

Going the extra miles



**Donations to:
Veterans In Communities
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AFTER seven long days in the saddle cycling 264-miles from London to Haslingden, exhausted veterans were greeted with cheers and confetti.

The Riding for Forces and Families journey made by Veterans In Communities Operations Manager Phil Speddy and Royal Signals veteran Bob Brindley was a marathon, not least because some of the canal towpaths and riverside footpaths were uneven and not well maintained.

Arriving at Bury Road outside the VIC Centre, Phil said: "I am tired and elated. It is incredible what you can do what you put your mind to it. I am just so glad that we did it."

Bob, whose arms were riddled with bramble scratches and had a nasty cut to his elbow where he had taken a tumble from the bike, said simply: "I am extremely shattered, but I have enjoyed it, it has been good fun and I am delighted to have done it. I am now looking

forward to the next challenge – the Soapbox derby in Accrington."

Thanks to the back-up crew of trustee Bob Elliott and veteran Bill Ogden who made sure the bikes were fixed when they got damaged and Phil and Bob were well fed and got a good night's kip each day.

They were raising money for three charities: VIC, Scotty's Little Soldiers and the Friends of Lancashire Army Cadet Force.

The team left Haslingden on Saturday July 19, stopping off at the National Arboretum in Staffordshire before setting up the first three-night base camp near Leighton Buzzard.

They all took the train into London on Sunday. Bob Elliott said: "We even got free taxi rides in London when they found out we were veterans."

The van and back up crew called in on the cyclists several times en route in between camps.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "What this team have done is nothing short of

remarkable.

"They have faced so many adversities with grit and determination and the whole team have come together overcome the challenges and barriers.

"It was a wonderful afternoon as we welcomed the team back and it was fantastic to see so many people at the centre to welcome them home.

"On behalf of the VIC team, I would like to say that we are incredibly proud of them and so grateful for their fundraising efforts, it really is inspirational."

The duo will be repeating the Memorial Walk they first did last year last November, this involves Phil and Bob, and other volunteers who join them for a day, walking more than 60 miles all over Rossendale visiting more than 60 memorial sites where they will lay crosses, play the Last Post and observe a silence.

Next year, they are plotting an even bigger challenge; watch this space.

Friends reunited

COMRADES who had not seen each other in 20 years were reunited thanks to VIC.

Paul Nixon, from Whitewell Bottom and a long-time VIC member, met up with Sam Cooper, who recently moved to Clayton-le-Moors

after living in London.

The pair completed basic training together before serving in the Household Cavalry, but had gone their separate ways

Now caring for his parents, Sam was thrilled to



reconnect with Paul and said: "I recognised him straight away.

"I was chatting with Ray Sharkey,

who mentioned the VIC Accrington drop-in, and he encouraged me to come along to the fun day."

Groups on tour

ARTISTS and our Bimble Walking Group enjoyed an away day to Hebden Bridge in July.

The artists got to paint outdoors, while the walkers got to stroll.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "This was a great way for new members from different VIC groups to get to meet and both groups had a great time together."



Armed Forces family fun day



A FANTASTIC family-focused Armed Forces Day fun day brought veterans, serving personnel, cadets and families together at the VIC Centre.

The event, held in the adjacent car park, offered plenty of attractions for all ages.

Haslingden Fire Station brought along a fire engine, which was a big hit with the children, while families enjoyed a barbecue, face painting, stalls, and games.

Nine-year-old Logan Smithies, from Stacksteads, impressed Rossendale Community First Responders with his

CPR skills on a resuscitation dummy.

Logan had learned the technique from a school video and even knew how to place his mum Shelise in the recovery position, as she has epilepsy.

Egypt Company's Haslingden Detachment of the Lancashire Army Cadet Force was out in full force, proudly represented by VIC's new Operations Manager, Phil Speddy, one of their volunteer instructors.

The cadets engaged with visitors and dignitaries, including the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire Amanda Parker JP, Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Michelle

Smith, and Rossendale and Darwen MP Andy MacNae.

The cadets later paraded before the dignitaries, who offered their thanks and support.

VIC Chief Executive Amanda Walton praised the cadets. She said: "They are a credit to their detachment. At VIC, we are proud to stand by those who have served."

"Our work is built on connection, respect, and support, and today perfectly reflects those values in action."

The Lord Lieutenant honoured the dedication of service personnel, reminding attendees of their sacrifice and commitment.

Rossendale's MP offered his support saying: "If there's anything you need, come to me and I'll do what I can."

Standards were carried by Cadets Lance Corporal Tommy Westerman and Lance Corporal Joshua Prater, along with VIC Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth.

Toy Hampers and raffle prizes were donated by Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire Louise Cooper.

She is also linked to 38th Rossendale Open Scout Group who kindly made wooden Remembrance crosses for the VIC Memorial Walk held last November.



Taster sessions

VETERANS are invited to a series of taster sessions being held in Blackburn.

VIC's Community Capacity Builder Brian Hawke has been in discussions with Mind2Muscle Charity based at Euro House, School Lane, Blackburn, BB1 2QH, which is where a Veterans' Open Day will be held on Saturday August 2 from 9am to 2pm.

The day will be dedicated to supporting the physical, neurological, and mental health of the veteran community through movement, connection, purpose, and rehabilitation.

There will be AFKinetics Taster Classes and Veterans' Gym Access, a chance to meet with staff and see what the charity has to offer. Veterans are welcome to bring family along.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "This has come about thanks to the relationship Brian has built up with the charity."

"They have joined the Forces Wellbeing Collective, a collaboration of different charities and organisations who work with veterans."

"This is a great offer to show veterans just what they are able to access. The charity specialises on helping people who have a neurological problem and they have given people a new lease of life."

The VIC Minibus will be attending, for a free place contact Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180



ASDA Rawtenstall provided the venue for the VIC Choir to sing and entertain shoppers in the store.

VIC is grateful to Laura Saxton, the store's Community Champion, who hosted the group and also took this photo of them.

The singers were complimented on their choice of songs and were delighted when some customers also joined in the singing as they passed.

Chief Executive Amanda

Walton said: "The choir is all about having fun, you do not need to be able to sing, read music or have had any experience of group singing."

"It is a fun, friendly pastime and we welcome anyone, both armed forces and blue light veterans, and members of the community to come along on a Thursday evening and give it a go."

For more information about the choir, call Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180.

Summer Fair

AN AWARENESS and information stand was arranged by VIC at the Armed Forces Summer Fair held at Accrington Stanley Training Centre.

It was manned by the VIC Hyndburn and Ribbles Valley team including Project Worker Ray Sharkey and Veteran Ron Flowers.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "It was a great event to raise awareness of what we do and also to pass on information about the many things VIC do. It was great for partnership working as our ethos is to work together with other organisations to benefit all veterans in our community."

The VIC Choir also entertained the visitors.



Soapbox Challenge

OUR go-kart Willys Jeep will be put to the test again in August when, for the third year, VIC will be competing in the Accrington Soapbox Challenge.

The event will be on Saturday August 23, from 10am to 4pm.

Veteran Royal Signaller Bob Brindley will once again be in the driving seat and a team from VIC will provide a pit crew and back-up support.

Go-kart race

TWENTY veterans stepped up to the challenge of go-kart racing at Three Sisters in Wigan, but they soon found it was a little different to being in a car.

When members of VIC went to the circuit for the event organised by veterans' charity Mission Motorsport they loved the challenge.

However, a few days later, some of them realised they were not as young as they thought they were when the aches and pains of being in a close to the ground go-kart manifested.

Project Officer Ray Sharkey said: "My wife Caroline wanted to go but was unable and I suggested she go to the next and she replied, 'Looking at you, I am going nowhere near it.'"

"It took its toll physically, but the racing gripped you and it was proper competitive."



King's Team pass out

A FANTASTIC celebration event marked the end of the 12-week programme for King's Trust ACROSS Team 35.

As part of their service to the community, the volunteers picked to work with VIC completing a number of tasks including repainting the conference room, clearing the yard, fixing benches and the improving the shed roof.

At Poplar Social Club in Accrington, all the team members

delivered confident and personal speeches about how the programme had changed them.

The Mayor of Hyndburn Councillor Josh Allen and Mayoress Sheena Tyldsley attended as did the Mayor and Mayoress of Rossendale Councillor Michelle Smith and Jackie Oakes.

Councillor Smith said: "The team have really gained in confidence, their speeches were fantastic and they are all so positive and focused on the future with plans for their next steps."

VIC Chief Executive Amanda Walton said how impressed she was by the quality of the speeches the young people delivered.

She said: "Listening to those young people was really quite humbling and inspirational. To see how they had grown themselves as individuals was nothing short of remarkable."

"They have overcome adversities and are ready to embark on their adult life with new skills. VIC wishes them all the very best."



Work experience

NOT only was Kieran Harper one of the many King's Trust volunteers who helped at VIC, he also selected the charity for his work experience.

He used to work in hospitality and now hopes to become a Police Community Support Officer.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "He was very helpful and did work around the centre, learnt about different tools and also helped in the Creative Hub and learnt about etching."

He assisted to collect heavy items from Warrington for the VIC Armed Forces fun day.

Kieran showed an interest in art and, as a thank you for his hard work, he was given a free place on the Bob Ross art class at the end of June.

Letter home reminder of Ireland's troubled past

VISITORS to our Redoubt Ribble Valley outreach in Clitheroe were treated to a moving 'letter home'.

Former Major in the 14/20 Kings Hussars Geoff, gave a short talk about a letter that he started writing to his then girlfriend, who is now his wife, on July 21 1972; 53 years ago.

He started writing to her at 1400hrs and continued it throughout the day in between his duties and in it he matter of factly relays how the day progressed; that day was to



become known as Bloody Friday.

Bloody Friday refers to the bombings that occurred in Belfast, Northern Ireland, on July 21, 1972, during the Troubles.

The Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) detonated 22 bombs across the city within a short period, it resulted in the death of nine people and injured another 130. The attacks involved numerous explosions and also included many hoax bomb warnings.



Thanks to the Throttle Twisters Motor Cycle Club for picking VIC to benefit from funds raised at the club's camp in May in Cheshire. Several VIC members attended and we received a donation of £267.

What's On and Where



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.

THURSDAY

Rochdale Veterans' Breakfast Club and VIC Outreach

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

RIBBLE VALLEY & PRESTON

TUESDAYS

Redoubt Coffee Morning and Outreach

10am-noon

Trinity Methodist Church, Wesleyan Row,

Parson Lane, Clitheroe, BB7 2JY.

Sandbag Cafe

10am-12.30pm

St George's Church, off Lune Street, Preston PR1 2NP. This is a joint session with Lancashire Armed Forces Association.

VIC – 01706 833180

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Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren

Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

barryhyde@vic.org.uk

Veterans In Communities
Charity Number 1151194

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/ Art Group

FRIDAY 10am-3pm

VIC Hyndburn, Accrington Arndale Centre, BB5 1EX.

Accrington Stanley Breakfast Club/ Drop-In

LAST SATURDAY EVERY MONTH

10.30am-noon

Stanley Sports Hub, Thorneyholme Road, Accrington, BB5 6BD.

BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

Veterans' football

MONDAY 8-9pm

Blackburn Rovers Indoor Centre, Ewood Park, Blackburn BB2 4JF. A cost applies.

Outreach Service

TUESDAY 10am-noon

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

Contact Chris McGrail 07787 585109

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