

VIC Newsletter

VIC Battlefields tour 2024

ELEVEN veterans were left humbled after they walked in the footsteps of their forebears on an emotional four-day Battlefields tour of Northern France.

The experience was filled with sights and sounds, history and remembrance and all were moved by the final service at Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium.

Members of VIC had been talking about the tour for several years, and the 80th anniversary of D-Day was the ideal opportunity.

They walked on Juno beach, where so many Canadian soldiers came across in landing craft on D-Day and some British soldiers. They paid their respects and couldn't even imagine what they went through.

It was to be every bit as thought-provoking and hard hitting as they expected.

Veterans from the Army, RAF and French Foreign Legion completed 1,700 miles in the VIC Minibus with Operations Manager Bob Elliott and Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell sharing the driving.

The veterans laid wreaths at the Bayeux War

Cemetery, the British Normandy Memorial, Thiepval Memorial and the final one at Menin Gate, when Pioneer Corps veteran Phil Speddy also paraded the VIC standard while Essex Caledonian Pipe Band played.

Also in attendance was the 19th Regiment Royal Artillery and students from Dumfries High School.

***Juno Beach
 Arromanches
 Merville Battery
 Longues sur Mer***

At Merville Battery Bob Brindley, from the VIC Model Railway club, which meets at the Accrington Drop-In, had researched it and gave an account.

The location is going to be the subject of a diorama the group is going to make.

He said: "On Juno Beach there were 80 per cent casualties – one soldier was killed for every yard advanced."

When they visited Arromanches, the veterans could still see the remains of the concrete Mulberry Harbour that the British sailed across the English Channel before sinking it to make a port.

The sights, sounds and feel of war was brought to life when they visited the 360 degree museum above Arromanches.

The tour continued to Longues-sur-Mer where the harsh situation faced by former VIC members who were among those to land on the beaches on D-Day became a reality.

Above the cliff is a preserved German gun battery still in position.





Pegasus Bridge/ Café Gondrée

History has always been a passion for Scots Guard veteran and VIC Project Worker Ray Sharkey.

He said: "I have never been to the battlefields before, so it was a no-brainer when this was being planned. I have done a lot of study and I read history for pleasure."

For Ray, the most important part was visiting Pegasus Bridge as it was critical to defeating the Nazi army

who had invaded in France. This led to the end of the Second World War.

Ray said: "It was iconic because a glider flown by Staff Sergeant John Wallwork landed right beside the bridge, it's nose nudging through the German barbed wire. It was described as the 'most exceptional piece of flying' in the whole war."

Three gliders landed in total and the 128 troops were able to stop the bridge being

detonated and captured a couple of hundred German soldiers.

Ray said: "Seeing that was second to none as it was so pivotal."

The VIC party dined in Café Gondrée, next to the bridge, where the host Madame Gondrée had served German soldiers, but never revealed that she knew German and so understood all their conversations, then passed the information on to the Resistance.



Ray said: "They captured both bridges Pegasus over the canal

and the river bridge and it was code-named Ham and Jam."



Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "Everywhere we went we had conversations and people were interested in who we were."

While at Thiepval Memorial veteran Graham Limb helped someone to find their relative's name and at Merville Battery he was chatting to a man when he brought out a photograph, which was of Graham's Commanding Officer when he served in the French Foreign Legion.

Thiepval War Memorial

For 14th/20th Kings Hussar Ron Flowers the visit to Thiepval Memorial will be forever etched.

He said: "It was unbelievable. It was a beautiful clear day and the sky was crystal clear, there were also not too many people there."

"I have a keen interest in the Great War, I work in the Fusilier Museum archives researching histories, most of which are First World War soldiers a great number of whom appear on the monument at Thiepval."

"I had never been to the battlefields and never to France, I have been to Belgium as my aunt is from there. I have been interested in history from my youth. I worked for 12 -13 years in the

Police Museum in Manchester and learnt how to research and talk about history and I deliver talks.

"This was personal, but having been there gave me another angle to develop my talks. I now know where people are talking about, having seen it personally. It meant a lot."

On the Somme, Ron's grandfather – Pops – Albert Hugh Blanchard Flowers was in the trenches when his comrade was shot through the head, as his friend lay dying, Albert found an address book and he wrote to Daisy Smith, to inform her that her boyfriend had died in battle. They began writing to each other, became penpals, and later married.



British Normandy Memorial



Remembering the fallen



**British
Normandy
Memorial**



**Thiepval
War
Memorial**



Bayeux War Cemetery

Menin Gate

All who were present on the battlefields tour were moved by the visit to Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium, to observe the Last Post, lay a wreath and take part in the ceremony.

For many, it was the most important place they visited.

Veteran Paul Willcock, accompanied by Graham Limb laid a wreath on behalf of VIC while Phil Speddy paraded the charity's standard.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "Menin Gate, it was very moving. People are still coming from all over Europe to take part in the daily service and witness the Last Post and it was important to see that schoolchildren are also attending and observing."

For Pioneer Corps veteran Phil it was a great honour being asked to carry the standard.

He said: "Rarely are we afforded time, perhaps health or wealth, to attend such events, so I'd like to firstly extend my gratitude to VIC for hosting it."

"To each in attendance, I will hold dear and look back with great fondness at our sharing of this poignant window in time."



"Your company, candour and dare I say, wit was warmly received on all fronts. A trip where camaraderie and friendship flourished within a high state of remembrance and gratitude for the sacrifices made by our forefathers. Lest we forget."

Royal Ordnance Corps veteran Paul and his wife Sam both said their highlight was Menin Gate. He said: "Taking part in the ceremony at Menin Gate was definitely a privilege."

Royal Artillery veteran Darren Horsnell said: "For me the most powerful memory was Menin Gate. I wasn't expecting it to be as emotional as it was because I have done so many Last Posts before. There was just something about it."

"The whole week opened my eyes to just how many people suffered, especially the forgotten soldiers."



Administrator Amy Thompson, who helped with organising the trip, was given a handmade poppy plate as a thank you.

A generous benefactor paid for one veteran to make the trip and they have kindly offered to subsidise places at future tours.

VIC is planning further separate trips to the First World War Battlefields and Normandy Beaches with both tours ending at Menin Gate.



Ring stolen in burglary

A BEREAVED Falklands Veteran is desperate for the return of a distinctive amethyst and diamond engagement ring which was stolen from the top of a wicker casket containing his fiancée's ashes.

VIC Volunteer Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell, from Haslingden, returned to his home on Sunday Sept 22 at 10.30am, after being away fundraising at a fishing match for the charity to find a bedroom bedside cabinet was open.

Darren, who suffers with PTSD after service, initially thought his daughter might have visited, but then discovered other items had also been taken in the burglary.

In total, cash and property worth £5,500 was stolen.

Darren's fiancée Tracey



Vick died from cancer four years to the day of the theft and Darren has struggled to cope with her loss.

He said: "When I went in the front room, I noticed the blind leading to the back had been ruffled and then, I turned around and saw that the cabinet where I keep my fiancée's ashes was open. I didn't notice her ring was gone until about half an hour later then I was searching everywhere for it.

"The ring had been on top of the wicker casket where her ashes are kept and the order of service from her funeral is also there. They must have known the significance of what they had taken.

"They also took money and a 15-charm bracelet of Tracey's along with my iPad I use for art and a tablet from VIC.

"I am not bothered about everything else that has been taken, all I want is to get Tracey's ring back and I am offering a reward.

"Police said they believe the house was broken into during the day as other burglaries had also been reported.

"If anyone knows who has the ring, please can they contact the police.

"Please make sure your home is secured and as protected as it can be because

these people don't care who they steal from, what they steal and nor do they care about the damage it does to their victims."

Darren and Tracey first met in London when they were children and later in life met up again and became a couple.

Tracey was Darren's rock and supported him as he struggled with PTSD; he was devastated when she was diagnosed with cancer and passed away aged just 56.

He had only recently moved to the Housing Association property and, unfortunately, had not switched his insurance policy.

Anyone with any information is asked to contact 01706 237367 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 or email Rossendale.NPT@lancashire.pnn.police.uk

Bernard Munton

IT IS with great sadness we are reporting the death of Second World War Signaller Bernard Munton, aged 101.

His funeral was held on September 16 at Rochdale Crematorium when Standard Bearers escorted his funeral cortege inside the cemetery grounds.

Veterans then formed a guard of honour to greet the cortege.

Bernard served in the Royal Signals from 1942-1946 seeing service in South Africa, Persia, India, Egypt and finally at the War Office.

During this time, he received many Top Secret signals that were sent directly from the War Office. Bernard even managed to keep some copies of these Top Secret signals for himself.

His family would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Veterans, Veteran Breakfast Clubs, Associations and Communities for all the support and kind messages of condolences they have received following the passing of Bernard, which they have found very special and humbling.

The Nation owes so much to Bernard and his generation. Thank you.



Cabbage leaves, beetroot, cauliflowers and carrots were harvested from our allotment by volunteer Jack.

The ground is now being prepared for next year's crop.



Dedication for Standard

A BIG thank you to The Rev Stephen Brown for leading a short Standard Dedication Service at St Peter's Church, Laneside, Haslingden.

He is retiring from the church this month and has always been a supporter of VIC and the Royal British Legion, and leads the Remembrance Service in Haslingden.

We would like to thank Stephen for managing to fit our Dedication Service in before his retirement.

Since being introduced last year, our standard has been in attendance at many funerals and services and our Standard Bearer Jacko Pearce has done a great job.



Creature comforts

Christmas

THIS year's VIC Christmas meal will be at the Grand Royal Bistro and Bar, Waterfoot.

On Wednesday December 18 at noon, VIC members are invited to join in a celebration meal at the former Royal Hotel on Bacup Road.

The menu is on our Facebook page and the cost will be £19 for two courses or £23 for three courses. A £10 non-refundable deposit needs to be paid to VIC by November 22 and payment in full by December 2.

To book contact Administrator Amy Thompson on 01706 833180.

Bench gift

AS A thank you for a generous donation of £1,500 which benefited VIC, the charity donated a memorial bench.

Last year, Rossendale Rotary Club gave the money to VIC and it was used by our bi-weekly art group and for the Veterans In Production project.

A special remembrance bench has now been securely fitted at Lumb Millennium Green, overlooking the pond and is complete with a plaque.



CARING members of our craft group have been using up donated oddments of wool to create blankets and bedding for pets being cared for by a charity.

The RSPCA centre in Altham gratefully received the latest donations from VIC Crafty Chatters group.

Member Janet Attwell, whose parents and brothers served in the forces and is a former NHS administrator, said: "We often get donations from the public, for which we are grateful, but it can be just odd balls of wool so not enough to complete a pattern.

"We used these up by making blankets to donate to the charity and we also had some balls made from cotton and so we made them into dishcloths. We want to say thank you to everyone for their donations and show them that we put all the wool given to us to good use."

Foster Co-ordinator at the RSPCA Lancashire East Branch Animal Centre Sue Abraham was very grateful to receive the knitted and crocheted donations.

She said: "The cats love the soft wool blankets because they like to kneed the wool and they are also nice and cuddly for the dogs we have."



"The blankets will go with the cats and dogs as they are rehomed because they get attached to them once they have their scent on them."

Sue also made an appeal for new foster carers to come forward to help the charity look after cats and dogs.

She said: "We are desperate for temporary foster homes for both dogs and cats within an hour of our centre.

"The charity provides the foster carers with everything so they can look after the cat or dog."

Anyone who can help can contact 01254 231118 or email fostering@rspca-lancseast.org.uk

Any crafter interested in joining the group can call in on a Monday morning at the VIC Centre in Bury Road, Haslingden. from 10am to noon.



Garden rescuers

A VIC gardening squad has been on hand to respond to members of VIC unable to sort their own gardens because of health conditions.

One garden needed weeding and strimming so the veteran could gain access to his sheds.

They were also thanked after carrying out extensive works to create safe steps and outside areas at another home.



Singers raise cash for VIC

OUR choir was in fine song at Haslingden Tesco and raised a splendid £204.49.

A big thank you to Derek and his daughter, who did a fantastic job with the collection bucket, and to the store's Community Champion Wendy Howarth.

The VIC Choir will be back singing at Tesco Burnley on October 5.



THROTTLE TWISTERS MCC PRESENT:
 ALL PROCEEDS FOR
VETERANS IN COMMUNITIES
CHARITY ROCK NIGHT!

FEATURING:
SMUDGE
 7:30 - 11 P.M.
FRI OCT 18TH



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, Helmsshore. 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

9.30am-11.30am

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.

HYNDBURN

Outreach / Drop-In/ Model Railway Club

FRIDAY 10am-3pm

VIC Hyndburn, Accrington Arndale Centre, BB5 1EX.

Accrington Stanley Breakfast Club/ Drop-In

LAST WEDNESDAY EVERY MONTH

9.30am-11am

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

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

Chief Executive Amanda Walton

amandawalton@vic.org.uk

Operations Manager Bob Elliott

bobelliott@vic.org.uk 07961 554 006

Administrator Amy Thompson

amythompson@vic.org.uk

Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth

stevebutterworth@vic.org.uk

Project Worker Ray Sharkey

raysharkey@vic.org.uk 07741 902 188

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren

Horsnell

darrenhorsnell@vic.org.uk

VIC Choir Bookings Barry Hyde

barryhyde@vic.org.uk

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

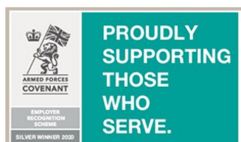
Veterans In Communities
Charity Number 1151194

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