



VIC Newsletter

Craftsman Jack becomes a Knight

THE highest French honour has been bestowed on veteran Jack Riley, who was on one of the last wave of boats to land on the Normandy Beaches on D-Day.

Jack, now 98, from Haslingden, is a member of VIC and Project Worker Ray Sharkey was delighted to finally present him with the stunning Légion d'Honneur medal.

Although not able to be present, Rodolphe Soulard, the French Consul Honoraire for Greater Manchester, sent a letter saying: "Congratulations to Mr Jack Riley for getting the Légion d'Honneur and my big thanks.

"The Légion d'Honneur, created by Napoleon in 1802, is France's highest distinction and honours exceptional acts of bravery and devotion by all those who have served France, whether they are French by birth or 'by spilled blood'.

"France wants to thank you for the commitment you showed to our country during this terrible campaign in France.

"You served with the 15th Scottish Infantry division for the Royal Electrical Mechanical Engineers (REME) as a Recovery Mechanic.

This role was essential to ensure broken down or disabled vehicles were repaired to fight our enemies again.

"This Légion d'Honneur is not only a thank you to you and all the men who were ready to give their lives to liberate us. It is also a message: we shall not forget; we shall never forget."

Ray applied for the honour last year and carried out extensive research obtaining Jack's story and finding the War Diary that outlined his service history including campaigns he had been involved in.

Craftsman Jack said: "When I received it, I was surprised, and I felt elevated; my friend who was in my flat at the time bowed on one knee and said 'Yes Sir'."

As a plumber, he was in a reserved occupation so was not conscripted, but when he switched to driving for Hollands' Pies, he was eligible and was called up in 1942, trained in Sheffield then was posted to various REME workshops.

On June 6 1945, he left Newhaven for Sword Beach, Normandy.

He said: "It was all right, it wasn't rough or anything like that,



but it was a flat-bottomed landing craft and the spray was the biggest thing."



He said soldiers on board were wondering what was going on and swearing in general.

Jack said: "I was on the scared side, but I wasn't showing it; I think everybody was in the same boat. We were wondering if it was going to be a wet landing because we had heard about people before landing in 4ft of water."

Once on the beach, they advanced 300 yards a time.

Jack said: "The hardship there was that we had to go about in bare feet at times when we were in areas that hadn't been cleared of mines, so the metal studs on our boots did not detonate magnetic mines. It

friendship bound in blood from the battlefields of World War One to the beaches of Normandy and to the final Victory of World War Two.

"Our two countries have stood shoulder to shoulder to defend and promote the values of freedom and democracy, and today again we are shoulder to shoulder to fight other crimes.

"Mr Jack Riley, many thanks for what you did alongside all your fellow brothers in arms. May your commitment, your bravery and your spirit of fraternity continue to act as an example and a source of inspiration for all of us.

"Long live to United-Kingdom. Long live to France. Long live to Franco-British friendship. I wish you, your family and friends all the best."



What a celebration

A FABULOUS celebration evening to mark 10 years of VIC was enjoyed by 100 guests.

After-dinner speaker former World Champion Snooker Player Steve Davis was a delight with his witty talk covering everything from tales from the snooker table to receiving his MBE and OBE from the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Veterans in Communities was founded in 2012 in Bacup, and relocated to Haslingden when the former Mary Hindle Centre in Bury Road was gifted to the charity.

Staff and volunteers now work across East Lancashire and Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale, running outreach and support cafes in many areas and a drop-in shop in

Accrington.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton along with Administrator Amy Thompson organised the evening at Burnley Football Club's Turf Moor.

Amanda said: "I would like to give special thanks to Amy Thompson, my right-hand woman, for all her help. I would also like to thank everyone who came and enjoyed the evening.

"It was just a perfect way to celebrate 10 years of VIC being here to support veterans."

Piper Steve Sumner opened proceedings and guests enjoyed table top magic performed by King of Aces Michael Areola and entertainment from army veteran Keith Walmsley and the Feniscowles and Cherry

Tree Singing Group.

Special 'Excellence in Volunteering' awards were handed out and recipients were: Burnley and Pendle – Phil Chamberlain; Ribble Valley – Rob Flowers, Hyndburn – Pat McEvoy; Rochdale – Debra Johnson-Brown; Heywood – Ian Rosales; Rossendale – Darren Horsnell.

Two special awards were handed out: Special Thanks and Gratitude – Carol Duckworth and Vision, Dedication and Commitment to VIC – Operations Manager Bob Elliott.

Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Anne Cheetham recounted, as a girl, seeing the Pathé news at the cinema of veterans in Malaya and Korea during the Second World War, and she had never forgotten those photographs.

She added: "We all know that if we want to keep our freedom, sometimes we have to fight for it to make sure. For all those who have been involved, we thank you very much.

"We appreciate all of you."



Thank you to our sponsors

Stonegate provides IT services to small and medium size companies. A family-run business, it is based in the North West but covers the whole of the UK from its Helmshore head office. Stonegate is there for every company that needs help, and provides an immediate response to any IT related issue.

Filter Fabrications is one of the UK's leading manufacturers of carbon filters. From its state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities in the North of England, products are distributed across the globe to numerous blue-chip companies and well-known household brands.

Vision Commercial Kitchens is an award-winning specialist in the design, supply and installation of commercial kitchen and bar equipment. Vision covers a wide range of market sectors including restaurants, hotels, schools, colleges, care homes, garden centres and

arenas, with access to all the major equipment manufacturers in the industry as well as an extensive network of service and installation engineers across the country. Vision carries out projects of all sizes from small independent businesses to large iconic buildings. The company is currently

carrying out work at the Old War Office Building in London – Winston Churchill's headquarters during the Second World War.

Rossendale Borough Council and **Action Together** also supported the evening's events by providing grants.



Woollen poppy celebration



A STUNNING poppy display featuring around 3,000 hand-crafted poppies will help to raise money for VIC.

Lavinia Tod, from School Court, Stubbins, looks after the former Stubbins Congregational (United Reformed) Church graveyard which is adjacent to her home, just off the Edenfield junction of the A56 bypass.

She has lived there for more than 20 years and has opened her garden many times raising thousands of pounds for various charities including Air Ambulance, Macmillan and the Christie Hospital.

Lavinia got the idea of the poppy garden after watching the Chelsea Flower Show and she selected VIC to benefit.

Lavinia said: "I am pleased to be supporting a local charity that is working hard in my local area."

Her art group and ladies that lunch have been knitting and crocheting poppies as have the Crafty Chatters at VIC and Weir

Knit and Natter along with many others.

The flowers have been fastened to wooden battens which will form a maze of paths leading the way into the churchyard,

A beautiful poppy archway has been created, a knitted poppy throw will be on a bench along with a poppy cushion, there is a large cross with poppies on and jam jar tea lights, with poppy tops of course and much, much more.

There will be free admission to the display in the churchyard on Sunday November 6 and Monday November 14 from 1pm and there will be a special children's trail and questions.

To help fundraise, friends and relations will be serving mulled wine and hot Vimto for £2 and a brew and a cake for £5 with proceeds benefiting VIC.

On the Sunday, Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Anne Cheetham will lay a knitted wreath on the grave where

RAF airman Bernard Hallsall is remembered. He was killed in action on July 17 1941, aged 24.

Other servicemen are remembered on gravestones, while three veterans are interred in the churchyard. Captain Richard Whitaker Porritt, of the famous Stubbins Fusilier who was killed in the Second World War during the retreat of the British Expedition Force to Dunkirk.

Driver Harry Lord of the Royal Army Service Corps who died aged 18 on August 28 1917 and Royal Engineer Lieutenant Philip Edmondson Halstead, who died aged 23 on November 27 1944 after an accident. Knitted poppy wreaths will be placed on their graves.

Lavinia said: "I am very grateful to everyone who has got involved and helped."

VIC will be present with the charity's gazebo and items made by the members.

Run for VIC

VIC supporter Affan Burki, is supporting the charity by carrying out a sponsored 10 mile run on Remembrance Sunday November 13.

Affan, who in his own words describes himself as 'not a runner', is undertaking the fundraiser as a personal challenge.

To support Affan visit <https://gofund.me/4e05ea1d>

Donations will go directly to the charity.



Mens' shed

OUR shed is now also being used by Rossendale Men's Sheds.

The group, based at Haslingden Community Link, works in partnership with VIC and also Whitworth Men's Sheds.

It is a place to meet new friends, learn new skills, share knowledge and experience or just come for a brew and a chat.

Facebook page: Rossendale Men's Sheds.

Challenge

OUR marshal team of Philip Chamberlain, Jacko Pearce, Jane Harvey, Phil Sped and Mandy provided help to the Rossendale Hospice Sabre Challenge.

Support VIC while you shop, in store or online

TESCO shoppers in Middleton and Rossendale are being asked to help raise funds for VIC.

In the four Tesco supermarkets in Middleton, and Rawtenstall and Haslingden Tesco, VIC has been named as one of the good causes that has been selected for the blue

token scheme.

Up until January 2023, customers can ask for a token when they shop and put it in the slot for VIC. All money raised will be spent on projects in those areas.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "VIC relies on fundraising initiatives, and we understand

how difficult it is to give right now due to rising costs of living, but this is a way you can donate and it will not cost you anything."

The Co-operative has selected VIC as a beneficiary of its Community Fund. If you are a member, please select VIC as your chosen benefactor.

To become a member visit <https://coop.co.uk/membership>

Whenever you shop online go through EasyFundraising select VIC as your chosen charity. The retailer eg Amazon, will donate a percentage of the purchase cost to us. www.easyfundraising.org.uk



Remembrance benches



MONTHS of hard work has gone into the creation of stunning memorial benches for Swinton.

The initial request came from Glenn Croston, from the Salford Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club CIC, who wanted four high quality benches for the Memorial Gardens in Swinton.

Veteran David Green made those last year, but over the last few months, the order rose to 13.



The benches, some for Victoria Cross honoured veterans and personal ones remembering those who made the ultimate sacrifice, have now been delivered to Salford Council complete with personalised plaques.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "This has been a great project for VIC and Veterans In Production to get involved in. There is nothing more rewarding than honouring those who paid the ultimate sacrifice and those who carried out heroic deeds.

"Three benches were paid for by The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers and a few were paid for by families.

"The money was raised through donations collected by the Salford Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club CIC and through fundraising events organised over the last few months."

A number of VIC members worked on the project: Joe Davis, Phillip Mills, Dave Joddrell, David Green, Willie Wilcock, Jacko Pearce, Raymond Sharkey and Graham Limb.

When a call to arms went out to the local community, people donated their unwanted bench ends, these were sandblasted and powdered coated by Powder Coating Northern, Blast Clean and Paint, and Triple-7 Refurbs.

The hardwood wood was provided by North West Timber Waterfoot in Waterfoot. The fittings were provided by John Lawson Distributors Ltd in Darwen and the brass plaques were provided by Timpson Ltd.

Bob added: "It was a great team effort and when we explained what the benches were for and where they were going, so many companies supported it.

"We look forward to November 1 when we see them at the special service and meet the people involved."

Happy 90th Brian

A SUPER 90th celebration was organised at VIC for member Brian Burrows.

His three daughters Debbie Jane, Karen and Lesley were delighted with the celebration VIC organised.

Brian served in the RAF Police for 24 years, in Aden, Suez, Cyprus and Germany.

He moved to Rossendale after the death of his wife, to be closer to his daughters. He is



a regular at the Greggs RV on Thursday, goes to Accrington outreach and has been on several social trips.

While at VIC, he met another veteran Gordon who also lost his wife and they now go

everywhere together and have developed a good friendship.

Debbie Jane said: "The VIC is his happy place and we could all see that yesterday."

"What wonderful friends he has made there."



Falklands 40th service

FALKLANDS veteran and VIC Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth was involved in planning the Bury 40th SAMA82 Falklands Conflict Memorial Service.

The 40th anniversary service was held at St Mary the Virgin Parish Church, Bury, with a service

conducted by the Rev Hugh W Bearn, Chaplain to the King.

Steve tried to contact as many Falklands veterans as he could from Bury to attend the service, which had to be re-arranged following the death of the late Queen Elizabeth II.



Horses for health



Record beater

SUPER-fit 87-year-old Gordon Aaron completed the Manchester half-marathon in an impressive two hours and 50 minutes – 12 minutes faster than his time last year.

He ran the whole way round the course and crossed the finish line alongside his son, Wayne.

The regular at The Sandbag in Heywood, also attends Activ8 health walks as well as Fun Dance and Zumba Basic in the community.

A VISIT to Spring Vale Farm, Green Haworth, led to members finding out how equine-facilitated learning can help with stress and mental wellbeing.

The visit was a huge success. It involved veterans and members interacting with the horses, not riding them, and they learnt to develop better coping strategies.



They also enjoyed a tour of the farm and refreshments. A further visit is being planned.

Social inclusion mill visit



OUR latest social inclusion outing saw 12 members enjoy a trip to Queen Street Mill Textile Museum in Harle Syke, Burnley.

Project Worker Ray Sharkey drove the VIC crew van and the visit was enjoyed by all.

Supermarket treat for shoppers

MEMBERS of the Choir entertained the shoppers in Tesco Haslingden and raised £249.74 for VIC.

Thank you to the staff and customers of Tesco, Tesco Haslingden Community Champion and our wonderful collector Jacko Pearce.



Volunteers praised at VIC's 9th AGM

ATTENDEES at the ninth Annual General Meeting of VIC heard how the charity had held more than 300 outreach sessions in the last year and more than 1,300 people, excluding staff and volunteers, had attended the VIC Centre.

The meeting was postponed, out of respect for the passing of the late Queen Elizabeth II.

Chairman Ronnie Barker said: "I would

like to say thanks to the volunteers as without them we could not exist. Volunteers have accumulated more than 7,000 voluntary hours and if those hours had been paid at national minimum wage, VIC would have needed in excess of £60,000 extra per annum."

He praised the work that has been done with Anglia Ruskin University and explained how when Our Local Heroes charity folded, VIC received an unexpected

donation of £29,393, and a further £5,000 was received from the estate of Harry Frost, a former Crawshawbooth councillor.

He added: "We held our 10th anniversary celebration and the A team of Amanda and Amy did an amazing job. I look forward to the 20th."

Chief Executive Amanda Walton outlined VIC's achievements over 2021/22 and explained how on April 12 last

year, the VIC Centre was able to reopen after Covid, but only with small groups of no more than six.

Over the year, the charity has supported more than 100 new members and held events and raised awareness across the area.

Clitheroe now has a new hub, social inclusion trips are again being organised and last Christmas 63 hampers were delivered.

She said: "Administrator Amy Thompson received an award from The Royal British Legion for her work and was invited to a service at Westminster Abbey."

We are a key player in the VPPP – Veterans' Places, Pathways and People and is leading on how to set up safe places for veterans to attend and seek help.

The charity was also shortlisted in the Pathfinder Magazine's Lockdown Awards.

Christmas lunch

OUR celebration Christmas lunch will be held at the Holden Arms, Grane Road, Haslingden on December 14 at 1pm.

A three-course meal will be served and the cost is £20 per person. If paying by card a 35p booking fee will be applied.

Contact Administrator Amy Thompson for the menu choices and book your place by paying a non-refundable deposit of £10 per person before Nov 25, email amythompson@vic.org.uk or call into the VIC Centre in Haslingden,

Payment in full is required by December 7.



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

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

(PILOT PROJECT)

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 Group/ Social Inclusion trips

see Facebook or website for details

10am-noon

Trinity Methodist Church, Wesleyan Row, Parson Lane Clitheroe, BB7 2JY.

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Outreach Service

MONDAY

Breakfast Club at Burnley Miners Social Club, 27a Plumbe Street, Burnley, BB11 3AA. 10am-noon

Contact 01706 833180 for dates of outreach at: Burnley Football in the Community; Pendle Armed Forces Support Group, Holmefield House, Gisburn Road, Barrowford; 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

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-10.30am Touchstones Cafe, The Esplanade OL16 1AQ.

RIBBLE VALLEY

Coffee Morning and Outreach

TUESDAYS

VIC – 01706 833180

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Volunteer Support Worker Mel Fitzgerald

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Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

Veterans Mental Health Caseworker Cath Mitton

cathmitton@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

barryhyde@vic.org.uk

Contacts

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 Rossendale and Hyndburn

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

The Samaritans

01282 694929

Mon to Fri 9am-9pm

Freephone 116 123

Op Courage

0800 652 2867 seek a referral through a GP or health professional

Veterans UK Free Helpline

0808 1914 218

East Lancashire Single Point of Access via GP or self-referral

01282 657116

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

Rovers Breakfast Hub, Legends Lounge, Darwen End, Blackburn Rovers FC, Ewood Park, Blackburn, BB2 4JF. 10.30am-noon


Want to help?

To donate to support the work of VIC please visit our website

www.veteransincommunities.org

Veterans In Communities Charity Number 1151194

VIC supported

by:  East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group




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Ribble Valley Borough Council
www.ribblevalley.gov.uk

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