

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

November 2022



Lest we forget

Keeping the memory
of our heroes alive

Inside:

London Marathon
The Blind Artisan
Winter breaks



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

A treasured time

Hello and welcome to your November *Review*. We are fast-approaching our National Day of Remembrance this month and I know this is a high point of the year for many of you – a treasured time for sharing memories and remembering old comrades.

As you get ready to take part in commemorations around the UK, in this issue we share some wonderful stories from Members who are making efforts in other ways to keep the memory of our heroes alive.

You may recognise our cover star, 101-year-old Member John McOwan, as his WWII stories of his time as a Desert Rat appeared in the *Review* earlier this year. Amazingly, John has since published his memoirs and held a book launch in his local town. As you can read on page 11, he hopes his stories will “make others appreciate the horror and grief war leaves behind.”

Then, on page 22, we speak to another talented Member. Peter Kay lost his sight as the UK was going into lockdown in 2020 and has overcome enormous challenges to create stunning Remembrance-themed woodcut pieces which he sells to

raise funds for us. He talks about the struggle of persevering with his craft and credits his fellow Members for giving him the courage to venture back into his workshop.

Meanwhile, more than 30 brave souls recently ran the London Marathon to fly the flag for Blind Veterans UK. We interview three of them on page 14, including Darren who ran for our late Vice President, Maria Pikulski-Hughes.

And, as you prepare for Remembrance, you might want to take a look at our piece on page 47 about the long-held traditions around this anniversary. Put together by our President Colin Williamson, it's a fascinating read.

I'd love to include a photo of you at your local commemorations in the December *Review*. Please email it to revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk by 14 November.

Enjoy your month. 🍁

Liz Millar
Editor



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Quiz answers - from page 50

- 1. Troop or band 2. Insect 3. (c) Porpoise 4. A parliament
- 5. Cow 6. (a) Andean condor 7. Butterfly 8. Lyrebird
- 9. (a) Sea otters 10. A tower

On the cover

John McOwan, 101, at his recent book launch with his Community Support Worker, Gemma Rome. Turn to page 11 to read John's story.



They have not died in vain

Your message from your Chief Executive,
Major General (rtd) **Nick Caplin** CB

Early in 2018, and completely out of the blue, I received an invitation to speak in a debate at the Oxford Union, the debating society of Oxford University. The motion was “This House believes that we have not remembered them” and the debate was



Caption: Nick Caplin

scheduled for 8 November 2018, three days before the 100th anniversary of Armistice. To this day, I don't know why they asked me - I'm neither an Oxford man nor a debater - but it felt like a rare opportunity.

I was given the option of which side to speak on and I chose to oppose the motion. Joining me on that side in the debate was the author Simon Jenkins and Andrew Murrison MP. The debate was one of those experiences I will never forget. My argument was, loosely speaking, based on the following...

“They shall grow not old as we that are left grow old. Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them.” These words, written by the Oxford poet Laurence Binyon as part of the poem, For the Fallen, were inspired

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Caption: Unveiling of the Menin Gate Memorial in July 1927

by the casualties of the British Expeditionary Force, following the Battle of Mons. The words were published in The Times newspaper on 21 September 1914 and became the Ode of Remembrance.

This also became the Exhortation that has been declared as part of the ceremony at the Menin Gate, Ypres, every single day since its opening in July 1927, standfast a period during WWII when the ceremony relocated to the Brookwood Cemetery. This ceremony commemorates the deaths of over 54,000 Commonwealth soldiers whose names appear on

the Menin Gate. Blind Veterans UK has had the significant privilege of making this exhortation from time to time, and our name is inscribed on a commemorative bell that hangs at the Gate.

Close to this location is the site of the 2nd Battle of Ypres of 1915, so significant for our charity as it was the first time that the German Army deployed poison gas against the allied troops. Many of our early St Dunstaners received their life-changing injuries at Ypres.

Oxford University's Roll of Service →

numbers 14,500 who lost their lives during the Great War. There are war memorials and plaques in every College that record the fallen. One of the names that jumped out at me was that of Henry Mosely, a scientist responsible for Mosely's Law relating to atoms. Mosely's loss was registered in the House of Commons as being one of the most significant and led directly to scientists being a protected profession in terms of call-up.

Our National Service of Remembrance is conducted at the Cenotaph every year. For 2018, the 100th anniversary

year, in addition to the 10,000 British and Commonwealth veterans on parade, there was a People's Procession of 10,000 civilians. The oldest veteran on parade at the Cenotaph that year at the tender age of 103 was Ron Freer, who had been a blind veteran since WWII and whose father had been killed on the front in September 1918. For all these people, Remembrance is a deeply personal affair; a time of sadness, of loss; a time to reflect and to learn.

Remembrance is not restricted to big ceremonies. It is conducted in many

ways, right across our country and beyond. At the National Memorial Arboretum, amongst 30,000 trees, there are over 300 memorials. Opened in May 2001, the NMA is now our nation's most popular large visitor attraction. I was privileged to visit a few years ago with some of our blind veterans from the Afghanistan campaign. It was profoundly moving to see them touching the names of comrades that they had left behind in that war – another moment I will never forget.

I think it's reasonable to say then that there is a significant amount of Remembrance activity in our country today. But, to use an expression we use regularly in the charity to hold ourselves to account, so what? What purpose can this have for us today?

At the Menin Gate there is a further inscription that both inspires and challenges: "See to it that they shall not have suffered and died in vain." This is echoed in the epitaph inscribed on a rock at Kohima which implores: "When you go home, tell them of us and say: for your tomorrow, we gave our today." Both statements are clarion calls for us to reflect on the tragedy of war, to learn and to act.

At Blind Veterans UK I like to think that we consider and take these challenges

seriously, day in and day out. Our prime purpose is and will remain to help those blinded in war and, subsequent to service, overcome adversity and find life beyond sight loss. This work is vital and continuous, given that both sight challenges and needs change through life. It is our purpose to understand this and to be there, providing support and encouragement in any way that we can to promote independence and wellbeing for our Members.

We also strive to be a greater force for good. So much that we do can be brought to the benefit of others who find themselves in adversity. Thanks to the change in our Articles earlier this year, we stand ready to support anyone in our country who has lost their sight as a result of terrorist or war-like activity.

And we are prepared to provide support to victims of war beyond our shores where they have lost their sight due to aggressive action. Our first goal in this area is to help build a Ukrainian rehabilitation system for the vision impaired. With the benefit of new money raised for this purpose, we will be able to act and help Ukrainians blinded as a result of this terrible war.

We could view this as visio nova, or a new vision – for we must continue to ensure that lives given have not been



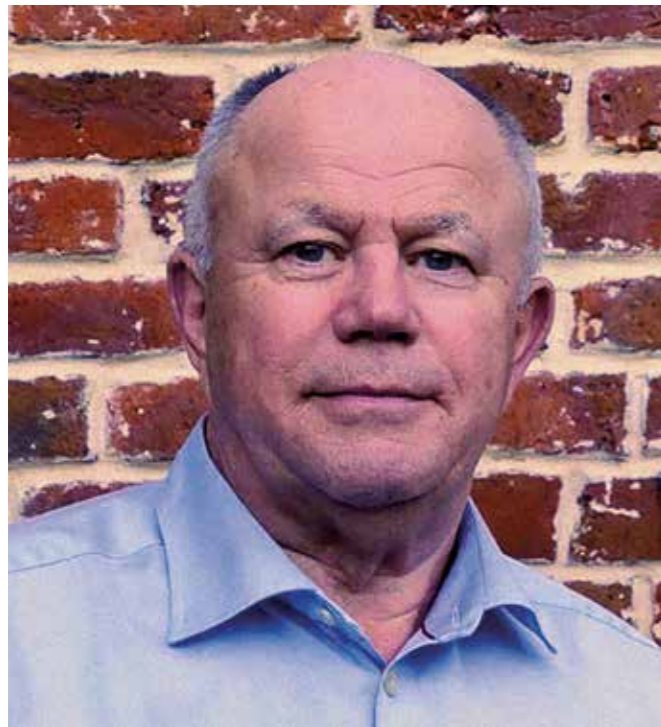
Caption: Sculptures and names on the walls of the Armed Forces Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum

A special day

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

I had the most memorable experience at Her Majesty The Queen's funeral on 19 September, which I had the honour of attending on behalf of Blind Veterans UK.

I was due to fly out to Greece for a holiday with my wife on the 18th and received a phone call to say I had just an hour to change my flight and confirm my place at Westminster Abbey. Luckily, our travel agent was very understanding and so I rushed off to hire a morning coat.



Caption: Barry Coupe

As I needed to be at the abbey early on the morning of the funeral, I arranged to stay at my son's the night before as he lives in London. However, just as I was getting ready to leave, he phoned to tell me that my grandson had just tested positive for Covid.

As luck would have it, I have a cousin who lives in central London – I'm not sure why I hadn't thought of him before. Fortunately, he and his family were at home and more than happy to put me up for the night.

Meeting them all again was wonderful. We enjoyed a lovely dinner together, updating one another on our lives. Then, the following morning, I donned my morning coat, complete with St Dunstan's gold cufflinks, and arrived at the abbey on time.

To my surprise, the place was already nearly full, so I scouted around for a seat. Low and behold, I found myself sitting next to like-minded souls, Duncan and Alistair – a rear admiral and a representative from Cobseo, the confederation of military charities. We had a two-and-a-half-hour wait

before the service began but, once I mentioned Blind Veterans UK, they were delighted and the time flew by in the blink of an eye.

The moment I'll never forget was when, deep in conversation, we suddenly became aware of the soft sound of bagpipes far in the distance. It grew louder and louder and then we could hear the marching of the sailors and realised that Her Majesty's coffin was nearing. As the parade arrived at the abbey, the sound was almost deafening. And then everything stopped. You could have heard a pin drop in anticipation of what was to come.

There was complete silence followed by the orders given to the pallbearers – those impressive Grenadier Guards who had been flown back from Iraq especially. We all stood up and the members of the Royal Family passed us as they walked down the aisle, including our Patron, HRH The Countess of Wessex. And then the coffin was in sight. It was very emotional to see it.

The service began and, although we couldn't see what was happening from where we were sitting, we could hear everything. The singing was spectacular. It felt as if every single person in the abbey was putting their heart and soul into each note in memory of our beloved Queen.



WIKIPEDIA / D.E.D.C.M.S

Caption: The funeral procession for Queen Elizabeth II at Westminster

I was also touched by the sermon by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, and when we all filed out at the end, I found myself standing next to him and told him so. He turned to me and thanked me very sincerely.

Then, as I was about to head off to the airport hotel to meet my wife, my seating buddy, Duncan, asked for my contact details. I've since received a lovely message from him and believe we will keep in touch. To come out of such an occasion with a new friend made it even more meaningful.

This month, I will be attending the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph at Whitehall with some of you. I'm sure this will also be a memorable day, full of friendship and fond appreciation for one another. I'm looking forward to it. 🇬🇧

Remembrance Sunday, 13 November 2022

As veterans across the country come together this month to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice, a small number of you will be representing the charity at the Cenotaph in London.

For those not heading to London and who wish to attend a parade, we encourage you to mark this important occasion by representing the charity at



Caption: Noeline is laying a wreath

events in your local area, surrounded by your loved ones and fellow veterans who live in your area.

Two Members, Noeline and Jim, tell us what marking Remembrance locally means to them:

Noeline: “I never miss it”

“I’ve been attending Remembrance Day parades each year since I was a small child. During the First World War, my grandfather lost four brothers and I then joined the Armed Services,



Caption: Jim will attend locally

making Remembrance even more important to me and my family.

“I’m extremely honoured to be laying the wreath on behalf of Blind Veterans UK at my local event in Pontypridd this year, in memory of those who gave their life for us. It’s very humbling. I’m sure it will be emotional, as it always is. I always shed a tear.”

Jim: “It’s important to me”

“I haven’t been to my local Cenotaph ceremony for the last two years due to Covid, but I will be back this year as it’s important to me to remember those who have lost their lives through the ages to defend our freedom.

“I served for 39 years in the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, having signed up when I was just 15. All through my service I attended Remembrance events.

“I’m fortunate to live within a mile of the charity’s new centre in Rustington so it seems even more important now to represent Blind Veterans UK in the town this Remembrance Sunday.”

■ **We’d love to include a photo of you at your local event in the December Review. Please email it to revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk by 14 November.**



Caption: John McOwan, who’s 101 years old, at his book launch

John launches his book

If you enjoyed the extracts from John McOwan’s memoirs which appeared in the May, June and July issues of *Review*, you can now buy his book!

The former Desert Rat, who’s 101, started writing down his memories of war during the lockdown, supported by his family and Blind Veterans UK volunteer, Frances Nixon.

John has now had his book published and launched it at the end of July with a queue snaking outside of the shop! John says: “In 2019 I joined a group of veterans on an organised trip to Normandy to mark 75 years →

since the D-Day landings. During the trip, a lot of memories which had laid dormant for many years were rekindled. A few months later, the outbreak of the pandemic and the introduction of the lockdown restrictions led me to wonder how I'd pass my time.

"I'm pleased to say that this charity, along with other veteran charities, came to my rescue. They encouraged me to stay in touch with other veterans by phone and over the internet. I was also encouraged to write a book which was the seed that germinated my decision to write of my experiences during the Second World War.

"This kept me busy and took me right through the lockdown period. I was quite happy at home writing and found the days weren't long enough.

"I hope my story will make others appreciate the horrors and grief war leaves behind."

■ **You can buy 'A Centenarian's Memories of WWII' by John McOwan in large print at Whitie's bookshop, Peebles, for £14.99. Call 01721 588170 or email whitiesbooksandcrafts@gmail.com to order. All profits go to Blind Veterans UK and a local Covid-19 charity.**

Members enjoy an adventure in Llandudno

In August, a group of intrepid Members embarked on an adventure week at Llandudno. The week was full of epic activities including tandem cycling, indoor climbing and canoeing.

Beautiful friendships were forged over the week and the group is now planning to return for a holiday together at some point in the future.

■ **Fancy a break? Turn to page 33 for winter breaks at our centres.**



Caption: Members canoeing during Adventure Week in Llandudno



Caption: Member Billy, centre, with the North Wales Dragons

Footie team win for Blind Veterans UK

Community football team, the North Wales Dragons, hosted a charity football match in September to raise money for us – and won!

The team was set up in 2008 to support good causes. They use football as a vehicle to raise money and awareness for local and national charities.

Before the match, our Vice President and local resident, Billy Baxter, met the team in their dressing room to thank them for taking part. He spoke about

how the charity has helped him deal with his own sight loss.

Match secretary of the club, Matt, said: "Many of our players are around the age Billy was when he lost his sight. For them to hear about his experience as a man in his late 30s, with a young family to support, and to imagine the impact sight loss would have on their own lives really brought home the importance of raising money for Blind Veterans UK. It certainly motivated us to do well in the match!

"We hope to continue to support the charity with activities at their centre and with fundraising where we can." 🍓



Caption: Back, from left: Darren, Steve, Andy and Alan with their guides

For the long run

As 40,000 brave souls took on the iconic London Marathon last month, we asked **Darren Blanks**, **Andy Leitch** and **Louisa Tatton-Bennett** why they signed up

“I ran to remember Maria”
Darren, 35, ran his 40th marathon this year in memory of a fellow Member.

“I’d already run 39 marathons this year, so the London Marathon was

number 40. But this one was especially important to me as I ran it in memory of my friend, fellow blind veteran and Vice President of the charity, Maria Pikulski-Hughes.

“Maria died in August this year after a long illness. She was the first female Member to run the London Marathon and was a huge inspiration to me.

“I lost my sight when I was 23 due to a hereditary condition called Leber’s optic neuropathy. I’d previously been in the King’s Royal Hussars in 2003 and completed two tours of Iraq before leaving and becoming a postman. When my eyes went, I was angry, depressed, sad and confused and was questioning, ‘Why me?’

“My cousin set to work raising money to try and buy equipment to help me and was handed a leaflet from someone about Blind Veterans UK. I hadn’t heard of the charity until then. I joined in 2011 and it’s helped me massively. I’ve been able to see what other Members achieve, despite their sight loss. Also, more practically, I’ve been given all kinds of helpful equipment.

“The biggest thing the charity has done is given me the confidence to make the most of opportunities. Without the support and encouragement of staff and Members, I wouldn’t have travelled alone to Los Angeles to compete in a marathon, or ever experienced skiing.

“If you can imagine always looking through a frosted bathroom window,

that’s what I see every day. I’m also deaf in one ear. It’s very tiring trying to work out what other runners are going to do, and constantly avoid obstacles while running marathons, but I feel amazing when I run and I’m planning more challenges in the future.

“I’m very thankful to Blind Veterans UK and to my fellow Members who have helped me on my journey.”

“It’s about raising awareness”
Andy, 48, ran his seventh London Marathon to give back to the charity.

“This was my seventh London Marathon and anyone who knows me knows that I always finish the challenges I set myself. It doesn’t matter if you’re super fit or a plodder like me, it’s about raising awareness, raising funds and having fun along the way.

“After 19 years with the Royal Logistics Corps, at the age of 37, retinitis pigmentosa started to cause a gradual decline in my sight which meant I was forced to retire. I have reduced peripheral vision and can only see around 30 metres in front of me.

“I joined the charity in 2011 and the staff have invested a lot of time over the years to help me rebuild my life when I’d lost all hope. When I first joined, I was feeling sorry for





Caption: The runners head passed Big Ben, and our Community Support Worker, Louisa, left, approaching the finish line with her friend, Stacey

myself, but they made me realise what was possible and gave me the confidence to start doing physical activities again and get back to work.

“It’s incredibly rewarding when I’m running along in the marathon and people in the crowd are shouting my name, I know at that moment that they are reading my t-shirt and recognising that I am running for Blind Veterans UK. It makes it all worthwhile.

“I had my guide, Hannah, by my side throughout the marathon who I put my complete trust in to help me safely navigate people, speed bumps, kerbs or



raised potholes... The sorts of things other runners don’t need to think about.

“I love to get stuck into these personal challenges to give back to the charity that has supported me so much.”

“London, you were epic!”
For our Community Support Worker, Louisa Tatton-Bennett, running the London Marathon was once an impossible dream, writes Internal Communications Executive, Annie Aitken

Just a few years ago, Louisa Tatton-Bennett, could never have imagined



Caption: The pair proudly showing off their medals after the race

that she would one day conquer the London Marathon alongside her best friend, Stacey Wall.

And yet, last month, they completed the gruelling 26.2 miles in just over five hours.

The pair took up running six and a half years ago as a way of keeping fit, despite both being busy working mums with young children. After starting gently with the ‘Couch to 5K’ programme, in time they were running together in all weathers, from storms to heatwaves to freezing temperatures of -4 degrees!

Louisa says, “I originally talked Stacey into taking on the London Marathon when we were out one night. On our first go in 2020, we ended up having to run it virtually due to Covid. This meant six laps in our village in flooding and pouring rain.

“Doing it again in London this year was amazing. Getting through those five hours and nine minutes took some strength, but we felt really encouraged by the atmosphere from the crowds and the support from our families, friends and colleagues. London, you were epic!

“Working for Blind Veterans UK for the past few years, I see daily just how much the charity helps Members adjusting to living with sight loss. I want to help make sure this work continues and help raise the profile of the charity so we can reach thousands more blind veterans out there who need this kind of support.”

After setting a fundraising target of £4,500, Louisa and Stacey smashed it, raising a phenomenal £6,500 for the charity. Our congratulations to them both on their amazing achievement! 🏆

■ **If you’d like to take part in a sporting event to help raise funds for the charity, take a look at our website at blindveterans.org.uk/support-us**

My Ben Nevis adventure

Member **Peter Burbery**, 86, recently took on the UK's highest peak with Blind Veterans UK volunteer, Chris Cheeseman. Here, they talk about the experience...

An avid cyclist and hiker his whole life, Member Peter Burbery, now 86, has taken on the highest peak in the UK, raising £1,189 for Blind Veterans UK.

Peter travelled from his home in Brighton to Fort William alongside volunteer Chris Cheeseman, to tackle the 8,500 metre climb to the summit of Ben Nevis.

To his surprise, he was joined by not only Chris but also his granddaughter, son in law and fellow blind veteran, Richard Cruice and his partner, who all met him at the foot of the mountain. The group set off at 6am in high spirits in near perfect weather conditions.

Peter says: "I'd previously climbed Snowden and Scafell Pike but that was a while ago. Ben Nevis was the last of the three peaks left for me to conquer.

I decided I had to do it. It was fantastic having everyone there with me. They all motivated me and helped me along the way."

Sadly, the rocky staircases, relentless gullies and the odd stray rock created an environment that was exceptionally challenging. This meant that after five and a half hours, the group made the difficult decision to stop.

Peter said: "At first, I was disappointed that we couldn't make it to the top, but it would've taken another couple of hours and that meant it would be getting dark on the way back down. It was definitely harder than I expected. I knew there would be rocks in the way, but not the number there were.

"However, I'm very pleased with what I've achieved. A lot of other

people passed as we staggered up the mountain and gave me lots of encouragement and congratulated me on how I was doing."

After his national service in the Army's Royal Sussex Regiment between 1954 and 1956 as Batman for First and Second World War General, Sir Lashmer Gordon Whistler, Peter was diagnosed with glaucoma and macular degeneration at the age of 48. His sight has deteriorated ever since and he can now see virtually nothing at all.

He said: "At first I was completely fed up when my sight went. I'd been an upholsterer and a keen cyclist my whole life and suddenly that was all over. I didn't know what to do.

"Luckily, I found out about this charity through a friend and was quickly welcomed. I visited the centre in Brighton every week to get together with other blind veterans in the workshop. I was trained on equipment like magnifiers, which meant that I could use my limited sight to read the post and generally stay independent."

Blind Veterans UK volunteer, Chris, says: "Peter is 86 which brings its own challenges, add to that being blind and you'd think hiking up Ben Nevis would be even more daunting, but not for Peter!



Caption: Peter and Chris at the highest point they reached

"The climb was hard going. Peter is more than fit enough to make the distance and the altitude but sadly his blindness, which is normally of little consideration when we're hiking together along the South Downs, slowed our progress on this incredibly challenging terrain.

"It was quite the adventure, though. I cannot express how proud I am of this inspirational man who was determined to give it his best shot. He's my very dear friend. He made it to within a couple of miles of the summit despite the challenges that presented themselves at almost every step." 🇬🇧

You say, we did

Our President and Member Engagement Lead **Colin Williamson** shares your recent questions...

How much influence does the Member Engagement Team really have to effect change?

The MET sits on the National Panel alongside Member representatives from all regions, plus the President, two Vice-Presidents, two Trustees, a representative from the Carers and Families Panel and the Working Age Member team. Any issues are fed directly to those who can influence change and we also speak regularly with centre managers and senior members of staff, including our CEO.

Is there an update following the concern that our centres appear to have been 'demilitarised'?

Our Llandudno Centre Manager, Kathy Boardman, said, "We are committed to ensuring military memorabilia is displayed at our centres to demonstrate our military heritage. Due to refurbishment work underway at our Llandudno and Rustington Centres, many of the historical and cherished items have been temporarily packed away and will be reinstated at the earliest opportunity.

"Before we move into our new Rustington Centre, some items at Brighton may be transported to Llandudno for display there instead. We are working with the Member Engagement Team to make sure key items are on display."

Will you introduce themed weeks at the new centre in Rustington?

Our Brighton Centre Manager, Lesley Garven said, "It's still a little too early to predict what the programme for themed weeks will look like but, rest assured, we are working closely with Members and staff to ensure that a full programme of events and activities will be available and published some months before the new centre will open its doors."

How will the charity improve its channels of communication with Members?

Senior Internal Communications Executive, Alice Tow, has been tasked with looking into this. The MET will be meeting regularly with Alice to provide feedback on new developments. 🇬🇧

Your letters

Money tips

On a recent activity week at Llandudno, some Members shared tips which were new to me, so I wanted to pass them on.

They told me that anyone with a vision impairment may be able to receive what's called a 'Blind Person's Allowance'. The allowance was an extra £2,520 income last year and if you were eligible in the previous tax year, you may be entitled to a refund. One Member said he called HMRC and received £1,500, while I also received a payment when I called, albeit smaller.

I also learnt that all veterans are eligible to join the Blue Light Card discount scheme. The card is very widely



ALEX YEUNG / ADOBESTOCK

Caption: It's crunch time for energy

accepted across 250 outlets, from Sainsbury's to Starbucks, and costs just £4.99 to join.

Jules Lee

Energy crunch

We all know that the price of energy is now well past the point of being a joke, so it's more important than ever that we get a grip on the energy we use.

One thing that can help with this is the smart meter. However, for many of us this bit of kit is not accessible as we can't actually see the figures on the hand held monitor.

This is in clear breach of the Equality Act 2010, but there are now speaking smart meters available that can read the figures to us. Having recently started using one, I can tell you that, though at first the connection was a little problematic, now that it's properly installed, it's child's play to operate. And the best thing is you can turn the speech on and off with ease.

The RNIB has a whole page devoted to accessible smart meters. You are entitled to one free of charge from your energy supplier... so get cracking! **Simon Mahoney** 🇬🇧

Becoming ‘The Blind Artisan’

Member **Peter Kay**, 66, tells our Marketing and Communications Assistant, **Romy Benshabat**, how he’s overcoming the challenges of sight loss

I lost my sight as the country was going into its first lockdown in 2020. I’d been diagnosed with cataracts and told by the hospital that they couldn’t treat me for several months because of the pandemic.

A week later, I lost my sight completely and went for private treatment which diagnosed optic nerve damage. I was black blind at first – with no sight at all – but, fortunately, with medication, got a little bit of my sight back.

My sight loss has affected everything. Before it happened, I’d had a good job working with fantastic people, and also enjoyed pottering about in my workshop, making things out of wood.

After the operation, it was as if my whole world had come crashing down. I had to leave my job, and I thought

I’d have to get rid of all the tools in my shed too. I just felt completely alone.

I’d been in the Territorial Army for 18 years, so my wife sent my application off to Blind Veterans UK and I was soon invited to London to attend the memorial service of the founder of the charity, Sir Arthur Pearson. The staff encouraged me to travel on my own, which was very scary. I thought, ‘Am I really going to be able to cope with this?’ I’m so glad they persuaded me as the experience was fantastic.

It was such a boost to my confidence that, gradually, I worked myself up to doing more things for myself.

Sir Arthur Pearson’s vision was to help veterans get back into the working environment or find ways to support themselves in some way. This positive



Caption: Peter’s laser cut designs include ‘The Lads’ and an Armed Forces Day pendant. His wife, Kay, supports with some of the finer painting

attitude is consistently expressed through the words and actions of staff and Members. It’s really encouraging to hear someone say, “Yeah, you can still do stuff – you’ll just need to do it differently.”

I spoke to a fellow Member, ‘The Blind Chippy’, who’d gotten back into woodworking, as well as a volunteer, John Wallace. They both gave me lots of encouragement and practical advice. And eventually, I ventured back into my workshop.

At first, it was very frustrating as I spent hours on bits and pieces which would have previously taken me minutes. But my daughter was asking me to make things for her and I didn’t want to let her down, so I persevered. With encouragement, I gradually got going with my woodwork again.

I’ve owned a laser that cuts wood since before I lost my sight, and now have a high-definition monitor and a programme that talks to me. So, when I get an idea of what I want →

to do, I draw it out on the computer programme. This is the part that takes the most time and it's not been easy. I can only do so much because my eyes start watering and straining trying to see. Still, once I've got the file, I use special MDF board, set it all up, and press a button.

A few months ago, I booked a few days stay at the Llandudno Centre where I met a lot of other Members and found that hearing others talking about their sight problems made a massive difference. I don't know if it's just a military thing, but veterans tend to tell it how it is. This really helped me feel less alone.

I made a laser cut design of 'The Lads' from the Victory over Blindness statue and I gave one to a member of staff in Llandudno. She's since asked me to make 15 copies for table decorations for the centre.

I've just made another design with a poppy and a cartridge shell. Ideas come to you when you're just wandering around or talking to people. With Remembrance coming up, I'm currently working on a silhouette cut out of the Cenotaph. It took a lot of working out, but it seems to be pretty good from what I'm told.

I've also been involved in the charity's

National Creative Project and find the online group calls with other Members to be fantastic. I joined the woodturning and woodworking groups and receive great advice from other Members on how to get around problems. Although I can't really see them, I don't feel alone as I know there's somebody there.

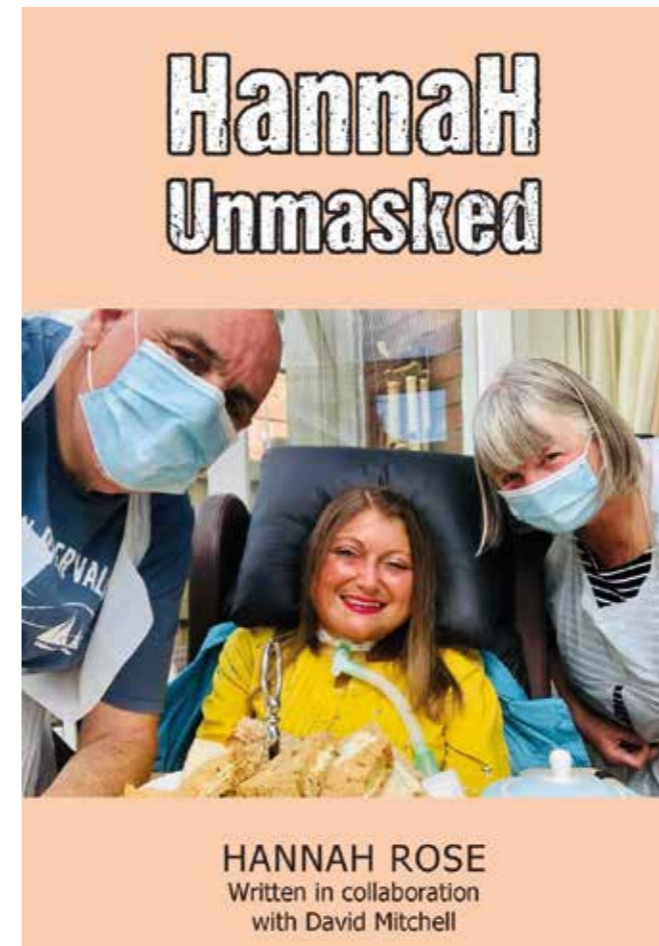
As the staff at Blind Veterans UK have done so much for me and given me such support along the way, I recently thought, what can I do for them? So, my wife has created a Facebook page called The Blind Artisan and through it I sell small woodturned and laser-etched items and donate the profits to the charity. Often, we'll list an item on the site and it's bought within an hour, sometimes by other Members.

For me, life now is a case of 'do a little bit and see what else I can do'. This approach keeps me busy and is better than being stuck in a chair doing nothing all day. Sometimes I'll be up at 2am thinking about different design ideas and wondering if I can make them work. It's all been a big learning curve, and it's purely thanks to the help I've received from everyone else that I keep trying.

I now know that even with my sight loss I can still do the things I enjoy – I just have to do them differently. 🇬🇧

Book review

Looking for a Christmas stocking filler? Look no further – Member **Terry Swales**, 89, has just the book for you



Hannah Unmasked by Hannah Rose in collaboration with David Mitchell

“I pulled my jeans out of the wardrobe and my Gap hoodie. I did my hair for the umpteenth time and took one last look in the mirror before heading back downstairs. Little did I know that would be the last time I would walk

down a flight of stairs. I have never seen that bedroom again.”

This is a quote from Hannah Rose's first book, *Same Both Ways*. At the time, 23 years ago, Hannah was 15 years old. She went into Alder Hey Children's Hospital and was diagnosed with Transverse Myelitis. Within days, she was completely paralysed from her neck down.

Hannah's third book, *Hannah Unmasked*, was launched at the Methodist Church Hall in Hartford, Cheshire, in August, and shows how much she's come to terms with her life. It's about everything that has changed for her over the past 20 years and reveals her remarkable insight into how precious life is.

She's attained GCSEs and A levels, and attended university to obtain a degree. She has a new home, and a job with Cheshire police. Even during the pandemic, her resilience shone through and made her a stronger person.

Twenty years ago, all these achievements were only a dream. →

Just imagine Hannah being able to work on her computer unaided! On a visit to the NEC exhibition in Birmingham, she writes about spotting a device called GlassOuse Assistive Device. Partly a mouthpiece, it was invented by an electrical engineer called Mamet who was inspired by a friend who had been paralysed while deep-sea diving.

The device can be activated by biting the button using your mouth and this has opened up a whole new world of technology for Hannah – emails, texts, games, social media and so much more.

She also talks about her amazing holidays at home and abroad – a holiday in Florida, her friend's wedding in Tuscany... She's always found a way to be involved.

In some ways, Hannah is lucky as she is blessed with inspirational qualities. These qualities have helped her achieve so much. She's been invited to serve on a committee for the disabled; she's spoken on BBC News at Ten; she's met the speaker at the House of Commons. She's also been on a visit to Buckingham Palace and met celebrities in the sports world and the media.



Caption: Terry Swales

She stresses that her journey could not have been possible without her mum and dad, her wonderful sisters and her devoted friends who have been so supportive over the years.

She also credits her health and social care package, which is quite

incredible. She knows exactly what she wants and the kind of people she needs to guide her. And she views her golden labrador, Mabel, as part of this package.

Hannah's story is inspirational. After finishing it, I immediately thought of Reinhold Niebuhr's words:

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." 🌍

■ **Hannah Unmasked is available to buy on Amazon.**

Terry read this book with the help of his Read Easy machine from Blind Veterans UK and dictated his review to his wife, Rose, who typed it out.

App of the Month: Envision AI

What is Envision AI?

Envision is an app for smartphones and tablets. It uses the camera to help with things like:

- reading text by magnifying it or reading it out to you
- describing a photo that you have taken
- finding objects around you

Envision is free to install and use. It works on both Android and iOS devices.

Getting started

1. You can find the app in the Google



Caption: Envision AI is free to install

Play store, or the iOS App Store, by searching for Envision AI.

2. Once installed, you sign in with your Google or Apple account.
3. You will need to give the app permission to use the camera.
4. You also decide if you want to share some of your usage data. You can still use the app even if you choose not to.
5. Once this is all done, it's time to explore the app!

Getting around the app

The layout of the app is similar on both iOS and Android, with a few minor differences. It seems to work well with both VoiceOver and TalkBack.

The top left icon on the main screen is for the magnifier which works like a handheld magnifying glass. You can point the camera at something and use the slider to make it bigger or smaller.

The bottom row is where you will go to change between modes. The first three modes are the ones we'll look at in this article, which are Read, →

“Envision is a great app which is well worth downloading and playing with.”

Identify and Find. We can't describe every single feature here, but here's a few highlights we think you might find useful...

The 'Read' mode

When you choose 'Instant', as you point the camera at things, it will try and read out any writing it can see. This can be useful when trying to read something short, like labels on ready meals, or something on the TV or your computer screen.

- The 'Scan' option takes a picture of a document (like a menu or a magazine article) and then reads it out to you. This is especially good for longer documents – and you can even save scanned documents into the 'Library' to read again later.

Like with most apps, there are a few things you might not get the hang of straightaway. You may need a bit of practise lining the camera up so that it reads the text properly. Also, if you're not used to using a smartphone or text readers, the synthetic voice can take a little while to get used to – but it'll be worth it!

Safety first! Please note that we recommend caution when it comes to scanning text. Don't scan anything with personal or confidential data.

The 'Identify' mode

- In 'Describe Screen', you point the camera at something and Envision will try and tell you what it is. For example, it might say something like, "Looks like a man sitting on a sofa."

The 'Find' mode

As well as identifying objects, Envision can try and help you locate things around you!

- With 'Find People', the phone will beep and vibrate when the camera spots a person. You can even use the 'Teach Envision' option to get Envision to recognise up to five of your favourite faces!
- 'Find Objects' does a similar sort of thing but looks out for objects. Envision has a long list of objects it can recognise, such as 'Cat', 'Bench', or 'Bus'.

Conclusion

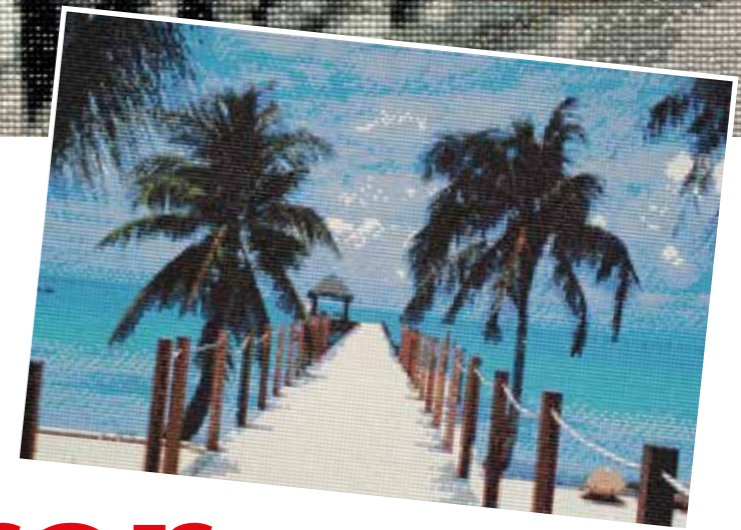
Envision is a great app which is well worth downloading and playing with. 🍎

- **You can find more information on the website at www.letsenvision.com/app. You can also contact our MeSH team for help on 01273 391447.**



Caption: Jennie's pictures of 'The Lads' and, inset, Palm Beach

My life as a carer



Jennie Gray works full time as a support worker for people with learning disabilities. Her partner, Dave, is a Working Age Member

“I met Dave as he lived on the same estate as me. This was seven years ago and, back then, he was already a Member of Blind Veterans UK and very independent considering he only

had around 4% of sight in one eye.

This means that, in terms of caring, I only need to help when we go somewhere new where he doesn't →



Caption: Jennie's stunning diamond painting of our Llandudno Centre

know the layout, like away on holiday. He took a bit of time to get used to our new home when we moved in three years ago, but now he's fine. I mean, he still walks into the door frame and trips up the stairs, but he pretty much gets about on his own. He even does all the cooking.

I took up diamond painting about five years ago as I noticed that I was spending more and more of my free

time staring at my phone and I wanted to switch off from the stresses of work and daily life. I saw an advert promoting a diamond painting pack

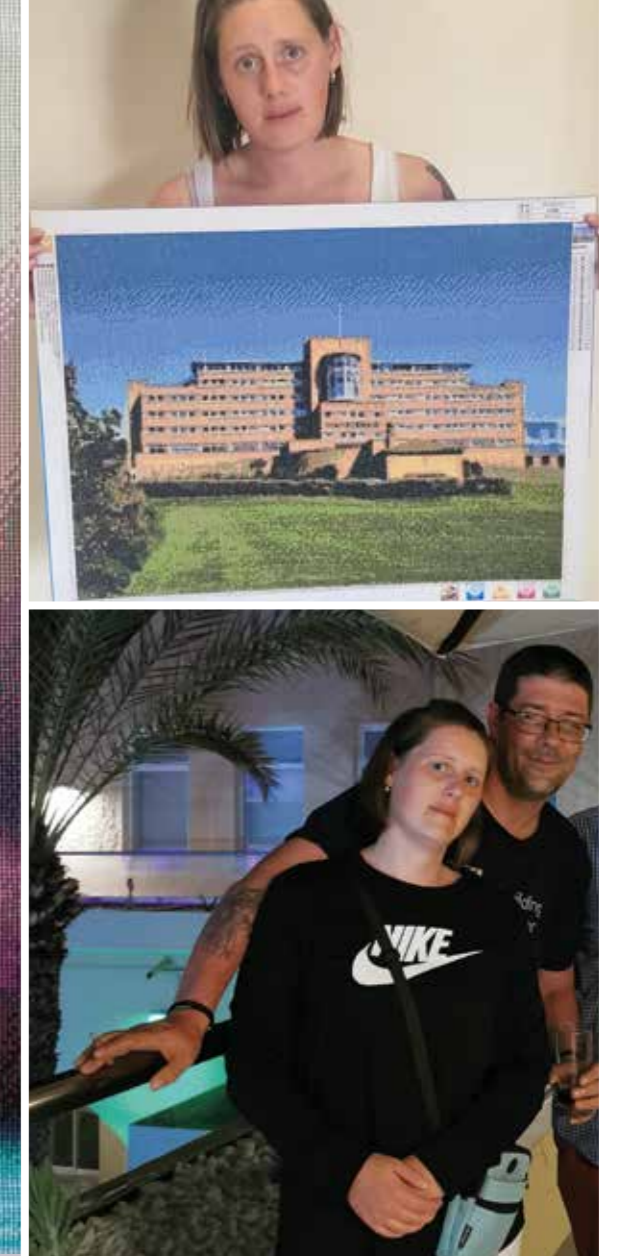
“Diamond painting is a combination of cross-stitch and painting-by-numbers and I find it really relaxing.”



Caption: Cherry blossom, our Brighton Centre and with partner, Dave

and just thought, 'I'll have a go at that.' Diamond painting is a combination of cross-stitch and painting-by-numbers and it's really relaxing. I've noticed that I suffer from less headaches since I've taken it up. It's a good way of having some 'me time', and it gives Dave, who's an Everton supporter, a bit of uninterrupted football time too.

I've completed lots of different pictures, but I've recently created some



of the Brighton and Llandudno centres, plus the Blind Veterans UK 'Lads' and logo. Each one takes me about two weeks to complete and I donated those to the charity to display in the centres or auction off to help raise funds.

I'd like to do more. I'm going to do one of the Rustington Centre at some point, and another of Brighton. It's just nice to have something I can do to help.” →



GOODLUZ / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Join our monthly virtual exercise sessions for carers

Carers and Families Engagement Panel

Are you a carer to a Blind Veterans UK Member? Then why not get involved in shaping the support you receive from the charity by joining our Carers and Families Engagement Panel? The panel meets once a month to discuss the needs and experiences of our carers, and suggest ideas for social activities, and how carers can best share valuable information with one another. Anyone who is a family member, partner or friend caring for one of our Members is welcome to join. Just get in contact with Stacey Barham via the details at the end of this page.

Fancy a break?

Turn to page 35 for details of our Carers Spring Break at Brighton.

Carers virtual exercise sessions Monthly sessions for carers

Our virtual exercise session for carers will take place this month on Wednesday, 23 November at 11am. The session is open to all carers and there will be a mixture of seated and standing exercises which can all be taken at your own pace.

To find out more, please contact our sports and recreation instructor at theresa.farley@blindveterans.org.uk or call her on **01273 307 811**.

- **What would you like to see on our carers page? Contact Stacey Barham on 01273 391483 or at stacey.barham@blindveterans.org.uk to share your ideas.**

Winter breaks at our centres

Our upcoming breaks at Brighton and Llandudno

Llandudno Centre

The following breaks are available to all Members and escorts, regardless of whether they require care assistance or intervention.

Relaxation and Retreat Week, 15-21 January

Kick off the New Year with a whole week dedicated to relaxation, meditation and wellbeing. Get to grips with mindfulness and launch your gentle exercise programme with

support from our staff, so you're ready to keep it up when you get home.

Highland Tour (including Burns Night) Week, 22-28 January

Join us to celebrate Scottish traditions in Wales with a week of highland dancing, whiskey tasting and tossing a caber. You'll have fun, laughter and plenty of activities, from arts and crafts to a special Burns Night Dinner with 'Neeps and Tatties' cooked by our wonderful chefs.

Dancing & Romancing (Valentine's Day) Week, 12-18 February

Let's keep dancing! *Strictly* might be over, but this week we'll be keeping the sparkle going. Come along to learn new dances and gentle jives with all the glitz and glamour you'd expect.

Food and Drink (including Shrove Tuesday) Week, 19-25 February

It's never too late to improve your culinary skills. This week is full of hints, tips and delicious delights to taste →



Caption: Join us for some relaxation



Caption: Join our Dragons and Daffodils Week in February

and savour. You'll discover our chef's best-kept secrets and make the perfect scones through live demonstrations.

Dragons and Daffodils Week, 26 January-4 February

Come and celebrate St David's Day in the beautiful setting of Llandudno. Nibble on a Welsh cake or a lovely piece of bara brith as you enjoy trips out to the stunning Welsh countryside. There will also be a St David's Day dinner accompanied by Welsh music.

Potting and Planting Week, 5-11 March

Calling all green-fingered Members! Come and help us create some gorgeous window boxes and planters to brighten up the centre. The week will also include trips to garden centres and National Trust properties.

Step into Spring Week, 12-18 March

Make the most of springtime by getting out and about to the wonderful promenades and countryside of north Wales. This week will help boost your confidence with gentle strolls or longer walks, followed by a nice hot cuppa and a chat to celebrate.

■ **For all booking enquiries, please contact the Llandudno Booking Office on 01492 867800. 8.30am-4.30pm, Monday to Friday.**

Brighton Centre

The following breaks are only available to fully independent Members and escorts who don't require assistance or intervention from our care team.

Fantasy Cruise, 24-30 January

Set sail on a voyage of discovery.



Caption: Carers Spring Break

Join us as we spend a week travelling around the world and waking up in a different destination every day (in our imaginations, at least!). From New York to Spain, you'll spend the week sampling exotic food and dancing the night away to beautiful music with lots of friends.

History Week, 7-13 February

If you love a bit of history, then you'll love History Week. We'll visit the majestic Brighton Pavilions with its underground tunnels, take a trip to Arundel Castle with its 1,000-year-old past, and hear about the wonderful history of our much-loved Brighton Centre.

Relax and Pamper, 21-27 February

Why not give your wellbeing a boost as we head into spring? Relax and enjoy amazing treatments, relaxation techniques and gentle exercises to take home with you, supported by our caring and dedicated team.

Food and Drink, 7-13 March

Food lovers look no further! This week is all about sampling great food and drink, and maybe even learning how to prepare a classic dish or two. You'll try delicious local produce, experience new flavours and even have the opportunity to take part in the Great Brighton Centre Bake Off.

ALEXEY FEDORENKO / ADOBE STOCK



Caption: Brighton Pavilions

Target Fun, 21-27 March

Take aim and join us for a fantastic week of target sports such as archery, rifle and air pistol shooting. This week offers a bespoke experience with lots of support to build your confidence and try your hand at these sports.

Carers Spring Break, 31 January-3 February

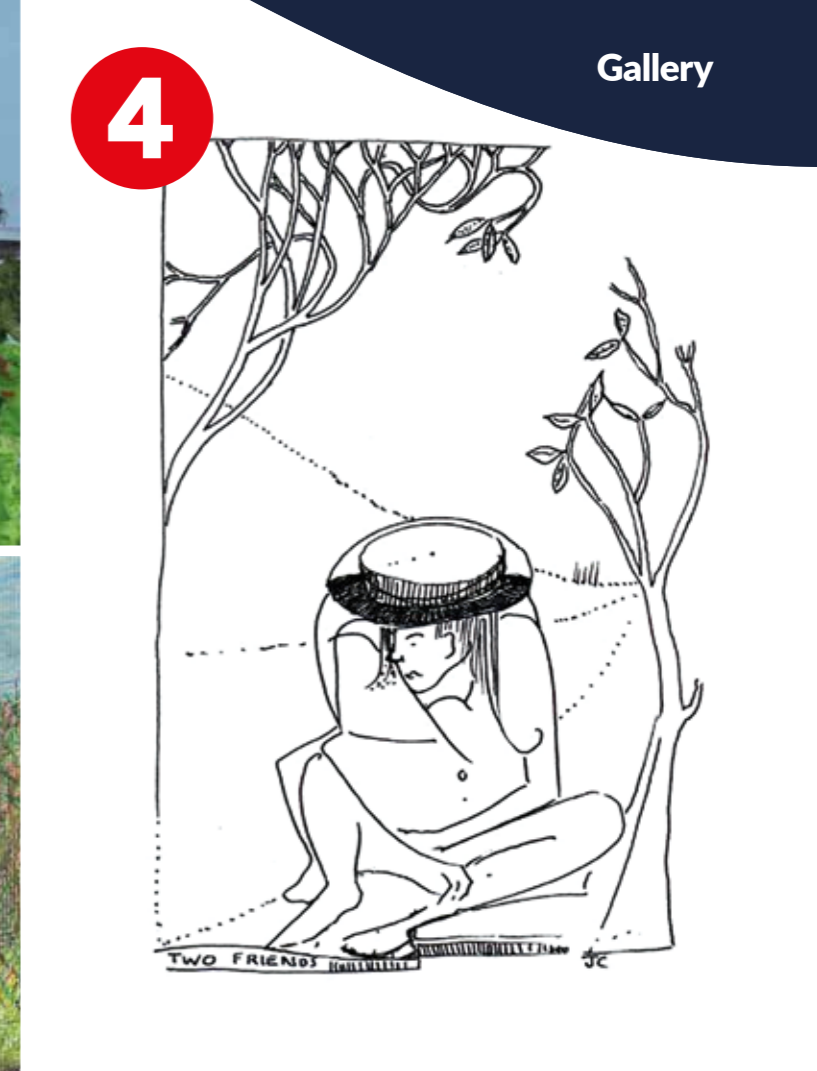
In this complimentary three-night break, unpaid carers of our Members will be pampered, entertained and have the chance to meet others in the same situation. Those interested should contact Sharman Collins or Stacey Barham on 01273 307811 in the first instance. 🍷

■ **For all booking enquiries, please contact the Brighton Booking Office on 01273 391500, 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday.**

Artistic flair

We are pleased to present more artwork by our Members for the National Creative Project

Captions: **1. Matthew McGowan - Autumn Landscape** **2. David Beresford - Autumn Landscape** **3. Jannet McCormick - On the Homefront** **4. Jack Carter - Two Friends** **5. Kathleen Hall - Dog** **6. Peter King - Wherry**



National Creative Project Programme

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

CRAFT

Festive Quilled Cards

If you're looking for a new paper craft hobby, why not try quilling? Quilling is the craft of creating a design from coiled strips of paper and, traditionally,

can be quite a fiddly craft. However, we've adapted the technique to make it easier for those with sight loss, so you can work on a larger scale, coiling the strips of paper around chop sticks or your fingers. This project includes all the materials and instructions you need to create beautiful handmade festive cards and gift tags.

GARDENING

Hyacinths

Have a blooming good festive season with our Hyacinth growing project. We'll send you all you need to grow these fragrant favourites including three bulbs, compost, and a ceramic bowl. You will just need to add some TLC for a colourful display.

CRAFT

Poppy Mosaic

Make your own decorative mosaic in the shape of a poppy to mark Remembrance Day this month. This is an easy, fun, and colourful design with



Caption: Milton Womersley with his finished NCP spitfire model

a wooden base measuring roughly 10 inches x 7 inches, or 25cm x 18cm, and no need for any tile cutting as all pieces are ready to use.

St Paul's Cathedral - wooden model project

We'll send you everything you need to complete a model of St Paul's Cathedral, plus our VI friendly instructions. This is a fun and challenging kit with 199 pre-cut wooden pieces which you can sand, slot together and glue - some are pre coloured to capture the details of this iconic building. The completed model

is 11 inches or 29cm high, 15 inches, or 38cm long and 8 inches or 20cm wide.

ART

Drawing for Beginners and Improvers - September, October, November

Inspired by The Big Draw, a national initiative, we invite you to 'Come Back to Colour', as we think about colour, pattern, and world cultures. We'll send you a pack that introduces materials and ideas that may challenge your idea of what drawing is and urge you to put the notion of perfection to one side, make some interesting marks and see what you can do.

■ **For more information about these projects and groups, or to request an activity pack, please call our bookings team on 01273 391455.**

All these activities are available to all our Members, whatever your experience or creative ability. Please note that the NCP is currently undergoing a restructure so it may take us more time to answer the phone, respond to your messages and send out creative activity packs. We thank you for your patience.

Have a wonderful month! 🌈

Lou Kirk-Partridge and the National Creative Project Team



Caption: Colourful hyacinths

Family news



Find a home for one of our badge boxes

Help spread the word about our amazing charity by placing a box of 'Victory Over Blindness' badges in your local corner shop, cafe, church, pub or veterans' club. Boxes contain 50 'Lads' pin badges, complete with 'how to donate' information.

To order, contact 0300 111 22 33 or supporter.services@blindveterans.org.uk



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



Birthdays

Barbara Jones who celebrates her 100th birthday on 26 November

Bryan Wardell who celebrates his 101st birthday on 23 November

Constance Evans who celebrates her 101st birthday on 18 November

Desmond Mahoney who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 22 November

Eugenia Harris who celebrates her 100th birthday on 6 November

Gladys Rowland who celebrates her 100th birthday on 19 November

Jean Hughes who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 4 November

Joan Harding who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 1 December

Keith Plummer who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 15 November

Muriel Gaffney who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 14 November

Stanley Vickers who celebrates his 101st birthday on 19 November

Thomas McKenna who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 1 December

Condolences

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

Valerie Denise Tarn who died on 7 August 2022. She was the wife of Colin Tarn

Brenda Grace Parris on died on 1 September 2022. She was the wife of Jim Parris

Sheila Pashley who died on 9 September 2022. She was the wife of Eric Pashley

Ann Bradshaw who died on 16 September 2022. She was the wife of Pete Bradshaw

Rita Newman who died on 26 September 2022. She was the wife of John Newman

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

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

John Bartley Archer of Farnham, Surrey died on 28 September 2022 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

Horace Richard Ashton of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 27 September 2022 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Peter Charles Ball of Sale, Cheshire died on 1 September 2022 aged 91. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Edgar Haig Bonner of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear died on 20 September 2022 aged 94. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

Anthony John Noel Braithwaite of Canvey Island, Essex died on 7 October 2022 aged 85. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Peter Brandt of Sudbury, Suffolk died on 22 April 2022 aged 91. He served as a Midshipman in the Royal Navy.

Arthur Walter Brookes of Birmingham died on 25 September 2022 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Walter Clarke of Malvern, Worcestershire died on 2 October 2022 aged 91. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Brian Anthony Colgate of Burnley, Lancashire died on 21 September 2022 aged 78. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Olive Louisa Cook of Lowestoft, Suffolk died on 1 October 2022 aged 101. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Henry Thomas Corless of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 2 September 2022 aged 97. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

Michael Bernard Ivor Crabbe of Wotton-Under-Edge, Gloucestershire died on 19 September 2022 aged 93. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Ted Davies of Shropshire died on 9 September 2022 aged 84. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Malcolm George Dunford of Truro, Cornwall died on 4 October 2022 aged 89. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Ian Durkin of Carlisle died on 18 September 2022 aged 90. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Hugh Edwards of Windsor, Berkshire died on 1 October 2022 aged 86. He served in the Royal Artillery.

James Flynn of Port Talbot, West Glamorgan died on 13 September 2022 aged 92. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Gerald Gifford of Wickford, Essex died on 21 September 2022 aged 93. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Ernest Guilford of Crewe died on 1 September 2022 aged 86. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps (65 Training Regiment).

Elizabeth Guy of Corsham, Wiltshire died on 30 September 2022 aged 98. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

William David Rees Gwillim of Swansea died on 20 September 2022 aged 90. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Educational Corps.

Samuel Harris of Peterlee, County Durham died on 20 September 2022 aged 89. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

John Michael Hayman of Wigston, Leicestershire died on 24 September 2022 aged 86. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.



Alan Hayter of London died on 24 September 2022 aged 96. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Scots Guards.

Michael Hayward of Kings Lynn, Norfolk died on 8 October 2022 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Territorial Army Auxillary Territorial Service.

George Alfred Hillier of Romford, Essex died on 6 August 2022 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

David John Hocking of Newquay, Cornwall died on 8 October 2022 aged 84. He served as a Corporal in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

Joseph Horan of Prescot, Merseyside died on 26 September 2022 aged 82. He served as a Craftsman in the Parachute Regiment.

Arthur Bertie Laws of Wells, Somerset died on 12 August 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

Malcolm Lowe of Ossett, West Yorkshire died on 3 October 2022 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

Arthur Jones of Aberdare, Mid Glamorgan died on 6 September 2022 aged 89. He served as a Steward in the Royal Air Force.

Michael Leslie Kelly of Bedale, North Yorkshire died on 6 September 2022 aged 102. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Prince of Wales' Own Yorkshire Regiment.

Donald George Mackay Macleod of Tain, Ross-Shire died on 23 September 2022 aged 93. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Daphne Marguerite Madden-Tune of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 1 October 2022 aged 99. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

Florence Mahoney of Surbiton, Surrey died on 1 October 2022 aged 100. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Royal Air Force.

Allan Edward Maynard of Blackburn, Lancashire died on 19 September 2022 aged 72. He served as a Rifleman in the Light Division.

Colin Meredith of Gravesend, Kent died on 22 September 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

James Moore of Poole, Dorset died on 29 September 2022 aged 89. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

William Arthur Reginald Morris of Bristol died on 29 September 2022 aged 101. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

John Nassau of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 30 September 2022 aged 87. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Anthony Trevor Parfitt of Egham, Surrey died on 1 September 2022 aged 93. He served as a Second Lieutenant in the R.A.O.C / R.E.M.E.

Frederick William Revell of Worthing, West Sussex died on 12 September 2022 aged 99. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Frederick John Rolinson of Stourbridge, West Midlands died on 1 October 2022 aged 85. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Jean Anne Selwyn Smith of Hastings, East Sussex died on 5 October 2022 aged 98. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

James Sephton of St Helens, Merseyside died on 1 September 2022 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Air Force.

John Brian Shelley of Uckfield, East Sussex died on 23 September 2022 aged 94. He served as an Air Mechanic 1st Class in the Fleet Air Arm.

Ralph Nicholas Soppitt of Chester Le Street, County Durham died on 2 October 2022 aged 84. He served as a Lieutenant in the Durham Light Infantry.

Alfred Herbert Southall of Manchester died on 1 October 2022 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Anthony David Standen of Burgess Hill, West Sussex died on 4 August 2022 aged 86. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

William Sullivan of Drifffield, Yorkshire died on 22 September 2022 aged 81. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force Police.

George Titterton of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 23 September 2022 aged 99. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Alfred Wakeham of Tavistock, Devon died on 18 September 2022 aged 91. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Kenneth John Warburton of Newbury, Berkshire died on 1 September 2022 aged 75. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Peter Reginald Weller of Hove, East Sussex died on 1 October 2022 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

Peter Wilkinson of Leigh-On-Sea, Essex died on 23 September 2022 aged 99. He served as an Acting Petty Officer Airman in the Royal Navy.

Ronald Winders of St Helens, Merseyside died on 1 October 2022 aged 89. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Lest we forget

Our President **Colin Williamson** shares 11 fascinating facts about Armistice Day, which together spell out the word 'Remembrance'

Royal approval

The Remembrance Day silence originated in Cape Town, South Africa. There was a two-minute silence initiated by the daily firing of the noon day gun on Signal Hill for a full year from 14 May 1918 to 14 May 1919, known as the Two Minute Silent Pause of Remembrance. This caught the attention of King George V who was

enthusiastic about the idea. The first official Two Minute Silence took place on Armistice Day, 11 November 1919.

Exhortation

The Remembrance exhortation is an extract from the poem, *For the Fallen*, written by Robert Laurence Binyon. It was first published in The Times newspaper on the 21 September 1914. The words are as follows:

*"They shall grow not old, as
we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun
and in the morning
We will remember them."*

Moina Michael

After reading a poem penned in May 1915 by Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae entitled "In Flanders Fields", American teacher, Moina Michael, pledged to wear a poppy every day in remembrance of those who lost their lives during the war. The poppy was



KATACARIX / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Remembrance poppies

adopted as an emblem by the British Legion in the UK after its founder, Earl Haig, had a chance meeting with her.

Eleventh hour

Armistice Day is commemorated on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month. This was the exact moment, on 11 November 1918, when the cessation of hostilities was due to begin after the signing of the truce and the guns were to fall silent on the Western Front.

Monuments

The decision to build a permanent monument, to be known as the Cenotaph, in London's Whitehall was agreed by the foreign secretary Lord Curzon. English architect Edwin Lutyens, who also designed the Thiepval Memorial in France, the largest Commonwealth Memorial to the Missing in the world, was chosen to produce the design and it was officially unveiled on the 18 July 1919.

Bands of the Brigade of Guards

The Bands of the Brigade of Guards led the procession taking the body of the Unknown Warrior from Victoria Station to Westminster Abbey via Whitehall on the 11 November 1920. They paused at the Cenotaph for a short service attended by King George V and have taken part in the ceremony at the Cenotaph ever since.

Royal gun salutes

The Royal Regiment of Artillery play a part in the commemorations in London each year. Kings Troop Royal Horse Artillery fire two rounds from their 25 Pounder Field Guns situated on Horse Guards Parade, at the start and finish of the Two Minute Silence. Timings are critical and they are coordinated by Royal Signals soldiers stationed in Elizabeth Tower in the Palace of Westminster (home to Big Ben) who are in radio contact with the guns.

Annual remembrance services

There are a number of Remembrance services at the Cenotaph throughout the year:

- The War Widows Association of Great Britain hold their Annual Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph on the day before Remembrance Sunday.
- The Regimental Parade held by the Royal Tank Regiment takes place the following Sunday to mark Cambrai Day (20 November), the anniversary of the Battle of Cambrai – one of the earliest massed deployments of British tanks.
- On Anzac Day, 25 April, there is a wreath laying ceremony and parade.
- A parade and service held by the Combined Irish Regiments Association to commemorate the war dead of the Irish regiments disbanded in 1922 after the First

World War is held in June.

- And the Belgian Parade at the Cenotaph has taken place yearly since 1934 on the Sunday preceding the Belgian National Day (21 July). Belgium is the only nation allowed to parade its troops in uniform and carrying arms in central London.

Nimrod

One of the most moving pieces of music played at the Cenotaph each year is Elgar's Nimrod, taken from his Enigma Variations, which sealed Elgar's fame. The hauntingly beautiful tune starts quietly, slowly builds up to a crescendo then slowly subsides. It was voted as one of the most popular classical pieces of the nineteenth century. To quote acclaimed cellist, Julian Lloyd Webber OBE, "It is a piece of music that sounds immediately British yet which carries a global message of sadness accompanied by an underlying sense of hard-won achievement." Perfect for Remembrance Sunday.

Commonwealth observers of Remembrance Day

Several Commonwealth countries have held a Memorial Day commemoration since the end of the First World War and continue to do so to this day including Australia, Canada, India, Kenya, New Zealand and South Africa. Representatives often attend the Cenotaph on behalf of their countries.



KATACARIX / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: The Cenotaph

Members of our Royal Family have also attended Remembrance Day events in other Commonwealth countries in the past, notably our late Queen Elizabeth II (Kenya, Ghana and South Africa) and both Prince (now King) Charles and Princess Anne (Canada).

England's site of national remembrance

The National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, near Lichfield in Staffordshire, was created to honour the fallen, recognise service and sacrifice and foster pride in the Armed Forces and civilian community. It's a year-round place to remember and entrance is free to all. Blind Veterans UK has a Memorial Walkway at the Arboretum with the names of some of those Members who are no longer with us engraved on flagstones. 🇬🇧

Quiz time

Your quiz master, Member **Ron Russell** tests your knowledge on the animal kingdom

1. What's the collective noun for gorillas?

2. What type of creature is a praying mantis?

3. Which of these marine creatures is a cetacean?
(a) pilchard
(b) puffer fish
(c) porpoise

4. What's the collective noun for owls?

5. What's a female crocodile called?

6. What's the largest bird of prey in the world?
(a) Andean condor
(b) Golden eagle
(c) Himalayan vulture

7. Which beautiful creature is known as a swallowtail?

8. Which Australian bird is capable of imitating both natural and manmade sounds?

9. Which marine creature hold hands while they sleep to keep from drifting apart?
(a) sea otters
(b) octopus
(c) dolphins

10. What's the collective noun for giraffes?



CHRISTOPH HILGER / ADOBE STOCK

Answers on page 2

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

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