



VIC Newsletter

A fitting farewell to D-Day hero

VETERANS and serving soldiers stood shoulder-to-shoulder to say a final farewell to D-Day veteran Jack Riley, three days after what would have been his 100th birthday.

VIC Piper Steve Sumner led the Standard Bearers and Jack's hearse past a guard of honour of more than 60 people, both veterans and serving personnel, which formed at the entrance to Accrington Crematorium.

There was standing room only inside for his service.

Jack, 99, died peacefully on December 28 at Highfield Hall Care Home, he had previously lived in Central Flats in Haslingden and had been a member of VIC for seven years.

Jack chose to join up in 1942, even though, as a plumber, he was in a 'reserved occupation' so exempt from conscription.

After completing Infantry training, the new soldiers were in Stalybridge, Tameside, when officers came in and asked if anyone could use a spanner, everyone who raised their hands, which included Jack, then became founding members of the newly formed corps the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

On June 6 1945, Jack



photo: Bernard Tighe

was in one of the last waves of soldiers to be sent across the channel to the Normandy Beaches.

He was interviewed in 2022 when he received the Legion d'Honneur, the highest military medal from France,

Jack described what it was like on the landing craft. He said: "It wasn't rough or anything like that... but the spray was the biggest thing, with it having a flat front it would dip and [the spray] covered you. I was on the scared side, but I wasn't showing it and I think everyone was in the same boat.

"They were wondering and saying, 'I wonder if it will be a wet landing, up to here', (indicating to his neck) because we had heard about things before; being in four foot of water, they weren't fit to fight by

the time they got ashore, they needed to dry out.

"I had never swam with kit on and some drowned. I was fortunate really. The hardship was nowt to do with the enemy or that, but we had to go about in bare feet when we were in the fields so we didn't leave traces and it was like walking on needles. We had to put our boots under our arms."

At his funeral, Celebrant Sarah Flanagan talked not only of Jack's war record, he spent five years in the forces, but also of his life as a son, husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

He met his future wife Brenda after he broke his leg and while in a military hospital, the soldier in the next bed was from Colne. He had two daughters and asked Jack to become a

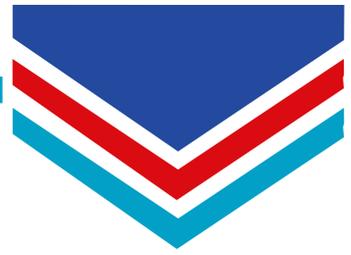
penpal to one of them. A year after being demobbed, they married.

After service, he first worked as a driver for Hollands Pies for many years and latterly would visit schools to talk of his wartime experiences mending military vehicles on the front line.

VIC Project Worker Ray Sharkey said: "Jack would often walk across to the VIC Centre and share a cup of tea and a doughnut while the veterans in attendance listened to him spellbound and stunned that he was there for some of the most pivotal events of the Second World War..

"As a student of history, I felt honoured to know Jack as a friend and living legend, the like of which this generation can only aspire to be."





RIP Irene, Vinny and Andy

WE HAVE also very sadly had three other VIC members passed away since our last newsletter.

Irene Halshaw had been a member of the VIC Choir since 2018 and sadly passed away on December 22.



She sang at a great number of the choir performances and will be greatly missed by the members.

Vinny Houghton was one of the members of the



Sandbag Café in Heywood and sadly died on January 12.

He joined the Sandbag Café in 2018 and was a regular

and also kindly donated items to our Model Railway Club in Hyndburn.

He joined the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME) during National Service in 1952 and was discharged in 1954.

Also from Heywood, we lost **Andy Daly** who passed away on



January 14. Andy was 62 and served as a Royal Engineer in the mid '70s in Germany.

For the last six years, he suffered from dementia and spent time in various care homes in Ramsbottom and Heywood.

His funeral will be on January 30 at St Joseph Church in Heywood at noon before a burial at Heywood Cemetery at 1pm and a celebration of his life at Heywood Cricket Club. The family have requested no standards.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to all the families and friends at this difficult time.

Book sheds light on SAS

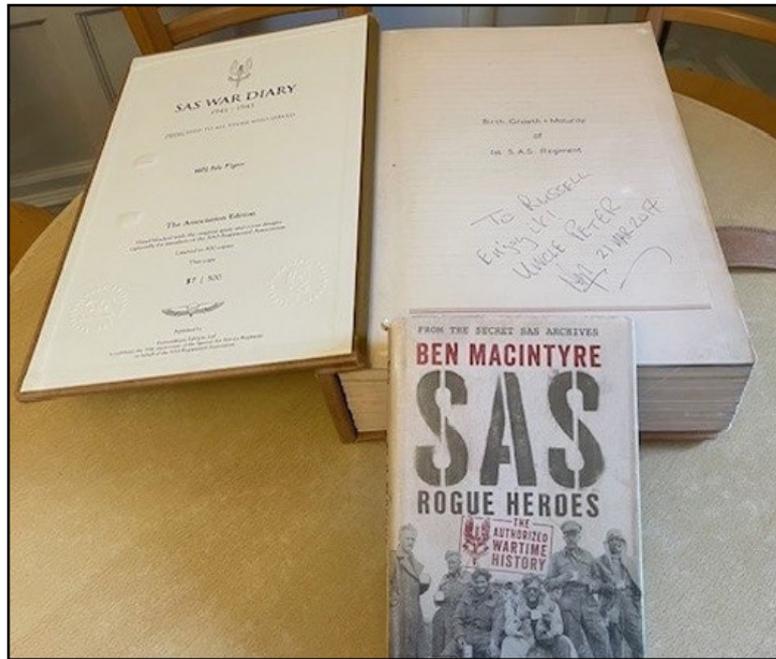
VIC has been fortunate to have been loaned a copy of the original SAS War Diary, which was used as the foundation for the TV drama series for **Rogue Heroes**.

We invited our members to pop-in over the Christmas and New Year period when they could read some of the extracts of this rare piece of the history of the SAS during the Second World War if they wanted to.

We were also visited, in January, by a member of the Blind Veterans' Association and a carer from Cumbria who is looking after one of the SAS soldiers featured in the book. He copied extracts of missions featured in the book to take back for the veteran.

The Blind Veterans' Association have filmed the SAS veteran discussing his experiences in the SAS and there may be another visit to VIC in the future.

We are also organising an informal talk by Pete (Red) Riley at the VIC Centre in Haslingden. Peter served in both the Army Air Corp and SAS and, as soon we have confirmed the date, it will be posted on our Facebook page.



Rochdale outreach has resumed after the Christmas break at Number One Riverside, in Rochdale, on Thursday mornings.

Photo talks

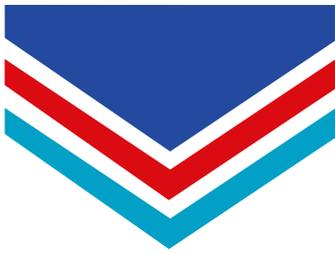
TWO free photography talks will be delivered by Duncan Phillips at the VIC Centre, Haslingden in February.

Duncan is one of our members from Clitheroe, and he owns Knowle Top Gallery in Clitheroe.

On February 1, he will be talking about his most recent visit to Southern Africa where he photographed many beautiful wildlife scenes.

On Thursday February 29, at the same venue, he will be giving a presentation and talk on his visit to the Arctic.

Everyone is welcome to the talks, there is no need to book and the doors will be open at 1pm for 1.15pm start.



Raffle for rhino painting

Training

STANDARD bearer training is being organised by the Royal British Legion on April 21 from 12pm to 3pm at the St Peter's Community Centre.

As VIC now has its own standard, and RAF veteran Jacko Pearce has kindly offered to be our official standard bearer, we are looking to offer training for anyone who wishes to volunteer to carry the standard if Jacko is unavailable.

To find out more call Administrator Amy Thompson at the VIC office on 01706 833180.

Respects

THE VIC Standard was paraded by Jacko Pearce and Ron Flowers gave a reading at the funeral of VIC member Phil Speddy's uncle.

Geoff Speddy was a Lancashire Fusilier veteran and his funeral was held at Overdale, Bolton.

RAFFLE tickets will be on sale from February to win a huge oil painting of a rhino by VIC Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell.

The painting, completed in Winton paints on canvas, will be raising money for VIC as Darren's way of saying thank you to the charity for all the support he has received over the years.

He said: "The inspiration behind the painting is my love for African wildlife. When I was being treated at Combat Stress, I found out I suffer from audio hallucinations and I was struggling with that. The consultant suggested I imagine a silver back gorilla to stop the angry voice and it worked, so I painted one."

During Covid, Darren's animal paintings were raffled off to help keep zoos going when they were unable to open.



Darren was inspired by renowned wildlife artist David Shepherd, well known for his elephant paintings, who set up the David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation and was passionate about conservation.

Just as elephants were hunted and killed for tusks, rhinos were killed for their horns.

Darren added: "Now the

raffling of my rhino painting will benefit others and money raised will support the work of VIC and will also enable free art classes in macrame, glass painting and clay model making."

For raffle tickets, priced £2.50, contact Administrator Amy Thompson at the VIC Centre on 01706 833180.



Thank you to James Mcauley for creating a stand for our new VIC standard so it can be on display in the foyer of the VIC Centre in Haslingden when not on parade.

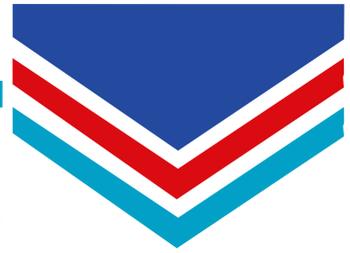


Creative members of our Model Railway Club, that meets at the Hyndburn Veterans Drop-in, have built a stunning model of Fort William Station and the harbour wall at Fort William for their layout in the cellar.

Although she only picked up a hook in October, new member of the Chatty Crafters Rona has made a beautiful bag and a blanket. The group meets every Monday morning at the VIC Centre.



VIC highlights 2023



HERE are the main highlights of our activities and news from 2023; for more news from last year check our Newsletters and News Stories on www.veteransincommunities.org

REFERRALS

We saw an increase in referrals from the previous year, especially for support with re-housing, benefits, mental health, local housing teams and general information about other welfare issues and enquires. Our outreach venues in Accrington, Clitheroe, Haslingden, Heywood, and Middleton had a regular number attending each week and many participated in the other social inclusion and outreach services across the year.

ACTIVITIES

Core activities continued: Arts and Crafts groups, Social Trips, Social Inclusion Activities, Walks, Model Railway Club, and the Choir. An additional Bimble walking group was started for those unable to take part in the more physically demanding walks.

CENTRE USERS

The VIC Centre has an average of 500 members, partner organisations, and member drop-ins each month seeking support or to see the services that utilise our centre.

OUTREACH

Across the year, our outreach team has given information, advice and support on a range of issues including benefits, re-housing, employment, courses, welfare support, referrals, telephone enquiries and our current membership is around 700 enrolled veterans or family members. Many had multiple issues and involved referrals being made to other statutory and third sector

organisations.

PARLIAMENT

VIC Centre had a visit from Penny Mordaunt MP (Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons) and Sara Britcliffe MP for Hyndburn and Haslingden to see what VIC does to support the Armed Forces Community. After the visit, we were mentioned not once but twice in the Houses of Parliament on May 10.

FILM

The film we made for the 'The Stories In Transition' project was officially launched at the National Army Museum in June. We will organise a North-West showing in 2024.

BBO FINISHES

The 'Building Better Opportunities' programme came to an end in March and VIC overachieved the targets set by European Social Fund.

INFO STANDS

Our outreach team held a number of information stands across our operating areas, these included mental health events, health centres, and volunteer events. They briefed DWP staff about veterans, issues they may have and different ways of supporting them.

ALLOTMENT

The VIC allotment was managed by a new member in 2023 and over the 12 months he has transformed it into a working allotment which has become a haven for wildlife.

VPPP

The Veterans' Places, Pathways and People, VPPP, programme we have been working on, came to an end in December. Partners are currently working on the legacy

of this successful programme using what we've learnt to provide safe places for veterans to access.

SUPPORTING OTHERS

We were contacted by three North-West based veteran-led third sector organisations who asked for our support in funding applications and also ways of setting up a similar provision to VIC in Warrington, Preston and Morecambe.

WORK EXPERIENCE

We supported learners on work experience from North Lancs Training. One of these learnt a range of social and general building maintenance skills. During the placement, he made the decision to join the Army and, if all goes well, he will be starting his basic training in early 2024.

100TH BIRTHDAY

VIC members celebrated the 100th birthday of one of the Sandbag Café members WW2 veteran Bernard Munton.

REME VETERAN

We reunited one of our WW2 veterans Jack Riley with the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME). He was one the first to join the REME in 1942 and the Association spent time with him to talk about experiences. The techniques are still used today, and his experiences have been documented.

OPEN DAY

An open day at Accrington Veterans' Drop-in yielded a great response and around 50 people attended. We invited the Hyndburn Deputy Mayor Councillor Terry Hurn and the Mayoress his wife Jean. We had some great feedback, they saw the Model Railway Club and heard about how the drop-in makes a difference to veterans' lives.

PEEL TOWER ABSEIL

In March we held a challenge where we had a number of our members and supporters abseil down the Peel Tower to raise money for VIC.

CORONATION

We opened the VIC Centre in Haslingden for members to celebrate the King's Coronation. They were able to watch the Coronation and parade on TV, have something to eat from a buffet and spend the morning and afternoon with other members who would have been at home on their own. It was a great day and good company.

SOCIAL TRIPS

VIC organised a good selection of social inclusion trips for our members. These included Carnforth Heritage Centre, Heskin Hall, Leyland Commercial Vehicle Museum, Hot Ice Show in Blackpool, Whitehough Outdoor Education, Centre, Bolton Abbey and steam train, Whalley Hall and the Ridges Gardens. All these trips were full.

CAKE STALL

We had another cake stall at the Rawtenstall Vintage and Craft Fair at the Unitarian Church in Rawtenstall. Our members contributed with a selection of homemade cakes, and these were sold to raise £215 for VIC.

EQUINE THERAPY

One of the members of the Model Railway Club got involved in Adventure Neighbourhood on an equine therapy course. A new project he got involved in was to train horses to find objects and people through scent. This is a unique concept and is having some good successes.



VIC highlights 2023

CARP FISHING

One of our members Darren Horsnell, and his son Barry, had an idea in 2022 to organise a Carp Angling Competition. We held two angling events in 2023 and both were a huge success. More are planned for 2024.

ASDIC CONFERENCE

Our CEO Amanda Walton and Operation Manager Bob Elliott attended the ASDIC conference when it was great to meet and see so many other veterans' organisations working together across the UK.

CAR WASH

We were invited by Hyndburn Fire and Rescue Service to a Charity Car Wash at Hyndburn Fire Station where they offered to split the donations with VIC and the Firefighters Charity.

ARMED FORCES DAY

Members of the VIC team attended a number of Armed Forces Day flag raising ceremonies in June. Our CEO Amanda Walton and Operations Manager were invited to Lancashire County Council for a short service and then to a reception in County Hall, in Preston. Our Administrator Amy Thompson carried one of the RBL Standards at the County Hall. Ray Sharkey, some of our Trustees and members attended the Rawtenstall ceremony, Haslingden and Clitheroe.

TALKS

Ribble Valley members had three interesting talks about the 'British Jews in The First World War' (We Were There Too), the history behind the 'Unknown Warrior' and a talk from a renowned photographer who gets commissioned by National Geographical for his wildlife pictures.

VIC CHOIR

Our Choir performed at a numerous supermarkets and community events raising a lot of money for VIC. They were well received in the community.

SHOWS

The VIC stand was out over the summer months at Bury AFC Fun Day, Trawden Show and at the Burnley Uniformed Services Day.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Bob Ross, art classes and craft groups were as creative as previous years with some art pieces being exhibited at a 'Mad Pride' event in Bacup. Our Crafty Chatters group sent a parcel of knitted keepsakes to Salford Royal Hospital. The knitted bears were used to provide comfort for patients in hospital at Fairfield, Oldham, Rochdale, and Salford.

MODEL RAILWAY

The Model Railway Club at the Accrington Veterans' Drop-in has grown in size, and they built a scale model of the Glenfinnan Viaduct.

DOWNING STREET

Our operations Manager and volunteer Darren Horsnell were invited to Downing Street to the Veterans' Reception hosted by Johnny Mercer. It was an enjoyable day and was great for VIC to get recognition for all the hard work our staff, volunteers and members do to support the Armed Forces Community.

NORMANDY

Over five days, three Sapper VIC members were invited to join the Preston Branch of the Royal Engineers Association to go to the Royal Engineers Chatham weekend and onto Normandy. The main purpose was to visit and pay their respects to two of their Branch

Members who served during WW2; Major Philip Kenyon RE and Spr Gerrard Rogerson RE and to visit the Royal Engineers invasion sites in Arramanche and on Juno Beach.

STANDARD BEARER

Our Administrator Amy Thompson came first in the Royal British Legion Lancashire County Standard Bearers Competition.

REMEMBRANCE

In November, our members and volunteers attended numerous Remembrance services across Rossendale, Bury, Burnley, Clitheroe, Oldham, Rochdale, Heywood, Middleton, and some of our members were invited to a number of schools to talk about Remembrance and what it means to the Nation.

ROCK NIGHT

The Throttle Twisters MCC hosted a charity Rock Night for VIC when £1,225.20 was raised. A small contingent of VIC members attended to show our support.

VIC STANDARD

Thanks to funding from Duchy of Lancashire, we were able to buy our own VIC Standard.

ROTARY DONATION

We were donated £1,500 from the Rossendale Rotary Club and it helped provide art materials for our bi-weekly art group and for the Veterans In Production project to put a Remembrance bench at Lumb Millennium Green.

CO-OP DONATION

Our CEO Amanda Walton and volunteer Darren Horsnell were presented with a donation of £2,846.33 from the Co-op in Haslingden. We would like to thank the

customers and staff for the donation raised through the Haslingden, Waterfoot and Whitworth stores.

RING OF RED

VIC was the beneficiary of money raised at the M60 Ring of Red where motorbikes met at Birch Services and rode around the M60 on Remembrance Sunday to raise money for a veterans charity.

NEW SANDBAG CAFE

We launched a new Sandbag Cafe (Longridge) outreach at Christ Church in Berry Lane, Longridge at the end of November; initial response has been good.

VISIT OF PCC

Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner Andrew Snowden visited VIC to learn more about the charity and its work with blue light veterans and serving personnel.

CHRISTMAS MEAL

Around 50 people attended our Christmas meal at Haslingden Community Link including members of the Blind Veterans' Association.

HAMPERS

We distributed some 70 Xmas hampers to vulnerable veterans across Rossendale, Rochdale, Heywood, Burnley, Clitheroe and Hyndburn. We received fantastic donations of food throughout the year, and we would like to thank ASDA, Tesco, Trevor and Katie, Foundation 92, Kemple View and many others.

IN MEMORIAM

Sadly, we mourned the passing of some members in 2023; Craft group member Irene Peel, David Hoyle, Trustee Colin Crowth, Choir member Irene Halshaw and WW2 veteran Jack Riley.



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.

Rochdale Veterans' Breakfast Club and VIC Outreach

THURSDAY

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

10.30am Number One Riverside, Smith Street, Rochdale, OL16 1XU.

RIBBLE VALLEY

TUESDAYS

Redoubt Coffee Morning and Outreach

10am-noon

Trinity Methodist Church, Wesleyan Row,

Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JY.

Sandbag Cafe Longridge

9.30am-noon

Christ Church Methodist Church, Berry Lane, Longridge, PR3 3JA.

VIC – 01706 833180

Chief Executive Amanda Walton

amandawalton@vic.org.uk

Operations Manager Bob Elliott

bobelliott@vic.org.uk 07961 554 006

Administrator Amy Thompson

amythompson@vic.org.uk

Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth

stevebutterworth@vic.org.uk

Project Worker Ray Sharkey

raysharkey@vic.org.uk 07741 902 188

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

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

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

HYNDBURN

Outreach / Drop-In/ Model Railway Club

FRIDAY

10am-3pm

VIC Hyndburn, Accrington Arndale Centre, BB5 1EX.

Accrington Stanley Breakfast Club/ Drop-In

LAST WEDNESDAY EVERY MONTH

9.30am-11am

Lancashire Carers Link, 54-56 Blackburn Road, Accrington, BB5 1LE.

BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

Outreach Service

TUESDAY

10.30am-noon

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

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