

# Veterans stay connected virtually and centre secure thanks to grants

**A GRANT of nearly £16,500 ensured veterans were always able to see their friends and keep in touch during lockdown.**

VIC never ceased working during the lockdown, although the centre had to close to the public. A lot of the social groups, arts and crafts, choir and coffee mornings, along with board meetings, moved online using Zoom.

The charity secured £16,444 from the Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten Programme - a Covid-19 response fund administered by The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust and funded by the Treasury.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "We have used



**Chief Executive  
Amanda Walton**

the money to buy tablets and sim cards and these have been distributed to our members so they can be used to take part in the activities normally held in the centre, which were switched online.

"They have also been a

way for the veterans to stay in contact with each other when they could not see each other in the centre; this has been very important for their mental health.

"Our art group and craft group successfully went online as has the choir. We are now moving on a stage and have already opened our shop at the Arndale in Accrington on Fridays and we are looking to reopen Sandbag Café in Heywood.

"Although things are starting to reopen, we know that some veterans are in the clinically vulnerable group. Although some are ok with going out others are still uncertain.

"Having the tablets means that, although the restrictions are lifting, those who are more anxious can

use them as a means to keep in touch. It also means we are prepared if there is a second spike; but we hope that doesn't happen."

The centre remained manned over the lockdown period and weekly phone calls were made by Outreach and Project Workers and managers to veterans.

Funding from the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Covid-19 Impact Programme of just over £14,000 covered the costs of running the centre throughout the lockdown.

Tesco's bags of help donated £500 which helped towards fuel and veterans' expenses incurred while helping to deliver food parcels in Rossendale for Positive Start.

## Preparing for the new 'normal'

**VIC is preparing for when the centre can reopen and is grateful to Samantha and Caitlin Woodend for the donation of washable face masks.**

Rossendale Sewing Bees, part of Helmshore recycling - terracycle, Rossendale, have made hundreds of face masks and donated them to local groups.

Neighbouring company Filter Fabs has also donated a box of disposable face masks.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "I have done the risk assessments and our



**Administrator Amy Thompson with Samantha and Caitlin**

group activities will have to remain virtually on Zoom for the foreseeable future due to the need for social distancing and there not being enough room in the art room to do that.

"We are following the government guidance and

from August 3 the VIC Centre will again reopen to the public, but everyone will have to wear a mask, sanitiser will be provided and we will have to restrict the number of people who come into the centre at any one time."

## Creative comp

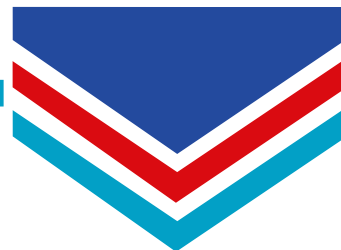
**Calling all creatives! VIC is about to launch a new sort of competition to celebrate our members' talents.**

The competition is open to VIC members and members of the Facebook Veterans Arts Organisation and their families.

Entrants are invited to create up to two pieces of work be it a painting, a photograph, a poem or a piece of music.

There will be weekly meetings via Zoom where advice and guidance can be offered.

For further information, contact Steve Butterworth on 01706 833180 or email [stevebutterworth@vic.org.uk](mailto:stevebutterworth@vic.org.uk)



**THANKS** to a donation from **Project Worker Bev Fowler, a huge smile appeared on the face of veteran Craig Harrison's mum who is living with dementia.**

Craig, his wife and Bev served together in the army.

Bev said: "The twiddle muff was donated by Alison Mitchell from The Royal British Legion as she works with us in Rochdale.

"I believe that were made for veterans by an RBL volunteer. They are fabulous."



## In memory of Peter Mallett

**A CHEQUE for £260 has been donated to VIC in memory of veteran Peter Maffett, from Burnley, who died recently.**

VIC member Robert Holder said: "He should have been going to the Rock of Gibraltar with me in May for the Royal Engineers

Freedom weekend celebrations.

"Peter was discharged in 1947 from the Rock, but because of Covid-19 we were not able to go."

His ashes will be taken back to Gibraltar and interred near the Moorish Castle area where he was billeted.

## Musical NHS tribute

**A VERY special happy birthday rendition of 'Somewhere Over The Rainbow' was performed by the VIC Choir to mark 72 years of the NHS.**

It was originally planned to perform the song to celebrate Colonel Tom Moore's birthday, but the musical arrangements for the singers was

complicated and took time to learn.

Instead the choir sang 'We'll Meet Again' while Abigail Walton, whose mum is VIC Chief Executive, played the melody on her clarinet.

Over the next few weeks, everyone had chance to practice and then they all individually recorded themselves

singing and playing their parts of the song.

Sam Walton did the technical bit combining the backing music, clarinet and choir vocals into one recording, that formed the backing to a Zoom call when the choir members sang the song and Abigail played.

## Anthony goes coast to coast for VIC

**MACHINE operator Anthony McCormack is planning to walk coast-to-coast to raise money for VIC.**

Although not a veteran, Anthony, 59, from Stacksteads, wanted to raise money for a charity that worked with armed forces personnel which is when he came across VIC,

He said: "I have been training by walking from home to work at Flexipol in Haslingden, completing my 12 hour shift and then walking home again.

"It takes me an hour and 50 minutes to do the 5-mile distance and the company has been open throughout the pandemic."

Anthony will leave St Bees in Cumbria, taking a pebble from the beach, and then walk the 190-mile route to Robin Hood's Bay



*Project Worker Ray Sharkey and Anthony*

in North Yorkshire carrying a pack and wild camping along the way.

He hopes to complete the trek in a fortnight.

Anthony said: "I have previously walked the Mary Towneley Loop twice to practice for another long-distance walk I was planning.

"Once I have completed the coast-to-coast, I hope to do the Whitby to Hull walk, again raising money for charity."

Anyone wanting to donate to Anthony's fundraiser can contact VIC on 01706 833180.



Amanda said: "After the success of 'We'll Meet Again' we decided to do this for the anniversary of the NHS.

"It was really hard for the choir because they could not hear each other singing and they didn't think it would

work; but it did.

"It was also a lot of work for Sam combining everything together

"We posted the finished piece on the VIC Facebook page for everyone to see."



# Allotment ready for crops



*VIC member Joe Davis*



**OUR Helmshore allotment has been transformed thanks to the hard work of Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth and a team of volunteers.**

The global pandemic meant work on the allotment had been put to one side, but Steve, with help from Joe Davis and Jacko Pearce, decided it was time to take action.

After two weeks of hard graft, all six raised beds which were overgrown were cleared ready for planting with a selection of plants that were donated by veterans' charity Dig In North West.

Steve said: "We were given fruit trees, cabbage

plants, courgettes, tomatoes, chillis and more.

"I had volunteers who helped me and I now want to set up an organised team to be able to look after the allotment in the future."

Steve has also learnt how to look after the existing fruit shrubs on the allotment and will be pruning the gooseberry bushes in winter to encourage fruit for next year.

A risk assessment of the area has been carried out and tools, locks and work surfaces have been disinfected. Anyone who wants to get involved in a team to maintain the allotment can call VIC on 01706 833180.



*Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth*

## Snap happy

**AN ONLINE photography course is successfully encouraging participants to explore and capture the world on their doorstep.**

Developing Veterans Online Photography is a course held over Zoom and delivered by Emma Holt.

Every couple of weeks the members are given a different word to take photographs to: shape, pattern and texture, contrast and leading lines.

Chief Executive Amanda Walton said: "If anyone still wants to join in, they are welcome to do so and all the sessions so far are on our Facebook page and so they can catch up. To join just contact our administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180."

It is funded by a Lancashire Covid-19 Support Fund grant administered by Lancashire Community Foundation.

## Nursery and vets form link

**A NURSERY school and VIC are forging closer links thanks to a bug 'mansion' and bench.**

Staff at Mulberry Roots Nursery, which like VIC is based in Bury Road, Haslingden, asked for a large bug house to be made for the children to fill.

Veterans In Production created the 'mansion', which is designed to help the children learn more about insects and the nursery provided VIC with a donation.

While collecting the bug mansion, staff saw a bench that veteran Brian McEvoy was renovating.

Brian, who is being supported by VIC through the Building Better Opportunities, Changing Futures project, said: "The bench had been built by a member a few years ago but it had not been finished off.

"Operations Manager Bob Elliott instructed me on how to sand the bench down and I did

so by hand and filled in where the screw heads were to make it smooth for the children to sit on.

"I had just painted my parents' garage so had undercoat and mint green paint left over and that went on the bench."

He then decorated it with bees, humming birds and butterflies by stencilling and painting and made a floral stencil from flowers on his bedroom curtain.

The alphabet and numbers completed the makeover.

Nursery Manager Danielle Tomlinson said: "We are collecting items from outside at the moment, twigs and leaves, to go into our bug hotel and when we saw the bench we just loved it. It is too nice to go outside so we have put it in the corridor and the children love sitting on it."

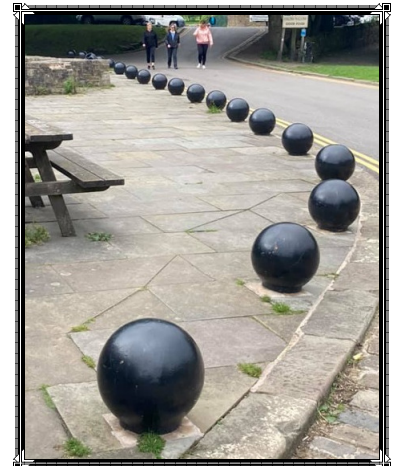
It is hoped, once restrictions



*VIC member Brian McEvoy with Danielle*

ease, the nursery and veterans can work more closely together. Brian has been invited to run an art class with children and it is hoped the nursery children can also visit the VIC Centre.

The Building Better Opportunities, Changing Futures project at VIC is run by Transformational Coach Gill Hughes who works intensively with veterans looking at all aspects of their life .



*Carol Duckworth's photo*



## ROSSENDALE

Activities are held at the VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL, unless otherwise stated.

**Outreach Service** OPEN FROM AUG 3

**MONDAY-FRIDAY**

9am-4.30pm

For a home appointment call 01706 833180

**MONDAY**

**Crafty Chatters**

10am-12 noon

**WEDNESDAY**

**Allotment and Veterans in Production**

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

**Art Class**

2pm-4pm

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

**THURSDAY**

**Woodworking Course**

10am-3pm

**THURSDAY**

**Computer and IT help drop-in**

11am-3pm

**VIC Choir (weekly)**

6.30-8.30pm

**FRIDAY**

**Art Group and drop-in**

10am-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 art class's** Contact Darren 01706 833180.

**Walking Group, Social Outings and**

**Outdoor Activities** These are held every

**THURSDAY**. Visit the Events section on our

VIC Facebook page or the VIC website and

follow the link to *Projects and Activities*.

9.30am-11.30pm

Ebenezer's Coffee Shop, The Old Chapel,

Ebenezer's Terrace, Billington, BB7 9NN.

## BURNLEY AND PENDLE

**Outreach Service**

**TUESDAY - alternate weeks**

Breakfast Club at Burnley FC in the

Community Cafe, Charter Walk.

9am-11am

Contact 01706 833180 for dates of outreach

at Burnley FC in the Community, Armed

Forces Support Group, Holmefield House,

Gisburn Road, Barrowford, at Morrisons in

Nelson and Asda in Colne.

## HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

**The Sandbag Cafe and drop in**

**TUESDAY**

10am-noon

Sandbag House, Taylor Street, Heywood

OL10 1EE

**VIC Outreach**

**TUESDAY**

12.30pm-4.30pm

Middleton Gardens, M14 1AB

**The Mess Tin - cafe and drop in**

1pm-2.30pm

The Lighthouse Project, Middleton Shopping

Centre, M24 1AB.

**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 and Art Group** OPEN

**FRIDAY**

**Outreach Service**

10.30am-3pm

## Want to help?

To donate to support the work of VIC please

visit our website and click on the secure

Virgin Money Giving link

[www.veteransincommunities.org/donate.html](http://www.veteransincommunities.org/donate.html)

## RIBBLE VALLEY

**Outreach Service**

**TUESDAYS**

9.30am-11.30pm

Ebenezer's Coffee Shop, The Old Chapel,

Ebenezer's Terrace, Billington, BB7 9NN.

## VIC – 01706 833180

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**Project Worker Ray Sharkey**

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**Transformational Coach Gill Hughes**

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07741 902 411

**Volunteer Support Worker Mel Fitzgerald**

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**Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell**

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**Outdoor Activities Co-ordinator Ivy Limbrick**

ivylimbrick@vic.org.uk

**Sessional Worker Bernard Tighe**

bernardtighe@vic.org.uk

**VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde**

barryhyde@vic.org.uk

## Contacts

**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@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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