

HOME SWEET HOME

WE ARE delighted to be in our new home in Haslingden thanks to a grant from the Ministry of Defence and volunteers who worked round-the-clock.

Apologies for not getting our newsletter out in January, but it has been a hectic time for VIC so this edition is a 'bumper bundle' covering all the exciting projects, activities and changes within the organisation.

Operation Relocation and Renovation involved moving VIC and charity REAL from Bacup to our permanent base at 12 Bury Road, now called the VIC Centre. It was carried out over two days thanks to our very own 'army'.

Manager Bob Elliott said: "We were fortunate to secure £25,000 from the Armed Forces Community Covenant and this has been supplemented by generous donations.

"REAL provided furniture, computers and office equipment and three local companies made a substantial contribution of furniture and equipment for kitchen and community areas of the building.

"We are grateful to Springvale Leather, Musbury Fabrics and Ramsbottom Kitchens who have made these areas good to look at, high qual-



ity, robust and practical.

"At the centre we used more than 70 litres of magnolia paint donated to us by Crown Paints in Darwen as we gave every room a bright fresh new look.

"We recycled the old kitchen into our new dedicated art room and members are in the process of fitting a new kitchen.

"We still have some work to do on the IT room and we will be furnishing and decorating the conference room to a high specification including an interactive whiteboard and projector.

"Once we have finished all the rooms, they will be available for local businesses and community groups to hire, please call in and have a look."

We have already had many guests including Rossendale MP Jake Berry and Haslingden MP Graham Jones, the Mayor Councillor Amanda Robertson, Councillor Gladys Sandiford and many people from the community.

Bob added: "We hope to have a grand opening of the VIC Centre at the next few months. Watch out for your invitation."

See page 5 to see how we have transformed the centre



Khaki raises cash

PUPILS swapped their uniform for army colours to help raise money for VIC.

Alder Grange Community School in Rawtenstall raised more than £700 for VIC through the non-uniform day.

The fund-raiser was the idea of one of the pupils Jamie, who hopes to join the Royal Marines. The event was also supported by the headteacher David Hampson and staff, who also donned khaki for the cause.

Trustee Ronnie Barker said: "It was a great effort by Jamie and all those pupils and staff at the school who joined in the non-uniform day. VIC is very grateful for their support."

Alder Grange was also the location of VIC's art exhibition last year.



Website on way

OUR website is currently under construction and the new look site should be live at the end of February.

The new site is being built, designed and managed by members of VIC and the group will have more control over the content and be constantly updating the site with press reports, news items, pictures and events.

Then new site will also have a direct link to VIC's Facebook page and Twitter account and will have an online shop.



VETERANS brushed shoulders with top snooker stars who swapped cues for clubs at Accrington Golf Club.

VIC provided a team of marshals for the inaugural Paul Hunter Foundation charity golf day.

They met stars including Steve Davis, John Parrott and Shaun Murphy.



VIC was delighted to be given a selection of autographed items which will be auctioned to raise money.

The tournament was organised in just three months and the veterans were delighted offer their marshalling services to ensure it was a success.

Some of the top North West businesses took part along with individuals who had come

from as far as Reading.

After five fantastic dry hours on the course, a team representing Accrington Stanley won on a card play-off – but the real winner was the charity as the event raised nearly £12,000 thanks to an auction of memorabilia.

It is hoped the event will become an annual one.



Veterans unite to celebrate

A FESTIVE fun time was had by all thanks to the hospitality of the IDL Club in Haslingden and a collection held on Rosso buses.

The bus company allowed members of VIC to collect from passengers and the funds raised helped to pay for a Christmas party for veterans of all ages at the club in Haslingden.

Stars on the night were 91-year-old veterans James Burge and Jimmy Barrett who had a fantastic time.

The party was organised by VIC member Tracey Vick, who had used the same venue in October for a Halloween quiz, which raised £95.

Tracey said: "Members had a great time and again raised more than £100 from sales



of raffle tickets and a collection bucket on the bar.

"The IDL bought in extra staff who started two hours before work without pay to cater for VIC needs. VIC and the IDL provided some great raffle prizes and allowed us to use their sound system for the local duo Lyrics who provided live music on the night.

"I would like to thank the IDL staff Kay and Mick Cassidy and IDL steward John Hankinson for their continued support. We hope to hold more events at the IDL in the future."

MBE honour for Barry

TRUSTEE and secretary of VIC Barry Payton was awarded an MBE in the Queen's New Year Honours' List.

Barry, who retired from being Head of Centre at Haslingden Community Link last year,



has been a strong supporter of VIC since its inception. His award is for services to children and families.

VIC is delighted that the honour has been bestowed on Barry and would like to add its congratulations.

VIC manager Bob Elliott said: "Barry is a loyal and committed advocate of the work of VIC and we are delighted that his dedication has been recognised by this honour."



East Lancs CCG moved by veterans' personal stories

A MOVING animation and a video were shown to members of East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group to explain the work of VIC.

Members Graham Gilson and Darren Horsnell attended the group's public meeting where their stories were told.

VIC Manager Bob Elliott said: "We have been fortunate to have received funding from the CCG and the group wanted to see how VIC had made a difference to the lives of veterans.

"Darren has spent many hours working with the Horse and Bamboo Theatre on an animation project to tell his journey while Graham created a DVD of his experiences.

"At the meeting these moving 'patient stories' were shown to members of the CCG and the public. We are hoping to publish them in the future."

The veterans – Darren who served in the Falklands War and Graham who served in Croatia and also spent some time with the French Foreign Legion – were



presented with a cake from the chair of the East Lancashire CCG Di van Ruitenbeek as a thank you for presenting their stories.

She also sent a letter to VIC saying: "Members felt that Darren and Graham told extremely powerful, individual stories which outlined their experiences both in the military and emergency services and also in civilian life, highlighting key issues that they have been faced with.

"I commend both Darren and Graham for their efforts in making the films and for sharing their stories with us and also to you for supporting them."

Bob said: "It was important for the guys to get their story out there and the response they got from the meeting was fantastic.

"In the future we hope to capture other veterans' stories on DVD."

Lowry and Museum trip

A SPECIAL trip to The Lowry and the Imperial War Museum will take place on Sunday February 23 thanks to a free bus being provided by Rosso.

VIC has links with the transport company since having a collection day on the buses in November.

Anyone wanting to make the trip should contact VIC. The bus will leave the VIC Centre at 9.15am.

Every little helps Tesco

TESCO stores in Haslingden and Rawtenstall were kind enough to let VIC collect in the foyer before Christmas raising a fantastic £400 towards group funds.

Suicide intervention

ANOTHER VIC member has completed the ASIST training for suicide intervention.

VIC offers this course to all its members.

New art class

THE new VIC art group has started at Heywood on the second and fourth Wednesdays at Heywood Sports Village from 11am to 2.30pm.



Commemorating First World War

POPIES will be blooming all over the Valley after VIC received donations of poppy seeds.

The seeds were provided by MAS Seeds of Wiltshire and Naturescape of Nottinghamshire.

There are plans to plant seeds in the cemeteries in Bacup and Haslingden and at St Mary's CE School in Rawtenstall.

Cracking Christmas



VETERANS and VIC's Suzanne Preston had a hectic Christmas and New Year attending a number of events around the Rochdale area.

The aim of the project was to provide a number of activities that were alcohol free, an opportunity to socialise and give something back to the community.

Thanks to support from a multitude of

groups and organisations, especially the Military Veterans' Service and Rossendale Hospice which provided the minibus, Suzanne was able to organise a host of activities to keep vulnerable veterans occupied over what can be a very difficult time of year.

After clocking up hundreds of miles, Suzanne said: "It made

Christmas and New Year wonderful as it was most rewarding project to be part of.

"One of the most rewarding bits was seeing how the guys enjoyed the experiences and making new friends.

"I saw a massive change in those guys and many of those who took part have remained in contact. It transpired

that two of the guys had gone through basic training together but then went their separate ways and met again on this project. They didn't realise they lived so close to each other.

"I would like to say a big thank you to veterans Chris Jones and Tony Stubbs who spent 10-14 hours a day on the project."

In total 15 veterans

who would have spent the festive period alone got a chance to get involved, help others and enjoy themselves.

LVA kindly donated £200 to the activities which helped to pay towards the Christmas meal and the bowling.

Suzanne added: "I would like to say thank you to everyone who made this possible. It was a fantastic, if hectic, time!"

On Christmas Eve, veterans enjoyed an ice-breaking game or two of badminton on courts provided free by Gary Smith of Heywood Sports Village one of the venues managed on behalf of Rochdale Borough Council by Link4Life.

Christmas Day saw the veterans visiting the Hebron Pentecostal Church in Rochdale where they prepared and cooked a meal for the homeless people living in the area.

Suzanne said: "They served meals to 20 homeless people. It was a very humbling experience and a real eye-opener for some of the veterans because some of the homeless people had similar issues to some of the veterans. "The guys really integrated with the homeless people and they all sat together to eat their meal."

On Boxing Day Harry Mills from the Lancashire Veterans' Association in Heywood organised a Christmas lunch at the Heywood Pub in Heywood.

Ian Kilgannon, from the Para's Association of Rochdale organised some of their members to attend. The LVA and Para's gift wrapped hampers, which were donated by Porchboxes of Bury. Every veteran got a present.

Veterans spent December 27 at the VIC Centre in Haslingden helping with the refurbishment and they got to meet other VIC members.



On New Year's Eve, veterans enjoyed a night of 10 pin bowling at Strike 10 in Rochdale.



Operation Renovation

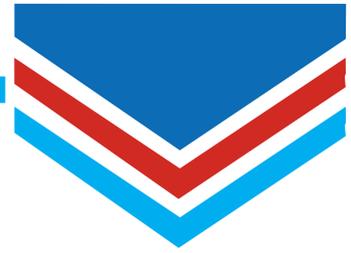
VIC
VETERANS IN COMMUNITIES
Return. Belong. Prosper.

FROM THIS



TO THIS





Choir to hit high notes

WEEKLY singing sessions have started at the VIC Centre.

The VIC Singing Group is for veterans, their families and anyone who wants to have a go and join in.

It is being organised by former military musician and singing teacher Peter Webster, who is a member of Oldham-based Fitton Factor Community Choir.

Peter played French horn in the Queen Royal Irish Hussars. Since leaving the services, he has struggled with mental health issues.

He said: "When I listen to music or I sing with a choir, it is like I am in a world of my own. It is a peaceful place and all of my troubles go away."

The choir meets every Thursday at the VIC Centre, 12 Bury Road, Haslingden, from 6.30pm to 8.30pm.

Peter said: "To start with the choir will be meeting once a week then, when we have any commitments, extra rehearsals will be added. When it takes off, hopefully it will change to twice a week."

For more information contact Peter on 01706 833180 or 0786 404 8761.



Traders back VIC

VIC was delighted to be given a cheque for £250 from the chairman of Rawtenstall's Chamber of Commerce David Gould.

VIC would like to thank the Chamber of Commerce for their support and the kind donation.



VIC walk to the Halo above Haslingden.

Outreach is expanding

TWO new veterans outreach services will be set up shortly.

VIC is in advanced discussions with Blackburn with Darwen and Pendle Armed Forces Group.

In Pendle, a one-stop shop at the Ace Centre in Nelson will be open shortly. VIC will be working with The Royal British Legion, the Clinical Commissioning Group, Calico and Veterans Association UK and Salute have been invited.

In Blackburn with Darwen VIC will be offering services in the Town Hall in Darwen every Tuesday. The RBL is hoping to be there once a month and veterans groups have expressed an interest in sharing the venue.

War graves appeal

THE families of loved ones who fought in the First World War and are remembered with a grave in Bacup Cemetery are being asked to come forward.

VIC has received lottery funding so the graves of heroes can be cleaned up and, if needed, headstones can be replaced.

Local historian Wendy Lord is helping VIC with the project as she has written an illustrated book on the fallen who are remembered in Bacup Cemetery.

Leading the project is Peter Webster.

He said: "We need to try to identify any surviving relatives so they can approve the work we want to do to make sure these soldiers are remembered."

Peter can be contacted on 01706 833180.



Welcome to the art room



ARTWORK created at VIC is being shown at a major exhibition in Devon.

The Art for Recovery Exhibition is on at the Goodwin Gallery at Petroc, Barnstable, part of North Devon College's School of Art at Pottington.

VIC was invited to exhibit by Tony Byrne, who attended and showed his paintings at the exhibition at Alder Grange last summer.

Darren said: "I first met Tony at Combat Stress when we were both at the art classes. We both realised what we got out of art and what it did for us.

"Being able to give back to the veterans and members by encouraging their art work is great and now I have my own art room it is brilliant."

The proceeds of any VIC artwork sold at the month-long exhibition will return to VIC. The artist will get 25 per cent with the remainder going to the art group.



NOW the art group has a permanent home art in all its forms will be explored.

Although the painting group will continue, there are also plans to hold sessions on creating costume jewellery and even setting up a knitting group.

Darren said: "The room we previously used was also used by other groups and so we had to put everything away. Now this room can be left set up. We have even had one of the oldest veteran members 91-year-old James Burge come along to one of our sessions."

MOUNTING and framing pictures is a whole lot easier for the Art Club now they have their own equipment.

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell explained: "When we held our art exhibition last year at Alder Grange we found that it was very expensive to have the pictures framed but we wanted to make sure that they looked right.

"Now the VIC board has agreed to buy the materials we need so we will be able to frame and mount our own pictures and we will also be able to offer this service to the public as well."

Quality prints are now also being made of art group members' work by Art & Soul in Padiham.



BEAUTIFUL and colourful salt dough artwork created by Wendy Ruggieri from REAL, is being sold to raise money for art projects.

Wendy has passed the recipe on so the art group will be trying its hand at creating models of their own when the kitchen is finished at the centre.

The art group is also buying a kiln and will be creating, painting and glazing pottery in the future.



MILITARY personnel are known for keeping time, now bespoke time-pieces created by the art group are on sale.

A series of clocks have been created by the art group and these will be on sale at exhibitions and through the new VIC website.



ROSSENDALE

VIC Outreach Service

MONDAY-FRIDAY

11am-1pm

VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL.

VIC Singing Group

THURSDAY

6.30-8pm

VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL.

VIC Art Group and drop-in

FRIDAY

11am-3pm

VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL.

Walking Group

THURSDAY

Walks are arranged on the 2nd and 4th Thursday, weather permitting. Contact VIC on **01706 833180**.

HEYWOOD

VIC Outreach Service

WEDNESDAY

11am-2.30pm

Heywood Sports Village, West Starkey Street, Heywood, OL10 4TW.
Badminton

3pm-4pm

Heywood Sports Village, West Starkey Street, Heywood, OL10 4TW.

Walks will be held fortnightly on **Thursdays** combined with the Rossendale walking group.

BURNLEY

VIC Outreach Service

TUESDAY

10am-2pm

Retreat 'n' Recover Centre, 21 Hammerton Street, Burnley, BB11 1NA.

Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

PCT Military Veterans Service

0161 253 6638

The Royal British Legion

08457 725 725

Rossendale Citizens' Advice Bureau

0844 499 4121 (from a landline)

0300 456 2552 (from a mobile)

The Samaritans

01706 830999

Mental Health Helpline

0500 639000

Monday to Friday 7pm - 11pm Saturday &

Sunday 12 Noon to 12 midnight

East Lancashire Single Point of Access

via GP or self-referral

01282 657116

Contacts

VIC – 01706 833180

Manager Bob Elliott

bobelliott@veteransincommunities.org

07961 554 006

Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth

stevebutterworth@veteransincommunities.org

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@veteransincommunities.org

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THE POPPY FACTORY
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Clinical Commissioning Group



Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group



VIC update

TO SAY it has been a busy start to the New Year has surely got to be an understatement.

Before the bells even chimed midnight, Suzanne had completed a marathon of activities working with vulnerable veterans over the festive period.

Then we had the move as we relocated not only VIC but REAL as well from the Bacup base to the new permanent home in Haslingden in just two days.

As anyone who has moved home knows, getting everything to the new house is but a small fraction of the work.

Our busy team of volunteers have worked tirelessly to complete a long list of jobs so the centre can be fit for purpose.

The kitchen is now literally being installed as I write and we have a few rooms to complete but the building is looking superb.

Even though we have spent much of the last few weeks indoors, our outreach continues, as does the art club and we even managed to fit in a couple of walks.

The next few months will be exciting ones for VIC as we adjust to our new surroundings, welcome more people into the base, establish new outreach in areas we have not worked in and plan for a busy year ahead.

Our New Year's Resolution? To continue to support veterans and their families to Return, Belong and Prosper.

Find us on
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www.facebook.com/VICVeteransInCommunities