

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

March 2023

## Inside:

SAS rogue  
hero, part 2

The story of  
SS Dover Hill



## Keeping Maria's memory alive

Why devoted husband Richard is  
determined to keep supporting us



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss





# Contents

- 03 Editorial welcome
- 04 Your welcome from your Chairman
- 06 News
- 09 Keeping Maria's memory alive
- 12 Our very own rogue hero - part 2
- 15 On your marks...
- 19 Need help with the cost of living crisis?
- 24 The story of SS Dover Hill
- 29 Getting a good night's sleep
- 32 Gallery
- 34 National Creative Wellbeing Programme
- 37 Family news
- 38 In memory
- 44 The story of Old Boot
- 46 Quiz time
- 47 Contacts

## Quiz answers - from page 48

- 1. Clouds 2. Edward Heath 3. Golf 4. Sting 5. Robert Burns
- 6. New Jersey 7. a) Whistling 8. Queen Elizabeth II
- 9. Portugal 10. A murder

## On the cover

Richard Hughes and his late wife, Member and Vice President of Blind Veterans UK, Maria Pikulski-Hughes, during the Brighton-London Cycle in 2021.



# Feeling the pinch?

As the cost of living continues to soar, we've partnered with older people's charity, Independent Age, to help you find ways to save money.

Their free guide, **Moneywise**, is packed with information on how to boost your income and cut your bills, while **Winterwise** is full of tips on staying warm and healthy through the colder months.

You can read or listen to the information via our website at [blindveterans.org.uk/sight-loss-resources](https://blindveterans.org.uk/sight-loss-resources), or simply call Independent Age on **0800 319 6789** to order your copy.

We've also included a helpful article in this issue, put together by RNIB with the help of other sight loss charities, on where to go for support if you're struggling to make ends meet. Turn to page 19 to find out more. 🌐



# Celebrating success

Your message from your Chairman, **Barry Coupe**

I often marvel at the fact that my father was so successful in his work as a physiotherapist, despite losing his sight in December 1943 at the tender age of 20.

He always told me that, although his rehabilitation as a Member of St Dunstan's was not without its



**Caption: Barry Coupe**

challenges, the opportunity to have a career where he was able to compete with sighted people on equal terms was a goal he certainly embraced.

Dealing with athletic injuries was a new concept just after the Second World War. After pestering the living day lights out of football team, Preston North End, he became their Physiotherapist in 1949; one of the very first in the then Division One.

With headlines in the Lancashire Evening Post such as, "Blind man gets Finney ready for match against Scotland," it's no wonder his physiotherapy practice grew to four departments and he became the go-to specialist for professional sports people and others suffering from athletic injuries. He was a role model for our organisation, and my pride in what he was able to accomplish is the main reason I became involved.

Like my father, many of our working age Members have embraced the rehabilitation offered by Blind Veterans UK and are now enjoying successful careers. We should be immensely proud of them.

This is why our annual Founder's Awards are so important. The awards recognise and applaud those of you fulfilling your potential – in all kinds of ways, I might add – despite the huge challenges of sight loss.

They are a fantastic way for you to celebrate the achievements of one another, particularly as those nominated are put forward by Members, staff, volunteers, family and friends. You can nominate via the form inserted in last month's *Review*, via our website at [blindveterans.org.uk/foundersday2023](https://blindveterans.org.uk/foundersday2023) or using the QR code below, or by calling your CSW. The deadline is 23 April.

The awards ceremony will take place in June and then, later in the summer, our focus will be firmly on the grand opening of our Rustington Centre. Along with our vice chairman, David Turner – also a building professional – I've attended many meetings at the site and feel buoyed at how well it's all progressing. I've no doubt it will be wonderful.



**Caption: Member Eddie Gaines with his Founder's Award, 2018**

I'm also looking forward to working with our new CEO, Adrian Bell, when he joins us next month. I met Adrian for the first time a few weeks ago and was impressed by his enthusiasm for our work and keen understanding of our values. He has strong experience, both in the military and in the charity sector, so I'm sure he will lead us well.

As Adrian settles in, I should think he will want to meet as many of you as he can to learn from your experiences and see the results of your rehabilitation for himself. And I'm sure he'll be as humbled as I am by your many varied achievements, both in and out of the workplace. They are a source of inspiration to us all. 🇬🇧

# News

## Our Centres get smart thanks to Amazon

We've teamed up with giant tech firm, Amazon, to install the ground-breaking Alexa Smart Properties system at our Centres in Llandudno and Rustington.

This means that, with the help of 120 fully integrated Echo devices, you'll soon be able to ask Alexa to help you with Centre information, entertainment, phone calls and even finding your way around.



**Caption: An Echo device**

### How it works Orientation

When you're at one of our Centres, Alexa will be able to help you to self-orientate, getting from point A to point B and locating objects within a specific room.

### Access to information

Alexa will also be able to give you information such as our lunch menu, fire safety procedures, and access news on the charity and its history.

### Access to services

You'll be able to ask Alexa about the events we have scheduled, and play audio books and listen to music.

### Care team announcements

In addition to this, our care team will be able to use the devices to make announcements and calls, and send direct audio messages to other devices throughout the Centre.

Our Head of Centre at Llandudno, Kathy Boardman, said, "We are so excited to be the pioneers for this fantastic smart system. Harnessing technology has always been part of the Blind Veterans UK ethos and this technology will be life-changing,

helping you to become more independent than ever.

"Our hope is that, when you leave us, you won't want to be without it and will continue using this amazing smart technology at home."

Meanwhile, John Quintas, Director of Inclusive Communities at Amazon, said: "We are honoured to support Blind Veterans UK and help transform their Centres. Our Alexa devices technology improves the quality of life for veterans by helping to make their lives more independent, accessible and fun."

■ **The system is now up and running in Llandudno and will be in operation in Rustington when we open later in the year.**

## Member John wins discrimination case

A Member from Somerset has won his discrimination case against a local restaurant after he was refused entry as they said his guide dog was "unhygienic".

John Hardy and his family were prevented from coming in for a meal, despite their protests that guide dogs were allowed. Bengal Spice in Williton, Somerset, has now been fined over



**Caption: John and Sidney**

the incident, which happened in September 2021.

Hospitality businesses are required under the Equality Act 2010 to make reasonable adjustments to not put people with disabilities at a disadvantage, with guide dogs classed as one such adjustment.

After being refused by the restaurant, John, 66, sought legal action following advice from our charity partner, RNIB. John says: "I eat out quite a bit and everybody knows my dog, Sidney, →



locally. But when you walk into somewhere new, you're anxious and hyper aware, wondering if you will have to present your argument and explain why a guide dog is allowed into a restaurant.

"I'm pleased that this has been resolved and want to thank my solicitors for their assistance and support. Hopefully it will help prevent other businesses from making the same mistake and discriminating against people with disabilities in the future."

## Nick joins BRAVO VICTOR

We're delighted to announce that our former CEO, Nick Caplin, hasn't quite left the Blind Veterans UK family just yet – he's been appointed part-time CEO of BRAVO VICTOR.

The international visual impairment research charity, which previously operated within Blind Veterans UK then became our sister charity in 2021, is entering a new exciting phase of development and growth. Nick will bring much knowledge and experience to this important role when he joins later this month.

We wish him all the best.

## Centres Supplement now online

Last month, we launched our Centres Supplement 2023, covering all the activities at Llandudno, Brighton and Rustington this year. Hopefully you will have received your copy by now.

If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that things can change very quickly, so we now have an online version of the Supplement which will be updated as and when necessary. You can take a look at [blindveterans.org.uk/breaks](https://blindveterans.org.uk/breaks).



**Caption: Your Centres Supplement is now on our website**



**Caption: Richard with Maria during the London to Brighton Cycle in 2021**

# Keeping Maria's memory alive

**Richard Hughes**, devoted husband of late Member, Maria Pikulski-Hughes, explains why he's determined to continue supporting Blind Veterans UK

“ On 10 September, I'll be riding 55 miles in the London to Brighton Cycle in memory of Maria and to raise money for Blind Veterans UK, the charity that meant so much to her.

When Maria and I took on the London to Brighton Cycle together in 2021, we didn't realise it would be her last fundraising challenge. Just one week later the doctors told her she →



had a tumour. I don't know how she did the ride as it was really tough, but she was incredibly fit and the only sign something wasn't right was that she was suffering with headaches.

Regardless of how she felt, I believe she would have completed that ride as she wouldn't have wanted to let the charity down.

### **Maria's story**

Maria joined the Army at 18 years old and had a short career with the Woman's Royal Army Corps, followed by 11 years with the Territorial Army.



**Caption: Maria was very fit and loved many different sports**

In 2003, while working as a nurse in a job she loved, she began to lose her sight. Within six months she had suffered almost complete sight loss due to the genetic eye condition, Leber's hereditary optic neuropathy.

Maria started receiving support from Blind Veterans UK in 2004 and, after the charity turned her life around, she was determined to give back by fundraising and raising awareness. She was a blind veteran through and through and the charity meant so much to her.

I didn't know her when she first lost her sight, but she told me she was in a very dark place until Blind Veterans UK gave her the confidence to pick herself up and she decided sight loss would not stop her from making the most of her life.

Through the charity, she started trying lots of new activities like skiing and white-water rafting, and she was given IT training which helped her secure a job as an Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, helping others who had lost their sight.

The first question she would ask patients was, 'Did you serve?' and if the answer was yes, she pointed them in the direction of Blind Veterans UK.

Maria carried out a lot of fundraising



**Caption: Richard and Maria at the Cenotaph in London, 2021**

for Blind Veterans UK and raised more than £5,500 for the charity. She also inspired many others to join in with her fundraising.

She had already fallen ill by the time she was given the great honour of being made a vice president of the charity and it's sad that she never got to do the role as she would have liked, but it meant so much to her.

### **My relationship with Blind Veterans UK**

After receiving her diagnosis, Maria was determined to represent Blind Veterans UK at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. I accompanied her and she stood alongside her fellow Members as she had so many times before.

Last year, I went on her behalf, travelling to London with our good friends Alan Holderness and his wife Jane. It meant a lot to me to be there.

I want to forever keep the link with Blind Veterans UK and keep Maria's memory alive.

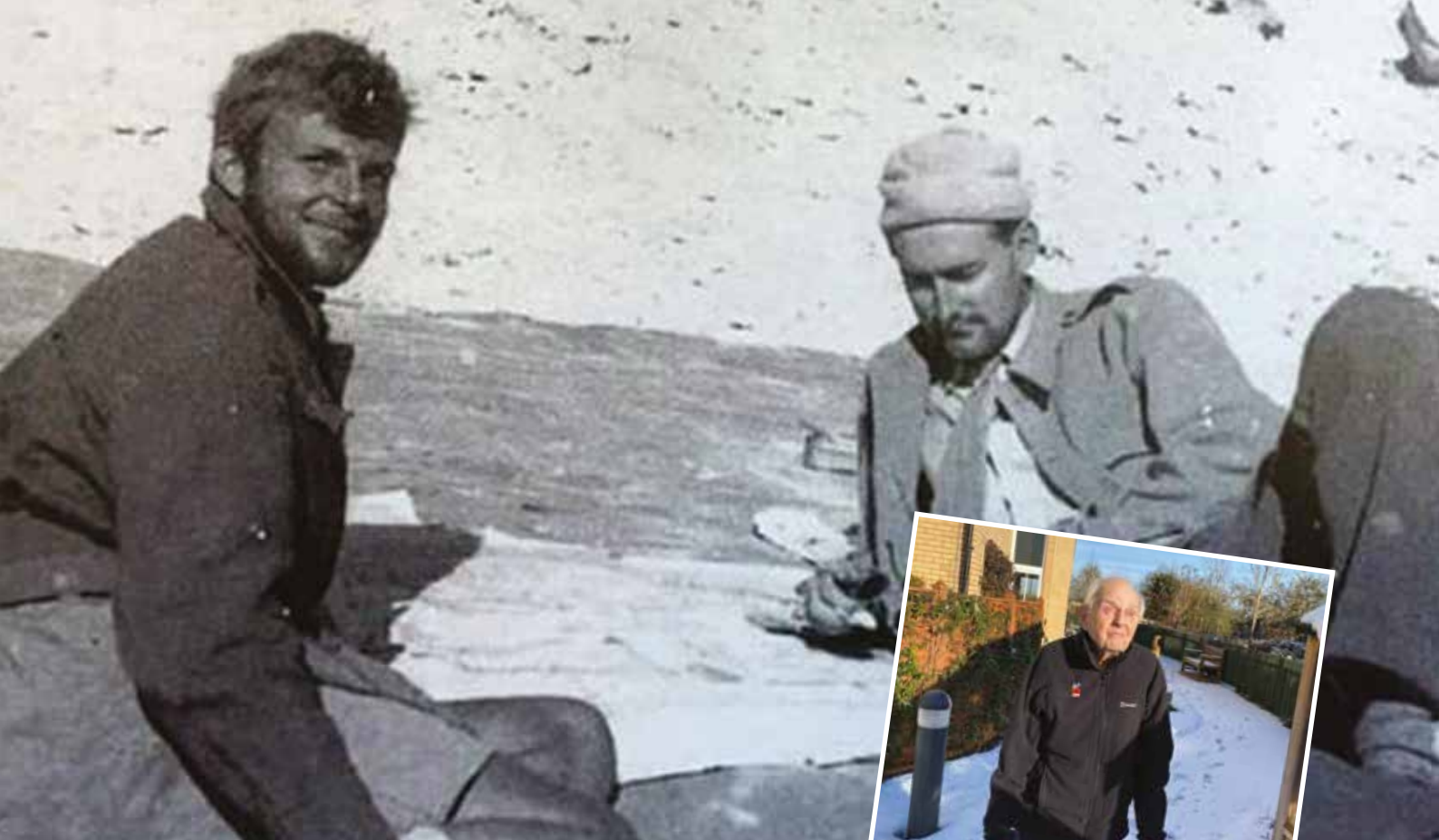
In 2021, Maria and I took nine hours to complete the London to Brighton Cycle on a tandem. Less than a year later, she'd lost her battle with cancer and I'm now going to be facing it solo.

I think I'll hold it together while I'm doing the ride, but it will be emotionally tough at the finish line.



**We wish Richard the best of luck.** 🍀





**Caption: Mike with SAS founder, David Stirling and, insert, today aged 103**

# Our very own rogue hero

We share part two of our story by 103-year-old Member **Mike Sadler**, the last surviving founding member of the SAS and real-life star of the BBC One Drama, *SAS Rogue Heroes*

We left the story last month with Mike escaping from an ambush in the Tunisian desert that saw SAS founder David Stirling captured.

Mike escaped with an SAS comrade

and an Arabic-speaking Frenchman. He guided the group over five days and four nights across the desert, mostly travelling at night, for over 100 miles without maps or food, to link up with the British-American Army.

Mike said: “We didn’t want to be spotted by anyone on the hills who might see us and we were conserving our remnants of water. We tried to avoid the heat of the daytime and travel in the middle of the night.

“We had no facilities for travelling but I knew that if we travelled westward from where we were ambushed we would make it in 100 miles. I knew the lie of the land with the desert and salt lakes and hills. I believed we would join up with the French and that was what we hoped would be our rescue. Luckily, we managed to miss the Germans as by that stage we were quite a long way behind enemy lines.

“We met up with French Equatorial troops who passed us on to the Americans as it was an American zone. When we finally got there they thought we couldn’t possibly be British because the nearest British were 100 miles away across the other side of the German line!

“An American journalist called Liebling saw us when we got to camp and wrote a description of us arriving and being handed over to the Americans. The Colonel shipped us off to the HQ in an ambulance to be inspected and a group of journalists followed.”

The war correspondent, A J Liebling

ended up writing of Mike: ‘The eyes of this fellow were round and sky blue and his hair and whiskers were very fair. His beard began well under his chin, giving him the air of an emaciated and slightly dotty [French poet] Paul Verlaine.’

After leaving the desert, Mike went on further operations in Italy and France. In August 1944, he was dropped by parachute into the Loire valley with the goal of finding SAS squadrons behind the lines and continuing their work destroying fuel depots as well as preventing Panzer divisions heading north.

It was this that led Mike to receive the rank of Chevalier of the Legion d’Honneur, France’s highest honour. He also received the Military Medal and Military Cross during the war.

Mike says: “The Legion d’Honneur was given to those who landed in occupied France, which is what I did after becoming a parachutist, although not a great parachutist.”

Near the end of the war Mike was waiting to be demobbed in Essex and, as the acting adjutant for now Colonel Paddy Mayne, received a letter asking for volunteers from the SAS to spend a year or two in the Antarctic. He says: “I took it in to Paddy and said ‘I’m the first volunteer’. Paddy said that →



**Caption: A sunburnt Mike after his dramatic escape across the desert**

he would like to come too so we and another chap were demobbed early to go to the Antarctic.”

Mike’s work in Antarctica was recently recognised thanks to the efforts of the UK Antarctic Heritage Trust with the naming of ‘Sadler’s Passage’ near the base he helped to set up.

Every episode of SAS Rogue Heroes, the new TV programme featuring the character of Mike, begins with the line ‘the events depicted which seem most unbelievable... are mostly true.’ When asked how he feels about the TV show Mike has one particular comment. “The bit that most annoyed me was that they rewrote a story about Paddy Mayne. I

was actually in a bar in Paris with him when he pulled a hand grenade out of his pocket, pulled the pin and put it on the middle of the table.

“This was rewritten to be David Stirling throwing it onto a snooker table. This wasn’t true and not something David would have done, but it was definitely the sort of joke Paddy would do. This annoyed me because I knew it was a fact. I was there at the time!”

Mike started to lose his sight in his 80s and it gradually deteriorated over time. He started receiving support from us in 2017 and lost his sight completely in 2019 at the age of 99. He said: “I started having the injections at my local hospital but they stopped doing any good so that was that.

“I was originally introduced to Blind Veterans UK through the SAS Association. I’m very pleased I was as this charity has been a great comfort to me. I’ve received a lot of training and useful information regarding my sight loss. I’ve also had brilliant support from my community support workers, initially Martha, and then Sallie-Ann. They’ve always been very helpful.”

**You can watch the first series of SAS Rogue Heroes on BBC iPlayer. Filming for the second series will begin this year. 🇬🇧**

# On your marks...

As the nation gets set for this year’s London Marathon on 23 April, we ask three of our brave runners why they’re taking on the gruelling 26.2 mile run...



**Caption: Matt Spruce**

**Matt:**  
**This will be the first London Marathon for veteran Matt Spruce, 41, from Colwyn Bay.**

“The military veteran community is a group very close to my heart. I

joined the British Army when I was 16 and served for 23 years as a combat medical technician in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

During my time, I served in several operations including Iraq and Afghanistan, and I saw first-hand the devastating injuries suffered by our servicemen and women.

I find it incredibly humbling to see the work military charities like Blind Veterans UK do to better the lives of those who have suffered life-changing injuries.

I was fortunate to leave the military unscathed, but that isn’t to say I won’t need support from a military charity in the future and I feel very fortunate to be able to support the work that Blind Veterans UK does.

I’ve recently learnt that someone I served with; someone who’s a similar age to me, has lost his sight. It’s still early in his journey, but I know →



Blind Veterans UK will be there for him if he wants their support.

In terms of this marathon, it's a tough one to train for as most of the training has to happen during the winter months when it's dark, cold and wet. It's hard to get the motivation to go out after work when the daylight has already disappeared. My aim is to get myself fit enough to enjoy the day.

I started training the first week of December and I'm running around 50km a week. I'm not going to win the



**Caption: Roxana Chu**

race and I've no specific time in mind, I just want to have fun and not be in pain!

In the military, looking after your fitness and training are part of the job. I'd train three or four times a week in work time. When you leave you need to learn how to be a civilian again and your habits change. I was no longer looking after my fitness.

Being awarded a place in the London Marathon to represent Blind Veterans UK has changed that and now I can't go more than two days without a run. I'm enjoying it and I want to keep it going."

**Roxana:**  
It was through her volunteering role as an Age UK telephone friend to Member, Peter, that Roxana Chu from London came across Blind Veterans UK.

"Peter has such high praise for Blind Veterans UK. He has nothing but good things to say about the support he's received from the charity over the past four years.

He's told me all about his stays at the charity's Centre of Wellbeing in Brighton and how his visits are the highlight of his year. I hope that by fundraising for Blind Veterans UK, I

can do my bit to ensure that veterans like Peter can continue to enjoy the support and hospitality of the charity for years to come.

I treat Peter like an uncle and that's why I want to show my support for Blind Veterans UK. It will be a huge honour to run on behalf of such a phenomenal charity and I'll know that with every step I take, I'll be raising awareness and that means the world to me.

I'm originally from Hong Kong but I've lived in London for 20 years. The UK has some amazing scenery to explore and my love of planning a route and going for a hike has led to me taking on ultra-marathons around the country and elsewhere in the world.

In May last year, I signed up to my first 100km in the Peak District. Participants were invited to walk or run the route. My friend and I walked it and it took ten hours to finish the first 50km. We went to bed with our feet covered in blisters and knew we wouldn't be able to carry on for the second 50km the following day. But I was inspired by those who were running the route and from then on I started training seriously.

An ambition of mine is to complete the six major marathons in the world.

**"We went to bed with our feet covered in blisters and knew we wouldn't be able to carry on for the second 50km the following day"**

This year I'll be taking on Berlin as well as London and then over the next two years I shall hopefully run in Boston, New York, Chicago and Tokyo.

I'm not a person that races to achieve a particular time, but I enjoy the journey and always want to finish. I like the longer distances as they train my endurance."

**Chris:**  
Chris Martin, 42, from Devon, is running for us as part of a team from public service provider, Seetec.

"Towards the end of last year, two Members shared their recovery stories with the company I work for. The presentation was so inspiring that within 20 minutes, five volunteers from the company had put themselves forward to run the London Marathon on behalf of Blind Veterans UK and a Seetec team was born.

Seetec is an organisation supporting people from all backgrounds to →





**Caption: Chris Martin**

break down the barriers that prevent them from getting a job or accessing services. We come across people affected by a range of injuries and long-term illnesses. To hear Members Simon Brown and Kevin Alderton talk about their journey and the support they've received from Blind Veterans UK is really motivating and fits so well with the ethos and goals of Seetec.

I'm a veteran myself, having served in the Royal Navy for two years, and I have great respect for all servicemen

and women. I also have a friend who lost an eye last year as a result of cancer, so the presentation by Simon and Kevin really caught my attention.

My friend still has some sight but it's made me more aware of the difficulties and adjustments that will need to be made.

My experience of the London Marathon last year was off the back of having Covid so this time round I'm going to give it a proper go and I hope to finish in under four hours. I also have the added incentive of doing it for Blind Veterans UK which helps to put the pain into context.

The day of the marathon itself is an assault on the senses. Nothing at all can prepare you for taking part in this iconic event. It's fantastic to be doing it as part of a team, we're sharing training tips and there's a real camaraderie between us.

We all want to do our very best for Blind Veterans UK and make a positive difference to the lives of all the Members the charity supports." 🇬🇧

**Feeling inspired? Register your interest for the London Marathon 2024 at [blindveterans.org.uk/events](https://blindveterans.org.uk/events)**

INK DROP / ADOBE STOCK



## Need support during the cost of living crisis?

If you're struggling to cope with rising costs, read on to find out what help may be available

If you need help to pay your bills and buy essentials, there are a number of charities and organisations which can offer advice and may be able to give you financial assistance. Here, you can find out where you can get help and what support you might qualify for.

### Help from your local authority

We recommend that you contact your local social services team first when looking for help to afford items. Whether you are registered with them or not, they may be able to give you help with the following: →



- fees for residential and nursing homes
- telephone installation and rental
- equipment to help you in your daily life
- adaptations to your home
- holidays

### If you live in England

Your local authority should have a welfare assistance scheme to help people on low incomes afford everyday household items. Call your local authority to find out the qualifying criteria and how much money is available (this varies between local authorities).

### If you live in Scotland

Apply for a community care grant from the Scottish welfare fund if you need help to leave care, live independently, or to continue living independently. Although this is a national scheme, local authorities deliver it, so contact yours to start your application. They also provide crisis grants for emergencies.

### If you live in Wales

Apply for an individual assistance payment from the discretionary assistance fund to help you live independently. They also provide emergency assistance payments. For more information or to make an application, call for free on **0800 859 5924**.

### If you live in Northern Ireland

Apply for a discretionary support loan. For more information, contact the finance support service on **0800 587 2750**.

### Grants for people with disabilities

#### The Florence Nightingale Aid in Sickness Trust

The trust considers applications from people of all ages who are disabled or in poor health and require medical items or services to improve their quality of life. The trust also considers grants for a range of items including medical aids, white goods, computers (including specialist software), reading aids, magnifiers, sensory equipment and communication aids.

#### Independence at Home

Provides grants to people who have a long-term illness or disability. It considers grants for mobility and travel equipment; specialist disability equipment; home adaptations; communication equipment; home repairs; kitchen equipment; beds and bedding; home adaptations and more.

#### Glasspool Charity Trust

Provides grants to individuals who are on low incomes and in difficult circumstances. They consider grants for white goods and other household items; beds and bedding; clothing

(including school uniforms); baby items; educational computer equipment or televisions; and adaptations and equipment for people with disabilities.

#### Linking Help with Hope

Provides grants to people of any age with illness or disabilities who are on a very low income and receiving certain benefits. Grants are for essential household items (such as a cooker, bed, fridge, washing machine or carpets) and specialist equipment not available from statutory agencies.

#### DEPHER

##### (for disabled and elderly people)

DEPHER (Disability and Elderly Plumbing and Heating Emergency Repair) provides vulnerable people with access to affordable and vital emergency work. It offers discounted or free emergency work on heating and hot water systems. It also provides financial help to people over the age of 65, the disabled, and those on low incomes. This can include help to buy food and pay utility bills. The service is free during the winter months and discounted at other times.

### Grants for technology and devices

We recommend you try out technology products before applying for a grant, so that you can find the software or product that best suits

ALEXANDER RATHS / ADOBESTOCK



**Caption: Get help with your bills**

your needs. Your local society for blind and partially sighted people may have computers or equipment set up for you to try, or they may offer classes where you can learn about new software. You may also be able to ask for free trial versions of software programmes so you can be sure they are what you need before you commit to buying the full version.

The following charities offer grants towards technology items:

- Florence Nightingale Aid in Sickness Trust
- Gardner's Trust for the Blind
- Family Fund
- Guide Dogs
- VICTA
- BlindAid

#### British Wireless for the Blind Fund

Offers radios and audio equipment →





**Caption: Some energy companies offer grants**

to people over the age of eight who are registered as blind or partially sighted and receive a means-tested benefit.

### **RNIB**

The technology for life team at RNIB can recommend free or low-cost software that could meet your needs.

### **Grants for household repairs and utilities**

#### **Foundations Independent Living Trust**

Provides grants to local home improvement agencies so that they can make home repairs for older, vulnerable and disabled people on low incomes. Offers funding primarily for heating, hot water and gas repairs. These grants are available in England only, in most local authorities.

### **Your energy supplier**

Some energy companies offer grants to help with energy bill arrears and essential heating repairs. Contact your energy supplier directly for more information.

#### **British Gas Energy trust**

Grants are available for those struggling with their energy bills. You do not have to be a British Gas customer. Usually offers grants up to £1,500.

#### **British Gas Energy support fund**

A new fund to help British Gas customers who are struggling to pay their energy bills in response to the increasing cost of living and rising inflation. Eligible customers with fuel debt of £250 to £750 can apply for

grants. It will remain open until funding is exhausted.

#### **EDF customer support fund**

Offers grants to vulnerable customers to provide them with a fresh start and financial stability. It can help households stay out of fuel debt and afford ongoing energy costs. It also provides grants for essential energy-efficient white goods such as cookers, refrigerators, or washing machines. There is no deadline for applications.

#### **Octopus Energy octo assist fund**

A fund for Octopus customers. Complete a quick and simple online form, which asks you a series of questions about your financial situation. Octopus can offer a number of support options based on circumstances and need, including access to existing schemes, monetary support from the fund, or a loan of a thermal imagery camera to find heat leaks at home.

#### **OVO Energy fund (UK)**

Supports OVO customers who have fallen behind with their energy payments. You must be in receipt of income support, jobseeker's allowance, pension credit, employment and support allowance, or universal credit (only if not working). Your energy bill debt must be at least £150 and your annual household income must be £16,190 or less.

#### **Scottish Power hardship fund**

For Scottish Power customers struggling to pay their bills. The fund can help by clearing or reducing arrears by crediting a customer's Scottish Power energy account. You must be in receipt of income Support, jobseeker's allowance, pension credit, or employment and support allowance.

#### **Grants for military personnel**

##### **Royal British Legion**

Grants are available for serving and former military personnel, as well their dependants and carers. 🇬🇧

**Compiled by RNIB with contributions from charities across the sight loss sector. To read the full article, visit [blindveterans.org.uk/costofliving](https://blindveterans.org.uk/costofliving)**

## **More information**

### **RNIB helpline**

**Your direct line to the support, advice and products you need. They will help you find out what's available from RNIB and other organisations.**

**You can ask Alexa to call their helpline. Just say: "Alexa, call RNIB helpline" to your Alexa-enabled device.**



# The story of SS Dover Hill

To mark World Storytelling Day this month, we share a WWII tale by Merchant Navy Radio Officer **David Craig**, courtesy of the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project

“ In the supplement to the London Gazette of October 8th, 1943, there was a list of names of 19 men: five had been awarded the Order of the British Empire and 14 the King’s Commendation for brave conduct. The citation read, simply, ‘For dangerous work in hazardous circumstances.’

I write the story as I remember it on behalf of the 19, as we all worked together and none of us did anything different from anyone else.

## Bound for North Russia

On January 13th 1943, I joined the SS Dover Hill at anchor off Gourock in the Clyde. As I boarded I discovered that we were bound for North Russia. We were heavily loaded with fighter aircraft, tanks, guns, lorries and a large tonnage of shells and high explosives.

We left the Clyde on January 23rd and arrived in Loch Ewe where we lay at anchor until the rest of the merchant ships had gathered for our convoy. Loch Ewe is a very beautiful place in the summer but with a north-westerly gale blowing and a few large, heavily laden merchant ships dragging their anchors, it can be very different.

On February 15th, 28 merchant ships set out in a gale for North Russia in the heavily defended convoy JW53. The escort was made up of three cruisers, an anti-aircraft cruiser, an escort carrier, 16 destroyers, two minesweepers, three corvettes and two trawlers. Trouble was obviously expected.

As we sailed north, the gale developed into a hurricane and ships began to get damaged. Our escort carrier was one

RUSSIAN ARCTIC CONVOY MUSEUM PROJECT



**Caption: Veteran David Craig at the Boom Defence at Loch Ewe**

of those sent back and our deck cargo began to break adrift. But we managed to save the tanks and kept on battering our way northwards.

## A German attack

The loss of our escort carrier meant that we had no aircover and, as expected, a few days later, a German spotter plane arrived. The next day we received a heavy attack by Ju 88 bombers. The blizzards, when they came, were always welcome as they hid us from the enemy.

We arrived at the entrance to Kola Inlet, which is a long fjord with the

Russian port of Marmansk near the top. We were all very tired and looking forward to having a good sleep. But we were very quickly disillusioned when, about a mile from the inlet, we passed a merchant ship on fire and crew taking to the lifeboats.

The pilot cheerfully told us that on the way down to meet us he had seen her being attacked by aircraft, obviously a common occurrence. We now understood why we had been fitted with so many anti-aircraft guns. We discharged our cargo at Murmansk and anchored. We were regularly attacked by Me 109 fighter-bombers which →





**Caption: David Craig, Radio Officer**

swooped down over the top of the hill and came tearing at us about 20 to 30 feet above the water. These attacks only lasted for about a minute but were very vicious. We had gunners wounded and more damage to our ship.

**An explosive visitor**

On April 4th, we were in Mishukov anchorage. I was playing chess in the officers' mess when 'action stations' sounded. I looked out and saw two Ju 88 bombers coming up from astern, high up. Our Bofors shells were bursting below them so when they turned away I assumed we had beaten them off, and stepped out on deck.

This was a foolish thing to do as, unknown to me, the planes had released their bombs before turning away. Five exploded on both sides of the ship and blew me off my feet. As

I got up, a gunlayer came down and pointed out a hole in the deck a few feet from where I had been standing.

It was obvious that a sixth bomb had gone through the main deck into our coal bunkers and had not exploded, but we were advised that there were no British bomb disposal people in North Russia. We then realised we'd have to dig the bomb out ourselves.

Although the Dover Hill was only a batted old merchantman, she was our home and no German was going to make us leave her while she was still afloat. The captain asked for volunteers, and 19 of us, including our captain, formed our own bomb disposal squad. We had no equipment; only a few shovels and 19 stout hearts.

When the Russian authorities heard what we were doing, although they had many exploded bombs to deal with, they kindly offered to send one of their own bomb disposal officers to remove the detonator if we could get the bomb on deck.

When we had dug about ten feet down into the coal, we found the tail fins and, by their size, decided our bomb must be a 1,000lb one. Unfortunately, the Germans also discovered what we were up to and bombed us again, hoping to set it off. Due to the explosions, →

**This story was sent in by Member David North, a long-time supporter of the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project. Here, he explains his connection...**

“My partner, Hily, and I were together some 27 years until seven years ago she sadly passed away. Her father, Norman Stanley Kemp, with whom I had the pleasure of spending many hours, served as an able seaman quartermaster on the destroyer, HMS Cassandra – one of the many escort vessels to the arctic convoys.

On 11 December 1944, having departed Loch Ewe on route to Russia, Norman left his bunk in the bow of the ship in the early hours to go on duty in the wheelhouse. Unseen by those on board, U-boat U365 had encroached within range and released a torpedo that took away most of the bow of Cassandra, as well as 62 lives of the men in the sleeping quarters. Norman survived and remained on board as the vessel was towed to the Russian port of Murmansk for repairs over a period of months before returning, with Norman, to the UK.

After Norman passed on we found ourselves with artefacts to hand on to various military museums. Hence we came across the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum

Project, which was set up to honour those who served in convoys during WWII. We travelled to Loch Ewe to meet the Trustees.

In her Will, Hily made a generous donation to the museum project – a legacy from her father. With matching funds from the Scottish government, we were able to secure the building near Loch Ewe within which the museum is now housed.

David Craig's experience is one of many recorded by the project. According to the former Chairman, George Milne, who knew him, Mr Craig wanted his story told so that the sacrifice and contribution to peace made by his comrades is always remembered.”



**Caption: Member David North**



the coal fell back into the space where we were digging so things got difficult, but after two days and nights of hard work we finally got it up on deck.

### Bomb disposal

I was standing beside the bomb with two of my fellow officers as our Russian friend started to unscrew the retaining ring of the detonator, but after a few turns it stuck. He then took a small hammer and a punch and tapped it to get it moving. I can honestly say that every time he hit it I felt the hair on the back of my neck standing up against the hood of my duffle coat.

After removing the detonator, we dumped the bomb into the Kola Inlet where it probably lies to this day.

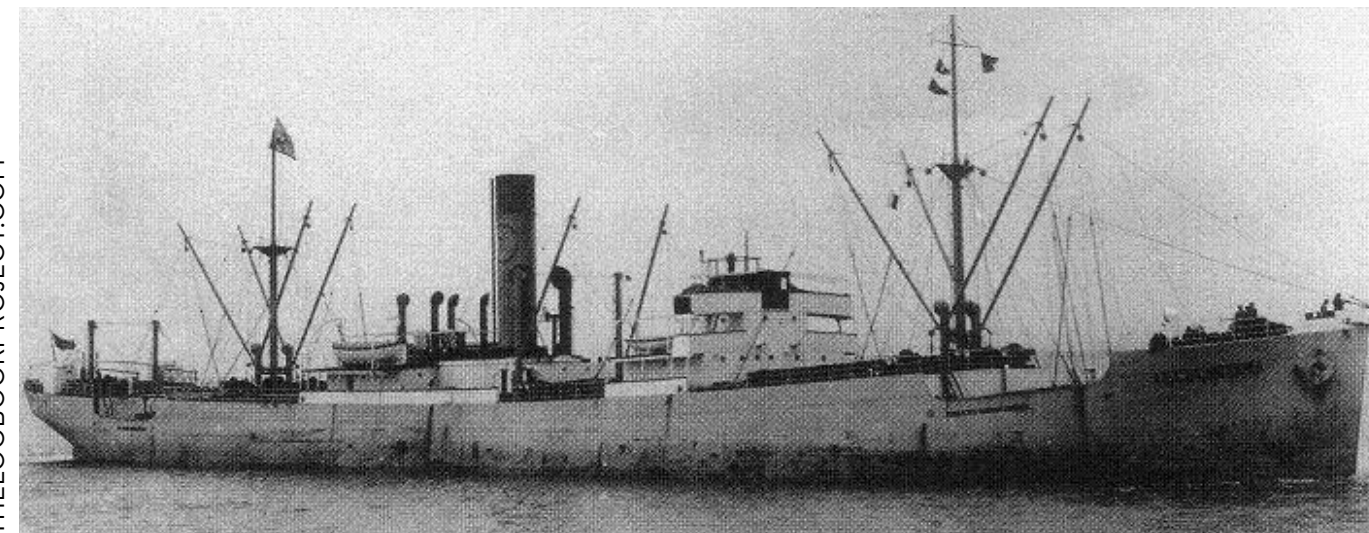
### My debt of gratitude

I returned to Murmansk in 1980, mainly to find the grave of a friend who had

been killed by a bomb splinter which went through his steel helmet. With the help of the Russian authorities I was able to do so. I went back again many times after that with other veterans.

I also found out that the Russian bomb disposal officer who helped us was called Pavel Panin. I heard from the Northern Naval Museum in Murmansk that he was killed in August 1943. He was a brave man who we admired very much. It would have been wonderful to have met him after all those years, but it was not to be. 🇷🇺 ”

■ **David sadly passed away in 2021, aged 96. His story is published with kind permission from his daughter, Dorothy Forwell. You can find out more about him through the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum Project ([racmp.co.uk](http://racmp.co.uk)) and The Log Book Project ([thelogbookproject.com](http://thelogbookproject.com)).**



**Caption: SS Dover Hill**

JULIA / ADOBE STOCK



**Caption: Sheep jumping over a gate**

# Getting a good night's sleep

Bored of counting sheep at night? Read on...

As most of us know only too well, poor sleep can cause all kinds of physical and mental problems, affecting concentration and memory and making us more irritable and less motivated.

But did you know that long-term issues with sleep can also lead to an increase in physical illnesses such as colds and flu, and cause depression, anxiety and mood disorders?

### What happens when we sleep?

Our sleep is made up of five stages, from non-rapid eye movement (NREM) through to rapid eye movement (REM):

**NREM Stage 1** – When you first fall asleep, it'll be a very light sleep.

**NREM Stage 2** – This is when your heart rate starts dropping. This stage lasts around 20 minutes. →



**NREM Stage 3** – This is when you're in a very deep sleep. Your body is very relaxed in this stage.

**REM sleep** – The rapid eye movement stage is when most of our dreams occur as our brains become more active. You only remember your dreams if you wake up during this stage. Your body is so relaxed that you can't move very well which prevents you from acting out your dreams.

Some people might wake in this phase to find themselves terrified by a nightmare and unable to move; this is called a 'night terror' and can feel very real and scary. This doesn't last very long though and is very uncommon.

Once REM sleep is over, you go back to Stage 1 sleep and back through this cycle about four or five times each night. Each cycle takes about 90 minutes.

### The problems we can have with sleep

A lack of REM and deep sleep can badly affect you during the day and sleep problems occur when this sleep cycle is interrupted in some way. These are some of the main causes of sleep problems:

**Stress** – You may not notice your stress levels in the day time if you're often

busy, but when you go to bed you may find your mind is full of thoughts or worries. The more you worry about not falling asleep, the more you're adding to this stress. Stress also causes the body to feel tense because you're on high alert. Tension makes it harder for your body to relax and prepare for sleep.

**Age** – As you get older, you need less sleep, yet you may still try to sleep for the same number of hours as you needed when you were younger. If you nap in the daytime, you'll find it even harder to fall asleep at night.

**Needing to go to the toilet** – This is often related to age. In fact, most people over 60 get up at least once a night. If you drink late in the evening, it's likely that you'll need to use the toilet in the night and drinking alcohol will increase this need.

**Pain** – Any illness that causes aching, pain, itching or discomfort can cause problems with sleep.

**Environment** – Noise, buzzing phones or IT equipment, an uncomfortable mattress, feeling too hot or cold, too much light and other distractions can cause problems with sleep.

**Poor bedtime routine** – Eating or drinking too soon before bed can affect sleep, as can using electrical devices

such as phones and tablets. Exercise and physical activity too soon before bed can also make it hard to sleep.

### Tips for improving sleep

- Make sure your bedroom is a comfortable temperature and that there's good air flow to reduce the stuffy feeling that can cause headaches and help you get enough oxygen.
- There are many apps that can help you get to sleep if you find it difficult. A few you could try are 'Calm', 'Headspace' and 'Noisli'.
- Try to reduce the amount of noise in your house and bedroom. For example, turn off televisions, put your phone on Do Not Disturb mode and ask other people to be quiet when you're off to bed.
- Make sure your pillows give you good support and aren't too high as this will give you neck ache.
- Exercise can help you sleep better as it tires your body out and uses up your energy levels. A brisk walk for 30 minutes is a good way to use up energy in the early evening.
- Try not to eat for about two hours before going to bed. We want our digestion to be slowing down before we get into bed, so if you're hungry, just have a very light snack like a slice of toast.
- The same goes for drinking. Try not to drink for a couple of hours before

going to bed, so you don't need to go to the toilet at night.

- Reduce the amount of caffeine you have and make sure you don't have any caffeine at all in the evening. Caffeine is found in tea, coffee, fizzy drinks (like Irn-Bru and Coke), dark chocolate, some sweets, some over-the-counter medications and energy tablets.
- Like caffeine, nicotine in cigarettes is a stimulant. It wakes you up and keeps you feeling alert. Try not to smoke for at least 90 minutes before you go to bed as it takes this time for the effects to die down. Never smoke during the night if you wake up.
- Cut down on alcohol, and stop altogether if possible. Although alcohol can help people to fall asleep, it will disrupt your sleep rhythms, cutting down your REM and deep sleep.
- Our minds and bodies like routine, so try and get ready for bed at the same time each night (unless advised otherwise by a GP or specialist). Get up at more or less the same time every day and try to avoid lying in past 10am.
- Stick to a routine at night time that tells your body you're getting ready to sleep. Start winding down, have a warm bath, dim the lights and switch off electrical devices. 🌙

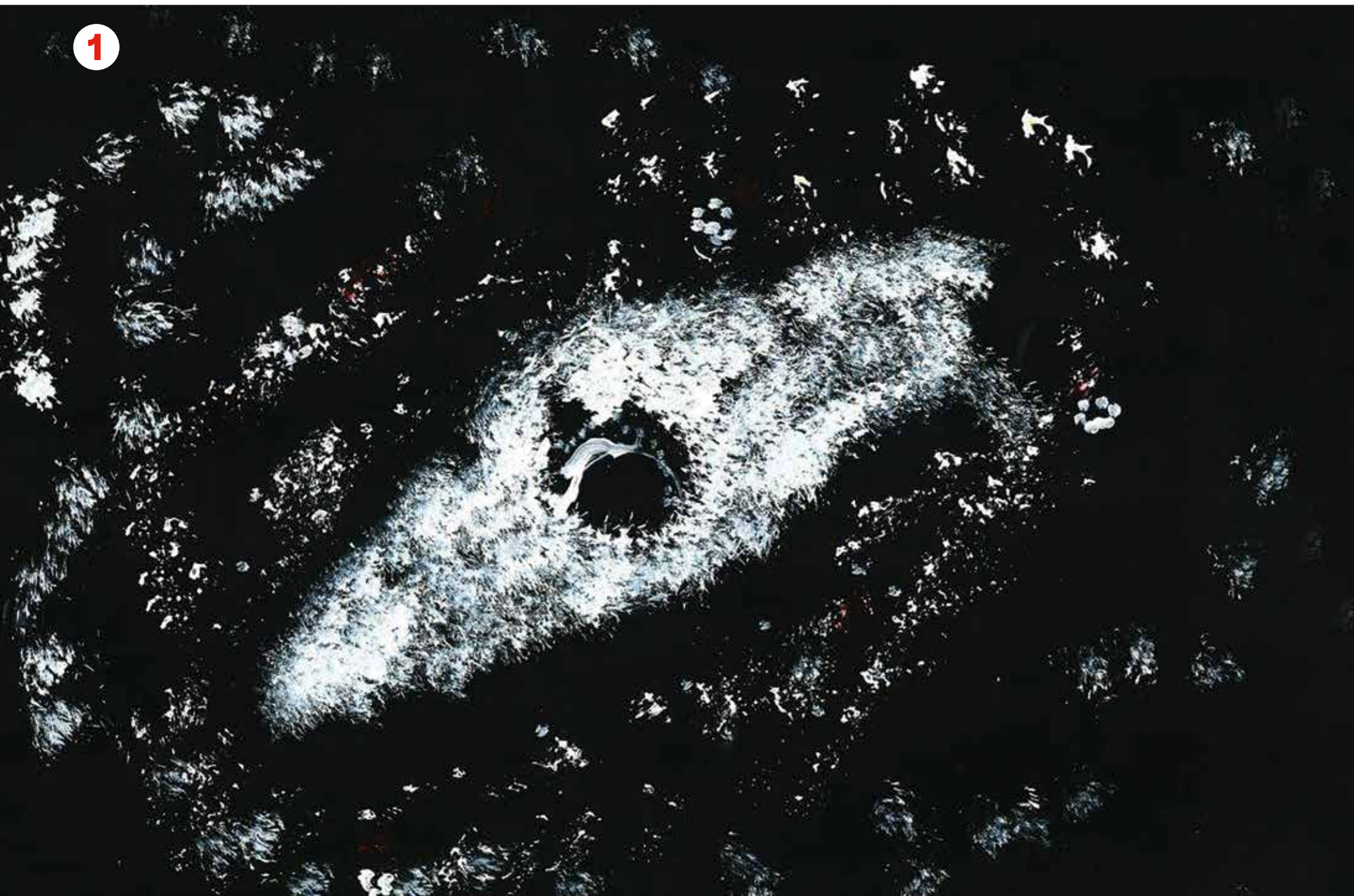
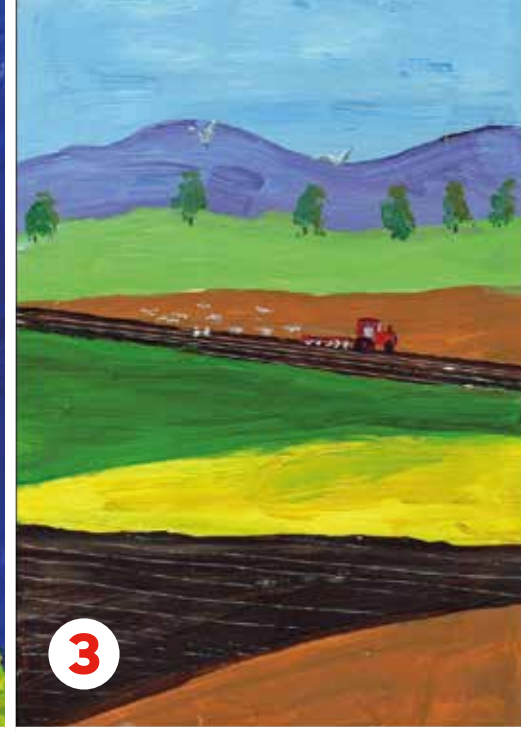
**Good night.**



# Artistic flair

We're pleased to present more artwork by our Members for the National Creative Wellbeing Project

**Captions: 1. David Beresford - Galaxy 2. James Morris - Sunflowers 3. Maurice Dawe 4. Dennis Chatwin - Yellow flower 5. Marjorie Paton - Untitled 6. Michael Kaye - Untitled**





# National Creative Wellbeing Programme

This month's creative activities you can take part in - all from the comfort of your own home

## CRAFT

### Spring Greetings Cards

Spring is in the air and we'll send you everything you need to create 10 beautiful handmade greetings cards to write and send to loved ones during February, March and April. The theme is 'spring' and 'Valentine's' so expect lots of flowers and hearts! This is a lovely creative project for Easter and you can make birthday cards or notelets to keep in touch with family and friends all year round.



**Caption: Willow basket weaving**

## GARDENING

### Freesias

Our gardening project this month is growing delicately trumpet shaped flowers to brighten up your windowsill. Watch them grow into a magnificent display with a scent to lift the spirits even on the greyest of days. We'll send you everything you need for this project including bulbs, compost and a galvanised bucket. You just need to supply some TLC to guarantee a burst of colour.

## CRAFT

### Stephenson's Rocket - wooden model project

Make your own wooden model locomotive with the help of our VI-friendly instructions. The Rocket is an early steam locomotive designed by Robert Stephenson which won of the Rainhill Trials of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway (L&MR) held in 1829. This is a fun and challenging kit with pre-cut wooden pieces which you can sand, slot together and glue.



**Caption: Stephenson's Rocket**

The Rocket is 10 inches or 26cm x 5 ½ inches or 14cm x 4 inches or 10cm and paint is included for those of you who would like to add some colour.

## CRAFT

### Willow Basket

Make your own round rattan basket. We'll send you everything you need and you just need to soak the canes provided in a sink or bowl when you are ready to weave the outside. The pack comes with VI friendly instructions and also an audio version if requested. It measures W6in or 15cm x L6 inches or 15cm x H3 inches or 8cm.

## ART

### Painting for Beginners and Improvers - February, March, April

Whether you're brand new to painting

or a seasoned expert, our painting project will encourage you to pick up a brush and see what you can do. The themes for spring are 'winter wonderland' and 'Tuscan village' and we'll introduce you to the VI friendly art of finger painting too, so you can work out which works best for you. Do send us your best work for us to share online and maybe even in *Review* magazine.

■ **To request an activity pack for any of these projects, or simply find out more, please call our bookings team on 01273 391455.**

## CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

Please call **01273 391447** if you are interested in joining one of our telephone or video call groups in one of the subjects below. →



Facilitated by the NCWP team, Members with a shared interest meet monthly for a chat and to share ideas, tips and support on our projects.

### Creative Writing

Whether poetry, prose, written and spoken word, this is a space for our writers to share thoughts and ideas.

### Gardening

A chat group to share the seasons and offer support with VI friendly gardening indoors and out. This one is very popular with those who've signed up



FIZKES / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: Join our knitting group**

for our gardening projects,

### Knitting, crochet or weaving

This group is for those of you who enjoy a chat about your latest projects with wool.

### Painting and drawing

If you enjoy making art, whether just starting out or a seasoned artist, this is the space to chat with other VI artists and exchange ideas tips and support.

### Woodwork

For those of you interested in woodwork, woodturning, wooden modelmaking. Great for peer support, tips and encouragement with your wooden model projects.

### Photography

We have a Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a fortnightly photography chat group with regular guest speakers. Anyone with an interest in photography is welcome.

■ **We'd love to hear how you get on with your projects. Please send us photos of you with your work by emailing us at [NCWT@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:NCWT@blindveterans.org.uk)**

**Lou Kirk-Partridge, Dave Bryant and Sue Kaulsi, your National Creative Wellbeing Project team** 🇬🇧

# Family news

**Robina Pollock** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 10 March

**James Smith** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 11 March

**Margaret Winney** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 14 March

**Leonard Brittain** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 21 March

**Joan Elyse** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 22 March

**Constance Hatfield** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 23 March

**Elizabeth Churchill** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 25 March

**Marion Hibbins** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 26 March

**Gordon Wright** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 26 March

**Audrey Kinnell** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 27 March

**Joseph Perkin** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 27 March

*All birthday information was correct at the time of going to press*

**George Dale** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 30 March

**Peggy Harding** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 2 April

### Condolences

**It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following, and we offer our heartfelt condolences.**

**Mary Hicks** who died on 25 November 2022. She was the wife of John Hicks

**Toby Lawson** who died on 1 December 2022. She was the wife of Arthur Lawson

**Ted Seiry** who died on 11 January 2023. He was the husband of Barbara Seiry

**Kath Allen** who died on 3 December 2022. She was the partner of Brian Elliott

**Debbie Ellen Barron** who died on 16 December 2022. She was the wife of John Barron

**Benita Reynolds** who died on 4 February 2023. She was the wife of Donald Reynolds



# In memory

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following Members and we offer our heartfelt condolences to their widows, widowers, families and friends

**Maurice Allen** of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 14 November 2022 aged 93. He served in the Royal Engineers.

**John Bryan Anderson** of Alnwick, Northumberland died on 16 January 2023 aged 88. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**John Edward Baker** of Cardiff died on 1 January 2023 aged 83. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

**Jean Baynham** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 12 January 2023 aged 95. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

**Jack Anthony Beard** of Reading, Berkshire died on 16 January 2023 aged 91. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**Eric George James Bee** of Edinburgh died on 20 January 2023 aged 83. He served as a Corporal in the 1st Battalion London Scottish.

**Kenneth Belcher** of Bristol died on 24 January 2023 aged 88. He served as a Radio Electrical Mechanic 2nd Class in the Royal Navy.

**Donald Henry Brasnell** of Dumfries and Galloway died on 4 January 2023 aged 90. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

**Derrick Brearley** of Liversedge, West Yorkshire died on 28 January 2023 aged 90. He served as a Driver in the Green Howards.

**Kenneth St John Brooks** of Gloucester, Gloucestershire died on 28 December 2022 aged 101. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Florence Joan Callaghan** of Bristol died on 26 January 2023 aged 95. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Enid Mary Carter** of Scunthorpe, South Humberside died on 14 January 2023 aged 90. She served as an Aircraftwoman in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**Cecil Clark** of Newbury, Berkshire died on 28 November 2022 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Ian Charteris Cowe** of Berwick-Upon-Tweed, Northumberland died on 1 January 2023 aged 90. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**John Frank William Crane** of Aldershot, Hampshire died on 1 January 2023 aged 98. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Andrew Culloch** of Dundee died on 18 January 2023 aged 92. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery.

**Ralph Decker** of Paignton, Devon died on 9 January 2023 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Artillery.

**Kenneth Stanley Dowdney** of Thames Ditton, Surrey died on 19 January 2023 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

**John Edward Enfield** of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire died on 18 November 2022 aged 96. He served in the Rifle Brigade.

**Brian John Evans** of Glasgow, Lanarkshire died on 29 January 2023 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**James Henry Foley** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 14 January 2023 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.





**William Frederick Foster** of Consett, County Durham died on 10 January 2023 aged 96. He served as a Lance Sergeant in the Coldstream Guards.

**William Fox** of Yeovil, Somerset died on 31 December 2022 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Peter Sydney Friend** of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 5 February 2023 aged 85. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

**Dennis Gilchrist** of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 1 January 2023 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Geoffrey Ashby Guy** of Lampeter, Dyfed died on 17 December 2022 aged 93. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Peter George Haines** of Portsmouth, Hampshire died on 21 January 2023 aged 90. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

**Michael John Hands** of Coventry, West Midlands died on 23 December 2022 aged 88. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**Raymond Philip Hands** of Rugby, Warwickshire died on 4 January 2023 aged 97. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**George Alfred Haslam** of Welling, Kent died on 27 January 2023 aged 99. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Signals.

**Jack Haslam** of Bolton died on 1 February 2023 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Ernest Holden** of Ripon, North Yorkshire died on 11 January 2023 aged 93. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

**Roy Hoskins** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 28 November 2022 aged 99. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Colin Hoyland** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 2 January 2023 aged 90. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Ronald Norman Alan Irving** of Alford, Lincolnshire died on 1 January 2023 aged 92. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Stuart Everard Munday James** of Shrewsbury, Shropshire died on 13 January 2023 aged 90. He served as a Lieutenant in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

**William Alun Jones** of Bangor, Gwynedd died on 15 January 2023 aged 97. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Royal Artillery.

**Robin Bipin Kantharia** of Shaftesbury, Dorset died on 27 January 2023 aged 86. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

**Daniel Kennedy** of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 12 January 2023 aged 40. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

**Hywel Bernard Lewis** of Swansea died on 5 February 2023 aged 92. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Wilfrid Charles Ewart Lindley** of Ovingdean, East Sussex died on 24 January 2023 aged 102. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**John Lomas** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 21 November 2022 aged 94. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Kathleen Mary Lory** of Kings Langley, Hertfordshire died on 25 January 2023 aged 97. She served as a Corporal in the Woman's Royal Air Force.

**John Edward George Luff** of Midhurst, West Sussex died on 9 January 2023 aged 85. He served in the Royal Artillery.

**Peter Lunn** of Lincoln, Lincolnshire died on 1 January 2023 aged 92. He served in the Royal Air Force.

**Donald Macleod** of Steyning, West Sussex died on 17 January 2023 aged 93. He served as an Aircraftman in the Middlesex Regiment.

**Derek Spencer Maudsley** of Preston, Lancashire died on 13 January 2023 aged 85. He served as an Air Mechanic in the Royal Navy.





**Peter Astle Milton** of Chester, Cheshire died on 21 January 2023 aged 97. He served as an Air Mechanic 1st Class in the Fleet Air Arm.

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**James Richard Minter** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 14 January 2023 aged 96. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

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**Pauline Eva Mole** of Abingdon, Oxfordshire died on 19 January 2023 aged 99. She served as a Subaltern in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Emlyn Mort** of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 24 January 2023 aged 94. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Desmond Arthur Newling** of Chichester, West Sussex died on 10 January 2023 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**John Currie Peebles** of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire died on 1 December 2022 aged 91. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

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**Douglas Robert Potter** of Calne, Wiltshire died on 13 January 2023 aged 80. He served in the Royal Artillery.

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**Iris Ray** of Bournemouth, Dorset died on 14 January 2023 aged 101. She served as a Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Ernest Robinson** of London died on 18 December 2022 aged 92. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Roland Robinson** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 29 January 2023 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Fred Slingo** of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 4 February 2023 aged 93. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Raymond Sparkes** of Hayes, Middlesex died on 21 January 2023 aged 93. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

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**James Sullivan** of Skipton, North Yorkshire died on 16 January 2023 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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**Deryck Sutton** of Macclesfield, Cheshire died on 1 February 2023 aged 89. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**William Tate** of Hebburn, Tyne and Wear died on 1 January 2023 aged 84. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

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**Andrew Tindall** of Southampton, Hampshire died on 29 January 2023 aged 85. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**David Melville Thomas** of Port Talbot, West Glamorgan died on 29 December 2022 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Educational Corps.

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**Mark Tuttle** of Hungerford, Berkshire died on 7 January 2023 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

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**Edwin Watkins** of Liss, Hampshire died on 25 January 2023 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the South Wales Borderers.

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**Randolph McDonald Watson** of Seaham, County Durham died on 9 January 2023 aged 87. He served as a Petty Officer Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

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**Kenneth Ernest White** of Guildford, Surrey died on 25 January 2023 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Leonard Wise** of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 25 January 2023 aged 91. He served as an Artificer in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

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**Leonard Michael Woodman** of Warwick, Warwickshire died on 22 January 2023 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

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**Greta Birgitta Wyer** of Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire died on 9 December 2022 aged 95. She served as a Corporal in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

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**Philip Leonard Young** of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 21 January 2023 aged 90. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

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# The story of Old Boot

Member **Colin Oakes**, 75, who's known as Woody, shares the tale of his military service, cleverly written from the perspective of his army boots...

Old Boot lived under a hawthorn hedge in the country. Once he'd been one of a pair of black and shiny military boots. Now he was a nondescript grey and covered in mud, leather laces missing and eyelets half closed.



**Caption: Colin Oakes**

Old Boot had once been highly polished and worn only on very special occasions, such as the Passing Out Parade at the end of basic training and the Queen's Birthday Parade in Berlin. But, as time passed, he became a 'working boot' – still kept clean and polished but no longer fit for the grand parades.

He learned to climb over high walls, pass the driving test, ride on the outside of tanks, jump from helicopters and take part in live firing exercises in Germany. Those were the good times.

Old Boot was also sent to Norway to learn how to ski. He loved the sensation of floating through the air off the ski jump and seeing the spectacular Northern Lights. The cold wet snow was not good for him, though, and he needed extra care when camping out.

JANET / ADOBE STOCK



**Caption: Old Boot**

At night when he was taken off, he was cleaned, put into a cloth bag and kept warm by body heat inside the sleeping bag.

His time inside the Arctic Circle passed and, as was typical of the military mentality, he was sent to Aden (now Yemen).

Aden was an active service posting with a very real threat of danger. Old Boot helped drive one of the mobile patrols which were prime targets for rockets, grenades or bombs beside and under the road. Each patrol lasted three hours and were three or four times a day. Some were better than others and Old Boot preferred the 0300 to 0600 hrs patrol as, although

at the start he'd be half asleep, when the sun came up it was magical.

That was his life for a whole month, and then he was sent up country.

He'd only been at the camp in the mountains for five days when dissident tribesmen attacked. At 22.20 hrs on the 5 June 1966, there was a loud explosion and Old Boot was thrown violently into the corner of the tent. A fire started and much of the contents of the tent were destroyed.

Old Boot was evacuated, returned to Aden for a week then sent back to England. And that was the end of his military career. 🇬🇧



# Quiz time

Your quiz master, Member **Ron Russell**, tests your general knowledge

1. What are cirrus, cumulus and stratus?
2. Who was Prime Minister when Britain joined the EU?
3. What sport was Bing Crosby playing when he died?
4. Who is Gordon Sumner better known as?
5. Who wrote the lyrics to Auld Lang Syne?
6. Which US state is known as the garden state?
7. Which of these is considered unlucky in a theatre?  
a) Whistling b) Heckling c) Singing
8. For whose Coronation was the dish 'coronation chicken' created?
9. Which is the only European country with a name ending in L?
10. What do you call a group of crows?

Answers on page 2



## Contact details

**Contact address** Blind Veterans UK,  
3 Queen Square, London,  
W1N 3AR, **0300 111 22 33**

**Member Support Hub (MeSH):**  
**01273 391 447**

**New Members:** Anyone who may be eligible to join Blind Veterans UK, can phone our Membership Department on freephone **0800 389 7979**.

### A different format?

If you would like your copy of *Review* in a different format, then please contact your **Community Support Worker** or **ROVI** for more information.

**The Brighton Centre 01273 307 811**

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[revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk)

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To listen to *Review* on Alexa, the command is: **"Alexa, ask TuneIn to play Blind Veterans UK Review."** If you have any problems getting it to work, please contact the MeSH helpline on **01273 391 447**.





# 2023

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The draw will take place **31 March 2023**

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Person responsible for the raffle and lottery: Richard Neate, Blind Veterans UK, 3 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AR. Blind Veterans UK is a registered charity no. 216227 (England & Wales) and SC039411 (Scotland).

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