepool, was found guilty in his absence of committing the offence in the town's Dent Street on October 7 last year.

Prosecuted by Hartlepool Borough Council under the Environmental Protection Act, Jordan was ordered at Teesside Magistrates' Court to pay a £220 fine, £88 victim surcharge and £300 costs.

The £608 total must be paid by June 3.

In a separate prosecution by the council on the same day under the same act, Emma Durge admitted illegally discarding a cigarette in the town's Victoria Road on September 10.

Durge, 38, of Greenwood Road, Hartlepool, was present in court as she was ordered to pay a £70 fine, £30 victim surcharge and £100 costs.

## Conservatives lose councillor

A Hartlepool councillor has defected from the Conservatives to Reform UK.

Cllr Rob Darby, who represents the Hart ward on Hartlepool Borough Council, said he feels the party has "left him" and "feels let down by so many broken promises".

He becomes Reform UK's second councillor in Hartlepool following the election of Amanda Napper in a Throston by-election last week.

Her win saw the party take the seat previously held by Labour's Cameron Sharp who stood down.

Cllr Darby said: "I am joining Reform because it is the only party in touch with the British public on the biggest issues facing the country, such as immigration, crime, and Labour's shameful attacks on pensioners with cuts to the winter fuel allowance."

He has represented Hart Ward on the council since

2024 and had previously been an longstanding Conservative.

Cllr Darby added: "We need real change. I think Labour and the Conservatives have become the same thing - high immigration, high taxes, high energy bills because of net zero."

"Only Reform will bring some common sense and I can do a better job of representing my residents in a party people believe in."

He and Cllr Napper have formed a Reform UK group on Hartlepool Borough Council.

A Reform UK spokesperson said: "We welcome anyone who shares our vision for integrity, accountability, and meaningful change to join us."

It means the Conservatives now have five members on the council, which is also made up of 22 Labour, six independents, one Independent Union representative and two Reform UK.



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