

# VIC Newsletter

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## New Ops Manager opportunity

**OPERATIONS Manager Bob Elliott is retiring from his role and VIC is currently recruiting for a replacement.**

Bob will be retiring in May after 13 years at the charity.

The post has already been advertised widely and the closing date for completed applications is noon on Friday January 31.

The Operations Manager has a key role within the charity leading and supporting our passionate staff and volunteer team as well as managing daily operations at VIC, supported by, and reporting to, the Chief Executive and The Board of Trustees.

The successful

candidate will be responsible for overseeing all operational activities within our charity, ensuring the safe, efficient and effective delivery of services to our members.

They will require strong leadership skills and the ability to work with senior management in developing and implementing successful business and delivery strategies.

This is an exciting role for someone eager to make a significant difference to the lives of former military personnel, and their families.

The successful candidate must be capable of maintaining our high standard of work; contributing



knowledge, skills and passion to enhance and develop our current and future operations and leading a team that creates a safe, sharing and understanding environment for members.

The Job Description and Person Specification is on the VIC website at: [www.veteransincommunities.org/vacancies.html](http://www.veteransincommunities.org/vacancies.html)

For an application pack contact [amythompson@vic.org.uk](mailto:amythompson@vic.org.uk)

**Deadline noon, Friday January 31**

## Welcome Brian

**WE ARE delighted to welcome Army veteran Brian Hawk to the staff of VIC as he takes up a new role as Community Capacity Builder for Lancashire.**



Brian served for 23 years in the Royal Military Police and his 18-month position is funded through the new Veterans' Places, Pathways and People (VPPP) Thrive Together Programme.

VIC is a partner in the VPPP, which was funded from 2021-23 by the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "VIC is proud to be involved with the VPPP and as part of the sustainability and legacy development in the first iteration of VPPP, the Forces Wellbeing Collective was launched to provide a network of professionals, volunteers and cross-sector organisations joining forces to improve the wellbeing of the Armed Forces community within the North West region.

"The second phase is now the VPPP Thrive Together Programme and one of the North West strategic goals is to level up provision and pathways through a sustainable, resilient and assured network of cross-sector organisations in the North West; the Forces Wellbeing Collective."

Brian has been appointed to deliver this work and through his career to date he has a proven wealth of relevant experience including caseload management and stakeholder engagement.

There are other Community Capacity Builders in Liverpool, South Cumbria, Cheshire and Greater Manchester.

Amanda added: "This is an exciting project as it is new and it is going to evolve as time goes on. It will offer new challenges both for Brian and for VIC."

To find out more about the project visit [www.forceswellbeing.org](http://www.forceswellbeing.org)

This is a new website and any organisations that want to register an interest should follow the links and get involved.

## Christmas cheer delivered to vets

**MORE than 65 hampers, including several for families, were packaged and delivered by an army of volunteers from VIC.**

VIC would like to thank everyone who donated items and those who helped with buying, packing and distributing them to veterans from our areas of benefit.

The volunteers who support VIC are the lifeblood of our organisation and we could not support the veterans from East and Central Lancashire without their sterling efforts year after year.





# Final Falklands trip

## Help wanted

A WORKS party is needed to help a veteran on Friday January 31.

One of our long-term members has been poorly over the past year and needs some help to make sure he can move about safely.

The minibus will leave Haslingden at 10.30am. Help is needed to clear rubbish from a shed and house and works will be complete by 12.30pm.

To volunteer, contact the VIC Centre on 01706 833180. Thank you.

**OUTREACH worker Steve Butterworth has completed an emotional third and last return visit to The Falkland Islands.**

Steve spent eight years in the Navy and was on HMS Intrepid in 1982 in the Falklands, working as a catering accountant and medic helping the wounded.

The South Atlantic Medal Association, SAMA 82, again organised the flights and Steve and his wife Maria stayed in Liberty Lodge, which is run by the Falklands Veterans' Foundation.

While there, they visited a care home for a carol service. The residents had been in their 40s when the islands were invaded by Argentine soldiers.

Steve said: "I was talking to one lady and she got hold of my hand then when Maria came across, she grabbed her hand too and she told her I was one of the heroes and she should look after me. It was emotional for us both."

HMS Intrepid landed 2nd Batt Scots Guards at Bluff Cove using landing craft.



Steve had become friends with Guardsman Phil Grundy who recently died, and so he placed a cross in his memory in the rocks at the side of Memorial Wood.

Steve said: "My first return led to a CD being produced, my second to book of poetry and on my third I took my wife Maria and also five copies of the book for the schools and library.

"The books are going to be used as a teaching tool and



now I have no need to go again."

He has also come back inspired to paint further pictures, based on photographs, and has a new painting technique using a palette knife instead of a brush.



## BEM for Barry

**CONGRATULATIONS to VIC trustee Barry Hyde who was awarded a British Empire Medal in the King's New Year's Honours List for services to the community in Rossendale**

Barry is a key player in teams that organise the Rossendale 60s Festival and Bacup Now events. He organises bookings and sings in the VIC Choir and chairs the VIC Fundraising and Marketing Committee. He is also on the board of Rossendale Radio.

Barry said: "I would also like to thank Pete Sweetmore for his constant support over many years."



## Superb new gifts for sale

**VIC's sublimation team has been busy fulfilling orders of personalised items.**

These include a pen in a presentation case with a football coaching logo on.

We have also been etching on a range of wooden bottle openers – which can also be

supplied with fridge magnets.

The laser etched items also include wooden coasters and cheese boards and can be made bespoke.

To have your own unique present created contact Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell on 01706 833180.





# 'Ello 'Ello 'Ello

## Kettle's on

**CHANGES** are being made to the way we use our Accrington base in the Arndale.

Instead of being a shop, it will become a drop-in coffee morning on a Friday from 10am to 12.

While the back room will become a base for art classes every Friday from 10.30am-2.30pm at a cost of £6 per attendee, which will include all materials needed plus tea and coffee.

Artists are welcome to bring their own materials and work but unfortunately oil paints will not be allowed for health and safety reasons.

The basement will continue to be used as a base for the VIC's model railway club.

Project Worker Ray Sharkey said: "We are asking people who use the premises how they want to see it evolve in the future. We will still be providing information about all the services VIC has to offer and anyone with an idea how the centre can best be used can call in or phone 01706 833180."

Anyone interested in the art group can contact Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell on 01706 833180.

**PRESTON'S Sandbag Café, which is supported by VIC, was very busy when, in addition to the normal brew, banter and bacon butties, there was a visit by Gary Crowe Veterans Lead for Lancashire Constabulary.**

He also brought with him the Local Policing Team.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott outlined the work the



charity undertakes and there was an opportunity for officers to speak to some of local veterans' support organisations and armed forces

personnel to better understand how they can support veterans in crisis and the wider veterans community.

This was part of Lancashire

Constabulary's 'Peoples Voice' series where their staff get the opportunity to meet with communities face-to-face.

Bob said: "It was very productive and we will now be looking to invite Lancashire Neighbourhood Officers to attend other VIC meetings and activities including Redoubt in Clitheroe and Accrington Arndale to meet and chat with our members."

## Art group and members on TV

**VIEWERS of ITV on Christmas Eve will have seen our charity featured in the Carol Service that was broadcast at 11.30pm.**

It was filmed in St Elisabeth's Church, Reddish, and also showed a short film narrated by Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell which showed the work carried out at the VIC Centre, in particular the art group.

The carol concert was themed around D-Day 80 and was attended by our Administrator Amy Thompson, VIC member Graham Limb, Operations Manager Bob Elliott and Darren also gave a reading from Luke Chapter 1.

Broughton House and the Imperial War Museum North also featured in the programme.



## Battlefields Tour 2025

**FOLLOWING a very successful Battlefields Tour last year, VIC is now planning a further one in September.**

The priority will be for those who missed out on last year's trip and wanted to go, but anyone who attended last year and would like to make a return trip will be added to a reserve list.

The trip this year will possibly be around Belgium and Holland to coincide with VE celebrations, but it will still include a visit to Menin Gate for the nightly service.

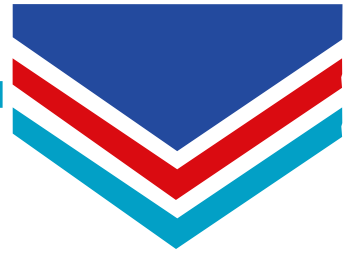
The cost will be similar to last year and a deposit of £50 will be needed.

Call 01706 833180 for more information.



**Thanks to generous customers and staff at Rawtenstall Tesco, the VIC Choir raised £194.32 just before Christmas. They were invited to sing by Emma Bailey, the Rawtenstall Community Champion, who also helped to collect money.**





# VIC Highlights 2024

## Here are some of the main highlights of our activities and news from 2024.

All our other news for 2024 can also be viewed in the Newsletters and News Stories on our website [www.veteransincommunities.org/news.html](http://www.veteransincommunities.org/news.html)

### REFERRALS

In 2024, we continued to see an increase in referrals from the previous year, especially for support with rehousing, benefits, referrals to mental health teams, local housing teams, general information about other welfare issues and enquires.

The combined activities at the outreach venues in Accrington, Clitheroe, Haslingden, Rochdale, and Middleton had a regular turnout attending each week. Many also participated in other social inclusion and outreach services across the year.

### CORE ACTIVITIES

We continued with Arts and Crafts groups, Social Trips, Social Inclusion activities, Model Railway Club and the Choir. We started an additional walking Bimble group for those who were unable to take part in the more physically demanding walks.

### DROP INS

An average of 500 VIC member and partner organisations, dropped-in each month for support or to see the services that utilise The VIC Centre.

Weekly attendees are Mental Health provider Op Courage, Drug and Alcohol provider Inspire and the Citizens Advice.

### OUTREACH

Our outreach team gave information, advice, and support on a range of issues including benefits, rehousing,

employment, courses, welfare support, referrals, telephone enquiries and our current membership is around 720 enrolled veterans or family members. Many had multiple issues and referrals were made to other statutory and third sector organisations.

### INFO STANDS

Our outreach team held a number of information stands across our operating areas, they included mental health events, local health centres, volunteer events. They also briefed DWP staff and Probation Services on some of the issues they may have and best ways of supporting veterans.

### HELPING OTHERS

We gave advice and supported to number of veterans organisations across Lancashire. These include Bay Veterans, Lancashire Armed Forces Association, Warrington Armed Forces Community Support Hub, and we continue to work with existing partners on the VPPP programme and Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs.

### PENSIONS AND PIP

We supported a number of veterans to claim their MOD pensions, Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and access DWP benefits.

### ART DISPLAY

Paintings from the VIC art group members went on display at the Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery, Rawtenstall.

### COVENANT GRANT

We were delighted to announce that we received a £97,142 grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust to fund a three-year programme, 'Reach, Support, Belong and Prosper'. The funding will help us to

identify, reach and support those from the Armed Forces communities, supporting them to overcome individual barriers to lead fulfilling lives.

### VPPP PROGRAMME

We are pleased to continue to be a partner in the Veteran Places Pathways and People programme (VPPP) new 'Thrive Together Programme' funded through The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. We now have a new member of staff covering Lancashire.

We attended the VPPP showcase event in Wigan in February where the portfolio partners presented their tool kits that will be made available to organisations working with veterans across the North-West.

### MILNROW

Outreach worker Steve Butterworth started a new monthly veterans coffee afternoon in March at the Milnrow and Newhey Medical Centre in Rochdale.

### CAMPING TRIP

VIC members joined the Throttle Twisters Motor Cycle Club at their annual camping rally at Sycamore Farm near Alderley Edge.

### MURAL

The Tesco Rawtenstall Community Champion visited VIC and saw the mural on the back wall of the VIC art room. Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell was then asked to paint a scene in their Community Room of Musbury Tor looking from Bury Golf Course.

### RING OF RED

We welcomed Netty and Mandy from the Ring Of Red (Manchester) team. They donated a cheque for £5,000 to VIC to support projects and

activities for veterans.

Going forward, VIC was selected as the Ring of Red's chosen charity for 2024. We can't thank the organisers and riders enough for raising this fantastic amount of money.

### FILM RELEASED

Return Belong Prosper – the VIC documentary short film co-created by Anglia Ruskin University and Darren Horsnell, Steve Butterworth and David Joddrell – was premiered at Alder Grange AG6 in Rossendale.

VIC was one of three charities chosen for the Stories In Transition project that researched how veteran organisations help ex-service personnel transition to civvy street.

### CONFERENCE

Our CEO Amanda Walton and Operations Manager Bob Elliott attended the Lancashire and South Cumbria Armed Forces Conference when our short film Return Belong Prosper was screened.

Amanda and Dr Nick Caddick from Anglia Ruskin University summarised the research and findings from the Stories In Transition project.

### NEW MINIBUS

Our old minibus, which had served us well for nine years, was replaced.

### SANDBAG MOVE

The VIC Sandbag Café was relocated from Longridge to Preston and was launched on St George's Day at St George's Church. This outreach differs from the other two Sandbag Cafes we established as it is a joint venture with the Lancashire Armed Forces Association.

### DIORAMAS

To commemorate D-Day 80



# VIC Highlights 2024

the Model Railway Club exhibited a number of their Dioramas at VIC Accrington and Fulwood Barracks Lancashire Infantry Museum in Preston as part of a larger exhibition.

## AWARD

*VIC was delighted to be a recipient of the 2024 Weston Charity Awards. We are one of only 24 outstanding charities from the North and Midlands of England and Wales who will receive a support package worth more than £22,000.*

## SNIFFER HORSES

One of the members of the Model Railway Club has been involved in new project where they are using horses to find objects and people through scent. This is a unique concept and further research is being undertaken.

## ARMED FORCES WEEK

*During this year's Armed Forces week, our volunteers, staff and members attended a number of Armed Forces Flag Raising events in Rossendale, Rochdale, Preston, Clitheroe, Burnley, Blackburn Cathedral, and many other towns around the North-West.*

## BATTLEFIELDS TOUR

Members of VIC undertook a First and Second World War Battlefields Tour.

We took 11 members on a five-day tour covering some of the D-Day beaches and battle sites in Normandy. We finished off at the Last Post at Menin Gate in Belgium where we paraded our standard and laid a wreath.

We also laid wreaths at the Normandy Memorial, Bayeux War Cemetery and at Thiepval. The highlight of the tour was the Last Post at Menin Gate.

This was our first tour, and as plans are already being

drawn up for 2025, it will hopefully be an annual event that our veteran members can get involved in.

## STANDARD BLESSED

*Our Standard was blessed at a Dedication Service held at The Parish Church of St Peter in Haslingden.*

*We would like to thank the Rev Stephen Brown for managing to fit the Dedication Service in before he retired.*

*Our Standard has been paraded at many funerals and services since we had it specially made in late 2023 and our Standard Bearer Jacko has done a great job.*

## CARP SOCIALS

Our Carp Social project held two competitions in 2024, one at Norton Disney in Oxfordshire and the second was in Yatley in Surrey.

## MARATHON.

*We would like to congratulate Mini Leather for completing the Manchester Half Marathon and we would also to thank him for raising £500 that will go to support veterans we help.*

## CHARITY NIGHT

VIC was the beneficiary of the Throttle Twisters MCC Charity night and we're pleased to say that £1,000 was raised on the night through a raffle, donations, sales of VIC merchandise and a bottle table.

## REMEMBRANCE WALK

*VIC members Phil Speddy and Bob Brindley completed a six-day Rossendale Walk of Remembrance where they played the Last Post and placed a cross on each of the War Memorials and places where there was a plaque to remember the fallen of the First World War.*

*They were joined and*

*supported by other VIC members and raised nearly £1,500 for VIC.*

## PARADES

Members attended and laid wreaths at a number of services around Lancashire and Greater Manchester.

Administrator Amy was invited to the Festival of Remembrance in London as the Lancashire Royal British Legion Standard Bearer.

Our Choir sang at two Remembrance Services and on Remembrance Sunday VIC members also joined riders at the M60 Ring of Red.

## TV CAROLS

*Our Art group was filmed for ITV's Carol Concert at St Elisabeth's Church in Reddish.*

*It was shown on Christmas Eve and the theme was based on D-Day 80.*

## ANIMAL BLANKETS

Crafty chatters members made blankets for the RSPCA animal shelter in Altham.

## STANDARD BEARER

*Our Administrator Amy Thompson retained the title of the Royal British Legion Lancashire County Standard Bearer after winning the Competition again.*

## VIC CHOIR

The VIC Choir had a busy year with performances in supermarkets, community events and care homes. They raised around £3,000.

## TALKS

*We held a number of talks for members in 2024 ranging from photography delivered by Duncan Phillips who has filmed wildlife in Africa, the Artic and South America, to talks about D-Day, and personal experiences from the*

*Northern Ireland Troubles and serving with Special Forces.*

## MODEL RAILWAY

The Model Railway Club has grown from strength to strength at the Accrington Veterans Drop-in.

## SOAP BOX

*VIC members entered the Accrington Soap Box Challenge again and Willys Jeep placed 11th out of 23 entries. A good result.*

## SOCIAL OUTINGS

*We organised a variety of social trips for members including places of historical interest.*

*Venues included: Samesbury Hall, steam train and canal boat trips, Harrogate Army Foundation College, the Mersey Ferry, places of local interest and an evening in Blackpool to see the illuminations and Hot Ice Show.*

## CHRISTMAS MEAL

Our VIC Christmas meal saw around 55 members attend the Grand Royal Bistro and Bar in Waterfoot.

It was a good afternoon, and everyone enjoyed meeting up.

## HAMPERS

*We distributed more than 65 Christmas hampers for some of our vulnerable veterans and families across Rossendale, Rochdale, Heywood, Burnley, Bolton, Preston, Clitheroe and Hyndburn.*

## IN MEMORIAM

Sadly, we saw the passing of some members during 2024: Sandbag Café members Vincent Haughton and Andy Daly, Sandbag Café Preston Mark Dilworth, and VIC members Ann (Barnsy) Barnes and Bernard Tighe.



## ROSSENDALE

Activities at the VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL, unless otherwise stated.

### Outreach Service

**MONDAY-FRIDAY**

9am-4.30pm

For a home appointment call 01706 833180

**MONDAY**

### Crafty Chatters

10am-12 noon

**TUESDAY**

### Art Group

10am-3.30pm

Cost £6 places limited book on

01706 833180

**WEDNESDAY**

### Allotment

Help on the allotment in Holcombe Road, Helmshore. Contact 01706 833180

**THURSDAY**

### Greggs RV

1pm-3pm

**THURSDAY**

### VIC Choir (weekly)

6.30-8.30pm

**FRIDAY**

### Art Group

10am-3.30pm

Cost £6 places limited book on

01706 833180

**SUNDAY**

### Drop-in

10.15am-12.30pm

**SECOND SATURDAY IN THE MONTH**

### Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club

10am-12.30pm

Haslingden Community Link Cafe, Bury Road, Haslingden BB4 5PG (book in advance)

**EVERY MONTH**

### Painting in the Style of Bob Ross art classes

Contact Darren 01706 833180

### Walking Groups/ Social Inclusion trips

see Facebook or website for details

## BURNLEY AND PENDLE

### Outreach Service

**MONDAY**

10am-noon

Breakfast Club at Burnley Miners' Social Club, Plumbe Street, Burnley, BB11 3AA.

Contact 01706 833180 for dates of outreach at: Burnley FC in the Community; Pendle Armed Forces Support Group, Holmefield House, Gisburn Road, Barrowford; Morrisons in Nelson and Asda in Colne.

## HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

### VIC Outreach

**TUESDAY**

### The Mess Tin - cafe and drop-in

1pm-2.30pm

The Lighthouse Project, Middleton Shopping Centre, M24 1AB.

**THURSDAY**

### Rochdale Veterans' Breakfast Club and VIC Outreach

9am Flying Horse Hotel, Packer Street, Rochdale, OL16 1NJ.

## HYNDBURN

### Outreach / Drop-In/ Model Railway Club

**FRIDAY** 10am-3pm

VIC Hyndburn, Accrington Arndale Centre, BB5 1EX.

### Accrington Stanley Breakfast Club/ Drop-In

**LAST SATURDAY EVERY MONTH**

**10.30am-noon**

Stanley Sports Hub, Thorneyholme Road, Accrington, BB5 6BD.

## BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

### Veterans' football

**MONDAY** 8-9pm

Blackburn Rovers Indoor Centre, Ewood Park, Blackburn BB2 4JF. A cost applies.

### Outreach Service

**TUESDAY** 10am-noon

Rovers Breakfast Hub, Legends Lounge, Darwen End, Blackburn Rovers FC, Ewood Park, Blackburn, BB2 4JF.

Contact Chris McGrail 07787 585109

## RIBBLE VALLEY & PRESTON

**TUESDAYS**

### Redoubt Coffee Morning and Outreach

10am-noon

Trinity Methodist Church, Wesleyan Row,

Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JY.

### Sandbag Cafe

10am-12.30pm

St George's Church, off Lune Street, Preston PR1 2NP. This is a joint session with Lancashire Armed Forces Association.

## VIC – 01706 833180

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Administrator Amy Thompson

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Project Worker Ray Sharkey

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Community Capacity Builder Brian Hawk

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Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren

Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

barryhyde@vic.org.uk

### Veterans at risk of homelessness

or organisations working with them are encouraged to contact OP FORTITUDE

0800 952 0774 or visit [riv.org.uk/opfortitude](http://riv.org.uk/opfortitude)

### Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

### NHS Military Veterans Psychological Therapies Service (NW)

0300 323 0707

### The Royal British Legion

0808 802 8080 7 days a week 8am-8pm

### SSAFA

email [Lancashire@ssafa.org.uk](mailto:Lancashire@ssafa.org.uk)

01772 260 462

### Citizens Advice East Lancashire

0808 278 7975 freephone Mon-Fri 9am-5pm

### The Samaritans

01282 694929 Mon to Fri 9am-9pm

Freephone 116 123

### Op Courage

0300 373 3332 email

opcourageNORTH@cntw.nhs.uk

### Veterans UK Free Helpline

0808 1914 218

### East Lancashire Single Point of Access via

GP or self-referral

0800 0130 707

### Armed Forces Support Group

01282 613132

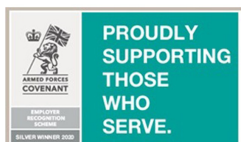
Veterans In Communities  
Charity Number 1151194

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