

# Artist Darren wins Spirit award

**FALKLANDS veteran Darren Horsnell has won the regional heat of Britain Has Spirit and is now in the running for the national £25,000 prize.**

Darren is VIC's Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator and was nominated for the award by Outreach Worker Claire Wright.

She used social media to keep the spotlight on his nomination by posting messages on Facebook and tweeting.

This resulted in Darren receiving votes from veterans all over the world including Canada, America and Australia.

Darren said: "I feel incredibly humbled that so many people have taken the time to vote for me.

"I am absolutely delighted as I didn't expect to win. I didn't even know I was being entered for the award until Claire started asking me details of my service record and I quizzed her."

Darren received more than 65 per cent of the total votes easily beating the two other North West opponents.

Along with nine others, he now goes through to the national final to find the



Community Hero of the Year who will win £25,000, to be used to further a local good cause. As regional winner he will now enjoy a fun experience day.

Darren has Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which has been attributed to the incidents he witnessed in the Falklands. While recuperating at Combat Stress, he discovered art therapy and found he had a hidden talent.

Now he runs popular painting sessions at VIC, which are always sold out, and he also set up an art group.

The group, under the

guidance and experience of Darren, has grown over the last three years and members have exhibited their work. It has also been recognised as good practice by a number of organisations.

Darren's mental and physical condition have improved substantially and he is no longer reliant on the statutory services that previously supported him. He has become a positive role model for others with similar mental health and transitional difficulties.

Darren said: "I have always said that art is a better form of therapy than

any medication.

"I get so much enjoyment out of teaching others; it lifts me up."

VIC Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "I have known Darren since 2011 as he was one of the first veterans to come to the organisation.

"He had a total lack of confidence, was insecure, did not respect himself and felt worthless. Darren was a shell compared to the man he is now.

"His confidence is now through the roof and he has a sense of pride in himself. His passion was always art and we managed to get some money to start a small art group on a Friday with Darren running it, which is now flourishing.

"His journey has been a phenomenal one and he has got through the regional heat on his own merit."

Voting in the final will begin in September.

## Soldiers freedom march through Haslingden

**SOLDIERS will be marching through the streets of Haslingden on Thursday July 21.**

The Duke of Lancaster's Regiment will be holding a Freedom of Rossendale parade.

A church service will be held at 11am at St James

Parish Church and at 12 noon the regiment will form up on Regent Street ready to parade through the town.

The parade will continue on to Bury Road, and then - pass the VIC Centre before going on to the junction with Manchester Road.

The soldiers will march to

the war memorial at Greenfield Gardens where the Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Granville Morris and the Vice Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire Colonel Alan Jolley and the Honorary Colonel of the Regiment will inspect the parade and take the salute.

From there the soldiers will continue to march up Manchester Road, along Warner Street and on to St Peter's Avenue via Helmsshore Road where it will disband.

As part of the parade, VIC will be opening its doors from 10am to 2pm.

# Carnival capers

Liz Henson Photography



**VETERANS were out in force at Bacup and Stacksteads Carnival when they arranged an assault course in the park and were singing on a float.**

Wynsors kindly provided a lorry and driver for the VIC Singing Group to decorate and they sang as the procession made its way from Burnley Road through the town centre and on to New Line in Bacup.

In Moorlands Park we set up an assault course for children and Patrick O'Reilly and Mark Culshaw brought along the living museum.

Chief Executive Liz

Hamilton said: "The museum doesn't just contain modern day kit but also items soldiers used to wear and use. It proved very popular with many people trying the clothes on and learning more about how things have changed."

Musical director Peter Webster said: "The carnival brought a lot of good memories for me as the last time I was in a carnival was 35 years ago when I was but a wee boy doing pantomimes."

He thanked everyone for their hard work in making the event a success.



## Marking Armed Forces Week

**TO LAUNCH Armed Forces Week VIC members attended the official Flag Raising Service at Rawtenstall.**

VIC also organised a Haslingden Flag Raising Service at Greenfield Memorial Gardens. The Mayor of Rossendale Councillor Granville Morris raised the flag on both occasions.

After the Haslingden Service, the VIC Centre was open for a networking lunch.



## Busy month for walkers

**FOUR walks have been enjoyed by members of VIC.**

On one they also foraged for food with Prospects of Accrington. Members learnt which wild plants were edible and collected their own food to make into elderflower fritters. These were served with wild garlic pesto on bread, salad and wilted leaves

Gorgeous weather

made the four-mile walk to Darwen Tower enjoyable and members went on a gentle 3.5 mile Gawthorpe Circular walk. This was followed by a visit to Gawthorpe Hall.

Finally, another beautiful day meant VIC and the Prince's Trust took a trip to the limestone pavement of Malham Cove.

See our website for all activities.

## Singing in the rain

OUR singing group perfected the art of Singing in the Rain at a fundraising garden party at the home of member Liz Taylor.

The singers were also at King George's Hall, supporting teen band FairPlay who have launched a debut single to raise money for The Sophie Lancaster Foundation.

Later that same night they



were on stage at the Top Club at a VIC benefit concert with Rusty and Quick Fix, which raised £400. A big thank you to the organisers.

They also performed at Asda in Rawtenstall when £280.89 was raised.

## Courses

**SEPTEMBER will see the start of three further courses run by Lancashire Adult Learning.**

If you want to book a place on the weekly computers for beginners or creative writing courses or the monthly wellbeing course; contact 01706 833180.

## Auction

VIC took part in the Small Charities auction on Ebay.

Several donated raffle

prizes were auctioned and they raised more than £100. Thank you everyone for bidding.

## Needle felt

**A NEEDLE felting workshop will be held at the VIC Centre on Saturday July 30 at 10am.**

The cost will be £25 per person which includes a starter kit, a small pack of wool and instructions to make an animal.

Call 01706 833180 to book a place.



# Vigil marks Somme



**A TWELVE-hour vigil was held to remember the fallen from The Battle of The Somme 100 years ago.**

The commemoration was observed between 7.30pm on Thursday June 30 and 7.30am on Friday July 1 with whistles blown at 7.28am.

The sound not only marked the exact time a century ago when the soldiers were ordered over the top, out of the trenches into no man's land only for many to be gunned down, it also started a two-minute silence at the centre.

Chief Executive Liz Hamilton said: "At one stage when the VIC Singing Group performed in the conference room we had around 40 people in the centre.

"We had permission to show a special Somme film from the Imperial

War Museum and VIC Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell painted, veteran Dave Almond, who makes walking sticks, showed people how to whittle wood and poetry was written and debated."

Veterans Pat O'Reilly and Mark Culshaw saluted with replica weapons when the service was held at 7am on Friday.

Several members of VIC managed to stay awake for the full 12 hours, but on Friday the centre was manned by a skeleton staff as many headed home to sleep.

Councillors, former councillors, members of the community and clergy all joined the veterans to observe the vigil.

Liz added: "It was very important for VIC to remember The Somme, it was the bloodiest battle fought by local men during the First World War.

"For our tomorrow they really did give their today and veterans and civilians owe them a great debt."



*Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to take part in The Somme Vigil.*

*Please also thank Liz and all the veterans for their warm welcome. I was so pleased to be able to pay my respects to the fallen in this way.*

*I have been to many Remembrance Services over the years in many different places, visited dozens of cemeteries and memorials but this centenary has been especially poignant; a once in a lifetime event. I had to bite my lip very hard on hearing the whistle in the morning.*

*I was very impressed with the work of the centre and to see how much the veterans appreciated this little corner of calm in their troubled lives.*

*I spoke to an RAF regiment veteran and he chatted for some time about how he is making slow but positive progress in dealing with his issues, both physical and mental. I was so interested in his art work and poetry and was concentrating so much on listening to him that I have forgotten his name.*

*Do pass on my best wishes to him and my hopes that he will keep making good progress. The same goes for all those I met; they certainly have the best opportunity for support within such a caring group.*

*If I can be of any assistance with fundraising events or assisting you in any way in the future please do not hesitate to contact me.*

*Thank you once again.*

**Anne King**



## Moving concert

**A MUSICAL, dramatic and moving concert was enjoyed by members of VIC to commemorate The Battle of The Somme at Heaton Park, Manchester.**

Admin Officer Tracy Keir said: "It was absolutely fantastic.

"They had a combined children's choir made up of different schools from various areas who had come together to sing.

"There were different singers who sang songs from that period of time, but not just English songs, German ones too.

"Then there was a contemporary art and dance work piece entitled 'Pals' which was incredibly moving and had the audience feeling goose bumps."

The concert also featured a range of letters, poems and diary entries depicting the lives of those affected by the Somme, including a specially commissioned poem 'Listening Post', which was read by author and broadcaster Lemn Sissay.

Just as the concert finished a perfect rainbow appeared.

## Rehomed

VIC helped a veteran to find a new flat in Rochdale.

As he had previously been homeless and living in a hostel, he did not have anything for his new home.

Chief Executive Liz Hamilton said: "He needed everything from a kettle to a bath mat so VIC appealed for voluntary donations of items and we were able to help him furnish his flat."

## Recycled

**A NEW craft class on a Wednesday is helping members recycle.**

Creative Crafts is run by Lancashire Adult Learning from 10am to 12.30pm each week. Decoupage and creating tea light holders are just two of the many crafts members have undertaken.

A further course will start in September.

## Hikers sought

**ARE you up for a serious challenge to scale Yorkshire's three peaks and raise money for Veterans In Communities?**

Alternate Forces and VIC are appealing for members to join the fundraiser on Wednesday August 10 at 5.30am.

The challenge will be completed over 12 hours and participants need to have a good level of fitness. A safety vehicle will be provided to cover the checkpoints.

Anyone wanting to take up the challenge should contact VIC for sponsor forms and details of online fundraising; call 01706 833180.



## ROSSENDALE

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

### Outreach Services

#### MONDAY-FRIDAY

11am-1pm

**WEDNESDAY by appointment only call 01706 833180 to book**

10-12 noon

Central Methodist Church, Burnley Road, Bacup, OL13 9AH.

#### MONDAY

10.30am - 12 noon

**Crafty Chatters**

#### TUESDAY - second week only

7pm

**Quiz**

#### WEDNESDAY

2pm-4pm

**Art Classes**

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

#### THURSDAY

Morning

**Rossendale Citizens' Advice (weekly) Shelter (second Thursday only)**

6.30-8.30pm

**Singing Group (weekly)**

#### TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

11am-3pm

**Art Group and drop-in**

#### FRIDAY

Morning

**Lancashire Wellbeing Service**

#### Walking Group

Walks will be held on the 2nd and 4th **Thursdays**. Weather permitting.

#### Family Walk

Held on third **Saturday** at 10.30am.

#### Outdoor Activities

Log on to our website and follow the link on *Projects and Activities* to see what we have planned and how to book a place. A full leaflet is available

#### Positive Art

Our art shop is now based at VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL, contact 01706 833180 for details.

## PENDLE

### Outreach Service

#### MONDAY

10am-noon

**first week only** Pendle Rise Shopping

Centre, Nelson, BB9 9SL.

**Second week only** Booths Supermarket Barrowford, BB9 6HJ.

**Third week only** Morrisons, Nelson, BB9 7UZ.

**Fourth week only** Co-op, Barnoldswick, BB18 6AB.

## HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

### Outreach Service

#### THURSDAYS

10am-12pm

1 Riverside, Rochdale OL16 1UB.

#### WEDNESDAY - every week

**11.30am-1.30**

Lighthouse Project, Cromer Mill Estate, Off Hilton Fold Lane Middleton M24 1AZ.

#### Walking Group

Walks will be held on the 2nd and 4th **Thursdays** and are combined with the Rossendale walking group.

## Contacts

### VIC – 01706 833180

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#### Outreach Worker Claire Wright

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#### Volunteer Outreach Worker Tony Stubbs

tonystubbs@veteransincommunities.org.uk

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

darrenhorsnell@veteransincommunities.org.uk

#### Volunteer Outreach Worker and Music Project

Co-ordinator Peter Webster

peterwebster@veteransincommunities.org.uk

#### 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@ssafa.org.uk

01772 260 462

#### Rossendale Citizens' Advice

03444 889 622

#### The Samaritans

01706 830999 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

01772 426930

#### Veterans UK Free Helpline

0808 1914 218

#### East Lancashire Single Point of

Access via GP or self-referral

01282 657116

VIC supported by:



East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group



Supported by NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group's social investment fund

## Want to help?

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

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

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