

# VIC Newsletter

## New Ops Manager

**VETERAN Phil Speddy is the new Operations Manager at VIC.**

He said: "To say this is an honour is an understatement. VIC is far more than a workplace, it's a place I've come to know as a community, a purpose, and a lifeline."

"It's been a journey that started for me during lockdown, volunteering with VIC as an outdoor marshal at the Rossendale vaccination centre. That's where I met Bob Elliott, a man whose mentorship, friendship, and example have since changed my life."

Phil is a veteran of the Royal Pioneer Corps, a foster carer trained in therapeutic care, a Cadet Force Adult Volunteer trained in healthy minds, and has lived experience with dementia through caring for his family.

He worked with the incredible Rossendale-based Beacon Dementia and Wellbeing team, and more than anything, believes in the power of community, connection, and showing up for others.

His said his role at VIC feels like coming home.

Phil said: "I've seen first-hand what this charity does: the lives it changes and has saved. The confidence it rebuilds, and the wondrous friendships it fosters, some of which I'm truly grateful to say are my own."

"Our members, volunteers, and staff are the heart of VIC. My commitment is to listen, to learn, and to lead in a way that honours our shared values and your lived, and professional experiences."

"My goal is simple, to ensure VIC continues to be a space where all ex-service personnel feel welcome, supported, and empowered. Whether you're a younger veteran, a woman who served, or any person just looking to reconnect, you belong here."

"To Bob, thank you for trusting me with something you built from the ground up. I promise to carry your vision forward with care and dedication."



**2012 signing of the Armed Forces Covenant by Rossendale Council**



## Bob retires and returns

**AFTER 13 years at the helm of VIC, Bob Elliott has retired from his role as Operations Manager.**

The Royal Engineer veteran was one of the founders of the organisation in 2012.

Initially based in the former REAL building in Bacup, it was gifted its current base, the VIC Centre in Haslingden in 2014.

This provided the veterans' charity with space to grow and facilities to enable veterans to prosper.

Civic dignitaries, including the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire Amanda Parker JP and the Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Judith Driver, pictured, along with many veterans from the area of benefit, called at the centre to wish Bob well.

Although retiring as Operations Manager, he will be returning as a Trustee, so he will

still be a familiar face.

Chair of trustees Ronnie Barker reflected on the reasons VIC was established explaining that Bob wanted support for veterans to be more holistic and to have continuity.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "His influence on VIC – on all of us – will echo for years to come, so it is only right we take a moment to reflect and say a few words."

"Bob had a vision – a simple but powerful idea: to create a centre where veterans and their families could come and just be."

She praised his determination and tireless efforts and described the charity he had created as a 'beacon of hope' across East Lancashire and beyond.

He was presented with a military bronze statue and some military hiking boots.

within VIC.

*The charity will only get stronger, there will be changes and change can be a good thing with the new ideas that people bring.*

*I'm still going to be around, calling in as a volunteer and a Trustee. "*

## Thank you – from Bob

*"Thanks to Amanda and those at VIC who organised my last day. I was blown away with how many people popped in to wish me the best on my retirement, I must've done something*

*right these last 15 years.*

*I know VIC is in good hands with the Trustees they have, the CEO Amanda, new Ops Manager Phil, staff and the volunteers we have and as Trustee I've taken on another responsibility*



# VE Day 80 celebrations



**A SPECIAL VE Day breakfast was enjoyed by 25 veterans and partners from Rossendale at Haslingden Community Link.**

Rossendale Councillor Anne Cheetham helped VIC to obtain a grant from Lancashire County Council to ensure the attendees were well fed with a 'full English'.

Ops Manager Phil Speddy told the diners: "Eighty years ago today, the guns across Europe slowly began to

fall silent after nearly six long years of war.

"For millions, VE Day was a day of jubilation, of reminiscence, of relief, but it was also a day tinged with deep sorrow.

"A generation had endured the unimaginable and countless lives had been lost to protect the freedom we enjoy today."

In the afternoon, there was an open house at the VIC Centre in Haslingden when a special VE Day quiz was presented by veteran Ron Flowers.

**FIVE members of VIC attended a very special VE Day 80 service at Blackburn Cathedral.**

Administrator Amy Thompson led the colours carrying the Royal British Legion County Union Standard, and RAF veteran Jacko Pearce proudly carried the VIC Standard.

A parade through Blackburn town centre led to a salute taken outside the Cathedral and a very moving service followed.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton and King's Hussars veteran Ron Flowers had been invited and VIC Press Officer Catherine Smyth was present as the Deputy Mayor of Rossendale's Consort.



**TWO members of VIC were invited by the Lord-Lieutenant of Lancashire to attend the ceremonial lighting of a beacon to commemorate VE Day 80 at Lancaster Castle.**

Chief Executive Amanda Walton and Operations Manager Phil Speddy were invited while Administrator Amy Thompson carried the Lancashire County Standard for the RBL. The atmosphere in the castle was truly magical and all felt blessed and humbled to be in attendance for such a poignant occasion.



**CHILDREN from Crawshawbooth Primary School received a visit from , Operations Manager Phil Speddy and veterans Bob Brindley and Paul for their VE Day 80 celebrations.**

The trio unveiled a new commemorative plaque made by the pupils, which will be displayed in the school hall as a lasting tribute.

During the visit, they chatted with the youngest pupils and later led a special assembly when they spoke about the importance of VE Day.



**A BEAUTIFUL Peace Garden was officially opened at Trinity Methodist Church, Clitheroe as part of VE celebrations.**

VIC ran its weekly coffee morning and quiz in the community rooms at the church and the veterans then joined the community in the Warm Hub.

A VE Day Party was

held complete with traditional food, a display of wartime memorabilia including helmets and gas masks that visitors could try on, and the official opening of the Trinity Peace Garden.

A grant of £10,000 was awarded to the hub and this enabled the garden to be developed. VIC provided a supporting letter for the grant.



**POPPIES made by the Crafty Chatters at VIC formed part of a special Folkestone Poppy Project on the road of Remembrance.**

A total of 80 red and purple poppies were knitted and crocheted by the group.

Jan McNeill, from the project, praised the hard work and thanked the makers.







# Remembrance walkers thank uniformed group

**A SPECIAL thank you visit was made to 38th Rossendale Open Scout Group by three members of VIC.**

Young Beaver and Squirrel members made more than 60 memorial crosses which were placed on memorials during the VIC Rossendale Walk of Remembrance last November.

VIC Operations Manager Phil Speddy and veteran Bob Brindley, who both completed the walk, attended the group's HQ in Cloughfold along with veteran Paul.

Phil said: "We were

honoured to visit the 38th Rossendale to express our heartfelt thanks for their incredible contribution in creating over 60 memorial crosses.

"As a token of our appreciation, we presented the Beavers and Squirrels with handcrafted slate plaques, beautifully designed and made by veterans from VIC." In a touching

gesture, the Purple Colony Beavers gifted VIC several 'bags of joy,' which contained a poem, a teabag and a sweet treat.

These have already been shared with some veterans.



## Creative hub marks time

**A RANGE of slate clocks are being created by the Creative Hub at VIC.**

For more information clocks or other items that we make, including prices, or if you have something bespoke you would like to have engraved, call Amy Thompson on 01706 833180.



*Thank you to Burnley veteran John Docker for selecting VIC to benefit from money he raised when he took part in the ice bucket challenge.*



## Shoppers entertained

**OUR choir was in fine voice at Tesco Rawtenstall and a big thank you to Community Champion Emma Bailey for inviting the VIC Choir to sing.**

Thanks to choir members and collectors who gave up their Saturday to help raise £271.60 for VIC.



## Fast lane for veterans

**AN INCREDIBLE team day out saw veterans zooming round the Three Sisters Race Circuit in Wigan.**

The day was organised by military charity Mission Motorsport – a charity which aids the recovery and rehabilitation of veterans affected by service by

providing motor sport activity days.

VIC members including some from Sandbag Café Preston and other veteran organisations, had a truly fabulous day and can't thank Mission Motorsports and the drivers enough for supporting veterans.

## By Royal appointment

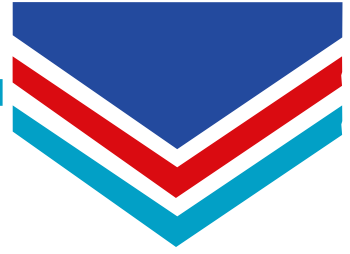
**TWO VIC members were invited to Royal Garden Parties at Buckingham Palace this month.**



As part of The Not Forgotten Team, Phil Chamberlain attended a garden party on May 16 and four days later, trustee of VIC Barry Hyde, who received the British Empire Medal in the New Year's Honours list, was also invited to the palace.







# National final for Amy



**CONGRATULATIONS to VIC Administrator Amy Thompson who competed in the Royal British Legion National Standard Bearers Competition for the first time.**

She came in an amazing seventh place missing out on the sixth spot by just two points.

Amy, who won the RBL North West Standard Bearer competition in March, said: "Out of 10 amazing competitors, I came a very respectable 7th. Top 7 in the country."

"I want to thank everyone who has trained, supported and encouraged me to get to National level."

"My Lancashire team including

CPM Dave Eltman and DCPM James Mcauley – I never thought National was on the cards for me but you both believed I could do it and I hope I did you proud."

This year's competition was held at Harrogate Convention Centre on Friday and on the Saturday and Sunday it was the National Conference and so Amy paraded the Lancashire standard with pride at the opening and closing ceremonies including a parade through Harrogate.

She added: "What an honour. There is no greater feeling than meeting up with my RBL family, who all work incredibly hard at these events, but play even harder."

## Bob Ross class

THE next painting in the style of Bob Ross class will be on Sunday June 29, and it will be extra special as the artists will create a triptych.

This means the landscape picture will be painted over three canvases which are clamped together while the painting is carried out, then separated once dry and hung with a space in between.

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell will be leading the session which costs £45



with a non-refundable deposit of £15 to secure a place.

The class starts at 10.30am and finishes around 3.30pm. Tea and coffee is supplied and a packed lunch is advised.

To book your place please call Amy Thompson on 01706 833180.

## Sandbag Café's first birthday

A CELEBRATION was held to mark the first anniversary of the Sandbag Café in Preston.

The veterans' morning is a collaboration between Lancashire Armed Forces Veterans Association and VIC and

Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth attends the weekly meet up every Tuesday morning at St George's Church.

The Sandbag started off with a cohort of around 12 and now regularly has up to 30 members.

## Bike ride a month away

**BBC Radio Lancashire gave VIC airtime to promote our Riding for Forces and Families charity bike ride.**

VIC members were invited by presenter Sharon Hartley to visit the Blackburn offices to discuss our plans with the Lancashire-wide audience.

We would also like to thank shoppers who stopped to find out more about our 260-mile London to Haslingden bike ride when the team set up stall in Asda Rawtenstall.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy, veteran Bob Brindley and Mandy, Phil's wife, will complete the route

during Armed Forces Week arriving back at the VIC Centre on Saturday June 28 when there will be an event from noon to 3pm and army cadets will be present.

Three charities will benefit from the ride, VIC, Scotty's Little Soldiers, and the Lancashire Army Cadet Force.

Bob cycled from Waterfoot to Deerplay, via Bacup completing 17 miles in total, while Mandy has already been training ahead of the ride next month.

The team is offering generous publicity opportunities for business sponsors – please contact 01706 833180.

## Rallying the troops

**VIC members joined our fantastic friends from the Throttle Twisters Motor Cycle Club at their rally in Cheshire.**

Seven VIC members joined the bikers at Sycamore Farm Caravan Site, Nether Alderley, for a fantastic weekend.

Most VIC members arrived on the Friday, but three headed down on the Thursday to make the most of the fabulous weather and stunning scenery.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "It is so good of the motorcycle club to use their rally to raise money for VIC and we are very grateful."

On the Friday evening there was a disco and, on the Saturday, a brilliant live band Smudge performed,

VIC sold hot dogs on the Friday and Saturday nights, all campers made a donation to the charity and there was also a collection held on the Saturday's night.







# Horse nose how to find

**GROUNDBREAKING** scent work is being carried out on the moors between Accrington and Haslingden where horses are becoming sniffer animals.

For the last three years, a small team is believed to be the only one in the country training horses to follow a scent.

Kathryn Williams, who runs Adventure Neighbourhood livery at Spring Vale Farm, Green Haworth, said: "We train them in the same way a dog can be trained to search and rescue by detecting a scent.

"Firstly, it is fun for us and the horses; if it wasn't then we would not do it. Secondly, it uses their sense of smell which is a very natural thing for them to do and thirdly, nobody knows how this could go so someone has got to give it a go.

"We are, we believe, the first doing cadaver searches and ridden. There is one lady Rachael Draaisma who is doing non ridden, she's in the Netherlands, has written a book and runs courses, but her focus is different, so, I think, is her methodology."

VIC Royal Signals veteran Bob Brindley is also helping with the training as he was previously a volunteer with Rossendale and Pendle Mountain Rescue Team.

Bob had worked with sniffer



dogs and knew the training, so has helped with laying trails and being a 'body' for the horses to find.

He said: "This uses the skills I picked up while with the Mountain Rescue that had been going to waste. My training had been paid for by the public donating in collection buckets so it is good to be able to give it back."

Maria Hurley, from Chorley, owns George, 14, and he is stabled at the farm. She was delighted to show how he could follow a trail.

Bob used a wrapped-up piece of pork chop and dragged it in a zig-zag trail across a lane before summoning George and Maria to follow.

Having had his nostrils cleared, George knew he was on scent work duty and he put his nose to the ground – then followed the trail across the road from one side to the the

other until he found the meat – then he got snacks for a reward.

In another field, full of interesting items to distract the horse, George again sniffed out and went straight to the hidden chop.

Animal behaviourist, author and researcher Debbie Busby has been to visit the farm and that has led to the team being invited to showcase their work to a team of equine experts in Manchester.

Their work also briefly

featured on the Channel 5 show Springtime on the Farm.

Kathryn's horse Dolly is 26 and her days of being ridden are over, but she is content to be led to the arena where she took great delight in sniffing out coffee-soaked sponges in return for a treat.

The team is developing different ways to train the horses to detect a variety of scents.

If the horses were able to be used to help with a missing person, Kathryn said they would be able to search a much larger area than dogs alone and if the horse was being ridden, the rider would also be able to see a greater distance than a dog handler on foot.

Should the horse detect a scent trail leading to terrain that was not suitable for the horse to navigate, they could alert dog handlers.

George is quite the character and he also has his own TikTok account – Batman George.

## A great Xperience

**THE great outdoors was enjoyed by the VIC team getting together in the fabulous setting of Woodland Xperiences in Cumbria.**



Community Capacity Builder Brian Hawke, is based at VIC and works throughout Lancashire on the Thrive project.

He said: "Woodland Xperiences was set up by Adrian Martin at Kirkby Stephen. He has visitors from all over the country, including police officers from Humberside, but is not as well known in the local area.

"He offers experiences for up to 24 people at a time

giving them a chance to get back to nature and to connect with the land – to rest, recover and restore.

"It is run by volunteers and offers dedicated weekend camps for armed forces personnel, veterans and blue light workers and also holds forces wives' challenges."

VIC members and their families got to enjoy a one-day taster session involving archery and making fires.



# What's On and Where



## 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/ Art Group

#### 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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Community Capacity Builder Brian Hawke

brianhawke@vic.org.uk 07741 902 343

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](mailto: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

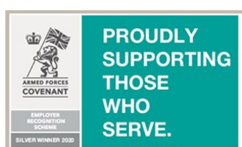
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**Charity Number 1151194**

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