

VIC Annual Review for 2022

This features some of the main highlights of our activities and news from 2022. This year was our 10th anniversary and a very special year for us, some veterans charities and organisations were greatly affected by the COVID pandemic, but VIC came through COVID stronger as we were able to plan and adapt to the 'new way of working'. It was challenging time for our staff, our volunteers, and members, but they have shown a level of commitment, support and enthusiasm for VIC moving into our 11th year.

All our other news for 2022 can also be viewed in the Newsletters and New Stories on our website <https://www.veteransincommunities.org/news.html>

- In 2022 the members accessing our social activities increased. The combined activities at VIC organised outreach venues in Accrington, Clitheroe, Haslingden, Heywood, and Middleton, had a footfall of over 80 attending each week. Some may have also participated in the other social outreaches during each week.
- Our VIC organised activities: art and craft groups, social trips, walks, model Railway Club, and Choir has a combined attendance of on average 30 members each week.
- The VIC Centre has an average of 112 members, partner organisations, and drop-in's each month for support or to see the services that utilise our centre.
- Across the year our outreach team have given information, advice, and support on a range of issues including benefits, housing, employment, courses, and welfare to drop-ins, referrals, telephone enquiries to over 400 veterans or family members. Many had multiple issues and involved some referrals being made to other statutory and third sector organisations.
- On the 25th January we had a VIP visitor at the VIC Centre in Haslingden Retired Colonel David Richmond CBE, an Independent Advisor to the UK Government. He was on a fact finding mission to learn more about the charity and the work that VIC does and he also chatted to several veterans to learn what improvements they think could be made to help veterans successfully transition from military to civilian life
- Accrington Stanley Community Trust held their first Veterans' Breakfast Club at Carers Link Accrington in January, VIC are supporting this new Breakfast Club and Project Worker Ray Sharkey worked closely with Lee from the Trust to get this open.
- We started filming the 'The Stories In Transition' project in February. Three films used documentary film-making to examine the role of arts, sport and culture play in helping soldiers make the transition to civilian life. Researchers used co-produced and creative methods to help veterans tell their stories, and in particular challenge stereotypes about ex-soldiers being either heroes or victims. The resulting films from 'Turn To Starboard', 'Veterans In Communities' and

‘Waterloo Uncovered’ and the research should be available towards the end of 2023, and will document the personal impact that art, sport and culture in helping veterans creatively examine their own personal experiences. ‘

VIC members Darren Horsnell, Steve Butterworth, Dave Joddrell and some of our members were involved in the filming process and were interviewed. The art room at the VIC Centre in Haslingden was transformed over three months with a mural painted on the wall to show their safe space. VIC will use the digital and filming skills we have learnt to make short films in 2023 to show what we do.

- In 2022 our outreach team held a number of information stands across our operating areas. Due to COVID these were all suspended, and it was great to be back in the community and meeting veterans again.
- During the first part of the 2022 we took another young person on work experience from North Lancs Training. He learnt a range of social and general building maintenance skills. He left his work placement as he found employment in the construction sector.
- On the 24th March our CEO Amanda Walton was invited to the North West Reserve Forces’ and Cadets Association’s second business breakfast meeting. We already have the Silver Employer Recognition Award and this year we are going for the Gold Award.
- On the 28th April the VIC Centre had a visit from John Healey MP the Shadow Secretary of State for Defence, Graham Jones for former MP for Hyndburn and the leader of Rossendale Borough Council Alyson Barnes. They spent over 2 hours talking to some of our members and seeing what we do. He was very interested in what VIC do and thinks there should be other areas of the UK that would benefit from similar services and a centre like ours where veterans can just drop in and get involved in a range of different activities.
- We received £500 from the Ribble Valley Borough Council, in May that will ensure our successful outreach can continue and grow.
- Over two days on the 4th and 5th May, our CEO and Ops Manager attended the ASDIC conference in Leeds. It was a great opportunity to meet other Veteran Drop-In Services around the UK and hear about the good work that is happening to support the Armed Forces Community.
- VIC organised a number of social inclusion trips for our members. Trips included; Fusilier Museum in Bury, Police Museum in Manchester, Whitehough Outdoor Centre with the veterans from Burnley FC in the Community , Lancashire Infantry Museum at Fulwood Barracks in Preston, Royal Military College in Harrogate for the final dress rehearsal for the recruits Passing Out Parade, Royal Armouries’ in Leeds, Bygones Times in Chorley, The Mill Café at St Catherine’s Hospice, and the National Arboretum in Staffordshire.
- Our members from the Clitheroe Veterans Drop-In joined the people of Ribble Valley to celebrate The Duke of Lancaster’s Regiment as they exercised their Freedom Of the Borough of Ribble Valley.

- During Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth Platinum Jubilee Celebrations, VIC members celebrated in Heywood and Haslingden and hung one of her original 14ft long Coronation Banners from 1953 outside the VIC Centre, we had been donated this a number of years ago. Our VIC Choir also performed to the residents at a local Residential Home during their own celebrations. We also joined in a number of local celebrations.
- Veterans In Communities had a stall at the Amazing Accrington Food Festival and War Re-enactment Day in June.
- We had our VIC outdoor stands at the Burnley's first Uniform Services Family Fun Day in June. A great first event with estimates of 3000-5000 not bad for a first effort. In September we also had our outdoor stands at the Preston Military Show.
- We've had a couple of guest speakers; In July VIC members listened to a talk from Rod Ross and Col Martin Newman on 'British Jews in the First World War - We were there too'. In October Geoff Hutchinson formerly a Major in the 14/20th Hussars gave a talk on his multiple tours when serving on 'Op Banner'. We plan to expand these talks in 2023.
- In July we helped paint the Positive Start Shop Front as Rawtenstall was being assessed for the Britain In Bloom competition. We were also approached by Rossendale Civic Pride to adopt a flower bed at Sparrow Park where the Cenotaph is situated, as part of the competition we themed the flower bed for the fortieth anniversary of the Falklands conflict. Pleased to say Rawtenstall achieved a Gold Award for their efforts.
- After many months of preparation, on the 27th August VIC raced our soapbox in the Accrington Soapbox Challenge. Our soapbox was based on the old willy's jeep, a number of members were involved in the making of this. Unfortunately, after a mechanical failure we were placed 14th out of 26th contestants, not bad for a first effort though.
- Following the announcement of the death of HM Queen Elizabeth in September, the VIC centre in Haslingden opened a Book of Condolence to allow our members and the members of the public to pay their respects and leave tributes to the Queen. Our veteran members were particularly affected by the sad news as she was their Commander in Chief of the Regiments and Corps they served in and we had pledged our Allegiance to her when we enlisted.
- In September a number of VIC members completed the Zip World Velocity 2 Challenge in North Wales to raise money for VIC.
- On Friday 30th September we held our 10 year celebration evening at Burnley FC, well attended by around 100 members, volunteers, guests, supporters, partner organisations and sponsors.
- One of our members of the Sandbag Cafe Gordon Aaron at the spritely age of 87 completed the Manchester Half Marathon on the 9th of October.

- The Veterans In Production project were asked by the founder of the Salford Veterans Breakfast Club to make 13 Remembrance Benches to commemorate a number of local VC Medal winners and Soldiers who made the ultimate sacrifice. This was the biggest project to date for the VIP, it involved recycling old cast iron bench ends and using new materials during the assembly process. On the 1st November they were unveiled and blessed during a service at the Salford Veterans Memorial Gardens in Swinton.
- The oldest VIC member Lewis Banham celebrated his 100th birthday in November. Sadly, Lewis passed away in December RIP Lewis Banham
- As with every year our members and volunteers attended Remembrance services across Rossendale, Bury, Burnley, Clitheroe, Oldham, Rochdale, Heywood, Middleton, and this year we even had members who attended the Cenotaph and the Festival of Remembrance in London. Earlier in the year our Crafty Chatters Group were asked to make some knitted poppies that were displayed at the former Stubbins Congregational Church.
- The REME Association paid a visit to the VIC Centre on the 25th November to meet one of our WW2 veterans Jack Riley. The REME was only formed in 1942 so this made Jack a founder member of the REME.
- We teamed up with Asda Foundation and are delighted to announce that Veterans in Communities is a 'Warm Place.' We started this in December and will continue into 2023 for a few months.
- On the 13th December the Sandbag Café in Heywood held their Xmas party, Santa made a guest appearance and gave each of the regular members a little present. On Wednesday 14th December VIC members enjoyed their annual Xmas meal, this year we had it at the Holden Arms in Haslingden
- We distributed around 50 Xmas hampers for some of our vulnerable veterans across Rossendale, Rochdale, Heywood, Burnley, Clitheroe and Hyndburn.
- Sadly we lost some members during 2022; Dennis Rawes, Peter Harris, Bill Lally, Trevor Tyerrl and Lewis Banham. RIP gentlemen Respect.