



info@veteranscentral.co.uk



Veterans Central West Raynham SHQ

Newsletter #13: March 2026



Bloodhound Missiles returns to SHQ!

Charity #: 1208763

If you would like copies of previous newsletters email info@veteranscentral.co.uk



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If you know someone who would like the newsletter sent direct to them, please ask them to email us info@veteranscentral.co.uk. You can also forward to folks of course, but it is better to ask them to contact us so that they can be added to the distribution list. The newsletter currently goes to around 1,000 people.

Follow us on social media!

Facebook: West Raynham SHQ Veterans Central

Email: info@veteranscentral.co.uk

Website: Our new website – <https://veteranscentral.org.uk> – will be launched mid-April.



Our Logo

The Veterans Central West Raynham SHQ logo was designed to graphically represent our aim of supporting each other. This is represented by the hands and arms being linked. The four colours of the hands represent the 3 military services (Red, Dark Blue, Light Blue) and the Emergency Services (Green).

Help Requests *(and please do read this bit!)*

Veterans Central is 100% volunteer. There are no paid staff. However, in 2026 we have picked up increased cost with rent, service charges, building insurance, business rates, utilities. To cover such costs, support our work with veterans, and the restoration of SHQ, we rely on the support of individuals and organisations.

Donations can be made to our account:

Account Name: Veterans Central

Account #: 62664344

Sort Code: 53-61-15

These are areas that **YOU** may be able to directly help - and also 'influence' others to help:

- **100 Club:** Slowly increasing take-up of this important fundraising element for us. It is only £10 a month by Standing Order and we can send you the form to complete. You can hold a maximum of 2 tickets.
- **Room Sponsorship:** This is a great scheme but has yet to get real traction! So far we have 8 rooms with sponsors and it is a struggle to get more on board; so **if you can help drive this it would be most appreciated.**

Materials and direct support: Our current main materials requirements are:

- **Garden shed** to help ease our storage solutions (even with 50 rooms we are out of storage!)
- **Wood bark** for the new garden area
- **Donations to Helping Hands** – see news item

Surface to Air Missile returns to RAF West Raynham after 35 years



On 10th February Veterans Central took delivery of a surface-to-air (SAM) system with which West Raynham had a long connection. Arriving by road from RAF Cosford were two Bloodhound missiles plus a launcher. The system was donated by the RAF Museum, with the transfer facilitated by the Bloodhound Missile Preservation Group, and with the cost of the move covered by an anonymous donor. The reason they are here is that they provide another 'veteran engagement opportunity' for this that want to get together to 'do something' but for whom work on the SHQ building is not their key interest! The Bloodhound Missile Engineering Team is already working on the project plan. See more detailed feature in this newsletter.

Lottery Success

Veterans Central has been awarded a grant of £19,139 by the National Lottery Community Fund. The grant is primarily for the purchase of materials to support the on-going restoration of SHQ, especially roofing and brickwork. The volunteers are now testing various options that can be completed by the veterans and volunteers over the next few months. This means we can progress some of the major building work without having to use donations that are part of the ongoing veterans support by Veterans Central.

Level 5 renewed



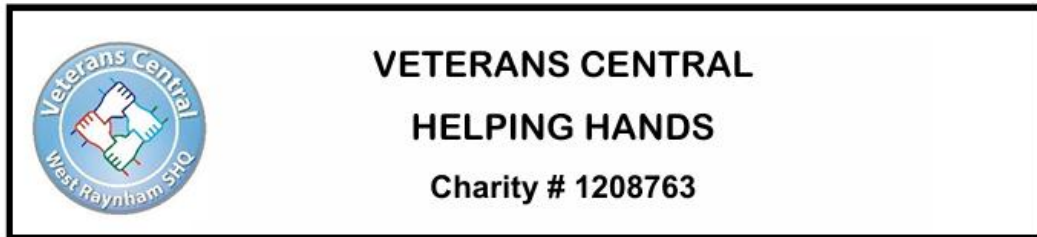
Congratulations to the catering team. A no-notice inspection today resulted in a renewal of our Level 5 rating!

The café is a key part of the service we provide at Veterans Central and our catering team, all unpaid volunteers, are very much 'key workers'.



Veterans Central Helping Hands Launched

As part of the excellent Veterans Help Awareness Day at SHQ yesterday we launched our Helping Hands support. This arose from a couple of recent cases where, working with charity colleagues, we were able to support veterans with items that helped them overcome specific issues. The Veterans Central team saw that this was an area in which we could provide more help, and some of the volunteers formed the Helping Hands team. See report on the Veterans Help Awareness Day.



Helping support people in need – when life hits hard!

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>Need Support? Reach out in Confidence. We'll listen and help find the right support.</p> | <p>Want to help? Donate, Fundraise, Volunteer – Every action helps someone get back on their feet.</p> | <p>Know someone who needs us? Share this poster with them – a small nudge can make a BIG difference.</p> |
|--|---|--|

We are not looking to replace the many charities that already exist to provide help and support. We aim to work alongside them and offer both our care package of useful items and an invitation to visit us to benefit from the support that comes from Veterans Central.

AIM

To collect items to produce emergency care packages, to help support Veterans and their families who find themselves, for whatever reason, in situations of hardship. This includes homelessness, financial difficulties in making ends meet, or unexpected emergencies that arise and cause problems.

DONATIONS REQUIRED

- ☺ Toiletries (for male and female)
- ☺ Household cleaning products
- ☺ Basic cooking utensils such as pots/pans, crockery/cutlery
- ☺ New warm outer clothing such as socks, gloves, hats, scarves
- ☺ New towels, fleecy throws
- ☺ Plastic storage boxes with lids

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>GET IN TOUCH</p> <p>Follow us on social media: Facebook: West Raynham SHQ - Veterans Central. Charity #1208763 Instagram: @shq_veterans_central Web: https://veteranscentral.org.uk Email: welfare@veteranscentral.co.uk</p> | <p>DONATIONS TO ACCOUNT</p> <p>A/C Name: Veterans Central A/C Number: 62664344 Sort Code: 53-61-15</p> <p style="text-align: center;">THANK YOU</p> |
|--|---|

IF YOU KNOW OF ANY VETERAN WHO WOULD BENEFIT FROM A HELPING HAND PACKAGE – PLEASE CONTACT US.



Care Home Connections

Veterans Central has recently made contact with a number of local Care Home that have veterans in residence. It was great to welcome 3 veterans from the Oakwood Care Home in Fakenham at our March breakfast. The 3 gentlemen (2 RAF and 1 Army) had a very enjoyable 4 hours with us; many thanks to the staff who arranged and accompanied. Veterans Central is a good 'go-to' place for such individuals even on our normal drop-in days, and we are encouraging other Care Homes to arrange such visits.



And the answer is?

A monthly quiz is run at the Dabbling Duck in Great Massingham to raise money for charity. At the last minute we were asked if we wanted to be the charity – and could we raise a team... for the following evening! In good military fashion, comms went out and a team reported for duty. This was a great awareness opportunity for us, as one of the team gave a short brief about Veterans Central and we have already had a few veterans turn up at SHQ and a few new volunteers. In addition the evening raised a very welcome £505 for Veterans Central. We are the nominated charity at the June quiz and our team members are off to quiz boot camp for a spot of training.



Social Media - Instagram

One of our volunteers has brought us more into the social media sphere and we are on Instagram!

Please share the QR Code far and wide.

King's Award for Voluntary Service (KAVS)

We were honoured to be nominated for the KAVS. The assessment team spent some time with us at SHQ and at our Swaffham drop-in ... we just have to wait now to see if we are successful!

Tinkle the Piano Keys?



One of our volunteers donated a Baby Grand piano to the Events Room and also had it tuned in situ. This is now ready for anyone with musical inclination. A good old-fashioned sing song would be great .. we just need people to come and play this wonderful piano.

Swaffham drop-in continues to grow



February was our busiest Veterans drop-in at Swaffham to date with around 40 people coming in during the morning, including several new folks as well as 'regulars'. Great conversations in what was a very buzzing room for a few hours. Many thanks to all those who came along, and the Veterans Central team for the fantastic cakes (and scones). The Swaffham drop-in is the last Tuesday of the month so get the dates in your diaries!

Which way to RAF West Raynham?



Many visitors comment that we are hard to find – and that is true with the lack of signposts to the site. During its operational life the airfield had several of the standard red edged signs directing traffic. One of these has now found its way back to us. Discretion prevents us naming names or when and how the sign was originally obtained!



2026 Breakfasts Covered ... but Sponsor the Cakes!

The good news is that ALL of the Veterans Breakfasts for 2026 have been sponsored! Several people have asked if their other 'food options' they can sponsor and the team has proposed a 'Cake Sponsor of the Month' with the sponsorship supporting the cost of our cakes for a month.

So we thought we would see if there was any interest! A sign would be put in the Café saying 'April Cakes sponsored by ...' or just anonymous. Cake Sponsorship is £50 a month and if you would like to be part of this scheme we would love to hear from you.

New Sponsors

We are fortunate to attract new sponsors on a regular basis, and donated materials and services are essential to Veterans Central as we have very little money to pay for anything! The latest are Su-Bridge Pet Supplies and KPI Drones.



Su-Bridge is one of the leading pet product wholesalers in the UK and we are very appreciative of the provision of bird food for our ever hungry and growing (and diverse) 'family' of birds at SHQ! <https://www.su-bridge.co.uk/>



Regular air to ground images of SHQ are an important part of seeing how the work on the building and grounds is progressing, and providing images for use in planning events. KPI Drones has a range of drones for multiple tasks and undertakes regular (and approved) sorties for Veterans Central. <https://kpidrones.co.uk/>.
Info@kpidrones.co.uk ; 07788 100635.

Veterans Central Polo Shirts and Fleece



We now have our Veterans Central polo shirts and fleeces in stock; if you ordered one please come and collect (and pay!). If you want one, we keep a supply at SHQ, or you can email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk.

Polo shirts are £13 and fleeces are £25 (plus postage if you cannot come and collect).

Wearing these helps spread the word about Veterans Central.



Listen in! Veterans Central is on radio.



Veterans Central is working with the Norwich-based Future Radio on a series of radio 'programmes' this year, all very exciting and YOU can be involved.

The '**my story**' lets you select 10 to 12 of your favourites and then go to the studio the play (with help) and talk about your experiences, and why some of the music has meaning for you. Our first 'my story' was by Richard Tree and was recorded on March 11th. Richard's session was broadcast at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Monday 23rd March but you can still listen to it on the Future Radio website.

Podcasts where you come to SHQ to be part of a short, recorded experience.

Our first 'my story' of 12 records plus chat was by Richard Tree and was recorded on March 11th. Richard's session was broadcast at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. on Monday 23rd March The second one is being recorded first week of April. We are now looking for more people to take part. Contact: ops@veteranscentral.co.uk or vetrans@futureradio.co.uk.

Be sure to tune in at 107.8 FM.

We are also starting a **Record Club** at SHQ where someone chooses a track, artist or album that everyone listens to and then discusses (over the usual coffee and cake, although we may arrange on-line call in participation if there is interest in that.) Watch out for details of the first one in April.

From the Library

You never know who or what will come through the door at Veterans Central. In March we received a donation of a wide selection of original photographs concentrating on the RAF in the Far East. These are just a few of those for RAF Tengah (Singapore) and 45 and 60 Sqn who were stationed there in the 1960s. A reminder that we have our East of Suez History Day on Sunday 16th of August. The month has also seen several other additions to our archive and displays.



RAF Tengah-main entrance-1960-62





Veterans Help Awareness Day

In year 1 (2024) when we suggested such a event no-one would talk to us (with a few exceptions); in year 2 (2025) we ran the event and had 21 charities/orgs join us; this year we had 34 with us, and it was an impressive list of participants. We also had more veterans with us this year, a reflection of the growing awareness of Veterans Central and the interest in events such as this.

A fantastic day at Veterans Central today for this event; brilliant turn out of charities to network with each other and to meet veterans. Plenty of activity throughout the day, plus a chance to view SHQ, visit the Canberra and Hunter, and eat cake! We made several new contacts and that will help us improve our information to veterans. We also met many new veterans (and had several new signatures on our veterans 'wall'). There were some great presentations; the PTSD one in particular was well attend and we may well repeat this again.

Many thanks to the team for organising and running the event, and to those charities and orgs that came along, and to the many veterans that turned up on the day. Great to have Future Radio with us; a live session plus many recordings.





One of our volunteers even popped over to say hello in his Tiger Moth, and a pair of F-15s gave a spirited 'display' (not for our benefit) of low speed air combat.



Group Visits to SHQ

Not really the time of year for groups to come and visit, although the local Knit and Natter group had their regular get-togethers. As the weather improves, we will start to see more Group visits. It is always best to book a Group visit rather than just turn up; we can even set up visits on days/times that SHQ is not usually open and also tailor a visit for your group.



Our friends from the **East Norfolk Militia** held one of their regular training days; and of course always time for a break from muskets for coffee and cake.



Veterans Events 2026

Veterans Breakfasts at SHQ

The monthly breakfast remains one of our key activities the first two of 2026 have been full, although we even managed to squeeze in the reserve list folks! On average we site 45 people but end up serving 50 meals. They are great social occasions and each one sees a few new people. The February breakfast included 3 veterans who are resident at the Oakwood Care Home in Fakenham and we would like to thank the team there for arranging to bring the veterans to SHQ.

All the breakfasts are FREE and we are pleased to say that ALL the breakfasts for 2026 now have sponsors. This is fantastic and we very much appreciate the support from individuals and organisations. **Although 2026 is sponsored, we are happy to book sponsors for 2027!**

Our breakfast dates for 2026 are now set .. and bookings are open for any breakfast by emailing catering@veteranscentral.co.uk. The dates are:

- April 11th . Already fully booked.
- May 9th
- June 13th
- July 11th
- August 8th
- September 12th
- October 10th
- November 14th
- December 12th (Christmas Lunch)

Drop-in Centres

Our 4Cs concept (Coffee-Cake-Conversation-Company) is working really well and is proving of great benefit to an increasing number of people. Our main drop-in centre is West Raynham SHQ as we are open 3 days a week and the facility is particularly good. However, we now run monthly drop-ins in Swaffham, Fakenham and Dereham.

West Raynham SHQ is open every Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday from 1000 to 1500 for drop-in visits (kettle is always on and there is always cake!)

Swaffham drop-in

The Swaffham drop-in centre at the Assembly Rooms has been a great success and we average 25 or so at each one, with a few new people each time. This drop-in is part of our Veterans Voice programme. The following dates (**4th Tuesday of month 1030 to 1300**) are booked and we will book more dates through to September:

- April 27th
- May 26th
- June to December TBC



Fakenham drop-in

The Fakenham drop-in centre at the Fakenham Library started in February. This drop-in is part of our Veterans Voice programme and we have programmed them to end of April. The following dates (**1st Thursday of the month 1030 to 1230**) are booked and we will book dates through to August:

- April 2nd
- May to August TBC

Dereham drop-in

The Dereham drop-in centre will be at the Railway Tavern and we are just finalising dates.

Spread the Word: Help us reach veterans – spread the word about SHQ and the Swaffham, Fakenham, and Dereham drop-in centres, as well as all our other activities.

Veterans Events

All the Public Events we run are also great for anyone, but some are more specifically intended for veterans, such as:

Veterans Central History Days

We run a number of these days and they provide an opportunity to veterans to get together and either share experiences stories with each other and with other visitors, including the relatives of veterans. History days run from 1000 to 1500.

May 24th : **Cold War History Day. Including Bloodhound and Canberra themes.**

June 21st : **World War Two History Day.**

August 16th: **'East of Suez' History Day.**

September 26th: West Raynham Memorial Association Reunion

The annual get together and remembrance at the West Raynham memorial is attended by those who served at WR, or their relatives. It is hosted at SHQ and there is a ceremony at the West Raynham Memorial Wall.

November 8th Remembrance Sunday

Our annual informal ceremony at the Veterans Central Memorial Wall SHQ. Laying of wreaths and crosses, and unveiling of memorial plaques. [Memorial Wall Plaques \(and roses\)](#). You can sponsor a slate memorial plaque for the wall and a rose for the adjacent rose garden. If you would like details, email us for a form.



Public Events 2026

Our Public Events have 4 main aims:

1. People who visit may have veterans in extended family or friends group, or as neighbours – and so can help us in trying to reach veterans.
2. Events inform visitors on the support that is available for veterans in the area, provide networking opportunities, and provide historical context that helps educate on the of veterans when they served
3. Each event raises funds (donations).
4. Visitors may turn into supporters or event volunteers.

It would be great if YOU could:

- Put these dates in your diary and come and join us.
- Spread the word to everyone that you know!
- Volunteer to help out at an event.

HELP? If you are involved with, or know folks, in the Military Vehicle, Re-enactor, military heritage / museums, or trade / craft stands, then we would be delighted to have you with us at appropriate events. Email events@veteranscentral.co.uk.

• **April 19th**

Spring Fun Day

Activities and games, massive children’s book and toy sale, food, and a fantastic Tombola.



West Raynham SHQ
Spring Fun Day
Sunday 19th April 10.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Entry is FREE and you can take part in activities in the gardens and in the Station Headquarters (SHQ) building. The day includes:

- **Find the Bees and Butterflies:** Free bag of goodies to all the children who complete the hunt!
- **FREE Fun Games and garden activities including:**
 - Bean Bag Throw: get the bags in the Red Arrows wheelbarrow
 - Spin the Wheel: land on the red segments
 - Guess the number of eggs in the jar
 - Lawn darts, Giant JENGA and other games
 - **Pinata Game!**
 - Help Beatrice mouse plant herbs
 - Decorate a Gnome for the Gnome Garden
 - And more
- **Bookshop:** children’s books at very low prices
- **Meet Benji the SHQ Mascot dog**
- **SHQ Café with special Easter treats**







For updates and information on events: Check out the website: www.veteranscentral.co.uk
 Follow us on Facebook (West Raynham SHQ – Veterans Central), or email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk.

Charity #: 1208763

• **May 2nd / 3rd**

Wargames weekend

The Veterans Wargames Group are planning an even bigger event this year.



- **May 24th** **Cold War History Day.**
With several sub-themes; Bloodhound, 70th Anniversary of the Suez campaign, Canberra Reunion.



West Raynham SHQ

Cold War History Day

Sunday 24th May 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Based at our Cold War Station Headquarters (SHQ) building the day includes:

- Hunter and Canberra cockpits open
- Jet Engine display
- Bloodhound missile display
- Wargaming displays (participation)
- Small Arms display
- Short talks and discussions including:
 - Ejection Seats: development and use
 - Bloodhound: development and deployment
 - British Nucs: Deterrence or Destruction?
 - EOD: Tales from the front line
 - Cold War Veterans Q&A panels
- Bloodhound and Canberra reunions
- Military vehicles and groups
- **GUIDED TOUR OF RAF WEST RAYNHAM**
- 2nd hand military book shop
- Café







Participate? If you would like to be part of our events email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk. We would like to hear from potential participants: Cold War period military vehicles and re-enactors.

For updates and information on events:
Check out the website: www.veteranscentral.co.uk
Follow us on Facebook (West Raynham SHQ – Veterans Central) or email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk.

Charity #: 1208763

- **June 21st** **World War Two History Day**
Military vehicles, re-enactors, music, sales stands, presentations on key aspects of the war, plus various themes.
- **July 19th** **Annual Open Day**
Our Annual Open Day of displays and activities.
- **August 16th** **‘East of Suez’ History Day**
Presentations, discussions, displays on Britain’s military presence from the Canal Zone of Egypt, Persian Gulf, Aden and Far East.
- **October 24th** **Ghostly Airfields**
More RAF tales and mysteries.
- **September 26th** **West Raynham Memorial Association Reunion**
The annual get together and remembrance at the West Raynham memorial, all welcome.
- **November 8th** **Remembrance Sunday at the Memorial Wall**
- **November 21st** **Christmas Fair**
- **December 5th** **Walking Home for Christmas** (charity walk, Walking with the Wounded)



Veterans Voice Project



Outreach Events and Talks

Now that winter is over (at last) we have started our outreach talks, the first one being to a group of National Trust volunteers in King's Lynn in early March. Our outreach programme includes giving **talks to groups**, from Rotary Clubs, to Probus, Military Vehicle groups and more.. If you are part of a group that has meetings and you think that a presentation of Veterans Central would be interesting, contact ops@veteranscentral.co.uk.

Information for Veterans

We have created a useful Quick Reference Guide that hopes to help answer most of the 'frequently asked questions' that we, and others, have picked up from veterans in recent months. The handbook has been sent to all our charity contacts and is also used by Veterans Central volunteers on outreach visits and at SHQ. In previous newsletters we outlined 'Veterans and the NHS' and Veterans ID Cards and Badges. This edition's extract from the guide covers the Defence Discount Card and the Veterans Railcard.

IN each issue of the Newsletter we highlight a number of items from the Guide. In a previous issue we looked at why to register as a veteran with your GP. One reason is so that the GP can refer YOU under to specific programmes, and it is good for you to know about them.

OP COURAGE – Mental Health

NHS mental health specialist service designed to help serving personnel due to leave the military, reservists, armed forces veterans and their families.

WHAT? Op COURAGE can help you and your family with a range of support and treatment, including:

- helping you transition from military to civilian life by providing mental health care with Defence Medical Services (DMS)
- helping you recognise and treat early signs of mental health problems, as well as more advanced mental health conditions and psychological trauma
- providing support and treatment for substance misuse and addictions
- helping you to access other NHS mental health services if you need them, such as finding an NHS talking therapies service and eating disorder services
- liaising with charities and local organisations to support your wider health and wellbeing needs, such as help with housing, relationships, finances and employment
- supporting armed forces families affected by mental health problems, including helping them to access local services

HOW? To receive help and support from Op COURAGE, you must:

- be a resident in England and have served in the UK armed forces for a full day
- be registered with a GP surgery in England, or be willing and eligible to register with a GP
- provide your military service number



It does not matter how long ago you left the armed forces or how long you served for. You can contact Op COURAGE even if you left many years ago. You can also contact Op COURAGE if you're still serving but have a discharge date.

CONTACT: You can contact the service in many ways, including:

- directly getting in touch yourself, or through a family member or friend
- asking a GP or other healthcare representative to refer you
- asking a charity to refer you

The service will arrange for you to have an assessment, to make sure you get the right care and support.

East of England contact details:

Email: mevs.mhm@nhs.net

Call: 0300 034 9991

Web: <https://www.eput.nhs.uk/services/op-courage-the-veterans-mental-health-and-wellbeing-service/>

OP RESTORE – Physical Health and Wellbeing

Veterans Physical Health and Wellbeing Service. NHS service providing specialist care and treatment to veterans who have physical health problems as a result of their time in the armed forces. Note: this used to be known as the Veterans Trauma Network.

WHAT? Op RESTORE can support you:

- If you have a physical health problem of any type or severity that is a result of your time in service.
- If you live and are registered with a GP practice in England.
- No matter when your physical health problem first appeared.
- No matter when you left the armed forces.

HOW? Op RESTORE can support you by:

- Providing personalised treatment within the NHS.
- Treating you through military and civilian clinicians who understand the military environment and specialise in the type of physical health problems you have.
- Helping families and carers of veterans with physical health problems access appropriate support services.
- Working closely with many organisations, including GP surgeries, specialist NHS services, and military and non-military charities.

YOU may need to mention Op Restore to your GP as you can only be referred by a GP. The GP may not be aware of Op Restore. “Please note we only accept referrals directly from GPs. You can do this by asking your GP or directing your veteran/client to ask their GP to complete the Op RESTORE referral form and emailing it.”

CONTACT:

Email: Referral from GP (see above) to imperial.oprestore@nhs.net.

Web: <https://www.oprestore.nhs.uk//>



Veterans Events

Drop-in Days for 4C (Coffee-Cake-Conversation-Company): Veterans Central stays open all year and for now we will have our Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturdays for drop-in visitors between 1000 and 1500. We are also discussing options to increase our drop-in days from 3 a week to 4 a week in 2026; this will depend on having volunteers to open up SHQ on a Monday – if you are able to help with that, please contact us.

Veterans Breakfast: The breakfasts have been a huge success since we launched them in 2024; to the extent that we are usually fully booked a few weeks before the event, which is why it is important to get your request in early! Email catering@veteranscentral.co.uk We gather from 0930 for coffee and chat, and we sit down for breakfast at 1030.

Meal Sponsors: It is fantastic that our breakfasts are being sponsored by individuals and organisations. Every 2025 breakfast was sponsored and we have sponsors lined up well in 2026. We are always interested in hearing from anyone else interested in sponsoring these events. The most recent events were sponsored by, and many thanks to them all.

All the 4C days and breakfasts for veterans are FREE.

Interest Groups

Several 'Interest Groups' are either already in place or under discussion and we expect more such groups to form this year, as SHQ is a great facility for shared interest and we now have more usable rooms that can be used for such activities. If you are interested in a particular subject and would like to start a Group then come along and chat. If you want more information on any of the ones below, email the particular contact or email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk.

West Raynham Bloodhound (WRB): A group for the motor bike fraternity! The Group aims to bring together Veterans with motorbikes. Interested? You can get further information by emailing Simon at wrbbloodhound@gmail.com, or check the Facebook Page WRB-West Raynham Bloodhound. WRB meets at SHQ on the last Saturday of each month.

Wargames Group: There is a well-established wargames group at SHQ, although no regular meetings yet, other than the annual wargames weekend. If wargaming is an interest for you, get in touch.

Aircraft Engineering Team: Veterans Central now looks after a Hunter (complete) and a Canberra PR.9 (cockpit). The engineering team will be working on the Hunter this spring with strip down and repaint, plus work on the cockpit. There is also a plan to 'power up' the Canberra, and maybe the Hunter. Over the winter the team is sorting out the various parts, mainly Canberra, and creating an 'Engineering and Technical' room. Both of these are located in the Ops area and need 'quite a bit of work'. The 'sooties' (engines folks) are also looking at what to do with the Avon 206 from the Canberra. We may also have news shortly of another new arrival.

Model Railway Group: work is starting in April on the room assigned to the Group, and then they will move in their donated N-gauge railway; other gauges also encouraged of course.



Help Veterans Central

Volunteer! Veterans Central is **100% volunteer led and delivered**, with volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and experience (and ages and degrees of mobility!). Veterans Central provides opportunities for individuals to share, learn and enhance skills, and provides a socializing environment for volunteers (i.e. it is fun!) We also provide opportunities for volunteers to complete certified training course.

Fundraising

The need to generate funds never goes away and we are continually looking at sources of grants and sponsorship. **HELP? If you are interested in helping with fundraising please let us know – we could do with more support in this crucial area.**

Donations: Our main source of revenue is provided by individual donations from visitors ('money in the donations box' or as a donation for a specific part of the project e.g.(garden, breakfast, etc.)

Corporate Donations: If you are involved with a Company that wants to make a donation, having access to our Charity number may make it easier and better for you to support Veterans Central (and please do mention us to your Company!)

Sponsored Events: Many charities raise money when individuals undertake a charity activity .. so if you have any ideas (walk, cycle, wing-walk, or anything else) you can do and we can promote to get individual sponsors then do come forward.

Legacies: The provision of a donation as part of a will is not widespread in the UK, whereas in other countries such legacies are the main source of funding for charities. It is certainly something to consider as, in essence, this is money that could otherwise go to the Government. One of our team recently had this form of words added to a will. *"I give free of inheritance tax the sum of xxxx (in words) to Veterans Central (Registered charity number 1208763) for their charitable purposes absolutely."*

100 Club

Join the 100 Club. This is a fantastic way to provide regular monthly support to Veterans Central. We assign 100 tickets a month at £10 each and you have a chance to win 20%, 15% or 5% of that month's pot! The 100 Club has grown more slowly than expected but recent additions have taken the total to around 50 a month .. but still a long way to go.

If you would like an application form, email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk



Bloodhound Missile

In the 1980s locals driving the narrow road on the east side of West Raynham airfield would see numerous missiles pointing purposefully skywards, defending the East of England against attack from Soviet bombers. This led to the road being known as 'rocket road'. The grass in front of SHQ had a Bloodhound on display for many years prior to the closure of the airfield, and it was the first thing visitors and serving personnel saw when they drove through the Main Gate, a reminder of the key role they all played in the Air Defence of the UK.



'Back in the day' when a Bloodhound sat outside SHQ. The plan is to restore the system to this condition but hopefully display in the elevated position.

Several of our veterans are ex Bloodhound and it was their idea to try to source a system on which they could work. The items require restoration before the launcher and one missile will be returned to pride of place in front of SHQ. One of the Bloodhound veterans in the team commented: "The arrival of the Bloodhound system at Veterans Central is great for many of us ex Bloodhound veterans. It will allow us to bring back memories of when we were younger and working as a team on the system in our RAF service. West Raynham was both an operational base for the Bloodhound and also, in the latter years of the system, the centre of excellence and support for this important RAF air defence system.

JOIN THE TEAM! Any ex RAF Bloodhound trades people who would like to be involved in refurbishing and working on the system and the associated display room in SHQ, contact us – ops@veteranscentral.co.uk."

Veterans Central would like to thank Neil Cartman, on behalf of Bloodhound Missile Preservation Group (BMPG) and Tom Hopkins (Curator - Aircraft and Exhibits) at the RAF Museum. A great deal of work had to be done to ensure the survival of this Bloodhound system, and the BMPG has a long history of preservation in this field.



Part of the Bloodhound Engineering Team. Below: A spot of washing down to remove years of grime.



Bloodhound Day. Our Cold War History Day on 24th May has the Bloodhound as one the themes, so come along and learn more about this system.

Historical Note: Bristol Bloodhound SAM

Developed in the 1950s to provide a Surface to Air Missile system to protect the RAF's V-bomber nuclear-armed aircraft bases, the Bloodhound was designed to engage high-flying Russian bombers before they could release their weapons. The initial version, the Mk.1, had an operational range of 32 miles and entered service at the end of 1958. Work was already underway on an improved version, the Mk.2, with a far greater range (120 miles) and higher speed, around Mach 2.7, that would enable the missile to reach targets before they could release stand-off weapons. Bloodhound was an advanced system at the time it was introduced. The system was enhanced during its operational life to keep it effective, being given improved resistance to countermeasures, and improved performance against low-level targets.

Historical Note: RAF West Raynham and the Bloodhound

The start of RAF West Raynham's missile era was 1 September 1965 when 41 Squadron received Bloodhound SAMs; however, this was short-lived as the airfield was re-assigned to Fighter Command in April 1970. Fighters arrived and the missile squadron was disbanded in September. In July 1976 the airfield's Bloodhound era truly began when 85 Squadron, which had been a Canberra squadron at West Raynham, re-formed with the SAM, opening a SAM period that lasted to the final closure of RAF West Raynham in 1994. In addition to being the Headquarters of Squadron, and administering the two missile Flights at North Coates and Bawdsey, West Raynham also housed two operational Flights. In September 1989 the Squadron took over the 25 Squadron Bloodhound Flights at Wyton, Barkston Heath and Wattisham, but this was a high point, as the following year the draw down of Bloodhound strength started and by July 1991 the now 'outdated' missile was withdrawn from RAF service. No.85 Squadron disbanded on 10 July 1991. This was not the end of missiles at West Raynham, as the airfield had been home of the Rapier SAM system since 1983 and this remained at the airfield until summer 1994.





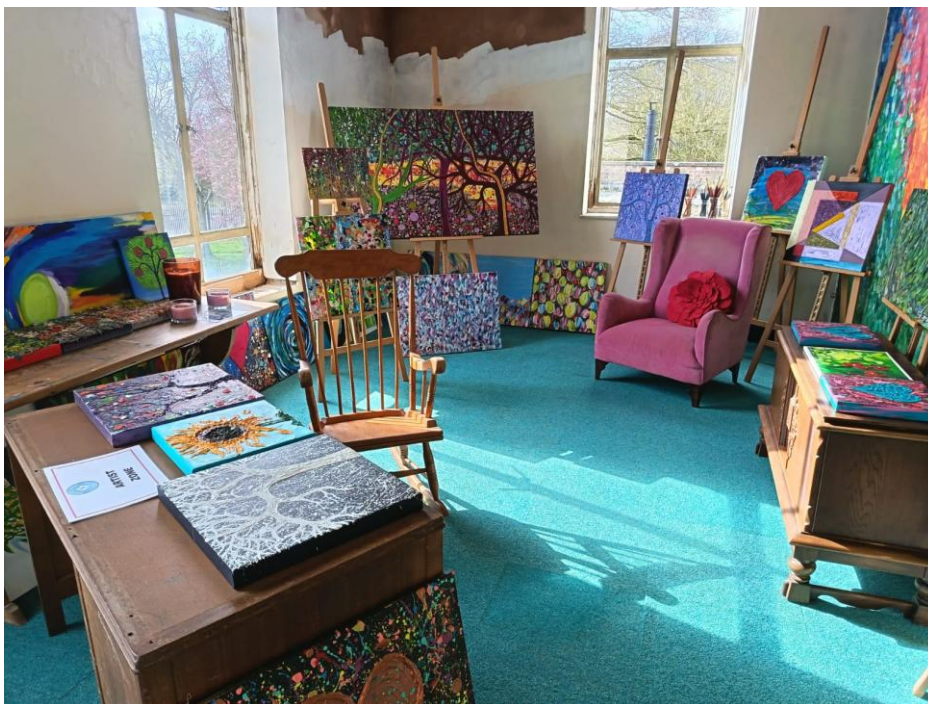
SHQ Building Progress

Ground Floor

The major change on the Ground Floor has been the creation of a bookshop for our fantastic collection of new books, all of which are donated by 66 Books (our landlord). Every book is new and the donation suggestion is only 10-20% of the original price... a deal you will not find elsewhere. Children's books, history, travel, cooking, fiction, and much more on offer.



First Floor



The art room is a great space to sit and contemplate, especially when the sun is streaming through the south-facing windows.



The Presentation is back in one piece now the books have moved out, and the model displays have been re-organised. The team is now working on information boards for the model shelves.

We have only 2 rooms to complete, plus a corridor area, on this floor; although these will be something of a challenge our aim is to have this floor complete by mid-summer this year, although that may not included the electrics for these rooms.



Not that long ago much of the First Floor looked like this – actually worse than this as we had already removed debris, mould, plants and dead animals! This room is now usable (below) and is one of 2 being used by Walking With The Wounded. We still have issues with leaks from the roof but we hope to fix that issue this summer (fingers crossed).



Second Floor

Three of the four rooms on the second floor are now 'work in progress'. All the window frames have now been repaired and rooms are being cleaned down and some plaster areas replaced. Painting has started on two of the rooms. In the winter this area has been quite a good working area, as light is better and with any hint of sun the rooms warm up (a bit!). Two rooms should be finished by late April, although as yet we have no power to this floor.



Left: August 2023. Right: February 2026 (and moved on again since this view).



The wooden stairs to the roof were in a very poor state and had to be removed. Our carpenter has managed to salvage quite a bit of the original and built new where nothing could be saved.

Ops Block

Progress is being made with 3 rooms in the Ops Block. Two are going to be used by the Aircraft Engineering teams, one as storage for parts and the other as a workshop / crew. Cleaning of the rooms and installation of racking and work bench well underway.



Canberra and Hunter parts. Right: cleaning down the workshop room.



The main room in the Ops Block was in very poor condition but work has started on cleaning and 'making good'. The Bloodhound team has already put up two 'work boards'.

You cannot visit the Ops Block unless escorted – but well worth asking for an escort so you can visit this area.



The Gardens

The Garden Team held a planning meeting in February and it was good to have several people attend that meeting. The overall plan for 2026 was agreed, with extensions to some parts of the Herbaceous Border, a refresh of the Herb Garden, extension of the Rose Garden, the Sensory Garden 2026 Plan, and the major work on the new area of ground at the rear of our plot. Work on these projects has already started and good progress is being made.



Looking across the fern garden to the new area being developed; clearing part of this area and planting the first shrubs (Dogwood with their lovely red branches). The area between the Dogwoods and the concrete posts will be used for a dead hedge; work has already started on the hedge.



On a sunny early March day the Sensory Garden is already looking good, and planting has started in the main beds.

Garden Help! Whilst 'on paper' we have a few garden volunteers the reality is that we do not have enough for garden development and maintenance. If you can spare a few hours a month to help with garden work it would be most appreciated!

We are also trying to source (or have funded) an **10ft x 8ft (minimum) garden shed** so if anyone has contacts please try to be persuasive!

SHQ Opening Times

SHQ is open 3 days a week (Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday) all year from 10 to 3. We open at other times by prior arrangement.

Location: There are no signposts to RAF West Raynham or the West Raynham Business Park (not West Raynham village). On entering the main gates at West Raynham, SHQ is the BIG building on the left. You can park outside the building or across the road from SHQ.

Post code: NR21 7PL
What 3 words: scrum.rationed.cakewalk

NOTE: Visiting SHQ **does not permit access** to the rest of West Raynham airfield.



info@veteranscentral.co.uk

Thank You to our Sponsors and Supporters

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