

Lewis honoured with Dutch medal

NORMANDY veteran despatch rider Lewis Banham has been honoured with a medal from the Netherlands to thank him for helping liberate the country.

Lewis, 94, attends the VIC art group and social inclusion activities, which have helped him not be housebound.

Although he knew he was to get the medal, VIC had also lined up a surprise – Lewis was reunited with the same model of bike he had ridden across Europe in the 1940s during the Second World War.

Lewis said: "It was a day that I will never forget. I was presented with the medal by Brigadier David Hargreaves, Chairman of the Royal Signals Association, and then they took me downstairs.

"I was amazed to see the bike again. I would have loved to have been able to ride it, but I can't, however they did lift me on to it and when it stopped raining and the bike was outside I got to rev the engine. It felt good."

Seeing the bike again brought memories flooding back for Lewis, who enlisted in the 15th Scottish Infantry Division on April 16 1942 aged 19 just three weeks after marrying his sweetheart Bessie.

Eight weeks' training followed and then he was stationed at a number of barracks across England.

He was serving in the 44th Infantry Division when, on June 13 1944 – seven days after D-Day, he was headed to France.

Lewis was on board a Liberty ship the Empire Duke crossing the English Channel to land in Arromanches along with his M20 bike registration number C5115653.

He said: "One of the most scary things was the landing. The bikes were lowered down onto the landing craft strapped three abreast and then we had to scramble down the nets, but the landing craft had slipped its mooring and we had to get back on board.

"I couldn't swim and when the craft came back there was a swell and you had to time it right to get onto it."

Once on the beach, Lewis had to ride off alone to reach a location while shells showered the sand. He almost never made it when, at first, he rode on the wrong side of the road and nearly ran into a jeep.



He said: "I never made that mistake again. I had rations for 48 hours and it only took 30 minutes for me to get to my destination, a French farmhouse.

"I dug my slit trench and then made a brew using metal plates, solidified methylated spirits and 'compo' tea – tea, sugar and milk combined into a cube."



There were times when the ground was so wet he couldn't dig a trench so instead he would put the bike near a wall, place his bedding roll across the seat and tank, with its raised filler cap, and have an uncomfortable night's sleep.

Lewis and his trusty bike covered thousands of miles across France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany delivering vital messages to the battalions on the front line to ensure the Allied success.

He said: "I recall taking a message one night and I missed the marker telling me where the battalion was. Then at the next crossroads a Sherman tank burst into flames in front of me and I realised I had gone too far and I did an immediate U-turn. About a quarter of a mile back I found the marker and set off across the fields, but I couldn't find the battalion because they were down in their trenches. I lifted a tarpaulin and this soldier inside came out and raised his fist at me."



"Fortunately, he could see I was on his side by my helmet; somehow I came through it all unscathed."

Lewis was also aware that the enemy used tree-lined roads to place wire at neck height to kill or maim motorcyclists so he always carried pliers to disarm the booby traps.

He returned home to Bacup in November 1946, to Bessie and their one-bedroom house on Tong Lane.

They went on to have a son Greg and Lewis now has three grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. Bessie died two years ago after they had celebrated 73 years of marriage.

Next May, Lewis, along with his son and fellow Royal Signals soldier Bill Ogden, whom he met at VIC, will be guests in the Netherlands while next June he will return to the Normandy beaches with the National Lottery.

He said: "Bill has been taking me to VIC every week for last 18 months and I enjoy it.

"Going there has helped me to get out instead of just sitting watching the TV and I enjoy the art group."

Preston Military Show



VETERAN despatch rider Lewis Banham was honoured to take the salute as the White Helmets – The Royal Signals Motorcycle Display Team – gave its last public display.

The work of VIC was showcased at Preston Military Show and Lewis was our very own VIP.

The Crew Van and information stand explained what our organisation is all about and Patrick O'Reilly and Mark Culshaw brought along the popular Living Museum.

Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "We had a great day at Preston Military Show. Lewis had a ball.

"We were extremely busy. Steve Butterworth sold copies of his Pale Maiden CD, Darren Horsnell sold paintings and the Crafty Chatters sold items made at the centre.

"It was a fantastic day not just for VIC but also for Lewis who was escorted all around as a VIP and he took the salute, which he wasn't expecting.

"I would like to thank everyone who came along on the day and supported VIC."

There was also a Battle of Britain flight past.



One small leap

DAREDEVIL Julie Davis made one small leap for womankind followed by a 15,000 feet fall back to terra firma.

Julie, whose dad former firefighter John Edwards is a member of VIC, ticked one off her bucket list when she joined the Black Knights in Cockerham to complete the skydive.

The finance officer with a housing association also raised £1,200 for VIC as she fell to earth.

She said: "It was absolutely awesome and was a wonderful experience. I would have no qualms about doing it again, but that would destroy what was a special experience and I just want it to be a once in a lifetime event."



Obituary: Fred Wellman

OUR condolences to the family of VIC member Fred Wellman who sadly passed away, aged 86.

Fred was a member of our art group and attended two days a week until he had to go into a home. Fred also joined us on many of the social trips including the Somme Concert in Heaton Park, Yorkshire Sculpture Trail and Illuminasia in Blackpool.

He served in the Dorset Regiment as a regular, wrote a small book on his experiences 'On and Off the Hook' and is featured in a British Pathe film from 1953.

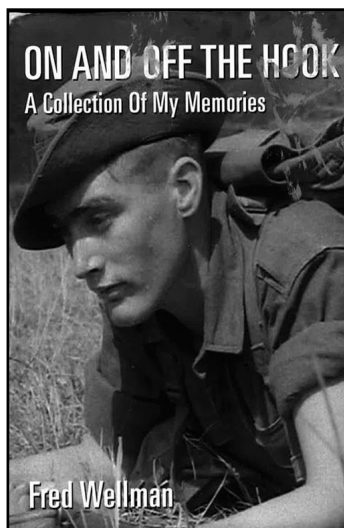


After spending some of his childhood in a Barnardo's home, Fred joined up aged 15 on January 17 1947 at Dorchester barracks.

He joined the Dorchester regiment first before the Dorsets. He served in Austria, Hong Kong, Germany and Cyprus during the troubles.

He was a bandsman, however he was a bit of a lad and subsequently was transferred back into an infantry unit. Fred gained the rank of Lance Corporal.

VIC Outreach Worker Steve Butterworth said: "Fred was a very well regarded and valued member of our organisation, a



regular member of the art group and he liked nothing better than participating in the trips out that are regularly organised. I shall remember him for that special service humour and banter which he never lost."

For funeral arrangements check the VIC Facebook page.



Accolade from RBL



VIC was honoured to receive a prestigious Royal British Legion award recognising our hard work.

The team was selected by The Royal British Legion Greater Manchester and Lancashire Area Team to win the coveted Third Sector Award against very strong opposition

The trophy was presented at a glittering evening at the Village Hotel, Bury, attended by Project Worker Liz Davies.

VIC Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "We were nominated alongside our good friends Dig In North West and Sale Sharks Rugby Club, both organisations that do a tremendous amount of good work for veterans.

"It is an honour that our organisation was selected as the winner and I would like to thank whoever put our charity forward for the award.

"It is wonderful that the hard work and dedication of VIC and our members is being recognised locally, regionally and nationally."



The citation reads:
"Veterans In Communities is one of the many brilliant grassroots organisations that we work with. What sets it apart is its commitment to community and the reintegration of veterans into civilian society.
"VIC offers a wide range of programmes that bring people together, develop skills and provide support and their staff and volunteers are enthusiastic, committed and have a real belief in their work. When you visit VIC you can feel the family environment and the sense of positivity from everyone there and that can only be a good thing for veterans who feel that they need help taking the next step."

... and awards for Tony



VIC Volunteer Outreach Worker Tony Stubbs received awards to recognise the work he carries out as a media ambassador for The Royal British Legion helping to promote and campaign for veterans' services and his work with the Military Veterans' Service.

AGM acknowledges year of achievements for VIC

A PHENOMENALLY busy year saw more than 200 outreach sessions held and more than 120 new members join the organisation.

At our annual general meeting at the VIC Centre in Bury Road, a breakdown of the year's activities was presented by Chief Executive Liz Hamilton on behalf of the Chairman Ronnie Barker.

Liz explained how the organisation has a representation on, and is a key participant in, the Armed Forces

Covenant Groups for Pendle, Burnley and Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale.

The charity was represented at 10 Remembrance and Armistice Day events across the areas where it operates and organised a flag raising ceremony in Haslingden for Armed Forces Week.

Liz said: "VIC is part of an innovative new partnership delivering the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams contract in Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale with a specific role to raise awareness of

ex-services personnel and support identified individuals."

A plethora of walks, activities and social inclusion trips have been held including a visit to Leeds Armouries, a kayaking day and trip to Crosby beach.

Weekly arts and crafts groups are held at the centre and in sheltered accommodation and the charity has two allotments in Helmshore and Middleton.

As well as major grants from key organisations including

the National Lottery, NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups in East Lancashire and Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale, the Armed Forces Covenant and the European Social Fund, VIC also raised funds and received donations.

The popular Singing Group raised £3,260 through collections at public performances and VIC received further donations totalling more than £4,000.

Liz said: "We have to say a huge thank you to our volunteers and also to our trustees.

"Our volunteers are part of the fabric of VIC and they are on every activity and every service that we offer and we are really grateful to them."

The charity was honoured to be a national finalist in the prestigious Soldiering On Awards in the Working Together category and Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell was regional finalist in Britain Has Spirit, which earned him a place in the national final of the competition.



Mayor drops in to open cafe



A NEW Veterans' Drop-in cafe has opened in Heywood run by VIC.

Project Worker Liz Davies was delighted when nearly 50 people attended the opening of The Sandbag Café, based in Sandon House, Taylor Street.

The Mayor of Rochdale Councillor Ian Duckworth, a former Royal Corps of Signals soldier, officially opened the Sandbag Café and many veterans attended.

Liz, a former RAF Police Officer, has been working with VIC since January

She said: "For me,

the highlight of the day was that two local veterans who rarely go out due to ill health actually came to the event and said they can't wait to come again next week.

"While it was fantastic to have almost 50 people attend, I'm more thrilled that we have already had a positive impact on these two people's lives. Fingers crossed we can do the same for lots more lonely and isolated veterans.

"So many people saw the benefits this would bring to veterans in and around Heywood; they



were more than happy to pitch in and do what they could to help me bring it into fruition."

Park Cakes donated a generous selection of cakes for the event, some of the left over cake was then distributed to the homeless by Sue Coates and the ladies

at Sandon House who do a lot to help the homeless and less fortunate.

The café will be open every Tuesday from 10am to noon with a drop-in session for advice and guidance in the last hour.

Breakfast club opens

A NEW breakfast club is being launched in Bumbles Café at Haslingden Community Link on Saturday October 14.

Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club will meet at the Bumbles Cafe on Bury Road every second Saturday from 10am to 12.30pm.

A full breakfast will be served at a cost of £3.50 and serving military personnel and veterans will have the chance to meet up and make new friends.

For more information join the Facebook group Rossendale Armed Forces and Veterans' Breakfast Club.

On song

OUR Singing Group will be in fine voice on Saturday October 21 from 1pm they will be entertaining shoppers at Tesco in Bury.



Festive cards for sale

BEAUTIFUL Christmas Cards created by members of VIC and are on sale at just £3.50 for a set of six.

The cards have been designed by members of the arts and crafts groups at VIC and display a variety of different artistic techniques.

Arts and Crafts Co-ordinator Darren Horsnell has painted a robin, Dave Joddrell painted Christmas decorations and a snowy scene of Stonefold was created by Liz Taylor.

Outdoor Activities Co-ordinator Ivy Limbrick has made a fretwork nativity, Pat Rothwell has painted a Christmas tree and one of the members at the art sessions at Jubilee Court pensioner Nora Yeoman has painted a snowy scene with fawns.

To order a set contact 01706 833180 or call into the VIC Centre at Bury Road, Haslingden.



VETERANS turned out in force despite the weather to support Haslingden Street Fair. Information and awareness stands were held and arts and crafts went on display. Thank you to the VIC Singing Group who switched to an indoor concert when rain put paid to the planned open air performance.



COTS and bedding were donated by VIC and the Crafty Chatters to Burnley Women's Refuge.



Gary completes challenge



Snowdon

A BIG thank you from VIC to 'no salad or lycra' Gary Nicholls for completing the national three peaks.

He set himself the challenge of cycling 500 miles and walking three mountains in five days.

Although he never managed the full cycling quota, he certainly got to the top of Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon within four days, 11 hours and 45 minutes.

And his cycling total was 313 in four days. Online he raised £2,500 for three charities, including VIC.

Gary said: "What an experience I have had. I truly believe that I put everything that I had into this challenge. After all I'm a fat 54 year old that has never ever done a multi-day event before.

"I am glad that I have given it a go, but from now on my challenges, that I set myself, will be limited to single day events.

"I sincerely want to thank everyone that has followed my story, supported me, donated to my charities and talked about my challenge over the last 18 months."

Night out

A FUNDRAISING night will be held at The Cornerstone pub, top floor of the Pioneer Buildings, Bacup, on Saturday November 4 from 8pm-12.30am

Tickets for the night cost £5 and include an artiste, DJ, raffle and meat and potato or cheese and onion pie supper.

It promises to be a great night and all those involved are giving their services free of charge.

For more details contact Bill Ogden on 07835 481855.



Exploring Eden

AN AMAZING social inclusion visit to Eden Camp in North Yorkshire was enjoyed by VIC members.

The former Prisoner of War camp huts have been converted into a museum depicting the history of war and conflicts.

Project Worker Liz Davies said: "It was the first time I had been and it was amazing.

"There was so much to see. We had a wide range of ages attended from Second World War veterans Lewis Banham and Dougie Hocken to my daughter Lauren who is just 24.

"The displays were fantastic and brought back memories, especially seeing bottles of Camp coffee; I remember my grandad drinking that."



Join the walking group

ACTIVE members of VIC took part in two walks to Pendle Sculpture Trail and Witton Park, Blackburn.

An inclement forecast led to VIC visiting Pendle Sculpture Trail and a longer 4.5 miles walk from Witton Park, Blackburn, took in Billinge Hill also took in the memorial to Alfred Wainwright.

Check out the latest outdoor activities on the VIC website.



Gloves sale



QUALITY knitted fingerless gloves have been made by the Crafty Chatters. They are on sale at the VIC Centre at just £3 per pair.



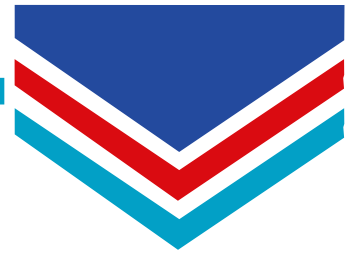
Cave camping

TWO intrepid VIC members spent a night sleeping in a cave in the Lake District.

Joe Davis and Paul Nixon joined Activate for the wild camp trek to Dalton's Cave. Once there the team cooked food on an open fire and camped down for the night inside the cave.

VIC's Crew Van was used for transport and a fantastic time was had by all.





ROSSENDALE

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

Outreach Service

MONDAY-FRIDAY

10am-3pm

To book a home appointment call 01706 833180.

MONDAY

Crafty Chatters

10.30am-12.30pm

TUESDAY (2nd Saturday only)

Veterans' Breakfast Club (from Oct 14)

10am-12-30pm

Bumbles' Cafe, Haslingden Community Link, Bury Road, Haslingden BB4 5PG

WEDNESDAY

Community Arts and Crafts

10am-noon

Computer Functional Skills

9.30am-12.30pm

Art Class

2pm-4pm

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

THURSDAY

Rossendale Citizens' Advice (weekly)

by appointment only

Singing Group (weekly)

6.30-8.30pm

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

Art Group and drop-in

11am-3pm

Walking Group

Walks will be held on alternate **THURSDAYS**, weather permitting. Log on to VIC Facebook page to see where the next walks will be.

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 the VIC Centre, Bury Road, Haslingden, BB4 5PL, contact 01706 833180 for details.

HEYWOOD, MIDDLETON AND ROCHDALE

The Sandbag Cafe and drop in

TUESDAY

10am-noon – drop in 11am-noon

Sandon House, Taylor Street, Heywood

OL10 4EF.

TUESDAY AND SOME FRIDAYS

11am-3pm

Allotment, Lattig Crescent, Langley,

Middleton M24 4LU.

Call Tony 07534 381723.

THURSDAY

9.30-10.30am Rochdale Breakfast Club,

Rochdale Town Hall Bistro OL16 1AB.

10.30am-noon

VIC Outreach

1 Riverside, Rochdale OL16 1UB.

THURSDAY

11.30am-1.30pm

Lighthouse Project, Unit S6b/c Middleton

Shopping Centre, Limetrees Road,

Middleton M24 4EL.

Walking Group

Walks will be held on alternate **THURSDAYS** and are combined with Rossendale.

HYNDBURN

Outreach Service

MONDAYS OR TUESDAYS (check with VIC)

1-3pm

Second floor Accrington Market Hall.

VIC – 01706 833180

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Outdoor Activities Co-ordinator Ivy Limbrick

ivylimbrick@vic.org.uk

Singing Group Bookings Barry Hyde

barryhyde@vic.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

0300 456 2552 Mon to Fri 10am-4pm

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

PENDLE

Outreach Service

10am-noon

MONDAY - first week only

Place de Creil, near Wilkos, Nelson.

MONDAY - second week only

Market Place Car park, Town Square Colne.

MONDAY - third week only

Town Square, Albert Road, Barnoldswick.

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 supported by:



East Lancashire Clinical Commissioning Group



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

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