

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

September 2022



The power of creativity

Passion projects to inspire you

Inside:

A sad farewell to Maria
Ukraine Warriors
Our survey results are in



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



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Quiz answers - from page 54

1. Hare 2. Pupil 3. Drum 4. Nails 5. Calves 6. Temple 7. Organ
8. Adam's apple 9. Bridge (nose) 10. Crown

On the cover

Member Shaun Gregory makes Wargaming figures with the help of our equipment and, on this page, Ukrainian athletes at Brighton.



The great create

Welcome to your September issue of *Review*. I hope you've enjoyed your summer, despite the extreme weather we've been having. As I write, my garden is still brown and wilting, and I never thought I could feel so happy about the prospect of rain.

What with droughts, floods, war and the spiralling cost of living, it feels like there's no end of things to worry about these days. That's why, in this issue, we explore the amazingly positive benefits of being creative, and how immersing yourself in a project, whatever it is, and making something of your own from the heart, can be the best de-stresser, especially in these troubled times.

So, in order to help you get the old creative juices flowing, we've asked three Members to show off their extraordinary creative talents. Our cover star, Shaun, spends his time building and painting tiny Wargaming figures, with the help of equipment he's received from the charity. Meanwhile, 89-year-old Member, Gerald, talks about his passion for the environment and the stunning eco garden he's created over 60 years. And then there's Bill, whose wonderful tales of growing up in wartime Hull you will

“Meanwhile, 89-year-old Gerald talks about his passion for the environment”

have read in the *Review*. He shares the fascinating story of how his memoir came to be and we also publish the final installment.

If these Members inspire you but you don't know where to start with your own project, one really simple way to get going is to take part in our National Creative Project. The project is two years old this month and still going strong. Many Members have told me how the activities help to focus the mind and provide a sense of purpose.

To mark the anniversary, we look at how the project is going on page 22 and, as always, share details of the arts and crafts activities on page 34.

Enjoy. 🇬🇧

Liz Millar
Editor



Time for a new chapter

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

Summer is well and truly here. There are the predictable indicators (blocked motorways, airport frenzies, hosepipe bans and so on), but there are also wonderful stories of Members getting out and doing extraordinary things.

My news feed has brought me some fabulous examples in the last few



Caption: Nick Caplin

weeks: intrepid cycle rides, marathon races, mountains being climbed and conquered, sponsored walks by schools, even a Lejog walk of 874 miles between Lands End and John O'Groats. I thought the London to Brighton 100km walk was something, but 874 miles!

It's also been good to see the resurgence of community activity across the charity, with plentiful examples of Members, families and supporters getting together. One trip that caught my attention was the blind veterans' visit to the Green Howards Museum. I haven't visited myself yet, but as a regiment that has produced a disproportionate number of Chiefs of the General Staff, it would be interesting to see if there is anything special they put in their coffee!

Community events are very powerful. Whatever the focus, they provide the opportunity for banter over a cuppa

and the sharing of tips, ideas and experiences. The initiative, imagination and drive of Members and supporters right across the charity is quite extraordinary and says a lot about the character of those who make up this special charity. That character has also shone through in the care and support of the Ukrainian Disabled Athletes team during their brief stay with us at Brighton recently.

We had not planned to reopen the centre at this stage, and had not anticipated that this opportunity would present itself. But it did, and at very short notice. And the Brighton team rose to the challenge magnificently. With the backing of new supporters, we were able to offer our facilities to the Ukrainians as they decompressed from the horrors of war and trained for the Warrior Games.

It was good to see the field full of archers; the pool busy with swimmers; and the gym pumping iron from dawn to dusk. Their head coach was keen to tell me just how impactful this was for the wellbeing of her team. The charity has played its part in helping their recovery and has done so with considerable style and grace.

You will understand, therefore, that it's with a sizable lump in my throat that I share this next news with you. Having

served with the charity for eight years this autumn, I will be retiring in January to go out to grass. The time is right I think, especially as our new Chair is now well established, the major redesign changes in the charity are well on their way to completion and the charity prepares to launch its next exciting chapter with the Rustington Centre.

I joined Blind Veterans UK in 2014, following 33 years in the Army and have never felt more happy nor more fulfilled. I have been inspired daily by the fortitude and resilience of our Members, and regularly sustained and encouraged by their advice, friendship and support.

Our blind veterans stand tall as a beacon within the veterans and vision sectors, and it has been an utter privilege to be your Chief Executive. This is not the time for farewells, not least as there is plenty of important work to do over the next months, but I wanted you to know before you hear of this on the grapevine.

I'm afraid I end with the very sad news of the passing of our first ever female vice president, Maria Pikulski-Hughes. Maria was a fabulous ambassador for the charity in her work as an eye care liaison officer and a wonderful example of someone living life to the full after sight loss. She will be very missed. 🍷

A humbling experience

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

I'd like to begin by saying how sad I was to hear of the passing of Maria Pikulski-Hughes, the charity's first female vice president. Maria was passionate about our work and extremely well regarded by her fellow Members.



Caption: Barry Coupe

Maria served in the Women's Royal Army Corps, followed by 11 years in the Territorial Army, before being discharged in 2003. She then worked in the eye clinic of her local hospital and referred many Members. She was also a tireless fundraiser. I know many of you will want to join me in offering my sincere condolences to her husband, Richard, and their family.

This summer has been incredibly busy – the first summer since before the pandemic that we've been able to bring our Members together in their communities to enjoy each other's company. The construction work on our new Rustington Centre is now well underway and we have also been hosting Ukrainian servicemen and women at Brighton for several weeks.

These incredible men and women were training to represent their country at the Warrior Games, a multi-sport

event in the US for wounded, injured or ill service personnel and veterans. Tragically, they had to return to the battlefield once their trip was over.

The Ukrainian Warrior Games team were the guests of honour at a party in London. I chatted to some of them at the event and the stories they told me beggar belief. I met a champion weightlifter who suffered horrible injuries but had the most extraordinary spirit.

The whole experience was very humbling, and I can only hope and pray that all of them live to see the end of this dreadful war. I should mention at this stage that Blind Veterans UK has been raising money specifically to support this initiative outside of our usual fundraising activities for our Members.

As a result of our work, Nick Caplin and I were presented with a medal from the Ukrainian Deputy Minister of Defence during an event for all the UK military charities. Of course, we are simply the representatives of this charity – this award is really for everyone who helped. I'd especially like to thank our centre staff who were exceptional in their professionalism and care towards the Ukrainians. The team at Brighton, in particular, worked hard to make our Ukrainian guests welcome



Chairman

Caption: Maria, left, in London for Remembrance last year

and support their training needs whilst continuing to deliver a superb service to our Brighton residents.

As always, working with Nick throughout this time has been a hugely positive experience for me and, like many of you, I'll be very sad to see him go in January, though I completely understand. Nick has put his heart and soul into the job for the past eight years and I'm sure the wonderful culture of care he's nurtured will continue on as part of his legacy. 🇸🇰

News

Remembrance 2022

Our President Colin Williamson shares news about our Remembrance activities on Sunday, 13 November

As I'm sure you know, every year a group of our veterans are invited to take part in the national Remembrance commemorations at the Cenotaph in London.

This year, our contingent in London will be smaller than usual, so we'd like to encourage you to consider getting in touch with your Royal British Legion branch or local authority to find out the plans for your local Remembrance commemorations.

The Royal British Legion will be holding Remembrance events around the country on both Friday 11th and



Caption: The Remembrance Parade last year at Llandudno

Sunday 13th November, and there will also be civic parades organised by local authorities taking place, which you will be able to attend.

These local events are a great way to pay your respects to those who made the supreme sacrifice, while you also promote this unique and life-changing charity in your own town or city.

If you require any assistance in finding out about what's happening locally to you, then please contact your community team who will be happy to help.

Grants Policy Review update

We have recently completed a review of our Grants Policy in line with our commitment to review the policy every three years.

The review was conducted by a working group who examined data from Blind Veterans UK grants awarded to beneficiaries over the last three years. The working group also undertook research into the grant giving principles and processes of other military and sight loss charities.

As part of the policy review process, the recommendations were considered, debated and discussed at multiple Member community engagement panels. The feedback from these panels was overwhelmingly positive and they strongly supported the recommendations made by the working group.

Following the review, we have made the following changes to our policy:

- We will be introducing the following principle: 'The provision of a grant should aim to make a difference to the Member's life, and the grant application should identify what difference the grant will make.'
- For Members who have lost their sight whilst in service, we will →



Caption: Member Brian Eskriett joined his local event in Skipton

ask if they would be prepared to voluntarily undertake a financial assessment so that other grant giving charities who are part of the Confederation of Service Charities (COBSEO) can be approached to part fund a grant.

- For grants under £750, no financial assessment will be required, but we will explore, with you, your ability to contribute towards a grant.
- A grant will only be awarded to dependents and spouses/partners on the premise that it will make a direct and positive difference to the Member.

We wish to reassure our beneficiaries that these changes will not impact on your ability to apply for a grant. Any beneficiary who wishes to consider



Caption: Colin Williamson

applying for a grant should contact their Community Support Worker or a member of their community team. These changes have been made to ensure our policy is in line with our principles of equity, affordability, sustainability and scalability. The revised Grants Policy will be implemented in the autumn of 2022.

Our Member Engagement Panels need YOU!

By Blind Veterans UK President, Colin Williamson

Last year, Blind Veterans UK created a Member Engagement Team (MET) to ensure that the voice of the membership is not only heard but also has an influence on the future direction of the charity and its policies and strategies.

The team consists of myself as MET lead, Billy Baxter as MET officer and Jennie Fuller as MET Admin. All three of us are Members.

We have set up Member Engagement Panels across the country which provide a forum for you to be involved in discussions about the charity's services, policies and proposals. It's also a chance to give your feedback in



Caption: Billy Baxter, our Member Engagement Team Officer

response to proposals and ideas from the charity. Some of the discussions so far have related to the Members Charter, the grants policy, the admissions criteria and the MET itself.

The panels also give you the chance to ask your own questions and raise any concerns you have. All the feedback and issues raised on the panels are escalated to the appropriate staff team to act upon.

These Member Engagement Panels are so important as we strive together to take this charity forward. Summed up by the slogan, "Nothing about us without us", our hope is that no policy

or strategy should be decided upon without the full backing, support and *participation* of those Members whose lives will be directly affected.

With this in mind, we are encouraging every Member to join their local Member Engagement Panel. Don't miss this opportunity to have a real impact on the direction of the charity and make sure it continues to meet the needs of blind veterans across the UK with its world-class services. 🇬🇧

- **If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us at MET@blindveterans.org.uk. We would love to hear from you!**

Members consult on new centre design

As construction work on our Rustington Centre continues, our Member Design Consultation Group recently met with the architects and designers to feed back on their plans

Our Member Design Consultation Group for the new centre at Rustington were invited to attend an open day at our Brighton Centre to meet with the architects and designers.

Along with our permanent residents, the group met with the various individuals involved in designing the new centre. Plans were on display and they had the opportunity to give their input and feedback.



Caption: Members of the Design Consultation Group

Brighton Centre Manager Lesley Garven said: "It was a brilliant day for Members to engage with architects, landscape designers and interior designers. There was a huge amount of activity, listening and discussion. I know that the designers went away with their minds full."

Billy Baxter, who is part of the Member Design Consultation Group, said: "We looked at things like textures, carpets, tiles, colours, different types of materials that could be used to soften the sound of the room, and different types of flooring to enable navigating.

"Some of the ideas really started to flow, especially because one of the designers is also visually impaired and had a good understanding of what we wanted – to deliver a very aesthetic, as well as practical, centre."

As the work continues, we'll keep you up to date on progress. 🍷

Your letters

A great stay in Wales

After my recent stay at Llandudno, I wanted to give my feedback. Firstly, a belated thank you to the drivers who transported me so comfortably, in air-conditioned luxury. They were Joe and John, and they made all the difference.

Secondly, I wanted to say how nice my room was. The bed was comfy, though slightly narrow; in fact, I nearly fell out during the first night!

I was pleased to be introduced to Alexa and shall endeavour to get on. However, I found the lighting inadequate and when writing postcards a little desk would be good. Talking of postcards, I couldn't find one with a picture of your fine building in the local town. Nor of the impressive line of soldiers - what an impact they make! Perhaps this could become a small form of income?

I loved the archery, and the visit to Grandad's Garage. I learned a lot from the other chaps. So, with great gratitude, I say, 'All power to your efforts to improve the lives of us VIPs!'

John Munro



Caption: Lance and Ann

Happy anniversary Ann!

I wanted to give my wife, Ann, a shoutout as it's our 60th anniversary on 8 September and she helps me a lot, especially with the gardening even though it's not her thing. I've had an allotment ever since I was first married, but I can't see well enough to do it all now. I'm lucky that Ann is there to point things out (and have a good laugh when I get things wrong!). Both of us have our fair share of health problems now, so it's lovely to spend time in the garden together and appreciate all we have. 🍷

Lance Cruse

■ **Do you have something to say? Email your letter of 100 words max to revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk if you can or ask your CSW to help.**

A sad farewell to Maria

Our President **Colin Williamson** remembers Vice President Maria Pikulski-Hughes, who passed away on 7 August

It is with great sadness that I say a final farewell to my fellow Member and our first female vice president, Maria Pikulski-Hughes, who has sadly passed away at the age of 61 after a long illness.

Maria fought until the end with strength, dignity and courage – the same way she lived her life. She was without doubt our finest recruiting sergeant and one of the best ambassadors for Blind Veterans UK we could ever have wished for.



Caption: Maria with her husband, Richard, at a fundraiser in 2016

Her boundless enthusiasm, gregarious nature and natural kind-heartedness made her stand out in the crowd, and her fellow Members were instantly attracted to her friendly demeanour and unwavering loyalty. Once you became friends with Maria, you found a friend for life.

Unfortunately, due to her illness, Maria never had the chance to represent the charity in her position as Vice President, but I'm sure she would have been excellent in the role. She possessed all the qualities needed – and more – and knew the charity inside out, having joined back in 2003. She had previously been a public speaker for Blind Veterans UK, raising vital funds and awareness for the charity.

Maria never hesitated to throw her weight behind any initiative championing the cause of blind and visually-impaired veterans. She was an incredible person and one who will be sadly missed by all who were fortunate enough to come into contact with her. I offer my sincere condolences to her husband, Richard. 🍷

The power of creativity

If you're feeling a little beaten down by life, perhaps it's time to let your imagination flow...



ALPHASPIRIT / ADOBE STOCK

completely absorbed reduces anxiety, boosts your mood and even slows your heart rate. And when you succeed at accomplishing something, no matter what it is, your brain is flooded with dopamine, that feel-good chemical that actually helps motivate you.

Boosts mental health

Did you know that the average person has about 60,000 thoughts in a day? Being creative helps focus the mind, reducing anxiety and depression. In fact, studies have found that writing, and even gardening, can help you manage your negative emotions, while drawing or painting can help you express difficult experiences.

Improves physical health

According to research, people who write about their experiences daily actually have a stronger immune system. Listening to music can also rejuvenate your immune system, while playing a musical instrument improves your cognitive function too.

Our Members show off their creative talents over the following pages... 🍷

What better way is there to take your mind off your problems than by absorbing yourself in your own creative project? Not only is creativity good for your health, it also makes you happier.

Increases sense of calm

Have you ever been working on a creative project and lost all sense of self and time? This state of being

The storyteller

Member **Bill Skinner**, 88, has written his wartime memoir and now takes part in our National Creative Project

I wrote my memoir soon after retiring. It only came about because I was learning how to touch type at the local Sight Centre, which is part of the university in Hull, and during one session ended up sharing some of my memories of the Second World War with some of my fellow students.

Even though I was just five when war broke out, I have very clear memories of that time, perhaps because, as the eldest sibling, I became the man of the

house at aged seven when my father left to join up.

After the session, the trainer said to me, "Bill, please come to my office." I thought I was about to get a telling off; that maybe a swear word had accidentally slipped out as I was talking – I worked on the docks in Hull for 37 years so that wasn't unusual!

I couldn't believe it when she told me she found my stories fascinating and set me a task to type 1,500 words on my wartime experiences. I said there was no way I could write that many words, but she encouraged me to give it a go, saying that once I started I'd soon fill the page. She was right. In the end, I wrote a whole book.

My memoir's not perfectly written, but people tell me they enjoy it because it's honest and from the heart. Growing up I had a love-hate relationship with my mother. My grandmother had become pregnant with her out of wedlock so it must have been very hard for them both. My mother would criticise me often, no doubt because the war put

her under so much stress. Luckily, my grandmother would always defend me.

The stories are told through the eyes of a young boy so, on the one hand, the war was a big adventure but, on the other, I would worry myself sick about the toll on my mother. I remember one of our neighbours would shake uncontrollably because of the constant bombings and I used to pray that my mother wouldn't end up the same.

Writing my memoir gave me a great sense of achievement. My stories are stored at the local history centre for posterity. I love the fact that I'm helping young people learn about the war. I even gave a talk in a secondary school a few years ago. That was an experience!

Sadly, I'm not able to write anymore. I have age-related macular degeneration which has chipped away at my sight over the years. Laser surgery didn't work, so I'm left with no central vision at all now and only a little peripheral vision.

When I started to lose my sight, I threw myself into creative projects to give myself something else to focus on. I took up woodwork and painting – one of my water colours even made it into an art

gallery. I also played walking football for the blind until I was in my early 80s as the captain of the team. But as my sight worsened, painting became more difficult – I couldn't put the brush where I wanted it to go. On top of that, an injury forced me to give up the football.

And then the pandemic hit and we were told not to leave the house other than for a short walk once a day. It took me exactly 11 minutes to walk around the block before I was back home again, with nothing to do. Needless-to-say, I became very depressed.

Eventually I decided to give the National Creative Project (NCP) a go. I like a challenge and so, since I can't paint anymore, I started with the wooden clock project. I was sent everything I needed in a pack and I was away. Being creative helped get me back on track.

I still do all the NCP projects I can manage. Becoming immersed in these projects keeps me busy and gives me a sense of purpose. I'm very grateful to all the staff for keeping the NCP going for so long, and for everything they've done for me over the years. 🇬🇧

■ **Turn to page 43 to read an extract of Bill's memoir.**



Caption: Bill, right, with Blind Veterans UK staff member, Andy



The model maker

Member **Shaun Gregory**, 52, builds Wargaming figures with the help of equipment from Blind Veterans UK

My hobby is building and painting historical Wargaming figures of various scales. My specialty and favourite period to focus on is Ancient to Medieval, but I tend to stick with the Classical period and the Dark Age.

I really enjoy reading and learning about these periods, and about the wars and battles, and the armies and people of the time. In the past, I've



Caption: Shaun builds the small figures which come in pieces

made Warhammer Fantasy figures from Napoleonic wars and the American War of Independence, but none of those inspire or interest me like the ancient Wargaming period of 3000 BC to 1485 AD.

I'm severely sight impaired and have less than 10% vision and nearly no distance vision. However, I have good very near vision in my left eye and Blind Veterans UK has given me the equipment I need to continue doing what I love.

My sight loss was caused by the Gulf War in 1991 and I'm also a long-term sufferer of Complex PTSD which, like my sight loss, really affects my life. But although both things cause me difficulties, I believe that it's all about what you *can* do that really matters, not what you can't do.

My sight changes throughout the day, so I have to keep adjusting my monitor to different scales accordingly. Unfortunately, it never gets better and I'm in constant pain



Caption: At work using his monitor from us to magnify the figure

in both of my eyes. I try to prepare for this, though. I will build and paint 28mm models or smaller, put them to one side and when my vision or the pain – or both – is really bad, I already have something readymade that I can continue working with.

I feel like the biggest challenge in life is to stay active. You *have* to stay active to be truly fulfilled. In sharing my story, I hope I can inspire my fellow Members to pick up a creative hobby of their own, whether it's writing, painting, model railways or whatever.



Caption: One of his finished creations with painted detail

Being severely sight impaired does have its limitations but, whatever your hobby, the charity will do its best to help you to keep it going.

I've found that I always have support from Blind Veterans UK staff when I need it and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Glynis, Kev and all the Working Age Member team, and also my Community Support Worker, Clare, and ROVI, Karl. 🇬🇧

■ **Need support with a hobby? Let your CSW know.**



Caption: Gerald with his wife, Shirley, in their beautiful garden

The gardener

Member **Gerald Bower**, 89, has spent the last 60 years creating a stunning eco garden

I joined Blind Veterans eight years ago and have been part of the Blind Veterans UK gardening phone-in group since its inception.

The group takes place on the first Tuesday of the month and we discuss what's happening in our gardens, greenhouses, window boxes and hanging baskets, and tell one another what we are propagating, planting and harvesting. Pests and diseases also

feature a lot and we all benefit from sharing our joint knowledge.

My wife, Shirley, and I have lived in our semi-detached house for more than 60 years. The site was previously a brickyard and when we moved in. I dug up hundreds of bricks and used them to build my cold frame, greenhouse base and hut foundation. The whole garden was a mass of trees and weeds.



Caption: The site was a brickyard

The one asset was a large Bramley Seedling apple tree which spread its branches over the hedges at each side and over the greenhouse. Large apples would fall from the tree and smash the greenhouse windows.

I had to climb above the top of a three-piece ladder to reach the higher branches. I pruned 5cwt from the tree. It grew it all back the following year. Even though my sight was failing, I sawed it down little by little. The apple crop was enormous, but the gathering was labour intensive.

I started producing compost more than 40 years ago. As a result of this, my garden has become more fertile each year. My compost is made from



Caption: Growing fruit and veg

grass cuttings, privet hedge clippings, foliage, vegetable peelings and fruit skins. It can be likened to a large fruit cake of 3.5ft x 2ft x 4ft deep. I cut out the middle and leave a crust which contains worms and substances. This helps to form next year's compost.

I love that we are now about 20% self-sufficient in fruit and vegetables in the garden, and that our carbon footprint is small. It's so important to help with the global warming issue. Every bit helps. Even if you only have a window box, you're supporting the bee population – and that is essential to us all.

■ **To find out more about the gardening phone-in group, contact your Community Support Worker.**



Caption: Betty Tring models her beautiful Jubilee bunting bag



Caption: Tom Strong shows off his amaryllis from the gardening project



Caption: Ron Zapple displays his colourful crown mosaic



Caption: Tony Philip with his watermill which he built and painted

Happy birthday to our NCP!

Our National Creative Project was launched two years ago this month. To mark this fantastic anniversary, we ask NCP team member **Sue Kaulsi** to tell us how it all began

As the country went into lockdown back in 2020, Blind Veterans UK staff came together to develop a remote service which would allow Members to continue being creative at home.

Thanks to funding from the NHS and the Armed Forces Covenant Trust Fund, the first of our creative activity project packs were sent out

on 23 September. Since then, the team has created 36 projects and 2,262 activity packs – and these have been sent out to approximately 1,500 Members.

We've been able to create a whole range of packs, from painting to woodwork, to collage to gardening... and just about everything in between!

In fact, over the past two years, many of you have created tea towels, cotton bags, flags of hope, Christmas cards, wooden clocks, racing cars, mosaics and even a model of the Titanic.

The project has also encouraged a love of painting as some of you have taken up your brush to tackle all kinds of themes, including landscapes, flowers, favourite holiday destinations and pets.

Meanwhile, the gardening projects have also gone down very well. Many of you have told us how much you've loved growing and nurturing the amaryllis, herbs, sweet peas and succulents we've sent you.

On top of this, we've also been running monthly creative hobby circles, offering a chance to connect and chat with fellow woodwork, mosaic, painting or knitting enthusiasts. During the early days of the pandemic, these monthly calls were a lifeline and helped all of us involved feel less isolated.

We want to thank those of you who have taken part in our NCP over the past two years. Here's to more creative fun in the future! 🍷

■ **Turn to page 34 for details of this month's NCP activities. To get involved, simply call us on 01273 391455 or speak to your CSW.**



Caption: The athletes with Members and staff at our Brighton Centre

Ukraine Warriors

Last month, we welcomed a group of Ukrainian athletes and their families to our Brighton Centre to help them prepare for the Warrior Games in Orlando

Our centre at Brighton has been unusually quiet since the restrictions were put in place for the Covid-19 outbreak, but that all changed in July when we welcomed a group of disabled athletes from Ukraine.

For just over five weeks from 11 July to 17 August, the centre became a hub of activity as we supported 34 men and women, along with their families and their support staff, to enable them to train for the Warrior Games taking place in Orlando.

Many of our guests had come straight from the frontline in Ukraine and arrived with only the clothes they were wearing.

Assistant Centre Manager Kellie Darcy-Pattenden explains what it meant to the centre's residents and staff to have had them staying with them.

"The team was so positively received by all of our residents. As soon as our Members heard the announcement, they told the staff that they felt it

was their duty to help. Many of our residents have lived through wars and they felt they were well placed to be able to show our Ukrainian guests that there is life after war and to help them to try to remain positive. Our residents and our Ukrainian guests really enjoyed getting to know each other. The Members didn't want them to leave.

"As for the staff, we all loved to see the centre busy and bustling. The teams all pulled together to do what they could. The group included three children and having them around the centre brought so much joy. Their presence had a powerful and emotional impact on the staff here.

"Personally, I feel incredibly honoured to have been a part of this project. Many of us have sat at home feeling helpless and wishing we could help the people of Ukraine. This was my chance to help, even if only in a small way.



Caption: Ukrainians at Llandudno

"It's been a challenge, one which I have enjoyed but also one which has brought sadness. Hearing personal first-hand stories of war and the loss of loved ones was difficult. Even in the short time they were here, they experienced loss of loved ones back home.

"The emotion when they left was felt through the whole centre. The staff and residents miss their company and it is so worrying knowing what they are returning to after the Warrior Games.

"I hope we are able to stay in touch and that after this war is over we can welcome each and every one of them to Brighton again one day."

Five of the Ukrainian athletes also enjoyed a two-day visit to our Llandudno Centre during their time with us. Our Health Care Assistant, Tim Bagnall, recorded their visit by taking some photographs during their stay.

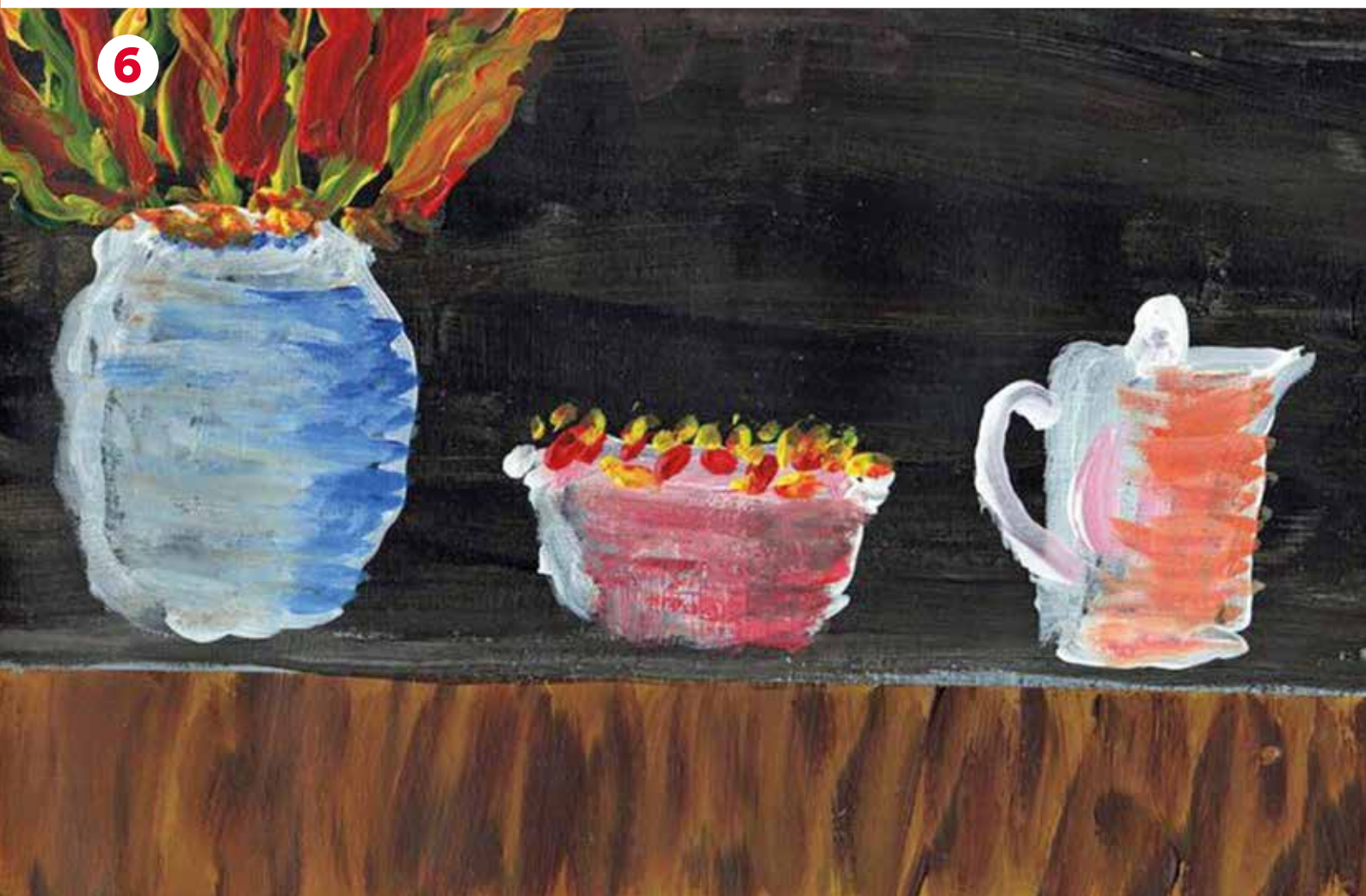
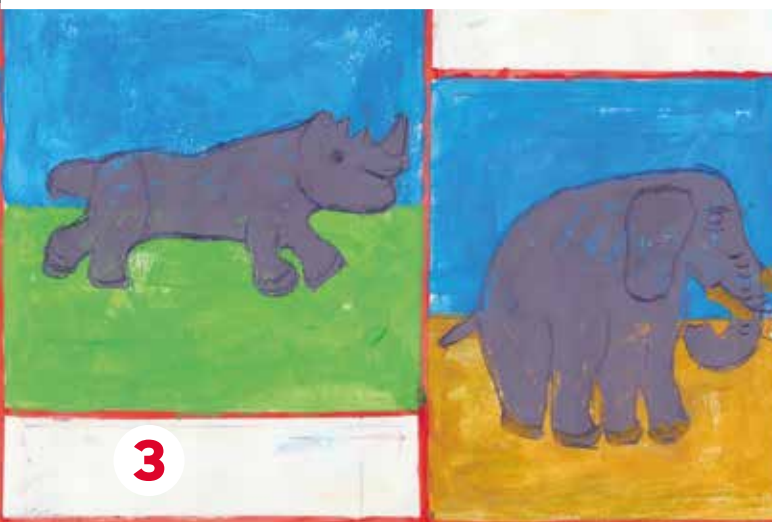
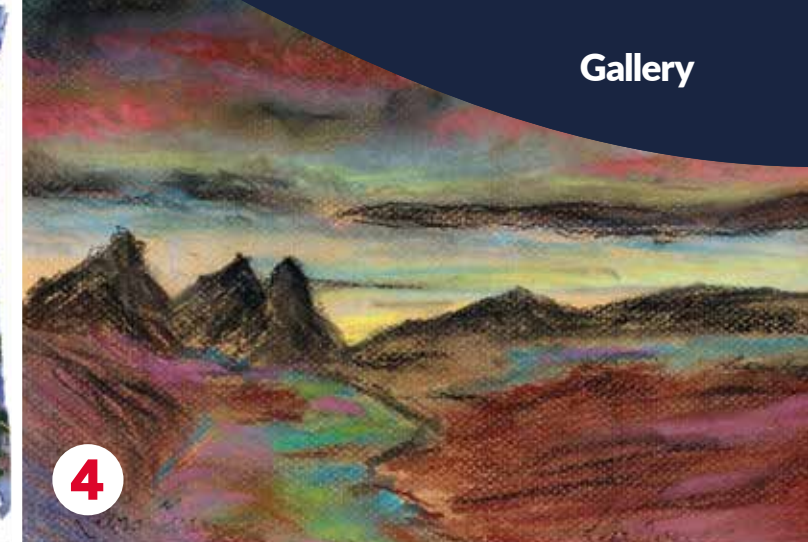
Tim says, "It was wonderful to meet some of the athletes and find out more about them. They met some of our staff and Members and were also taken on a day trip to an area of outstanding beauty in the Snowdonia mountains called Betws-y-Coed, which they loved.

"It was great to be able to give them a good break before they headed off to the Warrior Games." 🇺🇦

Artistic Flair

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

Captions: **1. Dennis Barker - View from my window** **2. Bill Ridgewell - Mountain** **3. Michael Hammerton - Animals** **4. Lewis Evans - Fantasy landscape** **5. Rita Scaratt - My garden** **6. Matthew McGowan - Still life**



Join us in securing a bright future for blind veterans

To mark Remember a Charity Week, the national campaign to inspire people to leave a gift in their Will to charity, three Members explain why they are leaving gifts to Blind Veterans UK

I'm proud to support veterans who follow in my footsteps

Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson became a Member in 2003 after an assault caused his sight loss.

"Blind Veterans UK provides lifelong support for veterans of all ages. The charity is currently looking after those as young as their 30s. It's important that it has the resources to look after



Caption: Alan with Penelope

the future of blind veterans in the same way that it looks after us today.

"Leaving a gift in your Will is easy. Your gift would ensure that Blind Veterans UK can continue to provide future veterans with the same excellent care that it has provided since 1915. I'm proud to support the blind ex-servicemen and women who will follow in my footsteps and I hope you feel inspired to join me in doing so too."

Much of the support I've received is down to gifts in Wills

Alan Lock joined the Royal Navy in 2002 before losing much of his sight due to a rare genetic condition.

"When I lost my eyesight, the future looked very bleak. With the help of Blind Veterans UK, I've been able to rebuild my confidence, career and even learned to hit the slopes again as a blind skier! I can now be the best dad to my daughter Penelope too, reading her stories with the help of assistive technology and large-print books.

"Much of the support I've received has been down to the generosity of gifts in Wills. In fact, five in ten of us at Blind Veterans UK are supported with the help of these gifts. Knowing first-hand how much the charity transforms veterans' lives makes it important for me to help do the same for those veterans that come after me.

"Please consider making a life-changing legacy by leaving a gift to Blind Veterans UK in your Will."

I want to give a little back and say thanks for the life I've had

Simon Brown was on his second tour in Iraq when he was almost totally blinded by a sniper shot.

"If you're even contemplating making a Will, then it's time to make one. All it means is that you've got people in your life that you want to take care of.



Caption: Simon Brown

"I've left a gift in my Will to Blind Veterans UK. I've been very fortunate; the charity has been very much involved in helping me rebuild my life. I want to give a little bit back and say thank you for the life I've had.

"This is the perfect time to reflect on what's important to you; to make sure you've taken care of your loved ones as well as causes close to your heart." 🇬🇧

How to leave a gift in your Will to Blind Veterans UK

If you would like to leave a gift to the charity, you will need the following details:

- **Registered address:**
3 Queen Square
London WC1N 3BH
- **Charity Number: 216227**

Alternatively, Blind Veterans UK can refer you to a free Will provider to help make or amend your Will.

- **Contact the Gifts in Wills team on 020 7616 7923 or at giftsinwills@blindveterans.org.uk for more information**



Caption: It's important to us to receive your views and feedback

The results are in...

Earlier this year, we commissioned an independent market research company to survey 200 randomly selected Members from across the charity about our work. We've collated the results and here are some of the highlights

Satisfaction scores

We were delighted to find that our overall Member satisfaction scores are on the up. The scores were the highest since 2013, having improved since last year.

Net Promoter Score

It was our Net Promoter Score that really blew us away. The Net Promoter Score (or NPS), measures customer experience and is calculated by asking the key question: How likely is it that

“These panels are invaluable to providing the thoughts and feedback of our Membership”

you would recommend Blind Veterans UK to a friend or colleague?

Our score this year was 94 out of 100, which is exceptional, particularly when compared to other market leaders. For example, banking sector leaders Monzo scored 80; internet services leaders PlusNet scored 37; and mobile phone leaders Tesco Mobile scored 38.

Telephone social groups

Of the 68.5% participants who said they have used virtual social groups, 49% said they would like to continue with these groups even now Covid restrictions have lifted. Many participants said their telephone social group helped lift their mood, and 44% who said they will continue with the virtual social groups also told us they lead or would lead groups in the future.

In terms of improvements we can make, we aim to continue working with our partner organisations to make sure Members can still engage in these groups when they have hearing loss. We also plan to recruit and train

additional volunteers to help facilitate and maintain these groups.

Member Engagement Panels

Our Member Engagement Panels started less than a year ago and are already established across the UK. Although 10% of participants said they contribute to these panels, the survey showed us that only a third of Members are aware of them.

These panels are invaluable to providing the thoughts and feedback of our membership, which forms a big part of our decision-making. Going forwards, we plan to do more work to make sure all our Members are aware of them and understand how to get involved.

Review and correspondence preferences

We were disappointed to hear that, despite your best efforts, some of you told us you haven't been receiving your copy of the *Review*, or aren't receiving it in your preferred format.

Making sure you receive communication from Blind Veterans UK in the best format for you is something we are determined to improve on. We plan to review our processes to make sure your communication preferences are updated regularly. 🎧

Carers Review

Our Member Experience Coordinator **Stacey Barham** gives the lowdown on the latest activities for carers

Carers and Families Engagement Panel

Do you support a Member? Then why not get involved in shaping the support you receive from Blind Veterans UK?

Our Carers and Families Engagement Panel meets once a month to discuss their needs and offer suggestions for social activities, signposting and how we can best share valuable information with each other.



Caption: Virtual exercise sessions

Anyone who is a family member, partner or friend caring for one of our Members or assisting them with day-to-day activities, is welcome to join. Just get in contact with me via the details at the end of this page.

New! Carers monthly virtual exercise sessions

This month, on Wednesday, 21 September at 11am, we'll be running the second of our monthly virtual exercise sessions for carers, tailored to all abilities. The aim of the sessions is to help you find time for physical activity and give your wellbeing a much-needed boost. There will be a mixture of seated and standing exercises and all of it can be taken at your own pace.

Our Sports & Recreation Instructor, Theresa Farley, will contact you before your first session to go through a few medical questions and make sure you know how to log on.

- **To find out more, please email theresa.farley@blindveterans.org.uk or call Theresa on 01273 307 811.**

Help from Age UK

If you look after a partner, relative or friend who is disabled or ill, you are classed as a carer, even if you don't think of yourself as one. This means you could be eligible to access emotional, practical and financial support.

Age UK, the national organisation providing information, advice, services and support to older people, has all the information you need about this.

The charity also has local branches, usually county based, offering a range of services for older people. This may include information and advice, a handy person, support at home after hospital, crisis care, doorstep deliveries, dementia support and emergency welfare and safety support, plus social clubs and activities and telephone befriending.

- **To find out more, please visit their website at www.ageuk.org.uk or call their free Advice Line on 0800 678 1602. Lines are open from 8am-7pm, 365 days a year.**

Guidance and coaching especially for carers

Mobilise is an online business led by carers, for carers offering free personalised guidance and coaching. Whether you have a practical challenge or just want a listening ear, being part



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Caption: Carers are eligible for help

of the Mobilise community means you can:

- connect with other carers from the comfort of your own home
- take a weight off your mind and find some clarity
- share tips and tricks (and laughter) in their community of unpaid carers
- explore support options that you may have never heard about
- learn from other carers by browsing the Mobilise Library which is filled with practical, financial and emotional tips for caring. 🌐

- **For more information, please visit mobiliseonline.co.uk/contact-us**

What would you like to see on his carers page? Contact Stacey Barham on 01273 391483 or at stacey.barham@blindveterans.org.uk for more information and to share your ideas.

National Creative Project Programme

Here are this month's creative activities and hobby circles you can take part in - all from the comfort of your own home. The following activities are available to all Members, whatever your experience or creative ability...

CRAFT

Jubilee Crown Mosaic

This is a chance to create your own decorative mosaic in the shape of a majestic crown to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year. We'll send you everything you need to make this easy, fun and colourful design. The wooden base measures roughly 7 x 8



Caption: Why not make your own beautiful Jubilee crown mosaic?

inches, or 18cm x 20cm, and there is no need for any tile cutting as all pieces are ready to use. The project comes with the opportunity to join one of our monthly mosaic hobby circles to chat with other Members and receive support if you would like to.

Battle of Britain Planes - wooden models

We'll send you everything you need to complete a wooden model of a Lancaster and a Spitfire, including our VI friendly instructions. These are fun and challenging kits with pre-cut wooden pieces which you sand, slot together and glue. The Lancaster has a wingspan of 19in or 49cm, while the Spitfire is 13in or 33cm. Paint will be included for those of you who would like to paint the finished models. The project comes with the opportunity to join one of our monthly woodwork hobby circles.

GARDENING

Hyacinths

Have a blooming good festive season with our hyacinth growing project. We'll send you everything you need to grow these fragrant favourites including three bulbs, compost and a ceramic bowl, so all you need to add is some TLC. The project comes with the opportunity to join one of our monthly gardening hobby circles to chat with other Members and receive support with this project if you would like.

ART

Drawing for Beginners and Improvers

- September, October, November

Inspired by The Big Draw, a national initiative and festival taking place throughout October, 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.

Members interested in discussing painting with other participants and our specialists are welcome to sign up for our painting hobby circle.

For more information about these projects and groups, or to request an



SUNDAY_MORNING / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Have a blooming festive season with our hyacinth project

activity pack, please call our bookings team on **01273 391455** or visit our website at blindveterans.org.uk/ncp

CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

We'd love to hear from you on **01273 391455** if you are interested in joining a monthly telephone or video call chat group on any of the following topics:

Gardening, knitting, woodturning, mosaic, painting, woodwork and creative writing.

Our groups are made up of up to six fellow Members with a shared interest, and two Blind Veterans UK staff also attend the group. →

Photography

We also have a photography Facebook page (at Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a fortnightly chat group with regular guest speakers. Anyone with an interest in photography is welcome, no matter what your experience.

We are in the process of redesigning our website right now so instead of your usual NCP content, you'll find a holding page. We plan to be back with our new and improved NCP pages towards the end of the summer at blindveterans.org.uk/ncp



MANUSAPON / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Our online photography group has regular guest speakers

■ **If you would like to try one of the projects or groups, please give us a call on 01273 391455 or speak to your Community Support Worker.**

This month marks the second anniversary of the National Creative Project, and we'd like to thank you all for your enthusiasm and sense of adventure in taking part.

We've achieved many wonderful collaborative projects through the NCP, from teacup tea towels way back in November 2020 and the stunning Collaboration in Colour art piece of Spring 2021 (currently on display at our Llandudno Centre), through to Jubilee Bunting on a Bag this June with participants now sporting much admired bunting shopping bags!

We've run 36 projects since September 2020, sent out 2,215 project kits at the time of writing this, and roughly 1,500 of our Members have taken part.

If you think you might enjoy one of the projects, but haven't yet taken the plunge, then please do! The National Creative Project is designed for you and open to every Member, whatever your experience or creative ability. 🎨

Lou Kirk-Partridge and your National Creative Project team

Family news

Birthdays

Harold Goodall who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 10 September

Joan Awbery who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 9 September

Joan Jepson who celebrates her 100th birthday on 19 September

Joan Osborne-Walker who celebrates her 101st birthday on 26 September

Kenneth Batt who celebrates his 101st birthday on 25 September

Kenneth Windle who celebrates his 100th birthday on 30 September

Nancy Bowstead who celebrates her 101st birthday on 18 September

Neville Bowen who celebrates his 100th birthday on 22 September

Robert Crum who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 14 September

Stella Savage who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 4 September

Condolences

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

Beryl Daisy Smith who died on 1 July 2022. She was the wife of Kenneth Smith

Joyce Kirby who died on 6 July 2022. She was the wife of Graham Kirby

Margaret Paulette Bousfield who died on 29 May 2022. She was the wife of Stanley Bousfield

Sylvia Davies who died on 14 July 2022. She was the wife of Ken Davies

Margaret Joan Houghton who died on 1 July 2022. She was the wife of Doug Houghton

Gillian Overton who died on 1 February 2022. She was the wife of Alan Overton

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

William George Alexander of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 1 August 2022 aged 95. He served in the Royal Observer Corps.

Maurice Leonard Bell of Carlisle, Cumbria died on 9 July 2022 aged 99. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Bone of Fakenham, Norfolk died on 16 July 2022 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Peter James Bradshaw of Worcester Park, Surrey died on 1 August 2022 aged 89. He served as a Leading Air Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

Lawrence Brewer of Liverpool died on 1 April 2022 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Army.

George Terrence Carney of Broadstone, Dorset died on 21 July 2022 aged 87. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Fred Casey of Plymouth died on 24 June 2022 aged 85. He served as a Guardsman in the Grenadier Guards.

John Hendley Copeland of Congleton, Cheshire died on 3 August 2022 aged 88. He served in the Royal Air Force.

John Cracknell of Stowmarket, Suffolk died on 11 August 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Army.

Margaret Eva Davis of Portsmouth died on 22 July 2022 aged 96. She served as a Wren HSR in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Kenneth Edwards of Rhyl, Denbighshire died on 29 July 2022 aged 91. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Frederick Graham Eekhoff of Liverpool died on 6 August 2022 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

Michael Eggar of Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset died on 20 July 2022 aged 86. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

David John Egley of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 12 July 2022 aged 65. He served as a Corporal in the Yorkshire Volunteers.

David Alan Gant of Stowmarket, Suffolk died on 8 August 2022 aged 83. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Albert Giliker of Leeds died on 1 July 2022 aged 85. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

Bertie Green of Mexborough, South Yorkshire died on 11 July 2022 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Douglas Kenneth Haines of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 3 July 2022 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

John William Derek Harris of Folkestone, Kent died on 10 July 2022 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Navy.

Patricia Joy Hawes of Ossett, West Yorkshire died on 19 July 2022 aged 93. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

George Frederick Hedges of Southampton died on 1 August 2022 aged 98. He served as a Temporary Acting Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

David Michael Horton of Windsor, Berkshire died on 22 July 2022 aged 88. He served as a Stoker in the Royal Navy.

Richard Jelbert of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire died on 10 June 2022 aged 79. He served as a Colour Sergeant in the Royal Marines.



Roland Henry Piercy Jempson of Bristol died on 6 July 2022 aged 91. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Ralph Jepson of Nottingham died on 22 July 2022 aged 83. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

Ronald Josselyn of Felixstowe, Suffolk died on 31 July 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Suffolk Regiment.

Mark Keith of Carnoustie, Angus died on 18 July 2022 aged 38. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Scots Greys (2nd Dragoons).

Frederick Last of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 17 July 2022 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the East Anglian Regiment.

John Robert Leach of Reading died on 22 July 2022 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Ian Lindsay of Aberdeen died on 1 July 2022 aged 89. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

George William Lumley of Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland died on 15 July 2022 aged 99. He served as a Leading Air Fitter in the Royal Navy.

Audrey Betty Machin of Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire died on 1 July 2022 aged 94. She served as an A.C.W. 1 in the Women's Royal Air Force.

Neville Marlow of Plymouth, Devon died on 27 May 2022 aged 84. He served as a Leading Radio Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

Anthony Alexander Martin of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 1 July 2022 aged 98. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

George Henry Massam of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 31 July 2022 aged 92. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

William McCarroll of Prescot, Merseyside died on 1 August 2022 aged 87. He served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Arthur McDonald of Slough died on 1 April 2022 aged 87. He served in the Army.

David Michell of London died on 1 August 2022 aged 92. He served as a Captain in the Royal Artillery.

Roy Millward of Nottingham died on 15 July 2022 aged 94. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Enid Mary Morgan of Cardiff, South Glamorgan died on 11 July 2022 aged 101. She served as a Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

John Terence Morris of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 1 August 2022 aged 98. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

James Edward Morris of Wakefield, West Yorkshire died on 29 July 2022 aged 96. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

David Newman of Ruislip, Middlesex died on 27 July 2022 aged 94. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Raymond Lionel Peacock of Royston, Hertfordshire died on 27 July 2022 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Valerie Edith Louise Peckham of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 21 July 2022 aged 96. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Maria Pikulski-Hughes of Preston, Lancashire died on 7 August 2022 aged 61. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

Keith Putt of Lewes, East Sussex died on 11 July 2022 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Hugh Stanley Reilly of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire died on 1 March 2022 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Army.

Arthur William Rowbottom of Nottingham died on 13 July 2022 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

William Rowland of Swindon died on 6 February 2022 aged 93. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Brian Oswald Sibree of Cromer, Norfolk died on 1 July 2022 aged 99. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

Colin Swanton of Ilkley, West Yorkshire died on 20 July 2022 aged 84. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

Neil Arthur Tudor of Weston Rhyn, Shropshire died on 1 March 2022 aged 82. He served as an Acting Leading Writer in the Royal Navy.

Arthur Vickers of Colchester, Essex died on 1 January 2020 aged 99. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

Marcel Vidot of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 1 August 2022 aged 82. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Fusiliers.

William Gordon Walters of Oldbury, West Midlands died on 13 June 2022 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

David James Wheeler of Darlington, County Durham died on 1 July 2022 aged 89. He served as a L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Bryan Wilkinson of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire died on 19 July 2022 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Corps Of Transport.

Francis John Williams of Preston, Lancashire died on 30 July 2022 aged 88. He served as an Acting Sergeant in the Royal Marines.

Stanley Gordon Winter of Orpington, Kent died on 13 July 2022 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

Henry Hubert Woods of Stowmarket, Suffolk died on 26 July 2022 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

The end of the war

We share the final extract of Member **Bill Skinner's** memories of growing up in Hull during the war



HULL DAILY MAIL

Caption: Young evacuees walking through Barrow upon Humber

During the remainder of that summer and into the autumn, the air raids were becoming less frequent. When we got them, they were still quite heavy, but now more on the industrial sites: docks, railways and factories.

The Christmas of 1944 looked much more promising. People were saying the end of the war was in sight. "Will our dad be coming home soon?" I asked my mam. (I still had flapping ears and asked too many questions.) "I don't know," she said. "I suppose it will end sometime!"

My grandma Elsie came round one day and said, "Jack has got you some tickets for the Firemen's Christmas party at the station. It's fancy dress." That cheered our mam up. Planning what to dress us up in was right up her street. →

Marie's costume was excellent; she was dressed as a Scottish girl with a full rig out from head to toe. She had the glengarry, the jacket, kilt, stockings and shoes. Brian was rigged out as a pirate, with a handkerchief on his head and a cardboard cutlass; he looked the part. What has she got in mind for me, I wondered? I soon found out.

"You're going as a jester," she said, "as you're always playing the fool." When I saw what she was making for me I said, "I don't want to go!"

"You're going," she said. "Even if I have to drag you there!" My costume was made, I believe, from parachute silk. It was an all-in-one costume, with one side of me appearing in yellow and the other side in orange. I had a flat cardboard cut-out hat, with three points on it. This was also covered with the same yellow and orange silk.

On the day of the party, I felt a complete fool. "That's what you are going as," said our mam. Someone had given her three little brass bells; these she sewed on to the points of the hat. I had never felt so humiliated. None of the other lads said anything to me (I think I would have smacked them if they had!). Marie won the 'girls' under five' class; Brian came second in the 'six to nine' class. I came nowhere in the over tens. I couldn't wait to get home

and take it off. It was a good job none of my friends had been at the party. I don't think I could have ever faced them again.

Our new neighbours

At the end of December that year, we had some prisoners of war erecting prefabricated homes in Woodhall Street. This caused some feeling amongst the residents in Woodhall Street and Kathleen Road. Poor Mrs Green was particularly concerned. Several people tried to console her, but I don't think they convinced her.

Our gang soon took it upon ourselves to have a look at them. Soldiers armed with rifles kept close watch over them. The prisoners all had patches sewn to the backs of their uniforms. We soon started asking them for badges, buttons and flashes from their uniforms. One cigarette, per item, they wanted. This was all right for a time but as badges etc. became scarce, they demanded two cigarettes per item. This was a major problem. Sneaking one cigarette off our mothers was hard enough; two was out of the question.

But we solved it. We had an old Rizla cigarette roller we had found in one of the bombed houses. So, with a razor blade we would cut a cigarette into four pieces. At that time, almost all the transport on the roads was

horse drawn, and what do horses do? Defecate on the road. When it dries up it blows into the gutter and looks a bit like tobacco. So, you've probably guessed it, we would gather it up rub it between two stones until it was powdery. Then, with a quarter of a cigarette at each end of the Rizla and the horse dung in the middle, we could make one cigarette become two. It worked a treat.

Everyone was happy, although some of them didn't trade with us anymore. Still, we felt we were helping the war effort; at last, we had the enemy smoking dung!

A celebration to remember

As we entered the New Year, everyone was saying, "The end of the war is very near now." I had my 11th birthday and at Easter would be going to Chapman Street School. Brian would soon be eight and Marie, who had finally made a full recovery, would soon be four.

VE Day finally arrived. On that night, our mam got the three of us ready and we went to Queen's Gardens. It was packed with crowds singing, dancing and some even crying. Everywhere you looked there were soldiers, airmen and even one or two sailors, grabbing the women and dancing around. Our mam was also dancing. She looked happier than I had seen her for some time.



HULL DAILY MAIL

Caption: The bombed Hammonds store in Hull, May 1941

Me, Brian and Marie stood and watched as the revelry continued. That night, as we finally made our way home, our mam said, "Well, there's one thing for sure, there won't be an air raid tonight!"

On May 8th 1945, peace was finally declared. Our dad came home a few months later. Then came the process of getting to know him again.

I could remember him, though it was strange, but Brian had been so young when he had gone to war, it must have been harder for him. As for Marie, she didn't even know him, but we would get by.

And we did. But that's another story. 🍷

Quiz time

Our quiz master **Ron Russell** tests your knowledge with his fun questions on the human body

1. Which wild animal grows all over the human body?
2. Which part of the eye is always learning?
3. Which part of the ear likes a good beating?
4. Which part of the hand might be used by a carpenter?
5. Where on your legs can you find young livestock?
6. Where on your head do you find a place of worship?
7. Which musical instrument can be found inside the body?
8. Which piece of fruit belonging to someone else might you find in your body?
9. Which part of your face might help you across a river?
10. Which part of your body is fit for royalty?

Answers on page 2



AGENTURFOTOGRAFIN / ADOBE STOCK



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

The Llandudno Centre 01492 868 700

Review Editor: 020 7616 8367 or
revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Feedback: To give us feedback on any of our services, please email us at supporter.services@blindveterans.org.uk or call **0300 111 22 33**.

Donations: To make a donation, simply call **0300 111 22 33** or visit blindveterans.org.uk/donate.

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**.



When Falklands veteran Steve lost his sight, we were there.

Blind Veterans UK estimates that there are many thousands of veterans like Steve who could be entitled to our support.



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

If you, or someone you know, served in the Armed Forces, including National Service, and are now struggling with sight loss then please visit blindveterans.org.uk/support