



info@veteranscentral.co.uk



Veterans Central West Raynham SHQ *Newsletter 8: April 2025*



The Dig For Victory Therapy Garden; plenty of garden work in recent weeks in the fine weather

Charity #: 1208763

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Veterans Central West Raynham SHQ Newsletter #8: April 2025

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.

Follow us on social media!

Facebook: West Raynham SHQ Veterans Central

Email: info@veteranscentral.co.uk

Web: <https://veteranscentral.co.uk> **NEW (launches in May)**



Our Logo

The Veterans Central @ West Raynham SHQ logo was designed by one of our colleagues 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).

Veterans Central West Raynham SHQ needs the support of companies and individuals.

Donations can be made to our account:

Account Name: Veterans Central

Account #: 62664344

Sort Code: 53-61-15

Help Requests (and please do read this bit!)

Costs and Fund Raising: Veterans Central is now picking up additional costs with service charges, building insurance, business rates (even as a charity we get have to pay BR), utilities and, from the end of 2025, rent. This means that we need to accelerate our fund raising and we are continually reviewing grant opportunities; however, the vast majority do not provide support for our type of charity! We always expected this to be a challenge, which is why we have our 2 core sustainable routes that – if fully subscribed – would cover ALL our operating costs. These are areas that **YOU** may be able to directly help and also ‘influence’ others to help:

- **100 Club:** as we have said before, if we had 100 subscribers monthly this would generate around £10,000 a year after prize money. At present we average 25 subscribers and despite having nearly 2,000 Facebook followers and 250 recipients of the newsletter we struggle to get folks to sign up. 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:** We have a scheme for sponsoring rooms at SHQ and if we had 60% of rooms sponsored it would generate over £20,000 a year. So far we have 6 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. Sponsors get their name on the room, coverage on our media and newsletters – and the satisfaction of providing real help. The ones we would really like sponsored on the Ground Floor are:



- **Event Room / café:** This has a tag of £300 a month and would be a great one for a company to pick up.
- **Lending Library / Reading Room.** £60 a month.
- **OC's office (meeting room).** £60 a month.
- **Gardens:** There are also options to sponsor one or more of the 5 main gardens (Memorial Garden, Sensory Garden, Herb Garden, Wild Garden, Dig for Victory Therapy Garden); none of these presently have sponsors. We have tagged each one as £75 a month.

Materials: Historically we have done very well with material support and this has enabled the volunteers to make the amazing progress that you see when you visit SHQ. Our current main materials requirements are:

- Plants for the Sensory Garden
- Wind chimes and water features for the Sensory Garden
- White Emulsion paint (matt and silk)

Content of this Newsletter

- **Key Recent News:** 1,000 breakfasts! Veterans Lunch, Charity Move in, 25,000 Volunteer Hours, Wood burner, Hunter aircraft, Veterans Help Awareness Day, Stairlift, Electrics
- **Veterans Voice:** a new and exciting project
- **2025 Events:** A look forward to the list of events for 2025
- **Help Veterans Central:** How individuals and companies can support the work.
- **Project Progress:** Short summary of recent work in the gardens and the building.

1,000 Breakfasts

The monthly breakfasts continue to be a key part of our activities, with an average of 45 participants at each breakfast. By the May breakfast we will have served over 1,000 full English breakfasts! This is a fantastic achievement by the Veterans Central catering team as each one involves a few days of preparation as well as the actual cooking and serving (and washing up!). We are also very grateful to the individuals and companies that have sponsored the breakfasts. Our breakfasts, lunches and drop-in cake and coffee are always free to veterans, so having sponsors really helps. If you would like to sponsor a meal, email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk.



March (left) breakfast sponsored by Roger and Doug and families, and April (right) breakfast sponsored by RBL Fakenham.



Veterans Lunch

The first of the Veterans Lunches took place in March and this monthly event now attracts 15-20 participants (we limit numbers to 20). Again, great work by the catering team – and to the sponsors of the lunches.



Left to right: 2 armourers on 'KP' peeling spuds for the lunch; the lunch in full swing; the result of too many portions of rice pudding and a warm Spring day!

Charity Move in

It was always an intention that Veterans Central SHQ would be a shared infrastructure that could be used by other appropriate charities either as a 'base' or for functions/meetings. We have the first two 'operational charities' confirmed as users of SHQ: Walking With The Wounded (WWTW) and the Fakenham branch of RBL. With its multiple room types, from small meeting rooms (ideal for client meeting) to larger meeting rooms, the gardens, and the Events Room, and the generally peaceful location of SHQ, this is an ideal location of charities. In addition, two historic charities (RAF Heraldry Trust and the Canberra Heritage Trust) store and display collections at SHQ

25,000 Volunteer Hours

The amazing Veterans Central volunteer team has now notched up over 25,000 volunteer hours since we started in March 2023. This is the only reason we have been able to make such progress with the SHQ building and gardens. We have new volunteers signing up each month – but we always have space for more. On our work days of Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday we have anything from 8 to 24 volunteers on site, which also means a good deal of coffee is drunk and cake consumed! We also spend a fair amount of time hosting veterans and visitors and sharing the concepts of Veterans Central and giving tours of the building and gardens.

Wood Burning Stove

We now have the approval from Conservation and Planning for the installation of a Wood Burning Stove in the Events Room; this will make a major difference for our winter period and the veterans activities. Trying to warm the large room with electric heaters is an (expensive) and fairly pointless challenge. We are grateful to the **Firing Squad**, in the Guardroom opposite SHQ <https://firingsquadwoodburners.com/>, for arranging (and fitting) the stove; another example of the great support Veterans Central is attracting. With the addition of secondary glazing on the windows of the Events Room, which are being supplied by one of our supporters, we *should* have a warm winter space in future.



Hunter Aircraft

A number of veterans associated with the Veterans Central Charity have suggested that the charities aim of providing a sense of purpose to veterans and of reducing social isolation could be enhanced by acquiring an aircraft. Whilst Veterans Central provides opportunities for people to work on the building and in the gardens, it was suggested that there were a number for whom aircraft work is another route to engagement. At a recent Veterans Breakfast this was confirmed when one of the attendees stated that he, as an ex Hunter technician, would really benefit from being involved – and we are sure more will join the team.

The Trustees agreed that this would indeed provide a very useful engagement tool, through the move, maintenance, display and historical presentation of the aircraft. One of our regular veteran visitors had mentioned that as a long-time Hunter pilot, starting in the mid-1950s, he would love to see a Hunter in the colours of his favourite squadron – No.56 Squadron. No.56 Squadron operated the Hunter between May 1955 and January 1961, initially at Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire before moving to Akrotiri, Cyprus. Anthony went on to fly a number of other Hunter tours, but 56 was his firm favourite. RAF West Raynham was a Hunter base, although not for 56 Squadron, and the airfield's Hunter period is well represented at the West Raynham Control Tower with a CFE Hunter and a heritage centre that sometimes opens to the public.



The airframe (rigger) veterans have found a suitable aircraft for loan. Planning and work is underway for the aircraft move, ground work on the SHQ site, and then re-paint of the aircraft into 56 Squadron colours. We are delighted to announce that the move is being sponsored by Jack Richards & Son.



The Hunter in its current location; since then the team has dropped the tanks and gun pack as part of pre-move work. We will be replacing the current nose with an F.6 nose.

For more information or to become involved with this project or with Veterans Central contact Rob Baker via ops@veteranscentral.co.uk . There is a Crowdfunder for this project: Check it out <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/veterans-central-west-raynham-shq>



Veterans Help Awareness Day

On 20th March we organised and hosted a Veterans Help Awareness Day. It was great to have 20 charities (plus us) set up information desks, a better response than we expected for this first such event. The morning was for networking between the charities, which proved very useful, and the period from 1100 for veterans to pop in and meet the charities, chat with us and tour Veterans Central, and of course, as always at SHQ, partake of coffee and cake.



Above: Charity networking; Below: Veterans visiting the displays – and two ex Army buddies met up at the Canberra cockpit – having not seen each other for over 10 years!





Stairlift

We have received the OK from the Conservation Officer (Grade 2 listed building!) for installation of a stair lift from ground floor to first floor. We are now obtaining quotes for a suitable system and have also started looking for grants. Ideally we would like this before our summer events.

Electrics

Our supporters at Gasway started work on some of our electrics in early April, with initial focus on the additional sockets and lighting on the ground floor – and which will delight those volunteer and visitor ‘users’ some heating in the Ladies Toilet! The project plan with Gasway will see them work on power and lighting on the first floor during the summer, which will be great for events. Veterans Central 100% relies on both our volunteers and the amazing support from companies such as Gasway.

Veterans Central Website

Our website has been offline for a long time, but now, thanks to one of our new volunteers we should soon be up and running again. The website will include a range of information and downloads and will be a great way to learn more about Veterans Central, our veterans activities, public events, and the restoration of SHQ.

<https://veteranscentral.co.uk>

Veterans Voice Project



Did you know that there are around 200,000 veterans in the East of England – and over 40,000 in Norfolk alone! Many of those are not aware of the opportunities available for socializing with other veterans, or the types and levels of support that are available.

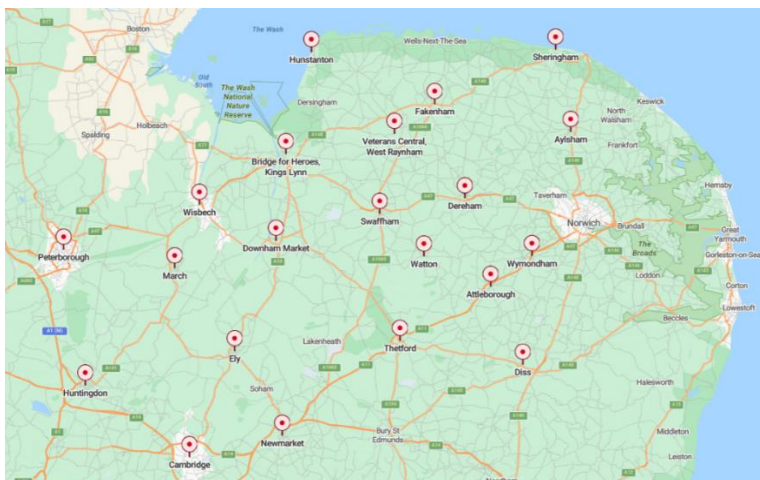
The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust (AFCFT) has launched a series of projects to help veterans learn about the facilities and support in their area. In the East of England this is under the **Veterans Voice** programme being administered by The Bridge for Heroes. Veterans Central at West Raynham SHQ is involved with two parts of this – Awareness Sessions and Drop-in Centres, for most of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. We are coordinating with other groups involved with similar projects in the region and also with organisations that are already running veteran hubs and breakfast (e.g. Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs) so we can best support each other and also avoid overlapping the work being done.

As Veterans Central we have been tasked with:

1. Running **Awareness Sessions** where we can ‘find’ veterans and provide information of places they can go and things they can do (such as hubs and Breakfast Clubs) as well as the types of support that are available, from NHS to specialist military charities.
2. Arranging **Drop-in Centres** at various locations in the area to provide a place for veterans to meet up. We have named this after the **4C concept** (Coffee-Cake-Conversation-



Company) that we run at West Raynham SHQ, but the Breakfast Clubs and drop-ins are similar.



How can you be involved in Veterans Voice?

- *Involved with an existing hub or Breakfast Club?* Please ask your admins to contact us so that we can explain the project and collaborate on supporting veterans.
- *Involved with a charity?* Check that we have your contact details and are engaged with you – so that we have information we can relay during the sessions.
- *Veteran living in the area covered by the map?* We are looking for veterans to help support the project activities in their immediate area.. either by coming along to say hello or coming along to help.

Useful Websites for Veterans

There are many websites out there that provide information; indeed, too many with some confusion and a great degree of overlap. As part of Veterans Voice we are trying to highlight those that might be of most use to veterans and families. Of course, many veterans are not able to access websites, so we are also looking to provide other methods for making people aware of such information.

<https://www.gov.uk/support-for-veterans>. This directory lists organisations that provide support to veterans of the UK armed forces and their families. You can filter results by location and select as many areas of support as you need.

<https://afvbc.com/> The Armed Forces and Veterans Breakfast Clubs website includes a map and details of the breakfast clubs, so easy to find one in your area (but a word of warning, it is not always up to date and some may have closed and some may be missing).

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/armed-forces-community/> How the NHS can help if you're in the British armed forces or are a veteran, a reservist or a family member of someone who is serving or who has served.

Charities: Most of the charities have websites and the best way to find them is by typing the name of the charity in the search or using the links from the .gov.uk site above, as this includes most of the established charities.



2025 Veterans Events April to August

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; this will depend on having volunteers to open up SHQ on a Monday – if you are able to help with that, please contact us.

All the 4C days, breakfasts and lunches for veterans are FREE. To book a place at a breakfast or lunch, email catering@veteranscentral.co.uk and ops@veteranscentral.co.uk.



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! Gather from 0930 for coffee and chat, breakfast at 1030.

- Veterans Breakfast: Saturday 10th May
- Veterans Breakfast: Saturday 14th June
- Veterans Breakfast: Saturday 12th July

Veterans Lunch: March 2025 saw the launch of our monthly Veterans Lunch (usually the 3rd Wednesday of the month but check dates). These run from 1200 to 1400, with lunch being served 1230 to 1330, although you are welcome to come along early for a coffee and a look around SHQ.

- Veterans Lunch: Wednesday 23rd April
- Veterans Lunch: Wednesday 28th May
- Veterans Lunch: Wednesday 25th June
- Veterans Lunch: Wednesday 23rd July



2025 Public Events

The list below only shows the main public days.

- March 20th: **Easter Fun Day**
- May 3rd/4th: **East Anglia Aero and Militaria Fair and VE Day**
- June 1st: **Sponsored Walk organised by Jack Richards & Son**
- June 21st/22nd: **Aviation and Military Art show**
- June 28th / 29th: **Wargames Weekend**
- July 20th: **Annual Open Day**
- August 17th: **American Air Power Day and VJ Day; Memorial Wall Blessing**
- September 21st: **Battle of Britain Day.**
- October 25th : **Ghostly Airfields and Superstitions (requires booking)**
- November 9th: **Memorial Wall Ceremony**
- December 6th: **Christmas Fair**



West Raynham SHQ Public Events 2025

The list of Public Events for 2025 at Veterans Central West Raynham SHQ is developing well. All events (unless stated) are FREE to enter. The details of each event will be published nearer each event. Images are 2024 events.

Participate? If you would like to be part of our events email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk. We would like to hear from potential participants - craft stalls, military vehicles and re-enactors, classic cars, etc.

March to July

- March 20th : **Veterans Help Awareness Day**
- April 20th: **Easter Egg Fun Day**: Scotty's Little Soldiers
- May 3rd / 4th: **East Anglia Aero and Militaria Fair**
Bomber Command History Day, Cold War History Day, VE Day; FLYPAST requested.
- June 21st / 22nd: **Aviation and Military Art show**
- June 28th / 29th: **Wargames Weekend. NEW!**
- July 20th: **Annual Open Day.** FLYPAST requested

August to December

- August 17th: **American Air Power Day + VJ Day**
- September 21st: **Battle of Britain Day** FLYPAST requested
- October 25th: **RAF 'Tales' (evening); requires booking.**
- November 9th: **Memorial Wall Ceremony**
- December 6th: **Christmas Fair**



Veterans Events. We also hold monthly events (breakfasts and lunches) for veterans. If you would like details of these events, email ops@veteranscentral.co.uk

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.

We will push out more details on each event a month or so before the date, and your help in spreading the word is always beneficial in getting the message to as wide an audience as possible. The public events have 3 main purposes for us:

1. They help us reach more veterans (either directly or through relatives, friends, neighbours).
2. They generate interest in the work of Veterans Central, which can turn into donations of materials, financial support, or more volunteers.
3. They generate revenue – and donations 'in the box' are our biggest source of income.



How you can be involved in our Public Events?

- *Help with organizing and/or running our events?* Public events involve a great deal of planning as well as the actual running of the event on the day. If you would like to help then please contact us. There are many different roles that need help!
- *Involved with or own a Military Vehicle or Classic Car?* Most of our events look to add such attractions to the day, so it would be great to see you and friends with such vehicles at the events. Please contact us to let us know what you would like to bring.
- *Involved with a re-enactment group, or solo re-enactor?* Most of our events look to have appropriate re-enactors on site, so it would be great to see you and friends with such vehicles at the events. Please contact us to let us know if you or friends can be part of an event.
- *Involved with a craft stall?* Our May, July and December events include craft stalls – so ping us if you want to have a stall at one or more events.
- *Involved with a heritage centre or museum?* Our May, July, August and September events include displays for such organisations – so ping us if you want to have a stall at one or more events.
- *Spread the word!* Share details of our events with colleagues and friends. We can send you a pdf (like the one above) and individual posters for events that you can send to friends or print and put up for others to see.

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; in recent months these have included Emergency First Aid at Work, Food Hygiene, Portable Appliance Testing (PAT).

Volunteers find that being part of the project gives them a **sense of purpose**, as well as the simple act of **working and socializing together**.



Questions:

1. *“Do I have to be ex military or emergency services to be a volunteer?”* Not at all; roughly 25% of our volunteers are not from those backgrounds.



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2. *“How much time do I have to give?”* As much as you feel able to! Some volunteers give half a day a month, some 1 day a week. Every hour is of benefit to the project – and you.
3. *“Do I have to be on site to help?”* Not at all; there are various areas in which you can help the project by ‘Volunteering from Home (VFH); this includes such aspects as the research archive, social media, and more.
4. *“My company allows volunteer days – can we come to Veterans Central for these?”* Absolutely! We already have a number of companies where employees have been great help with projects at SHQ.

If you have any questions or want to come and see what it is like at SHQ, it would be great to see you! If you would like to be part of the project you can come along for a visit, or email us for information, or complete and return our Volunteers Form.

Media Relations

We are getting increasing media coverage, primarily newspapers, and in April we also had a BBC Radio Norfolk interview – but we need someone who can build the media relationships and help drive this. Awareness of Veterans Central is the key to finding and engaging more veterans – and more volunteers and supporters.

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.**

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!)

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.”*

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. The first such event has been offered by **Jack Richards & Son – a sponsored walk on Sunday 1st June** ending at SHQ. Watch our Facebook page for more details!

Easyfundraising

The easyfundraising registration is starting to produce revenue – we have 25 supporters signed up and they have generated £300 so far. Imagine what this figure could be in a year if all our 1,800 Facebook followers and our other friends all signed up.....

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/veterans-central/>



Group Visits to SHQ

Group visits are a great way for SHQ to engage with organisations; these can range from veterans groups to enthusiast groups, such as cars and bikes, to friendship groups, such as U3A. They help us with awareness of what we are doing but also generate direct support, including donations. We have 14 such visits booked in to SHQ for the first half of 2025, from family tours, to history groups and car groups. Events vary from a few hours to an entire day. If YOU are part of a group, or know someone who is, encourage them to come to SHQ! **Recent Group Visits:**

Wednesday 26th February: North Elmham Young Farmers: It was good to host an evening visit by the North Elmham YFA, who were very interested in the work of Veterans Central, especially in regard to social isolation and loneliness, which are issues for the farming community.



Wednesday 19th March: The Wednesday Girls. Great visit on a fine sunny (but cold) day. The tour of SHQ and gardens was followed by plenty of tea and cake! The group included a number with military connections, including West Raynham. A very engaged groups, some of whom have been back again – and a few potential volunteers.





Sunday 13th April: Kings Lynn Amateur Radio Club (klarc.org.uk) on site today for one of their broadcast from an historic site days. A number of the participants were veterans (first one was an Armourer .. bit of an 'in joke' with us at Veterans Central) and the first contact made was with Australia... during the day various other stations came up across a number of locations.



Monday 14th April: Swaffham History Group (above right): Good to see a team from Swaffham join us for a few hours; after a brief on the history of RAF West Raynham and an introduction to Veterans Central, the team visited the PR.9 cockpit and toured the gardens and buildings.

Other visits and Outreach in the period:

- Royal Anglians Liaison visit, 6th March
- Downham Market Rotary talk (outreach), 10th March
- Peterborough College, 28th March
- The Warrior Programme (charity), 8th April



SHQ Building Progress

The details below only includes rooms where progress or changes have been made since the last newsletter. With the recent spell of very good weather, we made good progress in the garden as well as continued work on the First Floor rooms.

Ground Floor Rooms

As most of the Ground Floor is already in use, there is not much to report, other than ongoing work with the Military Research Archive as more books and documents arrive for the team to sort and file. The Research Team is currently engaged with around 8 enquiries from people looking for information on relatives, primarily RAF. We had two ladies whose father's had been Lancaster pilots and in addition to the research on careers, we also sat them in the replica Lancaster fuselage for the Virtual Reality 1943 mission to Berlin; very emotional for them.

Thrift Shop: We are developing one of the GF rooms into a Thrift Shop, an idea with which many veterans will be familiar from their Service locations. We are currently working on the room and gathering items for the shop; we will focus on clothes, toys and books initially, as it is not intended to be like the run of mill charity shops. We will be looking for donations of items from May, and all donations need to be clean and undamaged.

Canberra Heritage Trust: The CHT team have finished the sorting out of the technical publications library and is now working on some of the displays, which includes a screen with access to videos and photographs. This should be read for the Canberra Reunion on 3rd May, which is part of our Cold War Day. The cockpit of XH135 is now in place at the side of SHQ and one of our volunteers has taken on the task of getting the PR.9 cockpit powered up and is busy browsing the appropriate technical manuals.



First Floor

This is the part of SHQ where most work has been done in recent weeks; carpet tiles have been laid in the room that is being taken on by the RBL Fakenham branch and the rest of that room should be finished by the end of April and will be the first one with floor covering!



The **First Floor toilet** has undergone an amazing transformation with all the bricks now scraped back to their glazing surface (John is now 'looking forward' to doing the same for the Ground Floor toilets!). Still no progress with the plumbing but we hope to move this ahead by the end of April.

Presentation Room is now close to having the final wall painted after hours of work of filling, sanding and preparation, and we have started on cleaning and preparing the ceiling. Thanks to a donation of large perspex sheets, all the model shelves are now enclosed – this is major progress and the Model Team is now working through with cleaning and repairing the display models.



Model Room: One of the small rooms has been assigned to the Model Team for the work on repairing models, and they will also be running model classes later this year.

'Recc' Room: The other large room has had issues with roof leaks and we are having to strip back and re-do the ceiling and walls, whilst trying to fix the leaking issue (but see *roof issues* note). This room and the adjacent two small rooms will become the working area for Walking With The Wounded.

Model Railway Room: A veterans group requested a room for a Model Railway display and this tied in nicely with our plan to move the Carpenter 'shop' to the Ops Block, which makes it easier for materials. This should take place in early May. The Model Railway Group will be sponsoring this room.

RAF Regiment Room: We are in discussions with the RAF Regiment Heritage Centre at Honington regarding loan of items to create an RAF Regiment room at SHQ – more news as we have it.

Second Floor

Other than cleaning or debris and repairing windows, we have had no focus on this floor in the last few months. However, it is in the plan for the next 3 months to complete the cleaning down of the 4 rooms on this floor.

Operations Block

We are starting to sort out the stored items and clean up this area so we can fix some of the roof, window and wall issues.



The Gardens

A busy few weeks in the garden since the last newsletter. The daffodils have been a great show for a few weeks, as have the tulips – so many thanks to all those who donated bulbs last year and this year. Other than the bulbs there is not a great deal of colour in the garden yet, but we been adding more perennials. The shrubbery has been doubled in size and we have also added to the Stumpery / fern garden. We have a few new garden volunteers; this will be a great help with both maintenance and the development of the new garden areas. If you would like to **become a garden volunteer** please contact us.



We have also moved the **Herb Garden** to the sunny side of SHQ and created a new area with, for now, all herbs in pots. They are being divided into Culinary and Medicinal herbs and there will be information leaflets as well as the Herb Garden sign. Many thanks to Norfolk Herbs for a good deal on the most recent set of herbs.



The **Memorial Garden** had a few rose ‘casualties’ and these have now been replaced. There has been steady uptake on memorial plaques and we now have 25 on the wall, which we are sure will increase this year. A date for you diary is Sunday 17th August when there will an End of World War Two (VE/VJ Day) ceremony; this will include unveiling a number of special plaques plus a Blessing of the Wall conducted by Bishop Dr John Mills RN; a number Standards will also be paraded.



The **Sensory Garden** work has started and we plan to have the hard landscaping finished by early May and initial layout and planting started in May. This is an area that will require a good deal of work and progress will depend on how many people we have to take this on, as well as support with plants and other materials.



Bees (and other similar flying beasties) at West Raynham SHQ – early April

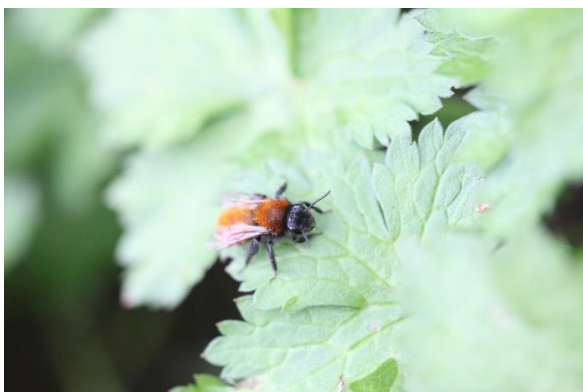
Did you know, there are over 270 different species of bee found in the UK, of which almost 200 are found in Norfolk? On Saturday 12th April a quick survey was carried out on the different bees to be found in the SHQ garden. Some of these bees are very rare, and need specialists to identify them, but many are common and once you get your eye in you can spot many different types. Each type of bee has a short season of activity so there will be different species found throughout the year. This survey was a quick snapshot and the total number of types of bees using the SHQ garden through the year will be much higher.

Perhaps the most familiar bee is the **Honey Bee**, and this is one of only two you can spot year-round. Honey Bees are not wild insects, but someone nearby has hives as there were good numbers visiting the flowers in the garden. Big and furry bumblebees are popular and recognisable, but there are many different types. During this visit there were the very common and large black, white and yellow **Buff-tailed Bumblebees** which will have been active right through the winter, **Early Bumblebees** with their peachy-orange tail and the all ginger **Common Carder Bumblebee**.

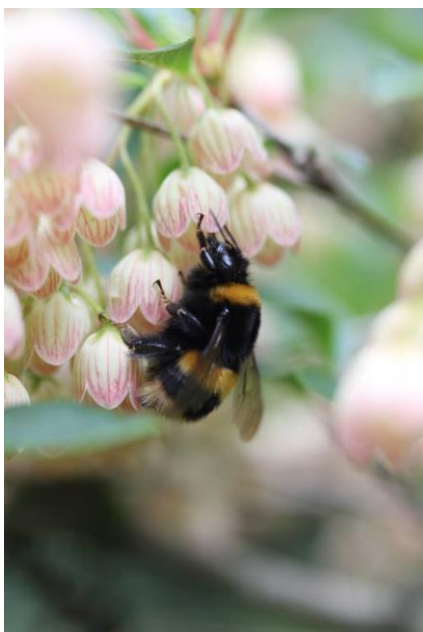
Another very early species is the well-named **Hairy-footed Flower Bee**, which looks like a small bumblebee and has a very loud buzz. Males have an obvious white face (and hairy legs!) and the females are all-black.

Solitary bees make up the biggest group seen, and these can vary from really tiny to Honey Bee-sized. There were almost certainly more types present, but the ones I was able to confidently identify were: **Gwynne's Mining Bee**, **Grey-patched Mining Bee**, **Chocolate Mining Bee**, **Clarke's Mining Bee**, **Ashy Mining Bee**, **Tawny Mining Bee** and the **Cliff Mining Bee**, a rare species that has only recently spread to west Norfolk.

Lastly are the mason bees, which love bee hotels, but we found **Red Mason Bee** not only visiting flowers but also nesting in the wall of SHQ! So, early in the season, there were thirteen different bees using the SHQ garden, and there were a few other similar beasties which you could well spot. One, which looks like a bee with a long proboscis, and will often hover in front of you is the wonderful **Bee Fly** – bees can't hover!



Above: A very brightly-coloured female Tawny Mining Bee. The bee-like, but distinctively shaped Bee Fly. Below: The familiar, and very furry, Buff-tailed Bumblebee; A male Hairy-footed Flower Bee, showing his almost white face and hairy leg.



Next time you look around the SHQ garden, especially if the sun is out, keep your eye open for these amazing flying insects – they are showing how valuable the garden is becoming for wildlife as it's being developed. Which ones can you spot?

NOTE FOR YOUR DIARY! Su will be setting up a Moth Trap overnight on 15th August and at 9 a.m. on Saturday 16th you are welcome to come along to SHQ when the trap is opened and the moths counted and identified.

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To support our **VETERANS**

 Fakenham to West Raynham

 1st June  10 Miles

SCAN TO DONATE
and help us to say **THANK YOU**



Our friends at Jack Richards & Son are organizing a sponsored walk to raise funds for Veterans Central.

The walk is 10 miles from Fakenham to SHQ on 1st June and there will be refreshments in the SHQ Events Room when the walkers arrive.

Sign up to join the walk. If you have issues with the QR code let us know and we can send you the details.



info@veteranscentral.co.uk

SHQ Opening Times

SHQ is open 3 days a week (Wed, Thur, Sat) all year from 10 to 3. We open at other times by prior arrangement. Note the Business Park gates close every evening, on Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday.

Location: There are no signposts to RAF West Raynham or the West Raynham Business Park (not West Raynham village). Help us by posting a review:

<https://g.page/r/CUCfUfjCNskPECA/review>

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.

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

Thank You to our Sponsors and Supporters

The Trustees, volunteers and veterans would like to thank the companies and organisations below for their support or Veterans Central.

