

New staff will deliver VALOUR

VIC has appointed two new members of staff who will be fundamental in the delivery of a new government support initiative.

VALOUR is a £50Million national government programme of support to make it easier for veterans, and their families, to seek help when they need it.

VIC is a VALOUR Recognised Centre, and, with partners Armed Forces Community Support and Veterans HQ, now delivers support to veterans and their families in Lancashire, Cumbria, Cheshire and Merseyside.

Tony Codling has been appointed VALOUR Pathways Co-ordinator for the North of Lancashire and Cumbria, and will be supporting veterans, linking with existing providers and identifying any gaps in provision.

David, known as Billy, Benson is VALOUR Project Co-ordinator for Central Lancashire and will be overseeing all project workers and data reporting to the Office

of Veterans' Affairs.

Both Billy and Tony have extensive Forces experience and latterly both have been working in Lancashire for football in the community programmes which support veterans.

They were appointed on September 21 are now undergoing an induction process and mandatory training to learn about the work of VIC, they will also be shadowing staff and learning more about the VALOUR programme.

Billy spent 25 years with the Royal Engineers airborne division and has a vast amount of experience in leading teams both in his military and civilian careers.

He said: "Being a part of this ground-breaking new government initiative, is like being a part of history. This is a turning point for veterans.

"It is the start of the government realising that there is a bigger picture and that some veterans need support after service."



Billy knows the difficulties faced by some veterans from his own personal experience. When he was struggling, his wife calling into VIC and as a result Billy got involved with Burnley Football Club in the Community and he became Veterans' Officer. He still coaches the club's veterans' football team.

He was also referred to Op Courage for support and he is still under their umbrella.

Billy said: "I am excited about my new role. I can see it making a big difference to a lot of veterans to help them to get the support they need and for them to know that support is going to be there continually."

After serving in the Army for 12 years, Tony became a PE teacher and then, after Covid, he became involved in the football in the community programme first at Blackpool and then at

Fleetwood.

He said: "We organised trips, coffee mornings, walk and talk and we have a fabulous community garden at Fleetwood; that is my legacy."

Tony will be looking to find the hidden veterans and making sure they have access to the right services if they need them.

He said: "I got out in 1999, and went into a different career, so I became one of those hidden veterans and there were a couple of times I needed help but I didn't know

where to turn.

"This is person-centred support and I am really looking forward to getting started. I have a huge area and I will be going all over introducing myself.

"I will be working with the many different organisations that already support veterans."

Billy and Tony will be holding a showcase to explain to organisations what VALOUR is all about and how it can help them support the veterans who attend their services.

Helping hand

VIC volunteers helped Rossendale Rotary Club to run the 59th Round the Hills walk.



It was an early start for some – 7am on a Sunday at Marl Pits in Rawtenstall. There are two walks, one 18 and the second 14 miles, over the hills of the Valley.

Operations Manager Phil Speddy, Administrator Amy Thompson and members Dave Whitehurst and Paul Nixon assisted. Also in attendance were VIC trustees Bob Smethurst, Marilyn Procter and Alan Woods.



NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Veterans go exploring

IT HAS been a busy month for trips which have included the National Memorial Arboretum, Eden Camp and Dunsop Bridge.

Eight members from VIC and the Rochdale Breakfast Club went on a joint trip to the arboretum in Lichfield, Staffordshire, for a memorable trip around the poignant memorials dedicated to campaigns and corps.

It was a long trip, but definitely worth it to be able to pay respects to those that paid the ultimate price.

It was very interesting to see the new Elysium memorial for veterans who have taken their own lives, and the LGBT+ community memorial.

Another added bonus was we saw a flyover by two Chinooks.

The NMA will soon be renamed the Royal British Legion National Memorial Gardens and work was taking place during the visit to prepare

for this.

Members of the Clitheroe outreach went to Eden Camp World War II Museum in Malton, North Yorkshire, where they explored former Prisoner of War huts. These have been converted into a living history museum which captures the sights, sounds, smells and conflicts over many years.

Trip organiser Andrea Whiteley said: "There was sunshine and blue skies which set the scene for our visit to Eden Camp for All Services' Day.

"The exhibits were fascinating – far too many to take in properly in one visit – and it was a proud moment watching Von Fullere take her place in the parade. A brilliant day out for everyone."

Five VIC members went on a social outing to Dunsop Bridge and they enjoyed a walk around the picturesque village and refreshments at Puddleducks Tearooms.

Upcoming trips

Sunday October 4, visit to B&E Boys to see the Select Military Vehicles Division, which was started by the late founder Brian Boys. There will be a wide range of armoured and softskin military vehicles, tracked tanks and artillery to see. Cost £1 for the minibus from Haslingden.

Wednesday November 18, Hackgreen Secret Nuclear Bunker. Attendees will be given

a guided tour, approx two hours, and afterwards they can spend an extra 45 minutes watching the film WarGames; there is also a café on site. Cost £36 - trip not suitable for people with mobility issues.

Friday December 11, Christmas Orchestra at Blackburn Cathedral.

See the noticeboard in the VIC Centre for details of trips and costs and to suggest venues.



Ian White

WHEN a veteran passed away in a care home in Accrington with no known family, the veteran family united to ensure he received a proper send off.

VIC was contacted by staff at Mapleford Nursing Home in Accrington following the death of Ian White, an RAF veteran who served in Aden and was wounded during his service.

At the request of the care home, VIC helped coordinate the military elements of Ian's funeral, so that he received a fitting farewell.

At Accrington Crematorium, a Guard of

Honour formed and many members of VIC joined veterans from all over Lancashire, who heeded the call which also went out in the press and on social media.

VIC Standard Bearer and also ex RAF veteran Jacko Pearce carried the VIC standard.

The Order of Service included Nimrod and The Dambusters March along with The Last Post.

● Jacko will also be carrying the VIC standard at the funeral of Clitheroe veteran Albert Renfrey on October 14 who served in the British Army.

It is believed that Albert leaves only a few, if indeed any, relatives in Clitheroe as most of his relations are living in Australia.





Riders' road trip

FIVE VIC Riders revved up to enjoy a fantastic weekend in Wales.

They toured spectacular scenery, travelled through Brecon and tackled the stunning Black Mountain Pass, with plenty of incredible views, twisty roads and, of course, a fair few stops along the way.

The adventure continued as they headed towards Machynlleth, where they hopefully caught a glimpse of the famous low-flying jets, before heading on through Snowdonia and Llangollen.

Their final stop was Oswestry,



where they spent their last night before making their way home.

VIC trustee Bob Elliott, Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell and his son Barry, and VIC member Graham Limb and his friend Paul went on the trip.

Special film showing

MEMBERS of VIC's Sandbag Café in Preston got to see an exclusive screening of D-Day film Pressure at the ARC Cinema.

Among the veteran visitors to the 102-seat auditorium was Preston veteran 102-year-old veteran Richard Brock.

Festival of Remembrance

ROCHDALE Festival of Remembrance will be held at Rochdale Town Hall on Friday October 16 at 7pm.

The celebration event, includes a pie and pea supper, military music, marching bands and a service of remembrance. Tickets cost £15.75.

AGM highlights hectic VIC year

MORE than 200 people access support and services provided by VIC every week.

At the Annual General Meeting, a packed conference room heard Chief Executive Officer Amanda Walton outline the charity's work from April 2025 to March 2026.

She explained that more than 120 new members were welcomed to the VIC community and along with existing members across all the organisation's locations, continued to be supported.

She said: "Behind every referral and every visit is an individual. A family and a unique story. We don't provide a one size fits all approach – every case is different."

In attendance were the Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Liz McInnes, along with Councillor Neil Looker, Mayor of Burnley Councillor Saeed



Chaudhary, Deputy Mayor of Hyndburn Councillor Stuart Eves, and Rossendale's Armed Forces Champion and VIC trustee Councillor Marilyn Proctor along with VIC members, staff, volunteers and visitors.

Councillor McInnes said: "VIC do amazing work supporting veterans and their families.

"Their base in Haslingden is a very welcoming place offering a variety of activities, with colourful artwork made by the veterans brightening up every room.

"None of this would be possible without the volunteers, my grateful thanks to them for all they do to help ex-service personnel to belong and prosper in their Communities across the North West."

Amanda outlined how the charity had been involved in several commemorative events for the 80th anniversary of VE Day and outlined some of the many activities VIC is involved with from a model railway club, breakfast clubs to equine scentwork.

She said: "The greatest impact comes from

bringing people together, helping them to connect with their peers, build confidence, develop friendships and regain a sense of purpose and belonging."

Amanda described the year as one of 'growth, partnership, impact and opportunity' and thanked volunteers, trustees, staff, supporters, partners and funders.

There had also been changes, including the retirement of VIC founder Bob Elliott as Operations Manager, who is now a trustee. Phil Speddy took over Bob's role.

She stressed that volunteers remain at the heart of VIC and, over the year, more than 10,000 volunteer hours had been donated – equating to £127k if charged at minimum wage.

Major fundraisers included a 260-mile cycle ride from the Cenotaph in London to Haslingden, the Rossendale Walk of Remembrance, choir performances, fishing events and community fundraising, as well as anonymous donations.

VIC is now a VALOUR Recognised Centre, and that change will be implemented in the 2026/7 year; but it was mentioned as Amanda discussed the future of VIC.

Dizzy, from Bay Veterans Association, thanked Amanda and Bob for the continued help and support VIC has given to Bay Veterans to set up, grow, and continue to develop and help support veterans in the Morecambe area.



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

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

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

Outreach Worker John Pluckwell

johnpluckwell@vic.org.uk

VALOUR Pathways Co-ordinator

Tony Codling tonymcoding@vic.org.uk

VALOUR Project Co-ordinator

Billy Benson davidbenson@vic.org.uk

Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator

Darren Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

b.hyde@ntlworld.com

**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

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

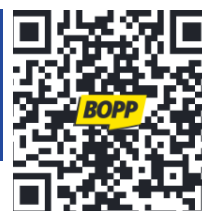
TUESDAY 10am-noon

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

Contact Chris McGrail 07787 585109

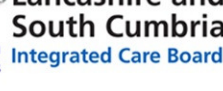
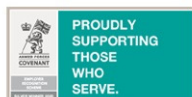
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