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ARMED Forces veterans deserve all the support we can give them.

That's true, even if they have committed crimes after returning to civvy street. Indeed, in many cases, support is needed all the more in cases where ex-service personnel have ended up falling foul of the law once out of the forces. It can be difficult to excuse crimes — especially for victims. However, rates of post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans are significantly higher than the general population. And experiences that soldiers go through are unimaginable to most of the general public, and the case is obvious for offenders who have served in the military to get the support they need to get back on the straight and narrow.

Recent Scottish Prison Service stats suggest there were 243 prisoners in our jails last year who had served in the forces. But similar figures have never been collected for those given sentences like community payback orders. We hear so much talk of Scotland moving to a progressive and enlightened justice system, with a focus on rehabilitation.

Yet we are told there is not the required monitoring or collection of basic data on offenders to work out who may need support for conditions like PTSD. Things are so unsatisfactory we have a senior SNP MP — Owen Thompson — suggesting too

many ex-soldiers in Scotland are “falling between the cracks” of the justice system and not getting the required treatment for ill-health related to their military service. Mr Thompson says it’s “disheartening” that individuals who have sacrificed so much for our country are “not receiving the assistance they need to overcome the traumatic experiences they endured during their service”.

Ex-soldier Calum MacLeod, who is now a community payback officer, is on a crusade over the matter. He talks of a “growing, forgotten army” of veterans who have effectively been thrown to the wolves. Mr Thomson and Mr MacLeod should be applauded for their efforts.

We often rail against soft-touch justice. But if ever there was an argument for leniency and for maximum support for rehabilitations, it's for veterans.

If the root cause of their offending is their military service, they should be given every help the state can offer.

Strange tangoings on

AUTUMN is officially here and Strictly is back on our telly screens.

But there are ill omens over at Elstree Studios. The cast have called in ghost hunters after unexplained bumps, noises and spooky incidents. So what paranormal force could be to blame?

Maybe it's down to a previous contestant — Stacey Ghoulie.



STRESSED... ex-personnel

Military veterans deserve our help

GET WEDDY FOR 2024'S NEW BRIDAL TRENDS



PICTURE PERFECT

WHILE wedding photography is still big business, many couples are hiring artists to capture memories.

Basing themselves at the venue, the illustrator interacts with the guests and sketches out perfect keepsakes.

Hannah Benson, a digital illustrator and owner of What Hannah Does, has seen her business take off as the first wedding fashion illustrator in the UK.

She said: “I have been blown away by the response. Not only do couples love the end sketches, they also love the theatre and entertainment I can create for their guests.”

BLUSHING BRIDE

LOOKING your best for the big day is always a key consideration.

Now, as well as traditional make-up, brides are turning to aesthetic practitioners to make sure they look their best with things like skin boosters.

Dr Claire Narrie, from Infinity Skin Clinic in Edinburgh, said: “High frequency treatments are really popular for brides and grooms because it helps with areas like acne, enlarged pores and dark circles, and patients get skin looking beautifully clear for the big day. There's also been an increase in men opting for anti-wrinkle injections and facials.”



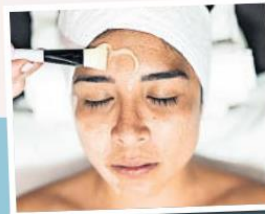
BOOST MEN

WEDDING party traditions have evolved over the past few decades with couples looking for ways to incorporate all their favourite people in their big day.

That's no more true than when it comes to the groom and his best man and, instead of just one, there is a trend for having a set.

George McLean, a humanist wedding celebrant at Fuze Ceremonies, said: “More and more often now a groom can't decide on just one best man so instead he'll opt for two.”

“That might be two best men, a bridesman and even having mum or dad as a witness to the signing of the register, to thank them for all their love and support.”



The hood wife

THE summer wedding season might be over for 2023, but planning for 2024 nuptials is kicking off, with the Scottish Wedding Show next month.

And trends for the upcoming year are already emerging, with bridal capes and

green ceremonies among the must-haves for modern marriages.

Features Editor LYNN KERNAN spoke to Wedding Show exhibitors about what couples getting hitched next year should look out for.



HIGHCING ON THE CAKE

WHEN it comes to cakes, bigger is better. Gone are the days of the small sugar-crafted flower arrangement as a cake topper, now it's cool to have a show-stopper of real flowers.

Alison McCabe, from The Kilted Cake Company, said: “We're still seeing flowers used as a fashion accessory for decorating and styling cakes.

Many of my brides want to incorporate their flowers into their cake for either sentimental value or to tie in with their venue decor.”

MY BIG FAT GREEN WEDDING

THE environment is at the heart of many wedding plans, with smaller weddings on the rise.

Malin Stewart, from The Dougarie Boathouse on Arran, said: “There's a desire among couples to consume less at their wedding, keeping it cosy and ultimately doing their bit for the planet.”

Freddie Main, of Oak and Black, said smart invitations, which save on paper, are becoming popular. He said: “It is a key ring sent to guests to access using their phones that contain all the information they might need.”



KISS AND CAPE UP

THERE is nothing more special than a wedding cape and these show-stopping hooded accessories are going to be all the rage in 2024.

Whether they are lace, sheer or embellished, capes are likely to be seen in many a wedding photo next year.

Joanna Kilpatrick, from Bibbidi Bobbidi Boo Bridal Boutique, said: “Bridal capes are becoming a real alternative to the traditional wedding veil.”

“They look modern, cool and can be personalised completely to your taste.”

“They're also the ideal piece to pass down through the generations — completely timeless. We're looking to expand our collection.”