

D-Day 75 Jack's story

WHEN Jack Cunnane was a teenager the last thing he wanted to do was join up and serve for his country.

Yet he ended up among the first wave of soldiers to set foot on the Normandy beaches on D-Day in June 1944. Now he looks back on his service career and says: "I am glad that I joined. I went away as a boy and I came back a man. I enjoyed my time in the army and I made some good mates."

Jack is now 95 and lives at Dryclough Manor, Royton. He should have been on this year's 75th Anniversary D-Day commemorations on the beaches in Normandy, but unfortunately he 'failed his medical' and so was unable to go.

Instead he went to the National Arboretum in Staffordshire, with veteran Ian Rosales, chairman of the organising committee at VIC's Sandbag Café in Heywood which Jack attends every Tuesday.

At the arboretum, Jack took part in the ceremony, laid a wreath and was fortunate to meet and chat to Prince

William, the Duke of Cambridge.

Born in Oldham, Jack had been working in the mills in the hope that he would escape National Service.

He said: "I was 18-and-a-half in 1942 and I got a letter saying I would have to go to Wales to work down a coal mine; that was when I decided to enlist in the army instead."

"After training I joined the Royal Ordnance Corps and 12 months later they set up REME in 1943."

"They gave me tests to do and puzzles to see if I was mechanically minded and I got accepted."

He was transferred to 20th Beach Recovery Unit, a small unit of just 40 soldiers, and they landed on Sword Beach in the first wave of the D-Day landings.

Jack said: "I was a driver and when the vehicles came off the ships they landed in the water, but because the engine compartment was not waterproof they stopped working."

His unit then scrambled up the beach, trying to avoid mines, shells, machine gun fire and snipers and then had



to wait until the tide had gone out to rescue the craft, get them to a make-shift workshop on the beach and get them roadworthy.

Jack said: "A lot of my mates got shot, but I was one of the lucky ones. I always said that I had a Guardian Angel looking out for me. We just thought of it as an adventure."

From Sword Beach they went to Arromanches.

In April 1945 he was involved in Operation Plunder – a military operation to cross the Rhine. Shortly afterwards he took 10 days leave to return home to Oldham to marry his sweetheart Emma.

Jack said: "It took me three days and several trains to get back home and I arrived back at 6.30am on the day I was due to be married at 2pm. I told my mum I was going to see Emma and she wouldn't let me because it was bad luck."

The couple were married for 71 years before Emma passed away. He has two daughters Lynn and Susan and four grandchildren.

He has returned to the beaches six times and on his blazer, alongside his army medals he proudly displays the French Légion d'Honneur.



Lewis's story

D-DAY veteran Lewis Banham spent the 75th anniversary in France revisiting the beaches and cemeteries and taking part in memorial services also attended by Prince Charles, the Duchess of Cornwall and political leaders.



He spent two days at Portsmouth Historic Dockyards where he was filmed singing with a war-time a capella trio the Charlalas.

VIC member Lewis, 96, was a despatch rider in the Second World War and landed on the Normandy beaches before going on to deliver vital messages to the front line.

He spent two days in Portsmouth before setting sail for the commemorations in France. Lewis said: "It was really nostalgic and when we landed all the veterans were given 100 Euros."

Honour for VIC



VIC has received a top honour at the launch of Armed Forces Week.

In a ceremony at County Hall in Preston, we were awarded Lancashire County Council's Tom Davies Trophy for 'outstanding contribution to the Armed Forces Community in Lancashire'.

Admin Officer Amanda Walton and member Jim Smith were delighted and surprised when it was announced the organisation had won the accolade, only the second time the award has been presented.

Chief Executive Liz Hamilton said: "This is a great honour for all the staff and volunteers who have made VIC such a success since we were founded in 2012.

"The organisation has developed beyond all recognition from those early days and each year we work with hundreds of veterans both at our centre in Haslingden and through the many outreach services we offer across the area.

"VIC is going from strength-to-strength and it is wonderful to see the charity and our many supporters receiving the recognition they deserve."

VIC offers a range of activities from arts and crafts groups and a choir to team-building days, outdoor activities, peer support, information and advice, a manufacturing hub making wooden furniture from recycled wood and an allotment.

The organisation's mantra is return, belong, prosper and it is responsive to needs and requests from members.

A new outreach shop has just been opened in Accrington further extending the services we provide.

The trophy was presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire, Lord Shuttleworth KG KCVO, accompanied by the Chairman of Lancashire

County Council.

County Councillor Paul Rigby, Chairman of Lancashire County Council, said: "I'm honoured to present the Tom Davies Trophy to Veterans in Communities.

"By offering a range of activities to support veterans, this group makes a tremendous contribution to the lives of people who have served and their families.

"Returning to civilian life after serving your country can be difficult and it's crucial that we recognise the work of groups like this who make an outstanding contribution to our county.

"Congratulations to Veterans in Communities for its invaluable work."

County Councillor Alf Clempson, champion for armed forces and veterans, said: "We are very proud of our nation's armed forces.

"Lancashire provides a good number of recruits and is also home to a significant military presence, as well as thousands of people who have served their country.

"Our sense of history means we will never forget those who have made the ultimate sacrifice on our behalf and we support veterans in a number of ways.

"These include establishing our ex-services mentoring programme where veterans provide training to young people and our support for the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub, which we helped to set up."

Project Lead of the Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub Ian Barber was quick to praise the team. He said: "I just wanted to say a massive well done on receiving the Tom Davies Trophy.

"You do great work at VIC which is often talked about, but now it has been formally recognised throughout the



Photo: Lancashire County Council

county. Keep up the good work."

The trophy is presented annually to the group, charity or individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the armed forces community in Lancashire in honour of Tom Davies who served in the Scots Guards until 1967.

He then joined the police where he had a long and distinguished career. He was secretary and treasurer of the Scots Guards'

Association in Lancashire.

He was Preston's Parade Marshal and sat on the Veterans Council. He was also involved with Preston Sea Cadets.

Tom passed away in 2016 after suffering a heart attack while walking home, after watching Preston North End.

Last year the award was presented to Preston-based Dig In North West, a charity that works closely with VIC.



Thank you to volunteers

A THANK you meal was held for all the volunteers who support VIC each week.

At the end of National Volunteers' Week, a special lunch was arranged at The Beach in Littleborough.

Our volunteers run or help to run the art groups, Crafty Chatters, the Sandbag cafe, computing



courses, the allotment, VIC Choir, Veterans in Production and our outreach programmes.



Hyndburn shop opens

VIC
VETERANS IN COMMUNITIES
Return Belong Prosper



Art sale

A RANGE of Daler and Rowney art packs are available to buy at the VIC Centre in Haslingden.

The packs include acrylic, watercolour, pastel and sketching paints and pencils and would make great gifts. For more information call 01706 833180.



Meet Tiger

HERE is the newest member of the VIC team – Tiger.

Our latest piscatorial member was named by Graham Riley and is swimming happily in his specially created tank at the VIC Centre foyer.

Scam talk

A VERY informative talk on scams and fraud was attended by 10 members of VIC.

Paul Geary, NatWest Bank Community Banker, delivered the talk for free.

IN THE first few days of opening our new shop in Accrington on June 18, more than 40 people had crossed the threshold.

We now have a shop and outreach premises right in the town centre in The Mall.

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell has relocated his popular art group on a Tuesday and people can drop-in on Tuesdays and Fridays to speak to volunteer outreach workers.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "We have had an outstanding start to the veterans' drop-in and we weren't expecting so many people to have visited us at this early stage."

"The shop is looking brilliant and we are very grateful to volunteers Brian McEvoy and Gary Horrocks for decorating



Art group now in Accrington



the inside.

"We had donations of furniture from North Lincs Training Group, Argos, Transformational Coach Gill Hughes and Tony Haynes from Veterans' Association UK.

A big thank you to Gareth Gregson from Sign it Up in Haslingden who has created a sign for free for outside our new shop.

"The veterans drop-in is held every Tuesday from 10am-3.30pm and Friday 10am-3.30pm."



Sandbag visit to Barton

FIFTEEN members of the Sandbag Café in Heywood enjoyed a lovely breakfast at the Veterans' Garage, which overlooks Barton Airfield.

The members received a warm welcome and an invitation to return for another visit when they will also tour the airfield.



Project Worker Bev Fowler held an awareness stall at the Macmillan Cancer Support event at Heywood Sports Village.

Talks

THREE presentations were made to explain how VIC is delivering on funding awarded by the East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott attended a meeting of Clitheroe Integrated Neighbourhood Team, when he was accompanied by Volunteer Outreach Worker Carole Mills.

He then led a presentation to Burnley Integrated Neighbourhood Team and was involved in a workshop at a veterans' health session in Blackburn for GPs and trainee doctors to make them more aware of the issues veterans can present with.



Sitting pretty



“My Mother sends many thank yous to the team at the VIC for the two planters that were made to specific dimensions. The more rectangular planter hides a metal grate that Mum was fed up looking at from the kitchen window.”

Brian McEvoy

VOLUNTEER Brian McEvoy has had a busy month with VIC completing a bench, building planters and helping to decorate our new Accrington shop.

He is pictured sitting on his first project – a refurbished bench that was originally donated by his friend Kelly and her family.

Brian said: “This project was completed with help from Bob, Simon and Bernard. I had some moments of, ‘Damn, what have I started?’ And when the wood didn’t line up properly I felt the beginnings of a panic attack.

“However, having



experienced guys helping me, soon solved the issue.”

At our Armed Forces barbecue, there was a lot of interest in his bench

and it will soon have a new owner.

Brian is now a volunteer ‘meeter and greeter’ at our new Accrington shop.



BBQ and banter

MORE than 70 people came along to enjoy a delicious helping of banter and barbecued food at our celebration afternoon to mark the start of Armed Forces Week.

Many thanks to Whittaker’s butchers, Asda Rawtenstall and Tesco Haslingden and to our very own army of volunteers who made the yard ship-shape so the barbecue could take place.



It has been a busy time for Veterans In Production, two orders are almost ready. One for a local school; two patio planters, bird table and one standard with poppies. The second is for eight standard planters for a children’s play area in Stacksteads.



VIC was represented at the Preston Military Show, but the bad weather meant there was a lot less to see and visitors were fewer in number.



VIC Choir is in fine voice

STUNNING singing by the VIC Choir in Asda Rawtenstall raised £360 for VIC.

Thanks go both to the singers and to Carole and

Jacko for their collecting and verbal support.

Special thanks to Asda's Laura Saxton, staff and customers for their generosity

Book appeal

IF YOU have any unwanted books please donate them to VIC as Tesco Haslingden is again running its second-hand book sale this summer

Any money raised gets shared between local charitable groups and VIC is one of the lucky recipients. Leave books at the centre or call 01706 833180.



***WALKERS** had an enjoyable trek on the moors to Hog Lowe Pike and then back to Clough Head Café in Haslingden.*

Cheshire cats earn their grin

A FUNDRAISING quiz and curry night was keenly contested by 45 hopefuls but the aptly named Cheshire Cats were grinning in the end.

The event, at North Street Indian Restaurant, Rawtenstall, raised £325 for the VIC.

Chief Executive Liz Hamilton said: "I am really pleased with the amount raised and would like to say a huge thank you to everyone who came along on the night, sold tickets, donated



raffle prizes and to North Street for their hospitality.

"We were well supported by members of the community as well as some familiar faces at VIC.



"We will definitely be holding the event again."



Our allotment in Helmshore is is blooming and set to yield a bumper crop. Thank you to everyone who has helped to tidy it up and plant donations from Dig In North West.



The fundraising Crafty Chatters stall at Tor View School Summer Fair.

What's On and Where



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 and drop-in (RELOCATED TO HYNDBURN)

WEDNESDAY

Allotment and Veterans In Production

Help on the allotment in Holcombe Road, Helmshore, or manufacture wooden items at the centre. Contact 01706 833180.

Community Arts and Crafts

10am-noon

Art Class

2pm-4pm

Jubilee Court, Jubilee Road, Haslingden, BB4 4DD.

THURSDAY

Woodworking Course

10am-3pm

Computer and IT help drop-in

11am-3pm

Painting with Pan Pastels

1pm-3pm cost £10

VIC Choir (weekly)

6.30-8.30pm

FRIDAY

Art Group and drop-in

10.30am-3.30pm

SECOND SATURDAY

Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club

10am-12.30pm

The Link Cafe, Haslingden Community Link, Bury Road, Haslingden BB4 5PG

EVERY MONTH

Painting in the Style of Bob Ross

Contact Darren 01706 833180.

Walking Group, Social Outings and Outdoor Activities

These are held every THURSDAY. Please visit the Events section on our VIC Facebook page or log on to the VIC website and follow the link to Projects and Activities.

BURNLEY AND PENDLE

Outreach Service

MONDAY - first week only

Place de Creil, near Wilkos, Nelson.
10am-noon

MONDAY - second week only

Market Place Car park, Town Square, Colne.
9am-11am

TUESDAY - every week

Breakfast Club at Burnley FC in the Community Cafe, Charter Walk.
9am-11am

WEDNESDAY - every week

Veterans Community Cafe, 1 Great George Street, Colne, BB8 0SY.
9am-11am

Contact 01706 833180 for dates of outreach at the Pendle Armed Forces Support Group, Holmefield Mill, Gisburn Road, Barrowford.

HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

The Sandbag Cafe and drop in

TUESDAY

10am-noon

Sandon House, Taylor Street, Heywood
OL10 4EF.

THURSDAY

9am-10.30am Rochdale Breakfast Club, Rochdale Town Hall Bistro OL16 1AB.
10.30am-noon

VIC Outreach

1 Riverside, Rochdale OL16 1UB.

HYNDBURN

Outreach Service

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

10am -3.30pm

VIC Shop, Accrington Arndale Centre.

10.30am-3.30pm Art group now on Tuesday.

Want to help?

To donate to support the work of Veterans In Communities please visit our website and click on the secure BT MyDonate page

www.vic.org.uk

VIC – 01706 833180

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Outdoor Activities Co-ordinator Ivy Limbrick

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VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

barryhyde@vic.org.uk

Contacts

Combat Stress Helpline

0800 138 1619

NHS Military Veterans Psychological Therapies Service (NW)

0161 253 6638

The Royal British Legion

0808 802 8080 7 days a week 8am-8pm

SSAFA

email Lancashire@ssafo.org.uk

01772 260 462

Rossendale Citizens' Advice

0300 456 2552

The Samaritans

01282 694929

Mon to Fri 9am-9pm

Freephone 116 123

Mental Health Helpline

0800 915 4640 Mon to Fri 7pm - 11pm Sat

& Sun 12 noon to 12 midnight

Royal Air Forces Association

0800 018 2361

Veterans UK Free Helpline

0808 1914 218

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

01282 657116

Bolton Armed Forces Centre 4 Veterans

www.bafc4v.org

01204 776628

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