



Planting a future

FUSILIER Andy Greaves now likes nothing more than planting up a beautiful flowerbed knowing it will give months of tranquillity and pleasure.

Five years ago, having served in Afghanistan, he left the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers 1st Battalion with anxiety, depression and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, compounded by autism.

He discovered the healing properties of horticulture while helping out on an allotment belonging to VIC.

It is fair to say, when Andy was referred to the charity he was in a very dark place and his mood swings were erratic.

His inward emotions would spill out into outward displays of anger and anxiety and, although this was not directed towards people but at situations, it was clear to all around him he was struggling to cope.

Now he has landed a job as an apprentice landscape gardener at Marl Pits Garden Centre in Rawtenstall and has turned his life around. He is an inspiration to veterans and those around him.

He said: "I volunteered with Stubblelee Community Greenhouses in Bacup and did my foundation and Level 1 in practical horticultural skills.

"About seven months ago I began volunteering at the garden centre and after about two months I went full-time.

"My main jobs are garden maintenance. As well as cutting the lawn, striping if necessary, and strimming, we also do intricate bed work, weeding, planting and cutting back any overhanging branches and topiary.

"My favourite part is planting flowers; I like making a garden full of flowers because I find it pleasant, peaceful and calming.

It gives me a lot of peace of mind thinking that someone is going to enjoy that garden for a season or two."

He said the physical exercise, including his 20 minute walk to and from home, helped him to cope with his mental health problems.

Although still pending a PTSD diagnosis, his GP has said Andy's condition is complex and he is on medication which has helped with his anxiety and depression.

Andy, 29, said: "Every day my life still has ups and downs and I have to maintain a state of calm to keep myself going. Work has helped massively and made me feel like I am no longer a leper. I don't want to be on benefits.

"The light at the end of the tunnel has now become a reality to me."

The plants in the polytunnels at the garden centre are laid out in perfect straight lines; military style. Andy said: "My boss Michael Nelson likes them to be in order and so do I; it is what I am used to.

"I still struggle with my mental health, but I keep a chipper attitude; as long as you stay positive, it is doable.

"I don't really want to look back on how I was, I was tortured and torturous to be around. I now do deep breathing exercises throughout the day to control the bubble of anxiety, but I have found a way of helping myself.

"The military work ethic is to keep things going and I am getting better and better and the feedback from customers is fantastic. I have the opportunity here to do further study and in 10 to 15 years I might want to have my own gardening company."

Andy has also been supported by the ABF: The Soldiers' Charity.

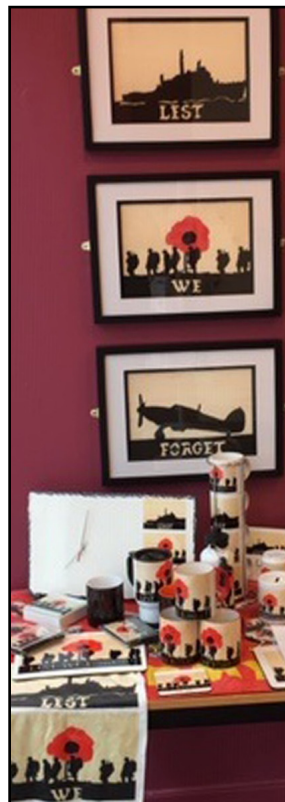
Remembrance merchandise

OUR Accrington shop has a large collection of Lest We Forget merchandise available in time for Remembrance.

The stunning collection includes colour changing mugs, coasters, keyrings, place mats, mouse mats, prints and more.

The shop, at the Arndale Centre, also has a large collection of paintings, prints and crafts made by VIC.

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell said: "Over the next few weeks we will have wallets and purses and we also offer the same range as a personalised item, just ask."



Works party for centre

VETERANS will be helping out Waterfoot Health Centre to plant a wildflower meadow.

The volunteers will be putting posts in the ground, roughing up the soil and sowing the seeds. The centre is a veteran friendly practice and lunch will be provided.

Anyone who is available to help on Wednesday October 30 from 10.30am should contact the centre on 01706 833180.

Time for a cuppa

THE first Middleton Coffee Club was well attended at the Lighthouse Project in the Arndale Shopping Centre.

As well as attending the weekly Tuesday Coffee Club, VIC Project Worker Bev Fowler also held an information stall in the shopping centre.

She held a further information morning at Wellfield Surgery, Rochdale.

And it was celebration time for the second birthday of The Sandbag Café in Heywood.

The café served up 41 full English breakfasts to mark the anniversary.

Thank you to all the regular members and visitors who attended and the committee that run the coffee morning every week.



Middleton Coffee Club



The Sandbag Cafe



Honours for VIC at English awards

CONGRATULATIONS to all the veterans, including VIC members who were named as finalists at the prestigious English Veterans' Awards in Bristol.

VIC was incredibly proud to have three finalists named and Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell was second in the Community category.

Former VIC Project Worker and founder of the Sandbag

Café in Heywood Liz Davies was third in the Volunteer of the Year category while Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth was a finalist in the Role Model of the Year Award.

As Darren was away, Chief Executive Amanda Walton attended the ceremony with the veterans.

She said: "It was a privilege to be able to attend the awards' ceremony and to be able to meet and hear the stories of so many

worthy finalists.

"To have three finalists from VIC on the shortlist when there are so many charities and organisations supporting veterans was a great honour.

"Congratulations to each and every one who was named, both finalists and those who collected the trophies. Every shortlisted veteran was a winner."

VIC's former Transformational Coach Terry Morley picked up the Community Award title.

Curry and quiz

AFTER the huge success of our Curry and Quiz night in June, VIC will be hosting a further event on November 17, again at North Street Indian Restaurant in Rawtenstall.

Tickets are £15 per person, which includes a meal and the quiz. A raffle will also be held.

Hear the news

VETERANS who are unable to read a newspaper for whatever reason can have a free copy of the talking newspaper for Rossendale.

Readers have been providing an audible version of the Rossendale Free Press for people who can't read for a number of reasons, including sight problems and difficulty in holding the paper.

For more information call Rodney on 01706 213962.

Wood appeal

WE NEED your wood. Veterans In Productions is looking for wood – ideally lengths of at least 5-6ft long.

Our recycling project makes planters, bird tables and many more bespoke items, but the wood they have to use is dwindling.

Anyone with free wood to offer the project can contact 01706 831880.



No need to 'Hide'

Activities

TWO walks and a social inclusion trip are planned over the next few weeks.

On Hallowe'en, Thursday October 31, there will be a 7.5mile walk along Rooley Moor Road and a further six-mile walk over Darwen Moor to the Tower will be held on Thursday November 14.

For both walks, the crew van will leave the centre at 9.30am and a £3 donation towards transport costs is requested.

A Social Inclusion Trip to the National Emergency Services' Museum in Sheffield will be held on Thursday November 23.

Places are limited to 11, including the driver, and the crew van will be leaving the VIC Centre at 9.30am prompt.

A donation of £10 includes entry and transport. Former or serving emergency services personnel are entitled to free admission on production of proof.

THE previously dark 'The Hide' room has been transformed and is now being widely used as a social meeting place.

The room, which still had its original dark wood panelled walls and ceiling, is now bright and airy and more attractive.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "I would like to say a big thank you VIC members Simon Peace and Brian McEvoy for



decorating the room, fortunately we still had some magnolia paint to keep with the colour scheme of the VIC Centre.

"Already the room is now being widely

used at lunchtime and it is ideal for members who want to sit and chat among friends.

"If you haven't been in, it is worth having a look."

School project

BESPOKE planters created by Veterans In Production have been delivered to St James School, Haslingden.

VIC was also asked to install a greenhouse. Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "I would like to thank Brian McEvoy, Sessional Worker Bernard Tighe, Paul (Willy) and Guy Walker for helping out. The project lasted a couple of



weeks because of bad weather as a base had to be laid before the jigsaw puzzle job of constructing the greenhouse was carried out."



Rations for homeless

SURPLUS army rations have been recycled to form emergency food kits for homeless veterans.

The Duke of Lancashire's Regiment donated the spare rations and because they are highly nutritious, contain plenty of calories and can be eaten hot or cold, VIC Crafty Chatters created 30 ration packs.

Book sales

A TOTAL of £1,350 was raised from the summer sale of books at Haslingden Tesco.

VIC, along with 10 other Rossendale charities and good causes, benefited from the money raised.



Liz Henson Photography

Festive lunch

VETERANS and supporters of VIC are invited to join our Christmas Lunch celebration at Old Mother Redcap in Blackburn.

A three-course meal will be served at 12.30pm on Tuesday December 17 and the cost is £9.99 per person.

Anyone wanting to attend should contact the centre for the menu choices and leave a £5 deposit.

Art Trail

IT WAS open house at the VIC Centre when we took part in the Rossendale Art Trail.

The newly refurbished The Hide was home to the Crafty Chatters while artists took over the craft room.

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell said: "I would like to say thanks to Christine and Emma for the food and Pat McEvoy for the chocolate and all the members of the art and craft group for making it worthwhile and producing so many fantastic pieces of work."

Choir on song

SUPERB feedback was given to the members of the VIC Choir who sang at Tesco in Haslingden.

Thank you to Barnsy and Jacko who collected money throughout the performance.

Remembrance

A SPECIAL Festival of Remembrance will be held at Rochdale Town Hall on Friday November 1 at 7pm. Tickets are £15 and include supper.



ROSSENDALE

Activities are held 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

WEDNESDAY

Allotment and Veterans In Production

Help on the allotment in Holcombe Road, Helmshore, or manufacture wooden items at the centre. Contact 01706 833180.

Art Class

2pm-4pm

Jubilee Court, Jubilee Road, Haslingden, BB4 4DD.

THURSDAY

Woodworking Course

10am-3pm

THURSDAY

Computer and IT help drop-in

11am-3pm

VIC Choir (weekly)

6.30-8.30pm

FRIDAY

Art Group and drop-in

10am-3.30pm

SECOND SATURDAY

Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club

10am-12.30pm

The Link Cafe, Haslingden Community Link, Bury Road, Haslingden BB4 5PG

EVERY MONTH

Painting in the Style of Bob Ross art classes Contact Darren 01706 833180.

Walking Group, Social Outings and

Outdoor Activities These are held every

THURSDAY. Visit the *Events* section on our

VIC Facebook page or the VIC website and

follow the link to *Projects and Activities*.

9.30am-11.30pm

Ebenezer's Coffee Shop, The Old Chapel, Ebenezer's Terrace, Billington, BB7 9NN.

RIBBLE VALLEY

Outreach Service

TUESDAYS

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Outreach Service

TUESDAY - alternate weeks

Breakfast Club at Burnley FC in the Community Cafe, Charter Walk.

9am-11am

Contact 01706 833180 for dates of outreach

at Burnley FC in the Community, the Pendle

Armed Forces Support Group, Holmefield

Mill, Gisburn Road, Barrowford, at Morrisons

in Nelson and Asda in Colne.

HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

The Sandbag Cafe and drop in

TUESDAY

10am-noon

Sandon House, Taylor Street, Heywood

OL10 1EF.

VIC Outreach

TUESDAY

12.30pm-2.30pm

Middleton Gardens, M24 1AB

VIC Middleton Coffee Club

1pm-2.30pm

The Lighthouse Project, Middleton Shopping

Centre, M24 1AB.

THURSDAY

9am-10.30am Rochdale Breakfast Club

Rochdale Town Hall Bistro OL16 1AB.

10.30am-noon

VIC Outreach

1 Riverside, Rochdale OL16 1UB.

HYNDBURN

Outreach Service and Art Group

TUESDAY

10am-3pm

VIC Shop, Accrington Arndale Centre, BB5 1PL.

FRIDAY

Outreach Service

10.30am-3pm

Want to help?

To donate to support the work of VIC please

visit our website and click on the secure

Virgin Money Giving link

www.veteransincommunities.org/donate.html

VIC – 01706 833180

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Volunteer Support Worker Mel Fitzgerald

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darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

Outdoor Activities Co-ordinator Ivy Limbrick

ivylimbrick@vic.org.uk

Sessional Worker Bernard Tighe

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

barryhyde@vic.org.uk

Contacts

Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

NHS Military Veterans Psychological

Therapies Service (NW)

0161 253 6638

The Royal British Legion

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

SSAFA

email Lancashire@ssafa.org.uk

01772 260 462

Rossendale Citizens' Advice

0300 456 2552

The Samaritans

01282 694929 Mon to Fri 9am-9pm

Freephone 116 123

Mental Health Helpline

0800 915 4640 Mon to Fri 7pm - 11pm Sat

& Sun 12 noon to 12 midnight

Royal Air Forces Association

0800 018 2361

Veterans UK Free Helpline

0808 1914 218

East Lancashire Single Point of Access

via GP or self-referral

01282 657116

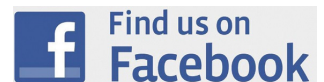
Bolton Armed Forces Centre 4 Veterans

www.bafc4v.org

01204 776628

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