

Liberation ride to be recreated thanks to Covenant funding



A band of brothers from the Queens Lancashire Regiment have set up the Veterans Living History Museum and hub.

Volunteers Wayne Hester, Jimmy Elsworth, Patrick O'Reilly, and David McLeary served together in the QLR and now run the museum. They are assisted by Dennis Rawes who served in the Lancashire Regiment which became the QLR.

Two grants from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust have enabled Patrick's dream from seven years ago to reach fruition. At that time, he was collecting military memorabilia and attending organised events with other veterans' charities. Two years ago, the team set up a Community Interest Company and Wayne's brother offered to

rent them the buildings, on Ordnance Street, Blackburn, used during the Second World War to make military ammunition.

In March 2020, VLHM received £20,000 from the Armed Forces Covenant so plans for the museum could progress. A Land Rover was purchased and a trailer was fitted out as a mobile museum ready to visit schools, cadet forces and events. Then Covid-19 put things on hold. Wayne said: "We have just been informed that a second Armed Forces Covenant grant to Tackle Loneliness and Isolation has been granted so we now have £70,000 for a two-year project called Operation Banham."

Lewis Banham is a 98-year-old veteran despatch rider who was in the D-Day landings and then made his way across Europe on his 500cc BSA M20 delivering

vital messages to front-line troops. Wayne explained: "We are going to recreate Lewis's story by building a bike identical to the one Lewis used, landing on Gold Beach on June 12 2022 and travelling across Europe, like he did, staying as near to the checkpoints that he did and arriving in Berlin six to seven days later. On the second Wednesday of each month we will have veterans coming to the museum to work on the motorbike."

Project Lead for Lancashire Armed Forces Covenant Hub Ian Barber said: "This is an exciting project based in Blackburn with Darwen which will engage with younger veterans through the history and experiences of a local older veteran. I'm pleased the Covenant Fund Trust have provided the funding to make this a reality and wish all involved the best of luck."



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YOUR COVENANT AT WORK



THE RIGHT TRACK

A project in Burnley to help homeless veterans has already assisted 28 armed forces personnel, including seven who are now successfully living independently. They are also working with a number of families in the community assisting them with everything including welfare, benefits and mental health.

Healthier Heroes Community Interest Company was set up by Managing Director Andrew Powell, who served in the infantry for 16 years in the Queens Lancashire Regiment and then the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment, leaving in 2013.

Andrew and his team of seven paid employees and 10 active volunteers run Bancroft House on Elizabeth Street providing supported accommodation for 21 homeless veterans and those leaving the criminal justice system. They are also supporting residents with mental health, welfare, education, employment, and training to enable them to be fully prepared for moving back into the community.

He said: "I have had my own struggles with mental health and addiction and so have had real life experience of what some of the veterans are going through. We have been full since week three and we have a further 15 on the waiting list when places become available."

Although the project is self-sustaining, grants of £35k from the Positive Pathway Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust, £30k from the Veterans' Foundation and a joint bid with UCLan and Dig In for £75k from the Armed Forces Covenant, have helped enrich the veterans' experience with innovative programmes and intervention work.

BREAKFAST CLUB TO OPEN

Ex-Gunner Gez Goddard can't wait for May as, hopefully, the Penwortham Armed Forces & Veterans' Breakfast Club will be able to open for good.

Gez, who served with 22 Air Defence in Northern Ireland and Cyprus, said: "I spent 12-18 months in the planning and we were originally going to open on the first Sunday after the March lockdown, so that didn't happen. In between lockdowns, we got back for four meetings and we had 12 veterans at the last breakfast club."

While they have not been able to have face-to-face meetings at The Fleece Inn in Liverpool Road, Gez has been organising online activities supported by his wife Pat.

He said: "We meet on Facebook



Teams for a chat and then we have a quiz for anyone who wants to take part. If I can help even just one person to get out of their home and to enjoy a bit of banter with the lads then it has been worthwhile."

As soon as the club can return and people are allowed to travel, Gez is planning a minibus trip to Eden Camp in North Yorkshire to the museum. For more information visit the Facebook group - Penwortham AFVBC.

COD ARMY SUPPORTS VETS

Fleetwood Town Community Trust is proud to support veterans and their families through Positive Pathways co-ordinator, Rick Clement.

Rick is a former Sergeant from the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment with 14 years' service before he endured life changing injuries due to an IED in Afghanistan. Having been through difficult times himself as a veteran, he is perfectly suited to the role.

Rick will be concentrating on improving the support needed for veterans and their families health and wellbeing in the community. Virtual events are already being held and welfare calls have been made during the pandemic. Coffee



mornings, guest speaker events, fitness and sports sessions are planned and anything that the local veteran network feels is needed. The Onward Together project was awarded £35,000 from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. A Facebook group called Fylde Coast Veterans has been set up and Rick can be contacted at rick.clement@fleetwoodtownfc.com or call 07949 523 089.

YOUR COVENANT AT WORK

AGE UK HELP JACK

Second World War veteran Jack has become the oldest and newest member of the Blackpool, Fylde and Wyre Branch of the Royal Marines' Association.

In a chance meeting at a local veterans quiz night, organised by Alf Clempson and Dave Whitworth, Claire Chantrell, Service Coordinator for Age UK Lancashire's Removing Barriers project, met members of the Royal Marines and their Welfare Officer and mentioned that she was working with a Royal Marine Commando veteran.

Claire had been working with Jack as part of the charity's project, which is funded by a grant from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust. The association had been unaware of Jack.



Claire said: "Jack will be 98 this year and still has a sharp mind, sense of humour and kind disposition. Jack, who loves ballroom dancing, saw active service in the Royal Marines from 1942 - 1946. His two brothers were also in the military, one was also in the Royal Marines and the other in the RAF. The latter sadly lost both legs during active service. With three sons in the military, it was not an easy time for their mother, who, Jack admits, he never really told of the reality of his experience. He told her he drove an ambulance just to keep her from worrying."

The Removing Barriers service works with a variety of agencies, services and associations as well as individuals. Emotional support is always on offer and many clients have felt a need for that support more than ever. Building relationships and a rapport serves well to build trust and then the veterans reveal issues and problems they are facing.

For more information on how the Removing Barriers could help you or someone you know, please contact Age UK Lancashire on 0300 303 1234, email advice@ageuklancs.org.uk or visit their website www.ageuklancs.org.uk



VIC HELPS VACCINATION HUBS

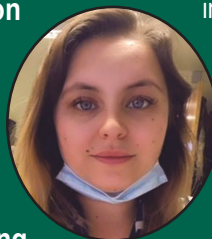
Armed Forces volunteers from Veterans In Communities have provided thousands of hours of support to the COVID vaccination hubs in Rawtenstall and Accrington.

Members of Veterans In Communities have been serving their areas in all weathers and all temperatures, even sub-zero. The car parking marshalls at both locations are essential to ensure the smooth and safe running of the hubs and keep the traffic flowing on the busy access roads. Operations Manager Bob Elliott said: "We were asked to help by the Primary Care Networks, and our volunteers stepped up to the plate to support the work of those inside the centres carrying out the vaccinations."

VIC's Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust funded project Veterans Should Not Be Forgotten has been a huge success. It has seen tablets loaned to veterans to help them stay in contact with family and fellow veterans while face-to-face interaction has not been permitted. One D-Day veteran from Burnley, Harvey (Paddy) O'Hara, has been able to see his grandchildren who live in Australia for the first time. His daughter emigrated in 1994 and the tablet enabled him to see and chat to her over FaceTime. Harvey is the only surviving member of No 4 Commando E troop that was among the first soldiers to bravely land on the Normandy beaches on D-Day.

ALAHNA LEADS THE WAY

Veteran Champion at Adelaide Street Family Practice in Blackpool Alahna Canning has gone above and beyond getting her surgery veteran-friendly accreditation.



She began by raising awareness among veterans of how the surgery could help them and made plans to attend Armed Forces Breakfast Clubs, until the pandemic

intervened. She said: "I was then assigned the lead task of helping all the other surgeries within the Central West Primary Care Network get accredited. My focus through all this has been to try to get to a point where the PCN as a whole could be accredited. One of the main things we implemented was to make sure our registration forms asked patients if they were ex-serving or had a military background this way we can add a code onto their medical records."

YOUR ARMED FORCES CHAMPIONS

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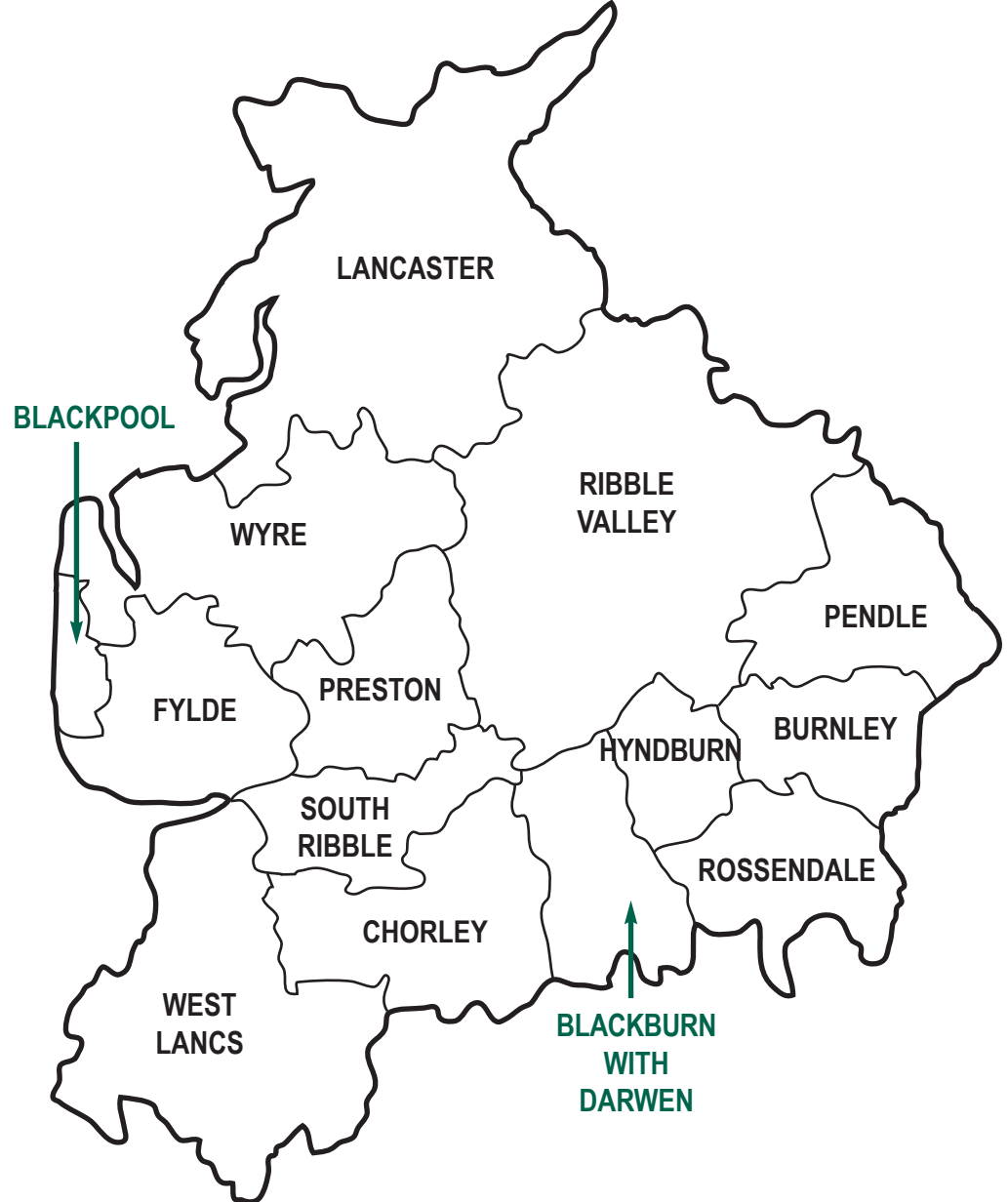
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OP COURAGE – MENTAL HEALTH HELP

Armed forces veterans suffering a mental health crisis will receive specialist care as part of a new Op Courage service launched by NHS chief executive Sir Simon Stevens.

Doctors, nurses and other NHS staff will work with military charities to provide

therapy, rehab services and, in extreme cases, inpatient care to hundreds of former soldiers, sailors and RAF personnel each year and those needing urgent help will receive a same day referral.

Minister for Defence, People and Veterans Johnny Mercer said: "One of the biggest

challenges we face with veterans mental healthcare in this country is making sure those who need help know where to turn."

To contact Op Courage: The Veterans' Mental Health and Wellbeing Service in the North of England, call 0303 123 1145 or email vwals@nhs.net