

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

February 2022



New beginnings

Your resolutions for the year ahead

Inside:

Our new centre in Rustington
Centenarian Stan's story
Community 5 hits Llandudno



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

Stepping into the year with hope

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Quiz answers - from page 54

1. Benny Hill 2. 1977 3. Norman Wisdom 4. Elton John
5. Sir Cliff Richard 6. Sandie Shaw 7. 'Don't jump off the roof Dad'
8. 'From Me to You' and 'Hey Jude' 9. Morecambe and Wise
10. Shirley Temple

On the cover

Members Jonathon Westerby and Steve Thomas with their trophies for the biggest catches of the day on a recent sea fishing weekend in Liverpool



Hello and welcome to your first *Review* magazine of the new year. If you're struggling to muster much positivity for the year ahead, I hope this issue, themed 'new beginnings', might help.

As we enter the third year of this dreadful pandemic, these are certainly challenging times. But, in the words of the inspirational deaf-blind author, Helen Keller: "Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement. Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."

Of course, something simple we can all do to muster hope as we start the year is to make our own personal resolutions. But if you think this means churning out the same old wishlist as usual – before promptly forgetting all about it (if you're anything like me) – please take a look at our fascinating article on page 18, explaining the origins of this long-held tradition.

For anyone in need of ideas, our carers recommend glorious, tried-and-tested holiday resorts on page 32. There are also group breaks coming up, including

a summer camp on HMS Sultan, and a special Military Week to mark the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War.

Over the year, I'm sure there will be plenty more exciting opportunities too. In this issue alone, you can read about an amazing sea fishing weekend some of our Working Age Members enjoyed in Liverpool recently. We also report on a lovely week in Llandudno especially for our Members of Community 5.

If you still need cheering up, I hope you can find a little comfort in our wartime story by Stan, who's 100 years old. After describing one setback after another in his early life - with great humour, I should add – he says simply, "as one door closes, another one opens." And it did for Stan. It really did.

Wishing you a fabulous year. 🍀

Liz Millar
Editor



Happy New Year to One and All

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

I hope you have managed to have a peaceful and enjoyable Christmas and spent time in the company of family and friends, one way or another. The weather was kind to the Caplin Clan this year and Isobel and I were able to



Caption: Nick Caplin

join our children and their spouses for some quality time at home on the Isle of Lewis.

Festive food was compensated for by a few brisk and bracing beach walks. There is no shortage of oxygen in the Hebrides!

Back at work today, the 4th January, I have enjoyed a delightful call with a member from Maesteg, Glamorgan which has provided a perfect shot in the arm to get me going for 2022. Largely confined to her house, though well supported by her husband, she has had more than her fair share of personal challenges recently. Yet her message was positive and upbeat, with the focus on managing and overcoming adversity and on getting the very best out of each day. It's the blind veterans' spirit and it's intoxicating.

Maria Pikulski-Hughes is another of



Caption: Maria with husband Richard, right, and Billy Baxter

our Members who demonstrates this blind veterans spirit on a daily basis. It was wonderful to see the Council's decision at their meeting in December to appoint Maria as our charity's first female Vice President, joining fellow VPs Billy Baxter and Paul Palmer.

Maria has demonstrated unbridled energy; a passion to promote Blind Veterans UK amongst visually impaired veterans; strong contacts within the eye care community; and

“It was wonderful to see the Council's decision to appoint Maria as our first female Vice President, joining fellow VPs, Billy Baxter and Paul Palmer”

an ability to connect with, and speak on behalf of, present and future Members.

This is an exciting opportunity to raise the profile of our female veterans and to ensure we are providing them with support that is most relevant and helpful going forward. I am delighted that Maria has accepted and that she will be the first of many in this exciting and important role.

We ended 2021 with the great news of the purchase of our new centre at Rustington, which we expect to open by the end of this year. Concurrently, the Council approved the proposal for our post-Covid operations model. With these key achievements under our belt, we now have plenty of important work to do in the next few months to get the new centre ready and configure our services for the future.

It certainly seems we are beginning a new and exciting chapter in the history of this great charity. Happy 2022! 🍷



Caption: Our new centre at Rustington, West Sussex

An exciting journey ahead

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

Since becoming Chairman of Blind Veterans UK on 14 December, it certainly feels like 'new beginnings', the theme for this month's *Review*. I'm sure our new trustees Clare Hayes and Jamie Cuthbertson, who's a Member,

feel the same. I hope they are made to feel very welcome.

Firstly, I'd like to pay tribute to Paul Luker, my predecessor. I'm sure many of you will have experienced Paul's

infectious smile and warm personality. His messages in the *Review* were always witty and interesting; his commitment to Blind Veterans UK was total. As one fellow trustee put it recently, "Paul consistently and fervently put the charity's purpose, values and impact front and centre." A hard act to follow indeed!

Paul's final legacy was the foresight to garner support for the purchase of our new centre in Rustington, near Littlehampton. These are exciting times as we prepare to move from Brighton and start work on the creation of a fantastic new centre which can better serve our Members.

I've been bowled over by the enthusiasm of our centre manager at Brighton, Lesley Garven. Lesley and her team have been working hard to put together a brief to make the new centre exceptional. It's a wonderful example of how, at Blind Veterans UK, we continue to develop the way in which we support our Members.

Also, as we look forward, Nicky Shaw, Director of Operations, and her team, are looking at our service offer as we plan for our transition out of the pandemic. I know Nicky hopes to reinstate some services that have been missed, keep some of the activities enjoyed in the pandemic, and

"Paul's final legacy was the foresight to garner support for our new centre at Rustington"

introduce new ways of supporting and connecting Members.

It's important to acknowledge the significant work and input from our Member Panels, who are working alongside staff and trustees to create an environment whereby Members have more choice, more say and more opportunities to get involved with the charity. Our CEO, Nick Caplin often talks of "Blind Veterans: A Force for Good". This doesn't simply apply to our staff; it's about the contributions you make, both to the charity and to your local communities.

If we are to go from strength to strength, we must make our services as effective as possible. I'm sure some will have been disappointed when we announced the move from Brighton, but I hope there is excitement as we start work on our Rustington Centre. We're not afraid to tackle difficult questions in order to improve the way we work, including what to do about our London office, so watch this space!

Our Director of Resources, Simon →

Hopkins, and his team have been working hard to put in place a new sustainable business model, which gives us an overriding principle behind what we do: supporting a greater number of blind veterans with a more developed service offering.

I had the privilege of spending time with Members at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday who were interested to know what this would mean and how they could help. Together, we will chart a course which will allow our charity to not simply survive but to really flourish. The key to this is achieving financial equilibrium, so we can plan with confidence.



Caption: Barry Coupe

“I had the privilege of spending time with Members at the Cenotaph during Remembrance Sunday”

Over the coming weeks, we will create a ‘roadmap’ based on our service review findings, which many of you helped shape. What will be central to this is how we best meet the needs of our Members and how we generate income. As our Director of Engagement, Jackie Harbor, says, “Raise more money and we can achieve so much more!”

Trawling through my bookcase, I came across a book written by Lord Fraser of Lonsdale, our second Chairman who served for 42 years. The book, ‘My Story of St Dunstan’s’, was written in 1961 and in the preface he wrote the following:

“The work of the charity is still not at an end, and not likely to be for many years. If there are no more major wars, St Dunstan’s will outlive its needs in the 21st century. I hope something of its work will live on forever.”

Profound words and maybe a recipe for new beginnings. It’s going to be an exciting journey! 🎉

RAF BENEVOLENT FUND



Caption: Princess Marina House

All about our new Rustington Centre

Your questions answered

As you will hopefully have read in the letter we sent you in December, we are delighted to be in the process of purchasing a centre on the south coast to replace our Brighton Centre, which is, sadly, no longer fit for purpose.

Princess Marina House in Rustington, West Sussex, is an impressive building

right next to the sea, and near to shops and transport. Here, we answer your questions about our new centre and the impending move.

How will the Rustington Centre meet the needs of Members?

The new centre, set over just two floors, is completely accessible to →



Caption: An aerial shot of Rustington town and beach

all levels of ability. It will have around 45 bedrooms, offering a mixture of care and independent living.

One of the best things about this new building is its location. Situated on the beach and at the heart of the local community, the centre and the local area will be far more accessible than our Brighton Centre, and allow us to develop our activity options.

Rustington High Street is a ten-minute walk, and the nearest train station is only a seven-minute drive. There is a direct train from London, and Brighton is less than 20 miles away.

When will the move take place?

While our goal is to move into the

newly-refurbished facility by Christmas, as I'm sure you can imagine, this will be dependent on many factors, some of which are outside of our control.

There will be a smooth transition into the new centre, and we will still be welcoming visitors for stays (Covid dependent) at the Brighton Centre right up to when the move has been completed.

Will Members be able to visit the Rustington Centre before the move?

Yes. We are in the process of setting up a Member Design Group for those who would like to be involved, and other groups will also play a big part in shaping how the building will best suit

Members' needs. Local Members will also be invited to open days throughout the year. Further information will be coming out on how to get involved.

Why was it important to find somewhere in the Sussex area?

Sussex was the top priority for us for a number of reasons. Firstly, we want to be able to continue supporting our permanent residents and so we will need to remain close to their families. Also, over past years, many Members have relocated to be near our Brighton Centre so we have a high proportion of Members in the Sussex area.

How much are we saving by relocating to the Rustington Centre?

We expect annual running cost savings of around £4m per annum from the move. In the first instance, this will be important as we seek to reduce our deficit and balance our budget. It should also allow us to continue to support blind veterans for as long as we're needed.

What will happen to the Brighton Centre building after we've moved out?

We recognise the significance and the history of the iconic building. However, unfortunately, we cannot guarantee what the sale will mean for its future. These decisions will be in the hands

of the local planning authority.

How will you keep us up to date on the progress of the move to the Rustington Centre?

You should have received a letter from us about the new centre before Christmas. We will continue to keep you updated in this magazine.

What if I have further questions about the Rustington Centre, or the sale of our Brighton Centre?

Please call **0300 111 2233** or email memberinfo@blindveterans.org.uk with your questions. Also, your community support worker is always on hand to help. 🌍



Caption: Rustington, West Sussex

News

Commemorating the Falklands War at Llandudno Military Week, 12 June

If you served in the Falklands, or were in the forces during that period, please join us in Llandudno for our Military Week on 12 June to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War.

This is a great opportunity for veterans to enjoy a week full of military-themed

activities and swap experiences and memories. You'll get to listen to guest speakers, take part in a trip to the Imperial War Museum (North), and participate in visits to local units to meet current serving personnel and explore modern military hardware.

We've also been invited by the Royal British Legion to attend a Remembrance Parade during the week, with other associations, at our local cenotaph on the sea front. This will be followed by a regimental-style military



Caption: Argentine soldiers in Stanley during Operation Rosario, Falklands

dinner where we dress in our best for the evening.

■ **Anyone interesting in taking part should contact the Llandudno Bookings Team on 01492 868700.**

Free diabetes information pack

Type 2 diabetes is a common condition causing the level of sugar (glucose) in the body to become too high. Many people become increasingly at risk as they get older, but there are ways to keep it at bay, or manage it well.

Our Health and Wellbeing team has put together a pack, full of information about the disease and what you can do to try and avoid it. There are useful tips on diet and exercise, and information about diabetic retinopathy – how diabetes can affect your eyes.

■ **Order your free pack by calling the Health and Wellbeing team on 01273 391495.**

Member telephone survey

We are conducting a Member survey between February and April, so you may receive a call from a

representative from external research company, Clariant Research, requesting a short interview. The questions will cover your experience of the services we provide and the information we glean from the survey will be crucial in helping to inform our future work.

Please note, there's no obligation to take part if you'd rather not and at no point should you be asked to share any information about your finances.

■ **Please call our Member Support Hub (MeSH) on 01273 391447 if you have any queries.**

The 2022 Summer Camp at HMS Sultan

After a two-year pause due to Covid, Andy Salter, Organising Secretary, shares the details of this year's event.

The Summer Camp at HMS Sultan takes place from Friday, 5 August, at 2pm to Saturday, 13 August, at 10am. We provide activities to suit all ages and abilities and allow veterans to once again experience Service life.

Due to accommodation restrictions we can only offer a limited number of places to Blind Veterans UK Members, but please don't let that put you off applying if you'd like to come. →

We endeavour to create a summer camp 'family' atmosphere by offering places to Members who regularly participate, but we'll also ensure that places go to new applicants too.

Applications will close on 1 May, after which we'll let you know if you've been successful. We look forward to seeing some of you in August.

■ **To apply for consideration this year, please call me on 01329 283928 or 07932 267782 or email a.salter639@virgimedia.com**

Hugh and Pam salute HRH Prince Charles

In November, Member Hugh Megarry and his partner, Pam, were delighted to attend the Royal Gun Salute at Hillsborough Castle in Ulster, Northern Ireland, in honour of HRH Prince Charles' 73rd birthday.

The salute was hosted by 38 (Irish) Brigade and Defence Relationship Management NI. It was the first to take place in Northern Ireland since February 2020, together with simultaneous salutes that took place in Scotland, England and Wales at 12pm.

Hugh said, "It was an honour to receive the invitation to represent my fellow Blind Veterans UK Members to wish HRH Prince of Wales a happy birthday."

Remembering Sir Arthur on his 100th anniversary

On 9 December, 12 blind veterans and a small number of staff gathered for a short service at Hampstead Cemetery at the graveside of Sir Arthur Pearson, the founder and first Chairman of Blind Veterans UK. It was 100 years ago to the day since Sir Arthur sadly died in a



Caption: The small service at Sir Arthur's grave in Hampstead, London

domestic accident, at the age of just 55.

The service continued a long tradition for the charity of annual remembrance of our founder and members of his family who are buried with him. His widow, Lady Ethel, was our first President and their son, Sir Neville, succeeded her in that role.

The service, led by Nick Caplin and our Chaplain Rev George Butterworth, reflected on how Sir Arthur's visionary ideas and inspiration have proved solid foundations for us to continue our work to this day. It also included poems

associated with Sir Arthur and the charity, read by our archivist Rob Baker and outgoing Chairman Paul Luker.

Our President Colin Williamson laid a wreath, and we were particularly grateful to Members Brian Eldridge who, as in previous years, presented our Standard, and Kevin Alderton, who played the bugle.

Sir Arthur's grave has benefitted from two cleans this year, and our thanks go in particular to volunteers Lynette Denzey, Andrew Wigfall, Rhona Levine and Liam Flynn for their work on this. 🇬🇧



Caption: Prince Charles with his parents and sister in October 1957

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADAR / WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

A gift for our departing Chair

As we said a final farewell to our outgoing Chair, **Paul Luker**, in December, we wanted to present him with a truly special, heartfelt gift. Step forward, master woodturner Bill...

On 9 December, we held a small gathering at our Harcourt Street office in London to say a final farewell to our outgoing Chair, Paul Luker. Paul joined the board as a trustee in 2012 and took on the responsibility of Chairman in 2017.

During the event, our President Colin Williamson presented Paul with a beautiful wooden bowl, handmade especially for the occasion by Member Bill Mooney.

Bill, 79, from the North East, has been woodturning since 1959 and was approached earlier in the year to make something special for Paul. Bill settled on a bowl, carved from a single piece of elm burr.

He says: "It was an honour to be asked to make something for Paul and to be able to show my gratitude for all he

has done for blind veterans like me. The blank of elm burr for Paul's bowl was kindly donated by my good friend Neil Walton who has been a longtime supporter of my fundraising efforts for Blind Veterans UK."

Bill, who served in the Royal Artillery, has been supported by Blind Veterans UK since 2010. Having given up woodturning when he first lost his sight, he now says he would never have taken it up again if it wasn't for the encouragement of our Brighton staff.

He says: "I remember being told during my Introductory Week that there's no such thing as 'can't'. This was a year after I'd given up woodturning and they helped me to see that with a change of attitude I might still be able to do it, even without my sight.

"You learn how to adapt and it's great

to be able to pass those skills onto others. Over the years, the staff have really encouraged me, even giving me equipment for my workshop which I'm very grateful for."

During his time at the charity, Bill has created pens for Blind Veterans UK Patron, HRH The Countess of Wessex, as well as HRH The Earl of Wessex and their children. He also made another bowl to mark the centenary of Blind Veterans UK.

More recently, he was involved in setting up a remote woodturning group, as part of the National Creative Project,

so his fellow Members had something positive to focus on in lockdown.

Bill says, "I am where I am because of the staff, volunteers and veterans at Blind Veterans UK. I'm very pleased to give back in any way I can."

After the event, Paul Luker said, "I was deeply touched both by the ability to say goodbye in the company of Members (so many of whom I know) and, more poignantly, by the gift.

"Not only is it beautifully made, but it means a great deal that it comes from the hand of one of our own." 🇬🇧



Caption: Colin and Paul with the bowl, and Bill, inset

New year, new beginnings

Rhian Jones from our Health and Wellbeing team thinks this is the perfect time to make a change for the better

A new year's resolution is a promise. It's a personal goal to improve our lives in some small way.

We might want to let go of a bad habit, such as smoking or too much drinking, or develop a positive one, such as

regular exercise. We may even decide that this is the year we'll do something we've wanted to do for years, like writing our life story, learning something new, or making contact with old friends.

The tradition of starting the year with a resolution dates all the way back to 153 BC and the mythical god of early Rome, Janus, the namesake of January. Janus had two faces, one facing forward and one facing backwards. This allowed him to look back on the past and forward towards the future.

On the last day of the year, the Romans would imagine Janus looking back into the old year and forward into the new year. They then started making resolutions for the year to come, and forgiving enemies for past troubles.

The Romans also believed Janus could forgive them for their wrongdoings in the previous year. They would give gifts

and make promises, believing Janus would see this and bless them in the year ahead. So, the new year really was a fresh start.

If you decide to set a New Year's resolution, make it specific to you. You might even want to take time to reflect and think about genuinely meaningful ways to change your life for the better. Your goals don't need to be huge – small, simple actions can make a big difference to your health and wellbeing.

Here are some resolutions from Blind Veterans UK Members and staff...

Stacey Barham

Member Experience Coordinator
 "I studied photography at college and loved it but I don't do much anymore. This year I want to make more time for photography and attend more sessions with the Blind Veterans Weekly Photography Chat Group. The guest speakers last year (including Rankin!) really sparked my interest again and I'm so grateful for Mark Pile and the team for keeping the group going."

Mark Pile

Working Age Member Volunteer
 "I don't usually make new year resolutions, but I've promised myself that this year I will reinvigorate my passion in photography with a great work commission, continue building my



Caption: Stacey Barham

model trainset and learn how to paint with airbrush."

Billy Baxter

Member Engagement Officer
 "My new year's resolution is to give more time to my family and my personal wellbeing. I want to go on more fishing trips and take short breaks with my wife, Karen, visiting historical buildings and ghost hunting, which we both like to do.

Another of my resolutions is not to swear so much. Bugger, I've broken that one already..." 🍀

If you need any support with your health and wellbeing, please contact your community support worker or the Health and Wellbeing teams.



Caption: Janus, Vatican Museum, Rome

Sea fishing? We're hooked!

Working Age Member Liaison Officer, Kevin Alderton, reports on a recent trip on the Mersey in Liverpool, courtesy of the Wirral Sea Angling Academy

During the lockdown last year, we were delighted to receive an invitation from the Wirral Sea Angling Academy to join them for a small two-day sea fishing trial, organised especially for our Members. Of course, we jumped at the chance but, due to the Covid restrictions in place, the trip took some time to get off the ground.

Finally, in November, six of our Working Age Members from the North West went along for the weekend, excited about the chance to get together and give something new a try.

Day one

The first day of the trip saw our Members fish on the River Mersey from a very accessible sea wall. Although the weather was dreary, spirits were high and you could feel a sense of excitement from everyone.

The Wirral Sea Angling Academy is very experienced at organising sea fishing trips and their professionalism and generosity shone through right from the start. They provided our group with all the equipment needed and even organised sponsorship from local tackle shops who handed over fresh bait and fantastic prizes.

The trip was also supported by a number of the Academy's registered volunteers, which meant each Member was lucky enough to receive expert one-to-one tuition and support. A huge benefit.

With sea fishing, the window of opportunity is narrower than with other types of fishing, such as freshwater. Also, fishing a daytime tide can always be a bit hit and miss, but we were told there had been



Caption: The Members enjoying the boat fishing session where they had the chance to catch different species of fish

good catches of pollock, bass, rays and smooth hounds of late, and the conditions were looking good for a decent fish or two.

After a few small pointers on the finer art of casting, everyone got to grips with chucking a lead and bait

into the Mersey. Members Lesley Hall and her husband, Barry, were quick to land some small whiting and dogfish. Other target species such as plaice, dabs, bass and pollock were more elusive, but almost everyone caught something during the session.





Caption: The catches of the day went to Jonathon and Steve (top left)

Even better, while we fished, some of the volunteers cooked up a fantastic BBQ lunch with burgers, sausages and drinks plentiful for all.

Barry caught the biggest fish in the end and was thrilled to win a new Penn 525 Mag 4 Multiplier Reel. He vowed to buy himself a new fishing rod to go with it so he could keep up his new-

found passion, while Lesley spent the rest of day badgering him to buy her a new rod and reel too.

On the Saturday evening, the Academy had arranged for us to go to the West Cheshire Sailing Club for a few drinks and a curry which had been donated by a local Indian restaurant.

“After a few small pointers on the finer art of casting, everyone got to grips with chucking a lead and bait into the Mersey”

While we ate our fabulous meal, we had the chance to meet the guys from the Wirral Boat Angling Club who we would spend the following day with.

Day two

The second day started with a huge surprise. Having heard all about Barry and Lesley’s banter about buying new equipment, Ben Koba, from the Academy, arrived with rod and reel in hand and handed them over to Lesley to keep. She was absolutely stunned!

We then joined forces with the members of the Boat Angling Club for a day’s fishing in the estuary. Each of our Members teamed up with a local boat owner and his crew. Boat fishing gave everyone the chance to catch a different species of fish and try out a whole new style of fishing.

One of the best things about boat fishing is that if the fish aren’t biting, you can move marks. Throughout the day, our Members not only

fished various marks using different techniques, but they also took part in some friendly competition.

Members Steve Thomas and Jonathon Westerby both won superb boat rods for landing the biggest catches of the day. Steve caught the biggest round fish, with a fantastic 97cm bull huss (weighing approximately 7lbs), while Jonathon caught the biggest flat fish, with a stunning plaice (weighing approximately 2lbs).

The start of a beautiful partnership

It goes without saying that the hospitality was incredible and all the Members had a fantastic weekend. We felt like we were met with open arms by everyone involved and experienced unparalleled generosity.

The weekend not only kickstarted a great new hobby for the Members, but also launched an amazing new partnership for the charity.

I can’t begin to thank Ben and his team of volunteers enough for all of their hard work and enthusiasm over the weekend. This is definitely an activity we’ll be booking again.

It’s something I would encourage all our Members - young and old - to try at least once. 🍷



JANE KELLY / ADOBE STOCK

You said, we did

Our President and Member Engagement Lead, **Colin Williamson**, shares your recent suggestions, concerns and feedback

- Happy New Year! We've received some really useful feedback lately. A Member from Community 8 asked if Blind Veterans UK had a policy with regards to motorised wheelchairs/scooters at the centres. Kathy Boardman, Centre Manager at Llandudno, and Lesley Garven, Centre Manager at Brighton, are looking into this with a view to formulating a policy and will share more with you soon.
- Meanwhile, Kellie Darcy-Pattenden, Assistant Centre Manager at Brighton, is meeting with the MET to discuss the development of a policy on guide dogs at the centres. More to follow on this one, too.
- A number of Members have expressed their concerns that the centres are becoming less and less military themed as artwork, regimental regalia, insignias and the

like are being swapped for prints of the local area. Nicky Shaw, Director of Operations, is planning to meet with the Members concerned to discuss this further.

- Community Support Worker Jenny Gaywood (Community 7) has received praise from a support worker at the BLESMA charity for her work with one of our Members who recently passed away. In the message, the support worker said, "Your support has been incredible and I cannot thank you enough for being such a support to him (and me)." This is such a wonderful example of independent service charities working alongside each other to support a Member with complex needs. Well done, Jenny!
- Members from across the charity gave thanks to our Working Age Member Case Manager, Glynis Gillam, for her excellent planning and preparation of the Remembrance event in London last November. Her amazing organisational skills were put to the test during the weekend but, as always, she proved she was up to the task and everything went according to plan. Well done, Glynis!
- An initiative was launched in early December to ask Members and trustees if they would contact some

of our more isolated Members over the festive period to wish them a Merry Christmas. We had a wonderful response and I'm delighted to share that almost 60 Members received a phone call. How lovely is that? 🎁

Email of the month:

Dear Editor

I wish to say just how much pleasure I have had from the National Creative Project throughout the past year.

My particular interest is gardening, and the team responsible for this in its various locations has done an absolutely outstanding job. I enjoyed it all, from the miniature Sweet Peas starter last January to December's Amaryllis, which has been flowering away on my windowsill.

Their enthusiasm and professionalism have shone throughout, and this is shown plainly by the pleasure Members express during the various phone-arounds. Thank you all, and well done.

Kind regards
John Hortop

Community 5 hits Llandudno

In December, a group of Members from south Wales enjoyed a break together at our Llandudno Centre. Our Community Team Leader for South Wales, **Jo Lawson**, shares more

The purpose of this week was to bring together our Members from across South Wales where the pandemic has caused them to be isolated for much of the last two years.

We saw Members from across the whole of Community 5 come together, from those in cities to more rural areas. It was lovely to see Members who have spoken to each other regularly on group telephone calls finally meet face to face, and great to see our newer Members taking the chance to get to know everyone, too.

Working with our colleagues at the centre, we were able to write a bespoke schedule for the week. Many of our Members were keen to get back in the art room, while two Members were inspired to start knitting again. There's no stopping them now!

For me, seeing everyone dancing and doing a conga around the centre is something I'll never forget. The best thing, though, was seeing the friendships grow and develop. Two of our Members, John Dew and Noleen Charlesworth, met through a telephone group call at the beginning of the pandemic so to watch their friendship grow over the course of the week was just lovely.

John said, "It's absolutely wonderful to be here. I feel fortunate that we've been invited with a group of Members who live in the same area and so we already know very well through our telephone group."

The staff at the centre were fantastic and met the needs of our group in every way - and then some! They made sure all the Members enjoyed every



Caption: Members from Community 5 exploring Llandudno

aspect of the week and encouraged everyone to try new things.

While some Members may have turned up at the start of the week on their own, they all left with a huge group of new friends. In fact, since we've got home, many have been in contact with one another over the phone and some have even met up for coffee as they got on so well. Everyone had an amazing time."

Kathy Boardman, Llandudno Centre Manager, said, "The Llandudno Centre has been fortunate to be able to open

its doors again for holidaymakers since the Summer of 2021, and in December it was a pleasure to welcome the Members of Community 5.

"During the pandemic the charity has continued their great work by offering the services remotely. This has enabled Members to continue to engage and forge friendships, and these relationships have been strengthened during their stay at the centre.

"The sounds of their laughter and singing throughout the building has brought the centre back to life!" 🎉

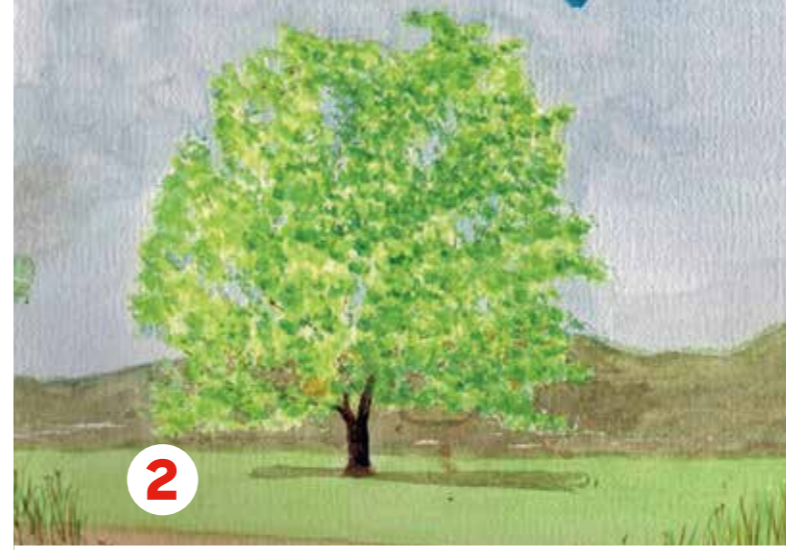
Artistic Flair

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

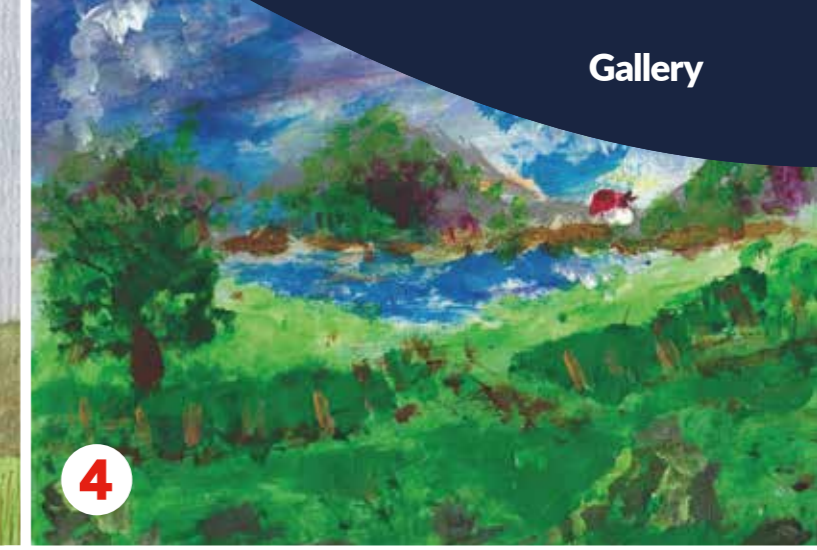
Captions: 1. Rita Scarratt - Dear At Dusk 2. Eddie Tann - After 3. David Anderson - Duck on a Pond 4. Patricia Hawes - Landscape 5. Brian Heather - Field of Sunflowers 6. Robina Pollock - Animal



1



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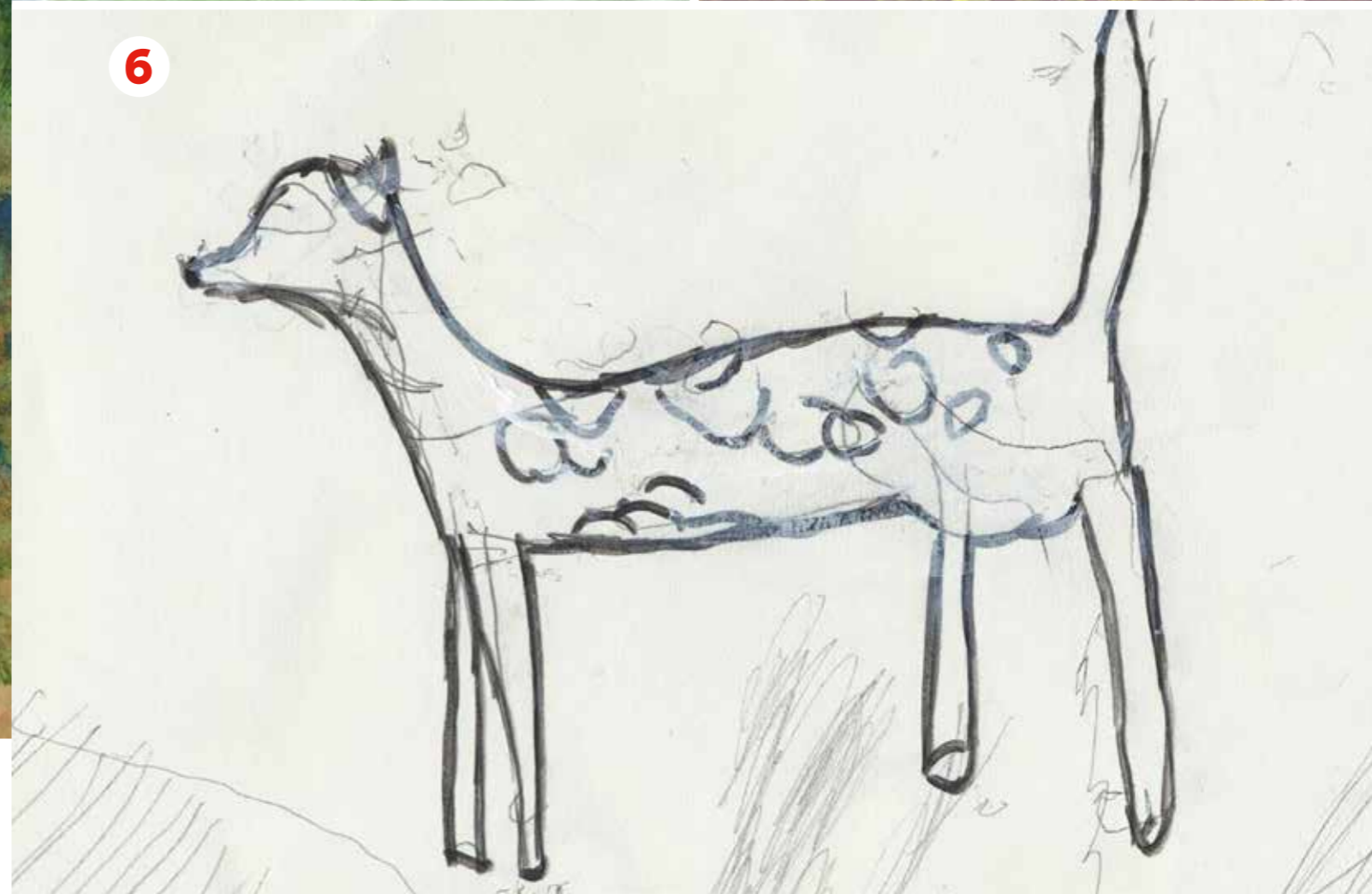
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App of the month: Be My Eyes

Blind Veterans UK IT Instructor, **Matthew Holland**, gives the lowdown on an app which provides sighted support to the visually impaired

What is 'Be My Eyes'?

Be My Eyes is a smartphone app. It provides easy access to a team of volunteers who can provide sighted help. The app uses your smartphone's camera to connect to the volunteer. They can 'see' what your camera's pointed at and describe it to you.

The volunteers can help with a wide

range of things, for example:

- reading the ingredients on food packaging,
- helping you locate something you've dropped on the floor, or
- helping you to read the departure board at a bus stop or train station.

As well as the volunteers who are on call for general help, Be My Eyes also provides a quick way to get 'specialised help'. Organisations like the RNIB, Google and Galloways all have staff on duty to provide advice and assistance.

Be My Eyes works on iPhone and Android phones, and is free to install and use.

Getting started

You can find the app on the App Store, and the Play Store, by searching for Be My Eyes.

The first thing you need to do once you

install and open it is to select the 'I need visual assistance' option.

Once you've done that, you need to sign in. You can create a new account with your email address or use your Apple, Google, or Facebook account.

Using the app

The app has a very simple main menu. There's one big button labelled 'Call a volunteer' at the top of the screen. Beneath this is a smaller one labelled 'Specialised Help'. Finally, there are smaller buttons marked 'Community' and 'Settings'.

The button 'Call a volunteer' will turn on your camera and connect you with a sighted volunteer. When they answer the phone they'll ask what help you need, and try their best to provide it.

The button 'Specialised Help' brings up a list of companies who are available to offer help. If they are labelled as 'Open' then you'll be able to place a call with one of their team straight away. If not, they should list their opening hours so you can try again later.

Calls are generally answered quickly - in less than 30 seconds on average.

Safety first

One word of warning: there's no formal vetting of the volunteers who sign up

to take calls. The upside of this is that they have plenty of volunteers available to take calls. However, it's worth taking a few precautions to make sure you are completely safe when you use the app:

- Protect your personal and financial information. Be careful not to point your camera at, or to share, personal documents like your address or passport. Also, never share your bank or credit card details or any other financial information.
- Report any inappropriate or unsafe behaviour. You can do this by using the feedback link in the 'Settings' menu.
- Don't share any personal medical information
- Don't use Be My Eyes for anything that could cause you injury or put you in danger.

Conclusion

By My Eyes is well worth trying if you already have a smartphone and feel confident using it. As long as you are careful about staying safe, it can provide really useful help with day-to-day tasks. 🗺️

- If you'd like more information about Be My Eyes, you can contact them on info@bemyeyes.com, visit their website at bemyeyes.com, or speak with our friendly MeSH team on 01273 391447 or mesh@blindveterans.org.uk.





Caption: Hotel Cala Bona in Majorca

Carers Review

The latest information, opportunities and stories for the family, partners and carers of our Members

The start of a new year can be a good time to book a much-needed holiday but, for carers, the thought of all the planning can feel like more stress than it's worth. We asked some of our Members' carers to share their recommendations.

Jacque **Hotel Cala Bona in Majorca**

"Have you ever booked a much-needed holiday in the sun only to

find that your 'accessible' room wasn't very accessible at all? Well, I can't recommend Hotel Cala Bona in Majorca highly enough!

Having been run by the same family since 1924, they know what people need. Our suite had ground floor access, a fully-accessible bathroom, a shower chair and a fridge for insulin. Several rooms are adaptable for disabled guests, and there are two

fully-adapted suites with one or two bedrooms and bathrooms. The first floor dining room and swimming pool are accessed by a lift and the pool has a hoist, with an attendant and a great poolside bar. Meals are all buffet service, but there are staff available if you need any extra help.

The resort has several miles of flat, pedestrianised promenade, and there are two disabled-friendly beaches with ramps, toilets and changing rooms nearby. Also, a pre-bookable service can transfer you from your own chair to a sea-going chair with a lifeguard to help you swim.

Extra equipment, like a buggy or walker, can be ordered through Nigel Keenan of Lower Hire, who will deliver to your hotel (**0034 6268 10688**)."

■ **Contact: 003 4971 85924 and www.calabonahotel.com. If you prefer to book a holiday package, you can use the Tui Welfare Service.**

Christine **Potters Leisure Resort, Hopton on Sea, Norfolk**

"We've been going to Potters Leisure Resort in Norfolk for the World Bowls for over 12 years now, and also for a summer break in June. The staff are great and the facilities and food are just brilliant.

They are very disabled-friendly and have always made Frank's guide dogs very welcome. There are hotel rooms and bungalows, and mobility scooters can be hired if required. There are also buses from the resort into Lowestoft and Yarmouth.

We go as a group, and the discount is really good. As most of our group are older, it's really suitable as they only take families during school holidays.

They have insurance cover for £5 too, and our friends who've claimed never had a problem getting the full refund. Plus, their Covid precautions have been superb.

The company has recently purchased another resort, Five Lakes Hotel →



Caption: Frank and Christine



Caption: Potters Holiday Resort in Norfolk

and Spa, near Colchester in Essex, which is opening in May. They are in the process of ‘Potterising’ it!”

■ **Contact:** www.pottersholidays.com

Cliffden Hotel, Action for Blind People, Teignmouth

“Frank and I visited this hotel a few years ago with his guide dog and they made us all feel very welcome. There is direct access through the gardens to the promenade and you can walk into the town along the prom.

There was also a bus stop outside the hotel and a train station with links to Birmingham and London. We loved being able to walk along the sea front into the town, there was also a country park adjoining the hotel grounds where the dog could enjoy a runaround.”

■ **Contact:** 01626 770052

Recommended website:

www.holidaycottages.co.uk

“This is a great website for finding holiday cottages as you can focus your search to include disabled access, dog friendly etc. Even though assistance dogs can’t be refused access, we find it’s much better to go where they are welcome.”

Top tips for travelling

Christine:

- If you’re relying on public transport, check it all out before you book.
- Check for accessible facilities, walk-in showers etc, beforehand too.
- If you book a cottage, make sure it’s not miles from anywhere.
- Take out insurance, which includes Covid cover.
- If you have a guide dog, check they will be made welcome.

Jacquie:

- Don’t rely on your airline or tour company to book assistance for you at the airport - do it yourself by contacting the disabled assistance office, especially if you are travelling to or from a foreign airport.

Nairi:

- Plan every little detail together and explain any changes of plan.
- When you go abroad, make sure all electronics, such as readers, are packed at the top for ease of customs
- Orientate on arrival and discuss mealtimes, entertainment, bar and hotel surrounds, then describe outings as much as you can with ‘touchy feels’ as you go.
- Find out where the toilets are on trips.
- Plan the return journey in the same



Caption: Cliffden Hotel



Caption: Jacquie and Nigel

way. Have everything booked so you are not scrambling for seats. I just book coach trips these days and they can still go wrong!

- Stay calm – go to the bathroom to scream! - and when you get home find time to relax.

We know the 24-7 role as a carer doesn’t stop when you go on holiday, but there are organisations that can help, so try to make the most of these when you can.

Happy holidays! 🎉

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

Best foot forward

Why looking after your feet matters. By **Rhian Jones**

Problems with your feet can stop you getting out and about. They can also affect your balance and increase the risk of falling. So, it's important to look after your feet and report problems such as foot pain and decreased feeling to a healthcare professional.

How can I look after my feet?

A simple foot routine will help keep your feet in good condition, including:

- wearing suitable footwear
- keeping your toenails short
- regularly moisturising your feet
- checking for cracked skin, blisters and signs of infection.

Which types of shoes are best for my feet?

You may find that trainers or well-cushioned shoes are more comfortable than ordinary shoes and offer welcome support.

These footwear tips can help you feel more confident on your feet:

- Always wear shoes or slippers. To avoid slips, never walk indoors in bare feet, socks or tights.
- Wear shoes that fit well. High-sided shoes with low heels, thin soles and

a good grip are a good choice.

- Avoid wearing sandals and shoes with high heels.
- Wear slippers that have a good grip and fasten up. Loose or worn out slippers may cause you to trip.

Where can I get my toenails clipped?

Good nail care can help to keep feet feeling comfortable. Nails that are too long can press against the end of the shoe and the constant pressure can cause soreness. Toenails that have been poorly cut can also become ingrown.

If you're struggling to cut your own nails, ask a friend or family member for help. If that isn't an option, many local Age UKs offer toenail-cutting services. This service operates from a number of clinics.

“If your foot condition affects your health or mobility, you may be able to have a routine chiropody appointment on the NHS”

SAWITRELYAON / ADOBE STOCK



Caption: Comfortable footwear can help you walk with confidence

Why should I get my feet checked?

Common problems like corns, cracked skin and ingrown toenails can all be treated, while conditions like diabetes or circulatory problems can all be picked up by looking at the feet. If you have a long-term condition, such as diabetes, arthritis or chronic problems with blood circulation in your legs, your feet are particularly vulnerable. Check your feet regularly and ensure you attend check-ups as requested. If you notice any problems, report them to your doctor as soon as possible.

Where should I go to get my feet checked?

If your foot condition affects your health or mobility, you may be able to have a routine chiropody appointment on the NHS. A chiropodist (also known as a podiatrist) can treat most common problems successfully.

What should I do next?

Contact your doctor to see if you're eligible for NHS treatment. You can also pay privately to see a podiatrist. 🇬🇧

Family news

Birthdays

Albert Lightowler who celebrates his 100th birthday on 17 January

Arthur Warwick who celebrates his 100th birthday on 8 January

David Roddis who celebrates his 100th birthday on 15 January

Eric Taylor who celebrates his 100th birthday on 20 January

Iris Ray who celebrates her 100th birthday on 16 January

Jean Lacock who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 19 January

John Humphreys who celebrates his 100th birthday on 14 January

Marion Sharville who celebrates her 100th birthday on 13 January

Nancy Paterson who celebrates her 100th birthday on 19 January

Reginald Slater who celebrates his 100th birthday on 24 January

Ronald Tyler who celebrates his 100th birthday on 8 January

Violet Rees who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 12 January

Wilfred Osborne who celebrates his 100th birthday on 28 January

William Armstrong who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 10 January

William Palin who celebrates his 101st birthday on 30 January

Gladys Jones who celebrates her 100th birthday on 21 January

Irene McNeal who celebrates her 101st birthday on 24 January

Alice Robinson who celebrates her 100th birthday on 5 February

Beryl Tatchell who celebrates her 100th birthday on 17 February

Edna Kirby who celebrates her 100th birthday on 5 February

Frank Buttery who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 2 February

George Winter who celebrates his 101st birthday on 28 February

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

Ivy Chafer who celebrates her 100th birthday on 25 February

John Beauchamp who celebrates his 101st birthday on 3 March

John McOwan who celebrates his 101st birthday on 6 February

Marjorie May who celebrates her 100th birthday on 15 February

Muriel Elhen who celebrates her 100th birthday on 21 February

Rebecca Urwin-Smith who celebrates her 101st birthday on 8 February

Ronald Davis who celebrates his 100th birthday on 9 February

Terence Best who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 10 February

Willis Sadler who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 22 February

Condolences

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

Beryl Mary Whitcombe who died on 19 December 2021. She was the wife of John Whitcombe

Rose Mary Bembridge who died on 7 December 2021. She was the wife of Allan William Bembridge

Mary Shute who died on 1 January 2022. She was the wife of Kenneth William Shute

Evelyn Mooney who died on 23 December 2021. She was the wife of Bill Mooney

Joan Wilson who died on 8 December 2021. She was the wife of Syd Wilson

Peter Zundel who died on 1 December 2021. He was the husband of Lyn Zundel

Edith McKinley who died on 10 December 2021. She was the wife of Rusty McKinley

Jean Davis who died on 1 December 2021. She was the wife of John Davis

Peggy Killick who died on 23 December 2021. She was the wife of Tony Killick

Jean Beall who died on 4 December 2021. She was the wife of Walter Joseph Beall

Annwen Carey-Evans who died on 30 November 2021. She was the wife of Benji Carey-Evans

Susan Walker who died on 10 December 2021. She was the wife of Geoff Bentley

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

Reginald Alfred Adcock of Cambridge died on 25 November 2021 aged 94. He served as a Guardsman in the Irish Guards.

Edward Andresier of London died on 1 December 2021 aged 97. He served as a Leading Air Fitter in the Royal Navy.

Ronnie Bairstow of Malton, North Yorkshire died on 29 November 2021 aged 78. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Corps Of Transport.

John William Belfield of Birmingham died on 25 December 2021 aged 94. He served as a Stoker Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

David Edward Billington of Swanage, Dorset died on 10 December 2021 aged 92. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

George Boag-Munroe of Liverpool died on 10 December 2021 aged 100. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Bertha Pearl Bright of Marlborough, Wiltshire died on 1 January 2022 aged 97. She served as a Senior VAD in the Voluntary Aid Detachment.

Victor Brooks of Brackley, Northamptonshire died on 9 December 2021 aged 96. He served as a Warrant Officer in the Royal Air Force.

Brian Kenneth Bull of York, North Yorkshire died on 28 December 2021 aged 92. He served as a Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force.

Peter Charles Candlin of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire died on 22 December 2021 aged 66. He served in the Royal Green Jackets (43rd, 52nd, 60th and 95th Foot).

Marigold Carey of Colchester, Essex died on 15 December 2021 aged 98. She served as a Petty Officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Frederick Carlisle of Newark, Nottinghamshire died on 26 December 2021 aged 83. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Tank Regiment.

William Henry Carnegie of Mold, Flintshire died on 28 November 2021 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Artillery.

Paul Kevan Chadwick of Colyton, Devon died on 24 November 2021 aged 74. He served as a Guardsman in the Grenadier Guards.

Ronald Edward Chalinor of Bangor, Gwynedd died on 1 January 2022 aged 79. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Robert Gordon Chitty of Weston-Super-Mare, Avon died on 18 December 2021 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Christopher Victor Christoff of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 10 December 2021 aged 96. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Edward Clarke of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 26 November 2021 aged 99. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Geoffrey Cobb of Matlock, Derbyshire died on 28 November 2021 aged 97. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Thomas Robert Cox of Bexleyheath, Kent died on 1 December 2021 aged 91. He served as a Naval Airman in the Royal Navy.

Donald Danson of Stockport, Cheshire died on 29 December 2021 aged 96. He served as an Air Fitter in the Fleet Air Arm.

Christopher Edward Dunn of Liverpool died on 22 December 2021 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

Laurence Firth of Newtown, Powys died on 10 December 2021 aged 97. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Stephen George Friar of Seaford, East Sussex died on 1 December 2021 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the King's Dragoon Guards.

Robert Albert Gibbons of London died on 15 December 2021 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Essex Regiment.



Edward George Lucian Gore of Woodbridge, Suffolk died on 3 January 2022 aged 79. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Robert William Gordon Hayter of Evesham, Worcestershire died on 26 December 2021 aged 90. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

David Ian Hazelgrove of Skegness, Lincolnshire died on 24 November 2021 aged 68. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Leonard Stanley Henley of Didcot, Oxfordshire died on 1 December 2021 aged 99. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Derek Anthony Holloway of Worthing, West Sussex died on 5 January 2022 aged 82. He served as a Corporal Technician in the Royal Air Force.

John Horn of Frome, Somerset died on 15 December 2021 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Peter Howell of Crewe died on 7 December 2021 aged 87. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Denis Jacobs of London died on 22 November 2021 aged 97. He served as an Ordinary Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Mavis Alice Jakeman of Swindon, Wiltshire died on 12 December 2021 aged 91. She served as an Officers' Steward in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Raymond Kidd of Newton Aycliffe, County Durham died on 13 December 2021 aged 92. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Keith Wilfred Kenneth Knight of Gloucester died on 5 December 2021 aged 81. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Bernard Peter Learoyd of Ashbourne, Derbyshire died on 31 December 2021 aged 94. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Mavis Linfoot of Macclesfield, Cheshire died on 1 December 2021 aged 93. She served as a Lieutenant in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

Kenneth Mervin Martin of Uckfield, East Sussex died on 25 December 2021 aged 87. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Alan Edmund Martin of Bristol died on 6 December 2021 aged 83. He served as a Trooper in the Middlesex Regiment (Duke Of Cambridge's Own).

Arthur Richard Mckinley of Birkenhead, Merseyside died on 3 January 2022 aged 84. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Eric Arthur Merry of Cambridge died on 2 December 2021 aged 97. He served as a Stoker 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

William Milne of Dundee died on 21 December 2021 aged 83. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Engineers.

Sidney Morris of Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland died on 24 November 2021 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

Elizabeth Mortimer-Cook of East Grinstead, West Sussex died on 11 December 2021 aged 99. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

Eric Motley of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 2 December 2021 aged 93. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Gladys O'Kane of Hove, East Sussex died on 1 December 2021 aged 97. She served in the Army.

Michael James O'Sullivan of Hull, Yorkshire died on 8 December 2021 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

John Pillans of Isle of North Uist died on 24 November 2021 aged 83. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

Derek Pope of Ellesmere Port, Cheshire died on 23 December 2021 aged 71. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

Peter Pope of Brighton, East Sussex died on 15 December 2021 aged 92. He served in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

Leonard Prigg of Thetford, Norfolk died on 1 December 2021 aged 94. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Thomas William Rathbone of Camberley, Surrey died on 10 December 2021 aged 97. He served as an Ordinary Coder in the Royal Navy.

Gwendoline Reeves of Tamworth, Staffordshire died on 1 December 2021 aged 90. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

Francis Thomas Retigan of Romford, Essex died on 22 November 2021 aged 96. He served as a Petty Officer Motor Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

Gerald Rigby of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 1 January 2022 aged 90. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Henry Robertson of Cardiff died on 1 December 2021 aged 95. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Peggy Rowe of Preston, Lancashire died on 5 December 2021 aged 99. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Roy Sanders of Callington, Cornwall died on 5 January 2022 aged 87. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

John Aidan Sefton of Warwick died on 23 December 2021 aged 93. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

James Sexton of Peterborough, Cambridgeshire died on 21 December 2021 aged 99. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers.

John Martin Sinnott of Preston, Lancashire died on 16 December 2021 aged 96. He served as an Able Seaman in the Merchant Navy.

David John Skeffington of Pershore, Worcestershire died on 25 December 2021 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

Raymond Peter Smith of London died on 7 December 2021 aged 89. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Charles Henry Smith of Reading, Berkshire died on 22 December 2021 aged 86. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Philip Henry Sparling of Leeds, Yorkshire died on 17 December 2021 aged 93. He served as a Marine 1st Class in the Royal Marines.

Ernest Spouge of Sudbury, Suffolk died on 31 December 2021 aged 93. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Lance Steer of Hull, Yorkshire died on 22 December 2021 aged 94. He served as an Ordinary Seaman in the Royal Navy (Rescue Tugs).

Jack Stokes of Bonnybridge, Stirlingshire died on 1 December 2021 aged 87. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Robert Summers of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk died on 27 November 2021 aged 87. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Vincent of Lincoln died on 19 December 2021 aged 98. He served as a C.F.N. in the General Service Corps.

Hubert Walpole of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 28 November 2021 aged 99. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Marines.

Peter John Warren of Presteigne, Powys died on 22 November 2021 aged 92. He served as a Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Derek Watts of Newmarket, Suffolk died on 1 December 2021 aged 93. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Constance Watts of Worthing, West Sussex died on 30 November 2021 aged 99. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Waugh of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 31 December 2021 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Anthony John Webb of Burnham-On-Sea, Somerset died on 22 November 2021 aged 97. He served as a Sergeant in the Duke Of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

John Wellings of Llanymynech, Powys died on 16 December 2021 aged 84. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Peter Berkeley Williams of Colchester, Essex died on 6 December 2021 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

Leonard Arthur Wilson of Andover, Hampshire died on 1 January 2022 aged 92. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Horse Guards.

Thomas Geoffrey Woodier of Coventry died on 14 December 2021 aged 92. He served as a Private in the R.A.O.C / R.E.M.E.

Raymond Woosey of Liverpool died on 20 December 2021 aged 83. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Geoffrey Wright of Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire died on 6 December 2021 aged 97. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

Geoffrey Youldon of Reading, Berkshire died on 10 December 2021 aged 90. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

Services and centres updates

The UK Government and devolved administrations recently introduced new restrictions in response to the risks of the Omicron variant of Covid-19. Here we outline the changes to our services

In order to operate with Covid regulations in place for everyone's safety, the charity made the decision to move to Operational Service Level 3 of our Covid-19 Plan. This means we are currently providing the following:

Support in the community

- Telephone support, including rehabilitation and social groups over the telephone.
- One-to-one face-to-face support where there is an essential need, and where this has been risk assessed.
- Maintenance and delivery of equipment by matter of priority only.

Social and special interest groups

We continue to offer telephone and online groups for Members. Get in touch with your community support worker to find out what's on and do let us know if you fancy starting a group yourself. General face-to-face groups will remain on hold, while all temporary face-to-face groups have been postponed.

Member Support Hub

- Our hub continues to run as usual.

Members can get in touch with MeSH on 01273 391 447, Monday to Friday, 9am-4pm.

Centre respite and holiday bookings Llandudno Centre

The Llandudno centre is offering holiday/respite stays for fully independent Members/escorts who do not need care support only, up to the end of June 2022. We continue to monitor guidelines with regards to bookings for residential/nursing Members and will keep you updated via this page in the *Review* magazine

- **The Llandudno booking office is open 8.30am-4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Call: 01492 868700.**

Brighton Centre

As we have permanent residents at Brighton, any bookings will be dependent on the latest guidelines for care homes. Please call us for up-to-date information. 📞

- **To get in touch with our Brighton Centre, call 01273 391500 between 8.30am-4pm, Monday to Friday.**

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

Creative activities

Please call our bookings team on **01273 391455** for more information on any of the following activities, or to request an activity pack. Kits and instructions will be posted out to you and there's the opportunity to take part in a telephone or video chat with other Members if you would like to.



SYDA PRODUCTIONS / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Painting for Beginners

Art

Painting for Beginners and Improvers (December, January and February)

The Art for Beginners and Improvers team return to acrylic painting after a period of different media. This time, we focus on non-typical applicators such as palette knives, sponges and sponge brushes. Participants can expect to receive these with the other essential materials and we will provide four new themes to help inspire you to use paint in different ways - a healthy exercise for new painters and seasoned artists alike.

There will be an opportunity to join a group call by phone or video to discuss the themes with your peers and →

instructors. A return label comes with the pack if you would like to share your finished artworks with Members and supporters online and in upcoming *Review* magazines.

Craft **Mantlepiece Clock** – wooden model project

We'll send you everything you need to complete this working wooden clock, including our VI friendly instructions. These are very simple kits with pre-cut wooden pieces which are sanded, slot together and are then glued. The assembled model is 6 inches by 9 inches by 4 inches (15cm x 22cm x 10cm).



Caption: Mantlepiece clock

The project comes with a group-call opportunity where you can join up to six other Members, and our craft instructors, for a chat about your project, tips and advice.

Air drying clay

This project is an opportunity to experiment with air-drying clay (no kiln required!). We will send you everything you need to get started, including a set of tools for shaping clay, key guidance and, of course, a pack of clay.

The project comes with the option of joining a group call with up to five other Members and two craft instructors to chat about how your

creations are developing and to share any tips and advice you may have for working with air drying clay.

Kits for this project will be posted out in early March.

Art & Craft **Jubilee Bunting on a Bag** (January, February and March)

Join us in marking the Queen's Platinum Jubilee by creating an inspiring collaborative design made from bunting. Members will be sent a large triangle to decorate, which will help design a cotton bag and also be added to decorative bunting at the Brighton Centre for the Queen's big

day. There will be an opportunity to join a group discussion about the project.

The deadline for the return of your contribution is 18 March.

■ **For more information about the projects and groups, visit our webpage: blindveterans.org.uk/ncp**

Creative hobby circles

We would love to hear from you on **01273 391455** if you are interested in joining a monthly telephone or video call chat group in one of the subjects below. Chat groups have up to six fellow Members with a shared interest, plus two of our staff.

We're currently offering:

Gardening, knitting, woodturning, mosaic, painting, woodwork, creative writing, card making (papercraft) and clay work.

For our photographers we have a Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a weekly photography chat group. Anyone with an interest in photography is welcome.

■ **You can see more information about the projects at blindveterans.org.uk/ncp**

The NCP programme is open to all

Members, whatever your experience or creative ability. If you'd like to try one of the projects or groups, please give us a call or speak to your community support worker.

As winter wanes and spring approaches, the excitement of new beginnings is in the air. This is the perfect time to take the leap and sign up for a new creative project or hobby circle. As the days get brighter and warmer you can be sure, as always, of a warm welcome from the Members, staff and volunteers of the National Creative Project. 🌸

Best Wishes
Lou Kirk-Partridge and the National Creative Project Team



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Caption: Join our knitting circle

Unexpected blessings

Doncaster Member **Stan**, 100, shares his wartime story

I was born in Peterborough in 1921, the eldest of three boys. I was named after Henry M Stanley, the American reporter sent to Africa to find the missing missionary, David Livingstone.

My family moved to Scunthorpe and my father worked as the manager of a tailor shop, but when the depression hit the area we moved again, west to Doncaster. We should have stayed in Scunthorpe and waited for better



Caption: Stan (centre) with his brothers, Dennis and Peter

times. My father, who was gassed in the First World War, remained unemployed for several years, leaving my mother as the sole bread winner working in a sweet and tobacco shop.

In 1932, disaster struck. I failed my 11 Plus. I was not a very studious pupil and perhaps my secondary education could be summed up by two of my reports: "Stanley is an intelligent pupil but requires encouragement," and, more to the point, "This pupil is mentally slow!"

After I left at 14, I had a number of uninspiring, dead-end jobs, which I walked out of. One of my employers said, "You can't leave, you have to serve your time." I replied, "Just watch me!"

Later, I saw an advert for boy recruits (aged 16 to 17½) for ground crew in the RAF. There were two grades, "Boy Entrance," for those who had failed the 11 Plus and "Aircraft Apprentice"



Caption: Stan, second row, far right, with 'B' Section in Tripoli, 1942

for those who had passed. These boys would go on to officer training.

I wanted a job in the engineering department, dealing with electrical apparatus. But, to my surprise, I was told I had a medical condition; I might live to be a 100 or fall dead the next week, and the Royal Air Force did not want recruits dying on duty.

I wasn't told what the condition was and, in hindsight, I can see it was an excuse not to employ me in a section of the RAF which was oversubscribed.

But as one door closes, another opens, and Doncaster was expanding their trolley bus service in Bentley and looking for conductors. The job came with the princely sum of £5 bonus per year, but I could be fined up to half a crown for not wearing my uniform correctly. The trolley buses ran on electricity and, as the conductor, I had the dangerous job of disconnecting the rods that joined it to the overhead cables when the bus needed to turn around, using a 20-foot bamboo pole.

As luck would have it, I met Marjorie

while working on the Bentley route. As she was getting off the bus, she dropped her books. Being the gallant young man, I helped her pick them up. She said, "Thank you, kind sir." I replied, in a rather condescending way, "Is the young lady going to school?" She said, rather curtly, "I'm going to commercial college!"

That was the embryonic start of a marriage that lasted 67 years.



Caption: Stan with Marjorie

I was called up aged 19, in January 1941, and became a gunner in the Royal Artillery 91st Heavy Anti-Aircraft 221 battery, the original Territorials at York. During my initial training, we were stationed for a time in the Roundtree's Bourneville buildings. Thus, we were nicknamed 'The Chocolate Soldiers'.

I had the chance to train as a radar operative. I was very keen on electrical engineering and became familiar with the new radar equipment.

In early 1942, my battery joined a convoy assembled north of Ireland, clustered around the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle. We travelled together as German submarines were very active in that part of the Atlantic, finally splitting into two groups, one to go to Malta with HMS Eagle and the rest of the convoy carrying vital supplies.

Sadly, a few months later, Eagle would be torpedoed by German submarine U-73 and sink in the Mediterranean, but my group travelled safely along the west coast of Africa. My battery was needed to guard the oil pipeline from Iraq to Alexandria.

It was early days for radar and the equipment was basic. I had to study a six-inch television-type screen with an horizontal line across the centre to work out the necessary elevation and range

One of my employers said, "You can't leave, you have to serve your time." I replied, "You just watch me!"

of incoming enemy aircraft. It had to be precise as the shell had to be fired just above and in front of the aircraft so the explosion would fall on the plane.

After 1942, and the second battle of El Alamein, the German forces retreated. The oil pipeline was no longer in danger, so I joined a unit as a signaller, dealing with telephone communication.

We were a mobile unit and my section moved westward through the desert behind the retreating Italian and German forces. We had to be very fit and strong to move all the equipment. The heavy anti-aircraft guns had to be mounted on concrete bases.

Later, we were sent to Italy and on one of my days of leave, I went to Vatican City and was even blessed by the Pope. I also went to Florence. After Italy, we were shipped to Greece and, for a time, functioned as a police force as the retreating Germans had left behind a country in chaos and civil war.

I was demobbed in September 1946,



Caption: On the day Stan retired: 'Goodbye to my yellow van'

and had a series of short-term jobs. Jobs were hard to come by after the war, but Marjorie was clearly frustrated so delivered an ultimatum: "Get a regular job or we don't get married!"

I got a job working with telephones - my wartime experience clearly giving me an advantage - so we were married later that year. I drove a GPO van and was awarded many times with badges for safe driving. I remained in the GPO until I retired in the 1980s, early because Marjorie was not well.

Sadly, she died in 2014. I turned 100 last year and now live in a care home in Doncaster. I became a Member of Blind Veterans UK 10 years ago. I'm very grateful for all the support. 🇬🇧

Quiz time

Our quizmaster, **Ron Russell**, tests your knowledge of popular music

1. Who wrote and performed the song, 'Ernie (the fastest milkman in the West)'?

2. In what year did Elvis Presley die?

3. Who sang, 'Don't laugh at me cause I'm a fool'?

4. Reginald Kenneth Dwight is better known by what name?

5. Which English Sir has had No 1s in the 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s and 90s?

6. Who famously won the Eurovision Song Contest barefoot?

7. In his song, what did Tommy Cooper ask his dad not to do?

8. What was The Beatles first No 1 hit? And which of their songs spent the longest time in the charts?

9. Which comedy duo wanted some sunshine?

10. The Good Ship Lollipop was the signature tune of which US singer?



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Contact details

Contact address Blind Veterans UK,
12-14 Harcourt Street, London,
W1H 4HD, **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**.

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