



Team-building VIC style

VOLUNTEERS and VIC staff members enjoyed fun-filled day away from the office in the beautiful setting of Dearden Woods in Edenfield.

The relaxed team-building day offered a variety of activities to take part in from throwing axes to hiking to Waugh's Well, creating paper aeroplanes to firing soft arrows, from painting to enjoying lunch together.

The day was also an ideal opportunity to chat, make new friends, laugh and share stories.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "It was a wonderful day in absolutely stunning surroundings and a great way to bring everyone together.

"It was great that this team-building day was in our local environment and it was a very relaxed and we didn't have to work to a time-table.

"A huge thank you to veteran firefighter Ryan and Jessy for hosting VIC and we wish them well for their future."

Feedback on the day was brilliant, volunteer driver veteran David Whitehurst said: "What an amazing day loved every minute, met up with a great crowd of people. VIC is my forever veterans' home thank you all for such a great day."

Sam Kelly said: "Thanks everyone for a fantastic day. Thoroughly enjoyed it. Great bunch of people."

Veteran firefighter John Edwards said: "I had a great day, really enjoyed it."

Veteran Aaron Lorimer said: "Excellent day, thank you everyone."

Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell said: "Had a great day with great company. Massive thanks to Sped for sorting it out and Dearden Wood staff."

While Centre Worker Carol Duckworth loved the day's activities and said: "I thought the staff at Dearden Woods were lovely and everyone enjoyed the day.

"The facilities were very good, there was great company and it wasn't too far away."





Russell Pilkington

VETERANS formed a Guard of Honour as we said a final farewell to one of our own Russell Pilkington at Accrington Crematorium Chapel.

Veteran Jacko Pearce paraded our VIC Standard for the funeral of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Veteran who was an active member of the VIC Choir.

Russ was just 17 when he joined REME and served for seven years, including being posted to the Falkland Islands after the war.

There was a very well



attended service with mourners asked to wear brightly coloured clothes to reflect Russ's personality.

Chairman of trustees and VIC Musical Director Ronnie Barker said: "Russ brought a

breath of fresh air to our Bass section in the Choir along with laughter and banter.

"Unfortunately, his illness cut short his time with us whilst undergoing treatment but he joined us whenever he could and is sorely missed."

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "The service was beautiful, Jacko carried the standard, there was a bagpiper and a bugler who played the Last Post and three members of VIC and his Uncle Peter joined in the salute.

"It was a very personal service with lots of tributes and recollections from family members."

VALOUR visit of MP to VIC

IT WAS a pleasure to welcome our local Hyndburn and Haslingden MP Sarah Smith back to the VIC Centre.

Sarah was a strong supporter of our VALOUR bid, and it was great to have the opportunity to show her what VIC will be delivering through VALOUR across Lancashire and the wider region

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "VIC is really pleased to have been acknowledged as a VALOUR recognised centre, it is about improving the equitable access for veterans across the region, strengthening co-ordination of services and support and across the region and improving the engagement of veterans so they can access the right support at the right time."

Sarah, who was accompanied by Lancashire County Councillor Samara Barnes,



said: "What is really exciting about this programme it's truly a partnership work between local organisations, local communities and national government and that's what I'm so passionate about because I

know that it's the communities on the ground that know what our local veterans need and want and working with national government and their funding can make a real difference."

VALOUR appointments

WE ARE delighted to have appointed two new members of staff – a VALOUR Pathways Coordinator and a VALOUR Project Coordinator.

VIC is now a VALOUR recognised centre and these two key personnel will help in our delivery of VALOUR – the Government's new £50 million UK wide support system.

Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton said: "We would like to thank everyone who showed an interest in the posts, we had to make some difficult decisions.

"The recruitment has now taken place and the two successful applicants will start in their roles on September 21 and they will be formally introduced in our September newsletter."



Memorials

TWO War Memorials which has been given to the Royal British Legion Middleton have now been rehomed in St Michael's Church, Tonge-cum-Alkrington in Middleton.

The Rev Jennie Beaumont offered them a new home, but Diocese rules had to be followed and permission was needed before their installation in the church could go ahead.

The War Memorial Trust has been notified about their location.

VIC The Mess Tin: The Lighthouse Project, Middleton Shopping Centre, every Tuesday 1pm-2.30pm





Pilotlight update

Scooter appeal

AT VIC we often get requests for mobility scooters, but we have none currently available.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "We're seeking two or three mobility scooters to support veterans throughout Lancashire and the surrounding areas.

"Many veterans struggle with mobility and independence, and a donated scooter can make a world of difference."

Scooters must be in a fully serviceable condition, so they would be ready to be passed on to someone who needs help to get them mobile.

If you can help: email info@vic.org.uk or call 01706 833180.

OVER the last eight months VIC has benefited from a business support package 'Pilotlight 360'.

VIC was the only veteran organisation to be selected as one of the 24 charities that were awarded the package, worth £22,000, by Weston Charity Awards in June 2024.

Implementation of the programme was deferred for a year and has now been concluded.

Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton said: "We have had eight meeting with the Pilotlight team and it is up to us now to implement our strategies and plans.

"They have left me lots of homework and guidance for the next few months and they will be coming back to us in December, six months after our final meeting, to see how it has been implemented and to see where we have got to. They will review and reflect on our progress."

Amanda and Chair of Trustees Ronnie Barker will be attending a celebration at Fortnum and Mason in London for the Class of 25 Weston Charity Awards recipients.

Amanda said: "Normally, the

six month follow up is an online meeting, but the Pilotlight team have been so involved they are coming to VIC for a further face-to-face visit."

She said the business advisors had 'had their minds blown' when they realised the difficulties faced by some veterans after they left the services – they had assumed there was still some central support in place.

Amanda said: "They learnt it was left to organisations like VIC to look after veterans."

On a personal level, Amanda is also continuing to receive personal development assistance from Pilotlight trustee and business coach Rory Cornwell.

Since launching in 2014, more than 200 charities have received Weston Charity Awards.



Terrific Trawden show

A SPLENDID time was had at Trawden Show when as well as selling VIC produced items and chatting to veterans, we also served brews and cakes.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy said: "It was a great opportunity for partnership building and, although many people knew who we were because we have been attending the agricul-

tural show for many years, we also got to chat to some who didn't know us.

"It is always a very busy show and it seems to expand every year we attend."

The creative team also made special items – wobbly animal-based fridge magnets – which proved popular with the visitors.



Banter, biscuits, brews

THERE was a great turnout at the Friday VIC Accrington Drop-in when a contingent from the Corps of the Royal Engineers and a number of Guardsmen called in.

The banter was fierce and the brews were hot, and there was even cake and biscuits.

Everyone had the mick taken out of them, so there were

happy Gentlemen of the Corps.

Keith Shepherd said: "Brilliant time on Friday's drop in at Accrington.

"If you're a veteran and fancy a chat, pop down and see us: cuppa, a biscuit and banter."

VIC Drop-in: Accrington Arndale Fridays 10am-3pm.



Weekly walks



WEEKLY bumble walks are getting veterans up and active and already visits have been made to a number of reservoirs.

Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell, who drives the VIC Minibus and also goes on the walks, said: "We have been to Clough Head

Café in Haslingden, and walked around a mile around the fairly flat reservoir.

"We have been twice to Hollingworth Lake, Littlebrough, and will be back again on September 20.

"We have also been to Jumbles, near Bolton, and will be back with Dawn Frankland and Liz Taylor from our Art Group

and they will be painting while others will be walking."

Dawn has been provided with a mobility scooter by VIC to help her get around and as the walking routes we pick are always fairly flat, that has enabled her to be able to join in.

For more information contact 01706 833180.

All revved up

FOUR members who went on the last VIC Battlefields Tour in 2025 were reunited to enjoy a fabulous, fast and fun day on the Three Sisters Race Circuit in Wigan.

Veterans John Docker and Helen Titterington were reunited with VIC Operations Manager Phil Speddy following the organisation's 2025 Battlefields Tour, while Administrator Amy Thompson also joined them for a fabulous day out at the Three Sisters Race Circuit in Wigan.

Phil said: "It was great to spend time together again, enjoying the camaraderie and creating more great memories.

"The rain made things a little spicy in the morning, but when the track dried out, the speed increased."

They got to experience some fantastic cars and were driven around the track by an amazing team of volunteers who give up their time to offer these free track days for veterans.

John said: "Thanks for the day out VIC and the fab company."



VIC6 launch

WE WILL soon be launching VIC6, a programme to recruit and train volunteers to serve as the welcoming faces of the VIC Centre, supporting visitors and helping them access the services they need.

With the introduction of VALOUR - VIC is already handling an increase in referrals and the new VIC6 team will be trained to assess and obtain the necessary information so that veterans contacting VIC can be signposted to the right person, outreach group or activity.

Contact 01706 833180 for more information.

Mental health

FOUR members of VIC completed an intensive two-day Mental Health First Aid Training course.

Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton, Operations Manager Phil Speddy, Project Worker Ray Sharkey and Administrator Amy Thompson all passed the online course, which was personal, interactive and challenging and saw discussions in break-out rooms.

The course was run by accredited company MHFA England.



Room for hire

OUR bright and spacious Conference Room is available for hire.

The large room, which is upstairs at the VIC Centre 12 Bury Road, Haslingden, is accessible by a lift or stairs and can be used for formal or informal meetings.

If you are looking for a room to hire out on an occasional or more regular basis contact 01706 833180.



Military history unveiled

VIC AGM date

OUR Annual General Meeting will be held in the Conference Room at the VIC Centre in Bury Road, Haslingden, on Wednesday September 16.

The doors are open from 7pm for a 7.30pm start and everyone is welcome to attend. Should you be attending, please inform Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180 so that enough papers are printed.

Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton said: "There will be refreshments available and after the formalities, there will be a presentation about our performance, highlights and achievements for the year 2025-26.

"This is an opportunity for those attending to have an input and influence future decisions – VIC belongs to you and you can help to influence our direction because we work for you."

CORE Volunteer at VIC Ron Flowers recently attended a gathering with Blind Veterans UK where he delivered an engaging presentation on the Military History of Lancashire.

The meeting, at the Intact Community Hub, Ingol, Preston, was a fantastic session with a wonderful group of veterans and supporters.

Ron shared stories from Lancashire's rich mil-



itary heritage, which prompted lively discussion and there was plenty of interest from those attending.

The event was organised by Adam Officer from Blind Veterans UK, and a big thank you to him and the team for the warm welcome.

VIC has a long-standing relationship with Blind Veterans UK.

Their regional team regularly utilises the VIC Centre in Haslingden for meetings, and we work closely with their support workers to

ensure veterans receive the assistance, camaraderie and opportunities they deserve.

Partnerships like these show the strength of the veteran community and the importance of organisations working together to support former service personnel.

Clitheroe outreach



A BESPOKE quiz was crafted and presented by one of our Engineer veterans at the weekly coffee morning and drop in in Clitheroe,

Royal Navy WREN veteran Von, who has been attending for five years, shared what being part of VIC means to her: She said: "It gives me the chance to meet some people, I came here and I have been

enjoying it ever since.

"There is so much banter going on, we do the quiz and we get to meet people and we get to learn about what the guys went through during the war."

She also composes quizzes and enjoys trips out.

VIC Coffee Morning and Quiz: Trinity Methodist Church, Clitheroe, every Tuesday 10am to noon.

Handy volunteers needed

HAVING our own centre gives VIC an amazing resource, but it also brings a never-ending list of jobs that need to be done.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy is compiling a list of 'to do' jobs around the centre – from sorting locks on doors to

painting walls, maintaining the outdoor space to making sure planters are looked after.

This is your opportunity to give back. If you have skills you could share, maybe carpentry, painting, gardening etc, contact 01706 833180.

Ramsbottom Memorial appeal

VOLUNTEERS are being sought to look after a War Memorial in Nuttall Park, Ramsbottom.

For anyone who doesn't know the background, to mark the Centenary of the end of the First War in 2018, the memorial was created by the RAMMY ROCKS project and children from local schools and nurseries, together with older members of our community, came together to create a lasting tribute to the men of Ramsbottom.

It was unveiled in November 2018 by a 101-year-old Second

World War veteran and beneath the central stone is a time capsule containing photographs and messages for the children of Ramsbottom to discover in 2118 – 100 years after it was buried.

Former VIC Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth, who is now a VIC Volunteer, is one of the people who care for the memorial but new and younger helpers are needed to look after the memorial in the years ahead by keeping an eye on it and repainting the stones as they weather.

If you can help contact VIC and ask for your details to be passed on to Steve.

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

THURSDAY

Bimble Walks

Call 01706 833180 for more details

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 01706 833180 Social Inclusion trips see Facebook or VIC website

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.

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,

VIC – 01706 833180

Chief Executive Amanda Walton

amandawalton@vic.org.uk

Operations Manager Phil Speddy

philspeddy@vic.org.uk

Administrator Amy Thompson

amythompson@vic.org.uk

Project Worker Ray Sharkey

raysharkey@vic.org.uk 07741 902 188

Community Capacity Builder

John Pluckwell

johnpluckwell@vic.org.uk

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator

Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

b.hyde@ntlworld.com

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

Veterans In Communities
Charity Number 1151194

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

Want to help?

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