

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK
June 2021

Best foot forward

Stepping into summer with our
Well Connected team

Inside:

Singing for health
Scouting memories
National Creative Project



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

Coming back to life

Being British we accept frequently inclement weather as a matter of course. In fact, as a nation we are notorious for steering just about every conversation towards what the skies will do next, when they'll do it and just how annoyed we're going to be afterwards. It's pretty much a national institution, like queuing, overpriced rail travel and Marmite. So, imagine my surprise when on the first day of Summer, glorious weather erupted.

Outside, everything has become a burst of lush green foliage, although you don't have to see it – you can smell it, and with a keen ear hear the multitude of wildlife that is getting into its stride as the weather warms up. Out recently, I was pleased to not only see a multitude of animals emerge from the shadows, but enjoyed hearing such wonderful noises as the lapwing (or pee-wit), skylark and jay and of course the ubiquitous blackbird. Night time brings such delights as the foxes barking in a nearby copse, muntjac deer and most lovely of all, the hunting and seeking calls of the tawny owl.

For those unfortunate enough to be early risers, the dawn chorus at this time of year is another true delight, with bird after bird joining in to create

a soundscape of utter beauty that it is impossible to revel in.

You may wonder where I'm going with this, and to reassure you that you are reading the *Review* and not the latest RSPB journal, I would direct you to our well-connected team's section later on in this issue. One of the things they advocate is going out for a walk and coming back to life after a dismal and bleak winter and wet spring. I can fully vouch for this when I went for a long stroll around Henlow near where I live a few days ago. It really felt like life was being breathed back into my body, although I must confess the excellent hostelry of the Engineer's Arms in the village post-walk did wonders too!

Shake off those winter scales, get your shoes on and try and leave your home – even if for a very short while. It's truly worth it, and if it can put a smile on my dour visage, then I'm sure it'll do wonders for you. Until next time, happy wanderings and enjoy your *Review*. 🐾

Chris Gilson
Editor



Contents

- 03** Editorial welcome
- 04** Your welcome from our Chief Executive
- 07** Your welcome from our Chairman
- 11** In the Know
- 13** A call to arms - become a Trustee
- 16** In Your Community
- 22** NCP Gallery
- 24** National Creative project
- 30** Recipes
- 31** Operations update
- 33** Our Centres - what you need to know
- 35** Bill Skinner - a wartime childhood in Hull
- 41** Well Connected - Walking
- 43** Well Connected - Gardening
- 46** Well Connected - Singing
- 47** Family News
- 48** In Memory
- 53** Scouting memories
- 59** Contacts

On the cover
Our Well-Connected team shows you how to make the most of the great outdoors



Taking stock

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

In my column in the May edition of Review I mentioned our continuing income challenge and that it was time to take stock and adjust our sights. Our purpose, of providing though-life support to blind veterans is clear. For those who have served their country and lost their sight, and especially our war blind who typically have lost sight rapidly through traumatic circumstances relatively early in their lives, our driving and continuing purpose is to help them find life beyond sight loss. This is our



Caption: Nick Caplin

constant, our duty to blind veterans, to our supporters and to our founder Sir Arthur Pearson. Our challenge is how best to do this within a reduced budget. In addressing this question, we find ourselves in a similar position to many charities today who are considering how to deliver impact with fewer resources. Fortunately, what sets us apart from many is that we have a strong balance sheet: we have money invested and in our property assets that gives us time to plan properly and to adjust in a measured way.

The issue of living within our means is a serious issue and has been carefully considered by the Directors and Trustees over the last few months. Given that this is a financial imperative, we have updated our income and expense assumptions and defined a new financial plan to take us forwards. In last month's *Review* I outlined a number of measures that we are taking forward as a result of our study. Our work has led us to take a further, critical business decision concerning our Brighton Centre.

Fit for purpose

For the last two years we have been conducting a detailed analysis of the work that is needed to keep the Brighton Centre building fit for purpose for the future. As many will be aware, we have undertaken priority work to ensure that the building remains safe, especially in relation to fire safety works, the lifts, electrical wiring, and doors. This work is now being successfully concluded. Yet looking over the medium term there remains much that would need to be done for the building to remain fit for purpose. As a Grade II listed building of the 1930s, it is now showing its age.

Particular challenges include the extensive external brickwork, which is of non-standard design and is showing signs of salt corrosion; and the windows, boilers, and main kitchen all of which will need to be replaced. Substantial investment is needed to maintain the building to a satisfactory standard, and more than its current value which is advised to be around £10m.

It is right and proper that the Trustees and Directors should consider whether this would be value for money, or whether our resource could be used in other ways and to greater impact. An iconic building, and designed specifically by architect Frank Lorne



Caption: Our Brighton Centre has been a part of the charity for many decades

to house the war-blind for training and rehabilitation post-war, its design over seven floors is arguably not best suited to our current Membership where the average age today is 87 years, and where Members frequently have additional challenges, not least mobility. It is reasonable to suggest that, if we were going to design a building to meet the needs of blind veterans today, it would be much easier to access and navigate, and the rooms would be better fit for purpose.

Accordingly, after careful and detailed consideration, the Directors and Trustees have taken the business →

decision that we should look for an alternative Centre facility in the same region which is easy to reach, has good accessibility, is better suited to the provision of holidays and respite and which is both cheaper to run and easier to maintain on an ongoing basis. Our intent is that we will move into this facility in order to close the Brighton Centre no later than March 2024, maintaining continuity of services throughout. Work has already started on finding a suitable facility and the omens are looking good. If we find somewhere appropriate, we will look to move earlier and to release the Brighton building onto the market.

Several questions

I am very conscious that this news will come as a significant shock to many and will raise a number of questions. The Brighton Centre has played a central role in the lives of many blind veterans and their families over many decades and holds countless happy memories. These will remain with us and we will work hard to ensure that we take the Brighton spirit with us to the new facilities. There are many issues to address and many questions for us to answer and I would ask for your patience while we get into the detail. In the immediate future, our focus in the building is on providing critical care and respite for Members who have high need resulting from the pandemic. And

I underline again our commitment to our current permanent residents that they remain in very safe hands and will have the very best support from us for as long as they need it.

Change is not new to the Charity. From day one we have adapted to the circumstances facing us, intent on using our wit and resource to provide the most appropriate support. Over the years we have operated out of a number of buildings in Brighton, including a property in Queen's Road, Arundel Lodge, Northgate House and West House in Kemp Town which was later renamed Pearson House and was closed in 1995, having been through a number of evolutions.

When Lord Fraser wrote to St Dunstaners in 1936 of his plans for the new Centre at Ovingdean, he talked of his hope that it "might be enjoyed and give benefit to the men at the earliest possible date and for the longest possible number of years". It has certainly done that, and many blind veterans in the decades since the Second World War have stayed at the Centre, whether it be for training, rehabilitation, or holiday. The Centre has played a vital role for us, and in many ways has been our Flagship. We will be sure to carry the torch with us to the new Centre when we get to that point. 🇬🇧



Caption: Test driving our driverless car outside the Brighton Centre

Difficult decisions

Your message from your Chairman, Air Vice-Marshal **Paul Luker** CB OBE AFC DL (rtd)

As you can probably imagine, the decision to move from our Brighton Centre has not been an easy one. Ovingdean sits prominently in our minds as a spiritual home for both St Dunstaners and Members of Blind Veterans UK and, for many of our longest serving staff and veterans, it has been the physical manifestation of the work of the charity. Certainly,

whenever I have needed to show us off to potential benefactors and supporters, it has been an automatic focus for visits.

Nick Caplin, in his article this month, cogently sets out the factors that have driven us to make the decision. Essentially, crucial as Ovingdean has been to our past, it has



become neither functionally optimal nor affordable for our future. Although the high cost of running the Brighton Centre is the overwhelming reason for confronting its closure – the push factor – there are other “pull factors” which have also influenced the decision.

The most important of these for me is the critical importance of delivering meaningful, nation-wide, high-quality support for our current and future Members - something which inevitably becomes increasingly harder to do if we are also faced with constantly diverting hard-fought-for funds to shore up the Brighton Centre. The



Caption: Paul Luker

trustees are unanimous in their view that in our next strategic evolution we must hold true to these three points:

- **Meaningful**, in the sense that our services remain relevant to individual Members’ needs; improve their quality of life; and deliver support that is typically not available elsewhere.
- **Nationwide**, in the sense that our services and support are widely accessible wherever in the country our members live; and
- **High quality** in the sense that although the manner in which we carry out our business may change we will not compromise on the effects we seek to achieve.

In making these points we are also heavily motivated by the clear fact that, although our Members all share the common condition of vision impairment, the ways in which they lost their sight differ enormously as do their personal circumstances and aspirations. Harking back to our earliest beginnings, those who lost their sight in combat and on duty remain the soul and conscience of our charity and they will continue to deserve our closest attention. These Members tend to come into the charity as young men and women, confronting traumatically reduced life prospects and facing a lifetime of changing needs. Our first

“Those who lost their sight in combat and on duty remain the soul and conscience of our charity”

priority will always be their support – and I am certain that the wider membership will always recognise and approve of this approach.

A firm belief

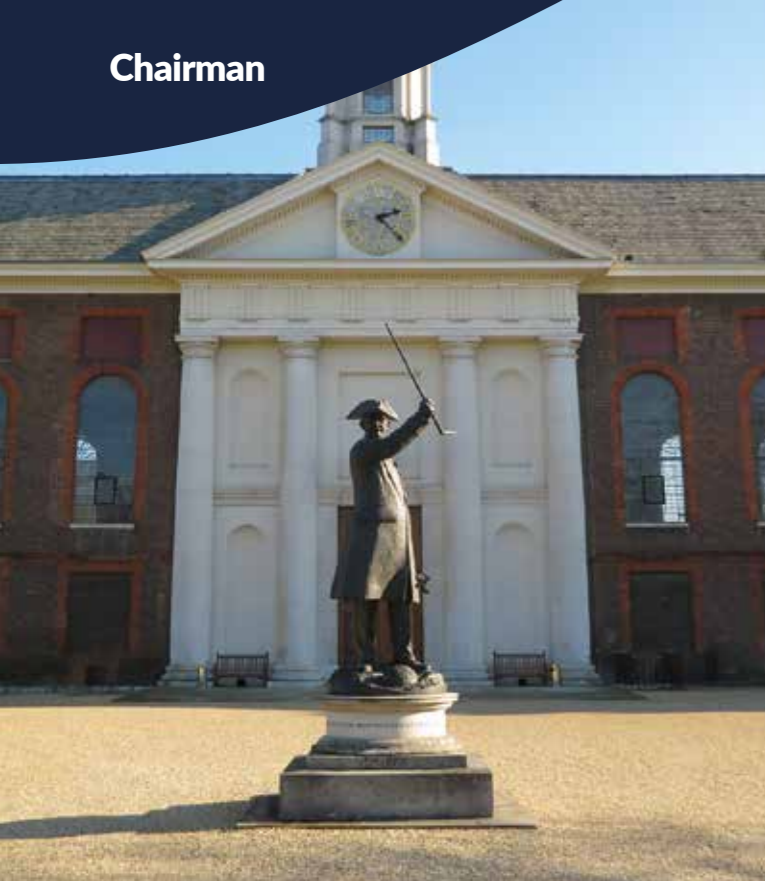
Having now confronted the push factor of costs and affordability, I now firmly believe that we should concentrate our energies in realising what I call the pull factors – the exciting prospect of ensuring that we do make the alternatives work and work well. Indeed, we should harness the ambition to make them work better.

Nick Caplin has spoken about our search for an alternative to Brighton. This must not just be something which is vaguely similar but manifestly cheaper; we are not about to turn Harrods into Woolworths. That would compromise on our determination to sustain (and improve on) our standards of quality. It must be something which is absolutely fit for future purpose, and which can quickly garner the same affection in which Brighton has been held. As Nick says, we have some irons

in the fire, but we are also looking at other contingencies should they not come to fruition.

When we talk generally about ‘change’ it must be much more than just a bricks-and-mortar replacement for Brighton. I have written before about how impressed I have been by the innovation and agility shown within Blind Veterans UK during the period that Covid-19 has impacted so heavily on our normal routines. We now know that some of these adaptations are far bigger than just a “make-the-best-of-it” stop-gap.

What the response to the pandemic has taught us is that there are important things which we could and should have been doing in our community-based support operations, which now need to become part of our future mainstream activity. I have been struck by how our focus on countering isolation using the National Support Service potentially now has significant utility well beyond the strictures of the pandemic. I have lost count of the number of letters and emails I have received extolling the benefits of all the friendship groups, virtual meetings and on-line hobby clubs that have sprung up. It is no exaggeration to say some of this activity has allowed members as far afield as Cornwall and Cumbria to become on-line next-door →



Caption: Chelsea Pensioner statue in front of the Royal Hospital

neighbours, and this could in future augment essential human contact, rather than replace it as has too often been the case in the last year.

Wider collaboration

I am also excited about the prospect of wider collaboration. Nationally we are in discussion with a number of like-minded charities to examine ways in which we can assist each other. Our charity is recognised as one with a strong tradition of delivering excellent rehabilitation services – and our recent work doing this remotely has even gained government attention. Others want to work with us and we will facilitate that – on the understanding that we unashamedly aim to enhance the offering to our Members,

“Our charity is recognised as one with a strong tradition of delivering excellent rehabilitation services”

not spread it thinner.

There is great opportunity here for synergy, where the collective product of our work delivers more than we would be able to when working in isolation. In fact, although we haven't always recognised this, we already collaborate in simple but effective ways. As just one example, we have a strong link with the Royal Hospital, where visually impaired in-pensioners benefit from our assistance without feeling any loss of their 'scarlet' identity as Chelsea Pensioners. These sorts of relationships can be set up much more widely, to mutual benefit.

My message is pretty straightforward. By all means lament the loss of what Brighton has been - for seven decades it played an incredibly important part in our charity's long history. It was right for its time, as were so many other places. But let's concentrate now on making sure that what replaces it – and the way in which Blind Veterans UK next works – are absolutely the best we can make them for the current and future generations. 🍷

In the know

There are some changes happening in our charity – we hope these questions and answers are helpful to you

Q Why is the Brighton Centre not practical anymore?

A The Brighton Centre has served our Members really well for many decades, yet we need to move to a more suitable location for our current membership. Our current Brighton centre is becoming unsuitable for modern day care and presents significant challenges with its size and multi-floor layout, particularly for older Members.

Q Why will a new location be better for Members?

A The facilities at our Brighton Centre are not as suitable for our membership as they once were. We will be searching for a building that is more accessible, modern, comfortable, has fewer floors and provides more individual space. This will give us the ability to review and improve the activities we offer. We would also like to be able provide better transport links via public transport.

Q Will the Brighton Centre open before we move somewhere else?

A Yes, it will. We are currently working through post-pandemic plans and our centres will be slowly opening in line with government guidelines for care homes and hospitality. We would like the move to take place by 2024 and we will work through these plans in the meantime, establishing our new Centre before we move.

Q What services currently offered in Brighton will carry on and what will change?

A We are currently reviewing and altering our services at the Centres as we work through our Easement Plan out of the pandemic and transition back to a 'new normal'. We will be making sure we can offer as many services to as many Members who require them going forwards.

Q How much would we be saving by moving to another location?

A In order to maintain the Centre for future use and meet its requirements fully, we would need to spend more than the



building's financial value, with work estimated at approximately 10 million pounds. In addition, our estimates are that, by moving, the charity would also make an annual saving of approximately 4 million pounds. It would be better to have a building that is already fit for purpose and allows us to use our money more wisely.

Q Where are you looking to relocate?

A Our search has begun, and we are prioritising sites in close proximity to the Centre with Sussex as a top priority.

Q When will you know where we'll be moving?

A The search for a new site has begun and we will let you know where this is as soon as we are able to. Please be reassured this is a top priority and our staff are investing a lot of time into finding a new location.

Q What will happen to permanent residents when we move to a new location?

A We plan to move to a new facility by 2024 and once it is found, we will be inviting our permanent residents to move with us. We are still committed to looking after our permanent residents for as long as we're needed in any way we can. The search for a new site has begun and

“The plan is to find the new site and move straight to it from the current Brighton Centre”

we will let you know where this is as soon as we are able to.

Q Will the Centre close before we move to another location?

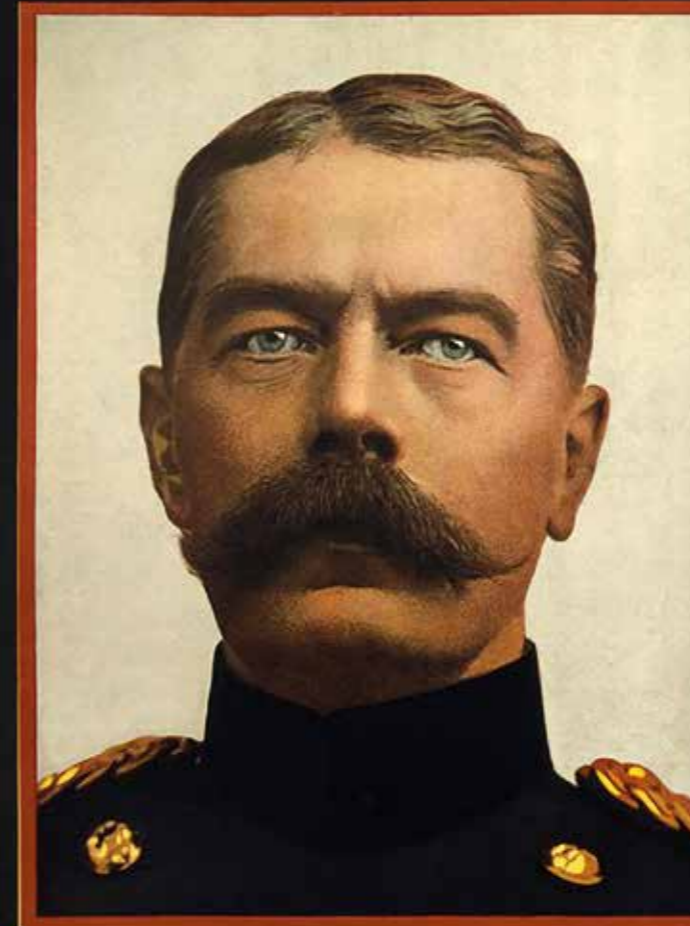
A The plan is to find the new site and move straight to it from the current Brighton Centre. We anticipate that this move will take some time and we will allow for a period of transition. The search for the new building is already underway.

Q Will we still be able to have clubs at the new facility?

A If we are not able to support clubs at the new facility, we will continue to support clubs to find alternative venues that work for them.

Q How will you keep us up to date on the progress of the new building/move?

A We are telling you this now so we can keep all staff and Members updated throughout the whole process and, as soon as we are able, we will inform everyone about the new facility or any updates in the process. 🗣️



LORD KITCHENER SAYS:-

'MEN, MATERIALS & MONEY ARE THE IMMEDIATE NECESSITIES.

DOES THE CALL OF DUTY FIND NO RESPONSE IN YOU UNTIL REINFORCED — LET US RATHER SAY SUPERSEDED — BY THE CALL OF COMPULSION ?'

Lord Kitchener Speaking at Guildhall, July 31 1915

ENLIST TO-DAY.

A call to arms

Do you have what it takes to be a Member Trustee of Blind Veterans UK? Have you previous experience that would benefit the Council and would you like to serve our organisation in this way?

You will probably know that we have, for a number of years now, had several Member Trustees on the Council, as our constitution was revised in

December 2011 to allow for three Member trustees. Colin Williamson, one of the Member Trustees of Blind Veterans UK will continue as your President. He holds office ex-officio for as long as he remains President. The other two Member Trustees are selected from the wider membership and will be appointed for a period of three years, following which they may be appointed for a further →

term of three years. No Trustee will hold office for more than two terms of three years unless specifically asked to do so by an 80% majority of the Council.

One of our existing Member trustees, Chris Cardwell will step down in December of this year, so we are looking to fill his trustee position from our membership. Under the auspices of the Council, the Nominations Committee considers the suitability of all applications or nominations for people wishing to become trustees and will put its recommendations forward to the Council for ratification. Colin as President and myself as Chairman form part of the Nomination Committee.

When member Trustees were first appointed, prior to the change of Constitution in 2000, there was a pool of approximately 400 war blinded St Dunstaners who were eligible. We now have well over 4,200 Members of Blind Veterans UK who are eligible and

“I am hoping that Members will wish to either put themselves forward or nominate others who they feel would make a good trustee”

I am hoping that Members will wish to either put themselves forward or nominate others who they feel would make a good trustee.

The role of Member Trustees is very important to the Council as it ensures that the Council is kept in touch with the views, wishes and feelings of the Members and other beneficiaries of Blind Veterans UK and that decisions will always be made with the best interests of beneficiaries in mind.

This crucial role does entail a time commitment with some meetings in London when we are allowed to do so. We have also got used to having Council meetings virtually over the last year and so would expect that some meetings will continue in this way. There are normally other opportunities to represent the charity in other ad hoc ways. Our Council meetings happen four times a year and we have an annual Trustee Away Day in London in July. It is hoped that trustees would attend the majority of these.

In addition to the Council we have a number of trustee committees and working groups that report to the Council on the various areas of the charity, so if you have background experience in finance / fundraising / corporate affairs or health and social care these would be valuable

attributes for sitting on any of these committees which also meet up to four times a year. Papers for the council and committee meetings are sent out in advance and we make every effort to ensure that they are accessible for Member trustees. All reasonable travel expenses are refundable so that no trustee is out of pocket for this voluntary work.

Any Member wishing to nominate either themselves, or someone else, as a Trustee should first ensure that they have the consent of the person concerned to do so and should then write to or e-mail Nick Caplin, Chief Executive, who acts as Secretary to the Nominations sub-committee, with a brief description of any relevant experience and saying why they think they would make a good Member Trustee of Blind Veterans UK. If you are interested but would like to know more information please contact Natalie Piedade, Executive Officer to Nick Caplin who would be happy to assist with any queries. The deadline for nominations is 30 June, 2021. Contact details can be found at the bottom of this article.

I know, from my own experience, that being a Trustee of this Organisation is both interesting and enjoyable and I do hope that a number of Members will want to contribute to the continuing

development of the work that was started in 1915 by Sir Arthur Pearson and is now continuing to help more and more blind and vision impaired veterans.

With best wishes to you all. 🍀

Paul Luker,
Chairman

Please contact
natalie.piedade@blindveterans.org.uk
or
nick.caplin@blindveterans.org.uk

Chris Cardwell, retiring Trustee said ‘I have taken on a new role as an Expert Advisor within the NHS England Armed Forces PPV and cannot do justice to both areas of activity so regrettably will not be standing for a second term as a Trustee. This is a great opportunity for someone who enjoys committee work and is keen to help ensure our governing body has a strong membership perspective. There is a fair amount of documentation to deal with, but the staff are really good at providing accessible Council papers so why not consider applying?’

In Your Community

A warm welcome at our Leader Buildings

In 2015, together with other military charities we secured funding to develop the Leader Buildings at our Llandudno Centre. Work was completed on the four purpose-built flats and a two-bedroom house during June 2016. This accommodation was designed to house any veterans from the associated charities and our own Members.

Following the easing of Government guidelines in respect of self-contained accommodation, we are delighted to announce that the Leader Building is again available for fully independent stays to our Members and their families.

Think Airbnb but with facilities designed for our veterans in a beautiful part of North Wales. The stay would be at the reduced rate of £36 per



Caption: The Leader Buildings

person per night for a self-catering stay, meaning no transport and no access to the main building.

We have also successfully re-established links with the charity BLESMA which wishes to use the buildings for the benefit of its veterans. We will be giving the opportunity for fully independent BLESMA members to book the Leader Building for self-catering holidays, alongside our Members. In line with our current Member offer there will be no services in place in the main building and we would not be providing transport or catering.

■ **Please be reassured that priority will be given to fully independent Blind Veterans UK Members.**

Our apartments

We have a selection of four flats and one house available for fully independent, self-catering stays. Each apartment offers a double bedroom, large living space and disability access kitchen and bathrooms. Visitors would also benefit from the use of the shared garden, with disability lift access, which enjoys elevated views of Llandudno promenade and Great Orme. It's perfectly set up for visitors to come and have a safe and relaxing break and enjoy and explore what Llandudno and North Wales has to offer.

Guest access

The Leader Building is accessed via a private gated driveway, accessible by code or via the 24-hour manned reception area. There is off-road parking available for two cars at the front or there is further easy parking in a private accessible car park.

A ramped pathway, suitable for wheelchairs, leads to the front door of the communal shared entrance space.

Amenities

The local shops in the area are a short walk away with a play park, tennis centre and bowling green nearby. The famous Victorian promenade is approximately a 10-minute walk. The local supermarkets offer a 'click and collect' and delivery service which could be arranged ahead of arrival.

The town of Llandudno is the largest holiday resort in Wales and is uniquely situated between the Great and the Little Ormes with two wonderful beaches, the iconic North Shore, with its sweeping bay and the quiet sand dune West Shore.

Llandudno has kept its Victorian and Edwardian elegance and splendour, despite its modern attractions. Perhaps most notably, Llandudno was the regular holiday destination of Alice Liddell's family, the same →

Alice Liddell who inspired Lewis Carroll 'titular character of the novel 'Alice in Wonderland'. It is theorised that this wonderful resort and its majestic surroundings were inspiration for the extraordinary visuals of the story.

North Wales has also become the adventure and outdoor capital of the UK. Some North Wales adventure activities are unique while others are record-breaking. Most are family-friendly and you'll always be in capable hands. You can also ride a heritage railway and climb the turrets of our local castles, discover gardens to explore, or museums to visit - the choice is all yours.

Most of the attractions in North Wales are open all year round, so no matter when you visit you can be sure of a great day out.

■ **For further information, please contact the Llandudno Reception team on 01492 868 700 who will confirm eligibility requirements.**

Get moving after lockdown

Are you finding it hard to get up and go for a walk? Harder to do things that a year ago you managed fine? A

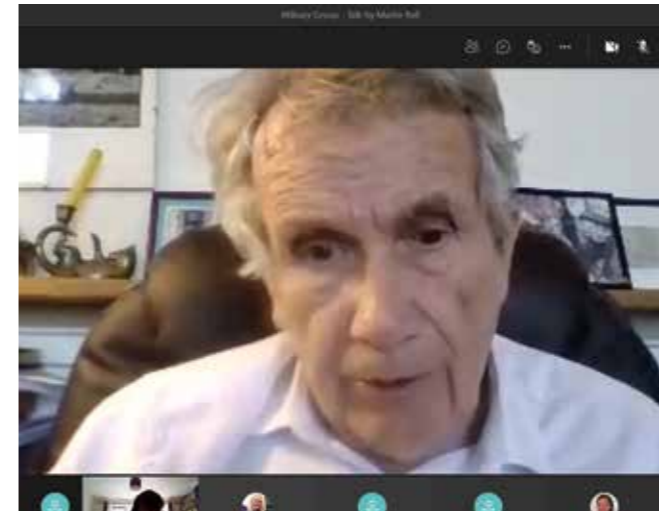
bit wobbly on your feet? The Health and Wellbeing team would like to hear from you, we've developed a pack with handy tips to get you moving, feel energised and help improve your physical wellbeing.

■ **Get in touch with us, call on 01273 391 495.**

Our veterans meet Martin

Reporter and MP Martin Bell OBE hosted a private talk for a group of 20 of our veterans with an interest in military history - providing some much-needed entertainment as this period of self-isolation continues. Streamed on Microsoft Teams, the blind veterans from the North East - with an average age of 83 - were able to join the call via telephone.

Martin vividly described his time in National Service before moving onto his war reporting days in Vietnam, Bosnia and various other conflicts, ending with his memories as a Member of Parliament. Afterwards he said, "Having reported extensively from the front line, I've seen first-hand the sacrifices that members of our armed forces make to keep us all safe. Blind Veterans UK is a fantastic organisation providing life-changing



Caption: Martin Bell meets our veterans

support to those who have served and lost their sight. It was an honour to work with them and regale some tales to blind veterans in the North East."

77-year-old Bill Owen from Dronfield was one of our Members on the call. He says: "Martin's talk was absolutely fabulous. It was amazing to hear stories from the conflicts he's reported from and he was extremely forthright when responding to the questions we had. I could have listened to him for much longer. It was such a nice event to attend during this lockdown where we could all get together virtually and enjoy a brilliant talk in the comfort of our living rooms. Big thanks to Martin for giving up his time and providing such wonderful entertainment."

The presentation with Martin Bell was

just one of the many virtual activities that the charity now offers the veterans it supports. Blind Veterans UK launched 'Operation Entertain' last year to maintain the beneficiaries' morale and prevent social isolation.

Do you have any Wrens in your family?

I'm not referring to the tiny, feathered variety in the garden but the indomitable ladies who joined the Women's Royal Naval Service. Specifically, ladies who joined up between 1946 and 1981 and did their basic training at Training Depot Burghfield/HMTE Burghfield/HMTE Dauntless/HMS Dauntless/Reading. Dauntless Divisional Photos is a nationwide project in collaboration with the Association of Wrens, to gather divisional photographs and memories from those training days but also to reunite ladies with old friends, share anecdotes and relive exciting moments.

So if you, your mum, granny, aunt, godmother or even next door neighbour donned a blue suit and aimed for a life on the ocean wave, please get in touch with Mandy Powell or Jenny Crisp on either ddpwrens@gmail.com or call them on **07765 435 295** or **0771 990 9844**. →

Aberystwyth veteran takes part in three-year challenge

A Royal Welsh veteran from Aberystwyth has been completing a three-year fundraising challenge alongside other veterans and serving soldiers in his regiment, in memory of Captain Stephen Healey who was killed in Afghanistan on 26 May 2012 when his vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device (IED).

Captain Colin Jones MBE, from Aberystwyth, has been raising funds for Blind Veterans UK since September 2019 as part of the Captain Stephen Healey Memorial Challenge. The Royal Welsh regiment, along with Ryan Jones former Wales and British Lions captain, has so far run from Maindy Barracks in Cardiff to Hightown Barracks in

Wrexham within 24 hours, totaling a team effort of 137 miles, and ascended Pen-y-fan blindfolded.

Captain Stephen Healey, who was from Cardiff, served in the 1st Battalion of The Royal Welsh regiment. He joined the Army in 2007 and was deployed to Afghanistan on 9 March 2012, taking over command of Checkpoint Langar as part of Combined Force Burma in the 1st Battalion, The Royal Welsh Battlegroup. Unfortunately, on 26 May 2012, whilst on patrol, his JACKAL vehicle was struck by an IED, killing Stephen and significantly injuring several of his colleagues in the vehicle. Colin says: "Steve was a great ambassador for Blind Veterans UK. We are doing this challenge for him".

Colin and the Royal Welsh regiment had originally wanted to complete several physically challenging events



Caption: Members of the Royal Welsh Regiment



Caption: Stephen Healey and Thea Davies

over a planned three-year period however due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they had to reschedule most of these. On Wednesday 26 May, the 9-year anniversary of Stephen's death, Colin will be launching the next series of challenges.

Stephen's partner, Thea Davies, will also be doing the international cycle from Berlin to Llandudno. Thea says: "Steve touched so many individuals who knew and met him, he was loved by so many and is truly missed by all. For myself to have this opportunity to continue his fundraising legacy for Blind Veteran's UK, alongside Colin, is a great honour. I will join the cycle team and cycle the full 1293.9 mile route from Berlin to Llandudno in August. I will then complete Ironman Wales for the second time on the 12 September which I previously completed in 2014 in memory of Steve".

"Steve will always have a special place in my heart and to be able to continue to raise money for a charity which he himself supported is the greatest way to keep his memory alive".

■ **To support Colin and the Royal Welsh team, please visit their JustGiving page: [justgiving.com/colinjones910](https://www.justgiving.com/colinjones910)**

Clearer path

As a Member of Blind Veterans UK since 2007, I would like to say thank you to Community Support Worker Lorraine Smith who put me in contact with Marieke Hofsteede, Occupational Therapist Health and Wellbeing. I would urge any of our Members who may feel that life decisions are piling up and it becomes difficult to place them in order of priority to use this valuable service. I cannot thank Marieke enough for calling me over a five-week period as each session gave a different perspective to matters and unravelling them became somewhat easier.

The way forward is to use these valuable services which Blind Veterans UK offers to give you a more balanced outlook on life.

Member Steve Jarvis 🇨🇪

On parade

We proudly present another selection of our Members' wonderful artwork produced for the National Creative Project



1. Rita Scarratt - Our Lane in Autumn **2.** David Anderson - Ducks on a pond. **3.** Mike Godley - Flamingos at a lake In Chile. **4.** Dennis Barker - View from my window. **5.** Matthew McGowan - Old Man of Hoy



ADOBE STOCK / GAL2007

Caption: Get creative in June and submit your work to the NCP team

National Creative Project programme for June

Creative Activities. Creative Book. Creative Hobby Circles.

Welcome to the June programme of activities to get involved with from home.

Call our new NCP Bookings number on **01273 391 455** for more information or to request an activity pack for the **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES** below – kits and instructions will be posted out to you with the opportunity to take part in a telephone or video chat with other Members if you would like.

For more information about the projects and groups please visit our web page: blindveterans.org.uk/ncp

Gardening

Tumbling Tomatoes

Your last chance to sign up for our Tumbling Tomatoes project. Enjoy watching your plant grow, the smell of the leaves and delicious and colourful fruits, all on your windowsill to enjoy over the summer. Your kit will include everything you need. During the project there will be the opportunity to join a phone chat group with other Members and our project team to discuss how your tomatoes are growing and all other things garden related.

Art and Craft

Flags of Hope

A simple craft project for you to enjoy creating designs around your hopes and wishes using oil pastels on fabric flags. We plan to display your flags in the grounds of our Centres during the summer months. Inspired by bunting and Tibetan prayer flags our Flags of Hope will fly in the wind sending positivity into the air as your hopes and wishes are blown by the breeze out into the world. Your pack contains materials and ideas to help you create your flags and a pre-paid envelope to return some to us.

There is the opportunity to take part in a group telephone chat with other Members to exchange ideas, support and encouragement, if you would like.

Creative Writing

Wordsmiths

If you enjoy writing or word puzzles, this is the project for you. Have fun trying out some poetry using our suggested words as a starting point for each line. This sort of poetry is called 'acrostics'. We will send you a project pack with suggested words and some examples of an acrostic from the Creative Writing team.

You are also encouraged to use photos at home as a starting point for your acrostics alongside the words given. You'll be invited to join a Creative Circle during the project to chat with other Members about ideas and our project team will be on hand with guidance and support.

Art

Pastels for beginners and improvers. June-August project.

Themes include city scape skyline, on the Home Front, summer landscape and still life.

There are pastel challenges with support, for you to learn to use pastels or improve your skills. With your permission your work may appear in our online project gallery. We will send a pastels project kit and you may use your own materials too. With a new project every 2-3 months sign up for just one or →

“Celebrating new beginnings, spring and summer and our colourful Blind Veterans UK community”

sign up each time. There will be the chance to meet other Members and our Art and Craft instructors for chat and tips by phone or video call if you would like.

Craft

Bird box – a woodwork project

A birdbox or bird feeder kit from ritoobby.co.uk for you to assemble at home. The pack includes our own adapted set of instructions, all the necessary softwood pieces for one birdbox or feeder, wood glue, nails (for optional hammering) and a roll of masking tape to hold your creation together while you plan the construction.

It is desirable but not crucial that you have access to a hammer to drive the nails – we can provide some small longnose pliers to make this process safer and more manageable if needed. 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.

Art and craft

Collaboration in colour ‘Blue & Purple’

A project from now until midsummer to create a large art piece made by the Blind Veterans UK family. Decorate 15x15cm squares with the choice of a wide variety of materials. Celebrating new beginnings, spring and summer and our colourful Blind Veterans community.

Once completed we plan to take this piece ‘on tour’ to a variety of locations. Your pack includes three wooden squares as bases for your work, collage materials and glue. We encourage you to use recycled materials and/or art materials from home too. With the opportunity to take part in a group telephone chat with other Members to exchange ideas and for support and encouragement, if you would like.

■ **Please call NCP Bookings on 01273 391 455 for more information or to request an activity pack for the CREATIVE ACTIVITIES above.**

■ **For more information about the projects and groups please visit our web page: blindveterans.org.uk/ncp**

CREATIVE BOOK – open for contributions – send your photos, poetry, prose, spoken or written, art

and craft work. The Creative Book is a collection of contributions from Members, staff and volunteers to capture living through Covid-19 and will form part of our charity’s archives for the future.

The Theme this month is ‘roses’. Tying in with the Rose Ceremony Memorial Day at the Brighton Centre on 21 June in which we will be remembering those we have lost during this last year.

Feel free to create as many pieces as you like, in any medium. Use your own theme, previous monthly themes, or



ADOBE STOCK / K.-U. HÄSSLER

Caption: This month's theme is Roses

be inspired by the colour and meaning behind this month’s theme, ‘the Rose’. Red for love and romance, pink for gratitude, grace, admiration and joy, orange for enthusiasm and passion, yellow for friendship and white for innocence and purity. Previous themes have been: ‘What has kept me going’, ‘Hopes and dreams’, ‘Spot the difference’, ‘A sense of place’

■ **Please send all entries via email to creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk or by post to: Creative Book Entries, Blind Veterans UK, Greenways, Ovingdean, Brighton, BN2 7BS. Telephone 01454 617 920 or contact your community support worker if you would like to submit a spoken word piece.**

CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

We would love to hear from you on **01273 391 455** if you are interested in joining a monthly telephone or video call chat group in one of the subjects below. Expertise is not required, just an interest in the subject.

Creative Writing. Gardening. Knitting. Woodturning. Mosaic. Painting. Woodwork.

Coming soon

Papercraft Hobby Circle

If you are interested in crafts using →



ADOBE STOCK /TFANTASY

Caption: Our Papercraft Hobby Circle is coming soon

paper - handmade card making, collage, decoupage, quilling to name a few, and would like to join a Papercraft Hobby Circle please give us a call! For our Photographers we have a Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a Photography Chat Group. Everyone with an interest in taking photos is welcome, from professionals with all the kit, to 'mobile phone' photographers.

■ **For more information on the Photography Group please contact: Mark Pile on 07584 056 459 or email him at mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk**

You can see more information about all of the projects above, stories and quotes from those participating, and see galleries of work from some of the projects at blindveterans.org.uk/ncp

Whether you have lots of creative experience or are a complete beginner the NCP team have designed these projects for you. If you fancy 'having a go' then please do. Our NCP team and fellow Members will be there to support and encourage you. 🍷

Lou Kirk-Partridge and the National Creative Project Team

Creative Book spotlight

We are enjoying receiving contributions for the Blind Veterans UK Creative Book, and over the coming months wish to share with you some contributions and the inspiration behind them. We spoke to volunteer coordinator Thais Curia and asked her about her thoughts, feelings and motivations around her contribution of a collection of photos called 'The Beauty of Life during COVID-19'.

"The beauty of life during the COVID-19 photo series was thought of as a way to remind us that even in the middle of a pandemic, we

can't forget what really matters in life - love, peace, support, friendship, solidarity and the power of Nature. Being passionate about photography I've been trying to represent all of them through my images which can be found in our daily lives, maybe when we're crossing the road or looking at the sky. With the hectic life that we used to have, we never had time to pay attention around us or reflect on how precious life is.

"My photos have been taken since March 2020, during my daily walks around Hammersmith and Fulham (where I live), and also by the River Thames. I wanted to join the National Creative Project as a way to remind everyone about the beauty of life despite COVID-19."

These photographs were chosen as they represent the power of Nature, Love and Peace respectively.

■ **If you would like to submit a contribution for inclusion in the Creative Book please email creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk or speak with your community support worker or volunteer coordinator.**



A sweet treat for summer

Member **Dennis Dyer** has sent in this strawberry-themed recipe for you to enjoy

Ingredients

For the shortbread base you will need:

65 grams caster sugar

140 grams plain flour

75 grams desiccated coconut

115 grams unsalted butter melted

For the jam coconut topping:

135 grams good quality strawberry jam

one large egg

50 grams caster sugar

Half teaspoon vanilla essence

90 grams shredded coconut - desiccated works just as well

Method

- preheat oven to 180 degrees or gas mark four
- line an eight-inch baking tin with baking paper, ensuring two sides

overhang -this will make it easier to remove the slices later

- In a large mixing bowl add sugar flour and coconut
- stir thoroughly to combine add melted butter and
- stir again to mix thoroughly - the mix should resemble wet sand.
- place mix into the baking tin press down to resemble one large slab
- place in oven and cook for 10-14 minutes or until the slice is golden brown
- while the base is still warm spread the jam over - I find that if you warm the jam slightly it will spread more evenly
- in a mixing bowl add egg, sugar and vanilla mix well and then add coconut and spread this mix over the jam so that its roughly even (don't worry if it's not, just put it into the oven for another 12 to 14 min or until topping turns golden brown)
- leave in pan to cool completely then take out and cut into squares 🍪

What's going on

Your update from our Operations Team

Due to the ever-changing situation across the UK, we are having to operate differently in different areas because of the differing restrictions in place across the UK. But we can keep you informed about how we've been supporting our Members recently. We'll do this by providing you with a 'status update' every month about what's been happening in our communities and Centres.

Our communities

As of 29 March 2021, Blind Veterans UK is safely providing the following services to Members in the community:

- Remote telephone support through the National Support Service, including remote rehabilitation and telephone social groups
- Staff and volunteers can meet Members face to face where there is an assessed need. An assessed need must be approved by a Community Team Leader
- Maintenance and delivery of equipment to priority Member cases

We have provided many of our

veterans with the opportunity to receive rehabilitation support remotely as part of our National Remote Rehab Service. This includes a range of services to help with independence and safety at home - for example assistance with technology, low vision assessments and support with health and wellbeing. If you would like to access this service, please speak to your caseworker.

We are running a growing number of telephone and online social and 'special interest' groups so that Members can meet each other regularly, catch →



Caption: Eric Colman pulls a party popper

up and share experiences. If you are a passionate football fan, interested in IT, crafts or just fancy a chat, get in touch with your caseworker and they will let you know what's on. If you fancy starting a group yourself, let us know.

Social groups will remain on hold while we review our services and gain a better understanding of the effects of the vaccination programme. However, there may be a need to establish some face-to-face social groups from July to address extreme social isolation, but these will be temporary and serve a purpose.

Member Support Hub

Our Member Support Hub continues to run as usual and we're working hard to restore our recycling service. Our drivers are starting to get back out on the road delivering and collecting



Caption: Win Amos sowing broad beans

equipment wherever it is safe to do so. Although we can't provide face to face support with equipment, we are doing our best to achieve this remotely. Of course, you can always get in touch with us if you need anything so please call us on **01273 391 447**, Monday to Friday 9am-4pm.

Our Centres

Our Centres opened their doors last month at a reduced capacity to those most affected by the pandemic. Isolation and testing measures continue to be necessary in order to make sure we adhere to Government guidelines. The Centres are still able to offer a positive experience even during this period with activities and engagement safely managed. The pathway for this service will be through a conversation with the Member case worker.

The Centres have been closely monitoring Government and local guidance. In the next article, the Centres talk about how they will expand their offer to Members going forwards to include holiday/respice bookings.

Our Permanent Residents at the Brighton Centre are in good spirits and have been enjoying helping the Inner Garden flourish again. They also enjoyed a small celebration on VE Day at the beginning of May. 🇬🇧



Caption: Llandudno Centre

Our Centres

Our Centres are re-opening for bookings – here is what you need to know before you pick up the 'phone

Brighton and Llandudno Centres - holiday and respice bookings

The Centres are managing the complexities of the regulations around hospitality and being a registered care provider to the best of their abilities. As we know, these are often open to regular amendments and the opening

of the Centres are subject to changes that we are not able to control. The information is correct at the time of writing, any updates will be provided through caseworkers and the Centre booking departments.

In order to adhere to government guidelines, the Llandudno and



Brighton Centres need to respond in different ways. Further updates will be provided in the July edition of *Review*.

Llandudno

We are delighted to be able to announce that the Llandudno Centre is planning to open on a phased basis in mid-summer for residential, nursing and independent holiday and respite stays, with all prevailing COVID-19 restrictions being adhered to.

When a booking is made it is essential that all health, mobility and care information is up to date as this will ensure that the correct level of support is available for your stay. The booking staff at the Llandudno Centre will need to determine the dates for a requested stay based on your individual stay requirements. We may not be able to offer your preferred date or month to stay but will be able to provide you with details of the next availability. Due to anticipated demand, we will be limiting stays to one week per Member.

The Llandudno booking office will open from 8.30am Monday 21 June 2021 to answer any of your queries or help you make bookings. The booking office hours are 8.30am-4.30pm.

■ **Llandudno booking office**
01492 868 700

Brighton

Due to having permanent residents in place, the Brighton Centre needs to ensure it continues to comply with regulations in place for care homes. The Brighton Centre is pleased to advise that it is planning to open for residential and nursing holiday/respite stays on a phased basis from mid-Summer. To comply with guidelines this currently would include a 14-day (two week) isolation period, any changes to these guidelines will be provided via the Brighton booking line. Unfortunately, at this time the Brighton Centre is unable to offer any independent holidays - however we hope the situation changes soon.

When a booking is made, it is essential that all health, mobility and care information is up to date as this will ensure that the correct level of support is available for your stay. We may not be able to offer your preferred date or month to stay, but will be able to provide you with details of the next availability.

The Brighton booking office will open from 8.30am, 22 June 2021 to answer any of your queries or help you make bookings. The booking office hours are 8.30am-4.30pm.

■ **Brighton booking office**
01273 391 500

COVID-19 safety measures

Behind the scenes we are working hard to ensure that we are able to reopen safely and all support in these difficult times is gratefully appreciated.

Housekeeping

Please rest assured that when you visit either Centre, we are ready and are building on the already high standards of housekeeping and hygiene by:

- Increased cleaning regime in place throughout the centre
- Increased frequency of cleaning to all touched points and surfaces within common areas



Caption: Using equipment at the Brighton Centre

Masks

In order to comply with National and local guidance, all staff and members are required to wear face mask, unless they have an exemption from doing so, while in the common areas of the centre unless seated for eating and drinking. Masks are made available at no charge upon request.

Infection control

Hand sanitizer dispensers are placed throughout the centre for everyone's use.

Social distancing

The Centres will take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with social distancing requirements.

Restaurants

The restaurants and bars will operate at seating capacities that allow for physical distancing between members based on local and national guidelines.

Track and Trace

We are required under government guidelines to collect details of people who visit the Centre. NHS Test and Trace may ask us for these records, either because someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 and has listed our premises as a place they visited recently, or because our premises have been identified as the location of a potential



local outbreak of COVID-19. The information will be shared in a safe and secure way.

Entertainment

Due to local restrictions still in place your stay at the Centres will not be the normal experience. The number of Members in the Centre at the time of your stay may be limited. We are here to care for you and help you through this difficult time. The entertainment on offer will be more personal and localised, where staff will be on hand to read papers, play games and facilitate local trips and activities.

Our staff

■ Staff are instructed to stay home if they do not feel well, and

temperatures will be checked before employees enter the Centre

- Appropriate PPE will be worn by all employees based on their roles and responsibilities, and in adherence to national or local regulations and guidance
- All staff have received training on COVID-19 safety and infection control protocols, including how to respond swiftly and report all presumed cases of COVID-19 at our Centres to the relevant public health department
- Staff are required to undertake regular Covid19 lateral flow tests. 🚫



Caption: Our Llandudno Centre on VE Day 2020



Photo caption: British Oil and Cake Mills on fire at Hull Docks after an air raid

New arrivals

Our second part of Member **Bill Skinner's** story about growing up in Kingston-upon-Hull during the war

In 1941 came the next big milestone in my life when my little sister was born. I already had a brother who was born in February 1937 and she was born on 2 May, 1941. I can remember it must have been late in the evening because it was pitch black outside and there was an air raid on. There seemed to be a lot of people in our house, which was in darkness apart from candles on

the mantelpiece. My mother was laid on top of the kitchen table with a big woman holding her down.

I remember becoming very distressed as I thought she was hitting my mother. A man whom I didn't know said, "Come on Billy, let's go and see if we can see the airplanes." We lived in Brighton Terrace, which was on Cumberland →

“When an air raid was in progress, my mother would bundle us into the air raid shelter, and she would sing to us”

Street and crossed over the road to the Co-op shop to stand in the doorway. At that instant, the bombs began to fall (I believe that this was the start of the Blitz in Hull) and we could see the shrapnel bouncing up off the ground all around us.

The kindly stranger who was with me said, “Come on Billy, we had better get back home.” On entering our house, I heard my mother scream out, and then crying. The big woman was holding a baby in her arms. “Take a look at your new baby sister”, she said. At that instant it was as though the world was ending. There was an almighty explosion outside, the door was blown in, the soot came down the chimney, and the baby was completely covered in soot.

On the following morning I went out into the terrace to play, and so did all the other lads of my age and older, collecting the shrapnel from the air raid of the night before. I went back home and got my seaside bucket and started picking it up. After filling the bucket,

I took it along to the air raid warden, who gave me sixpence. I went right away and collected another bucketful. This time he gave me nothing. I soon got bored with that (I wonder if I was one of the first to encounter the ‘buy one, get one free’ syndrome).

Bomb damage

It was soon after this that we moved to 65 Kathleen Road, Stoneferry. My aunt Lal (Alice) moved in two doors away. My grandma Elsie's home had also suffered bomb damage, so she was moved to 22 Mayville Avenue, off Stoneferry Road. This was about 20 minutes away from our house, where it seemed like we had moved to heaven. We had a small garden at the front and a long garden at the back. Brian and I had plenty of area to explore. My mother was particularly pleased we had a bathroom - something we had never seen. It had an outside toilet with a lock on the door and I often had to be rescued from there.

The bombing continued every night. I can honestly say I was never afraid of it. When an air raid was in progress, my mother would bundle us into the air raid shelter, and she would sing to us so we would not be afraid. I think she was more afraid than Brian or I were. Our shelter was in the back garden - it was an Anderson shelter which was half buried. It was very damp and cold

and not very comfortable. We had a small bunk bed; Brian on the top and me on the bottom. Our mam used to sit on a chair nursing Marie. When the bombs began to fall you could hear the ‘Krump’, ‘Krump’, as they exploded. This meant they were some distance away. If they were closer, you would here the whistle of the bomb followed by an almighty explosion. Then our mam would start to sing to us all the songs she knew. She would sing to me “Where have you been all the day, Billy boy, Billy boy?” I would have to reply “I’ve been courting all the day, with my darling Nancy Gray.” She would reply



Caption: Bomb damage to grain silos, Hull

“Did your Nancy tickle your fancy, oh, my charming Billy boy?”. I never did know who Nancy Gray was.

Once we had settled into our new home my mam's next job was to enrol me at my new school, which was Stoneferry Primary. My first day went pretty much ok, but the next day was quite eventful. It started off quite normal, until I was introduced to pen and ink for the first time, (I had only used pencil at my previous school Lincoln Street). As soon as I took hold of the pen in my left hand and began to write my name at the top of the first page of the new book I had been given, the edge of my hand began to smudge the ink all over the page. Miss Lewis, who was my teacher, became quite demented. She yelled at me “Use your other hand!”

Collared

I tried to explain to her the problem I had had at my previous school, but she would not listen. She grabbed me by my collar and plonked me on the front row of the class, next to a girl who had had all her hair shaved off her head, (which had been painted purple), and who had a headscarf covering it - apparently she had head lice. Next to us, sat two boys. One of them had a sore nose and mouth, with a very runny nose. The sleeve of his jersey told the tale. I never knew what →

“My seaside spade was laid on the garden where me and Brian had been digging a trench”

the other boy’s problem was. Miss Lewis told me this was the ‘dirty row’ and I would stay there until I learned to use my right hand.

A little later in the morning, Miss Lewis went around the class with a bag of sweets. Every pupil took one. I didn’t notice that no-one on our row attempted to take one, but I did (I was informed later, no-one on the dirty row was allowed a sweet). She immediately took me by my ear and marched me in front of the class and proceeded to smack the back of my bare legs. Her fingers felt like twigs and really hurt. Come the playtime, I was out of that school and on my way home.

Some 10 minutes later imagine the shock I got on reaching our back-garden gate, when I saw my Mam and my aunt Lal (Alice) had hold of each other by their hair and were having a right old set-to. My seaside spade was laid on the garden where me and Brian had been digging a trench the day before. I picked it up, ran down the path and proceeded to smack my Aunt on her behind. She let go of my mam

and said, “The little bugger has just hit me.”

“You leave my mam alone,” I said. “He should be at the front with the rest of the lads,” replied Lal. Both of them forgot their argument and began to laugh.

Going back

My mam suddenly said, “What are you doing coming home - it’s only playtime?” I told her why I had left. When she saw the marks on my legs caused by Miss Lewis slapping me, she said “Lal, look after the other two,” and to me “Come on lad you’re going back to school.”

‘Here comes the cavalry’, I thought as we set off across the field. My Mam must have sorted it out, because nothing more was said that day and Miss Lewis left me alone and moved me off the ‘dirty row’. Why anyone had to sit there I don’t know, as there were plenty of seats in the classroom. I learned later that a lot of the pupils had been evacuated. The next day we had a new teacher, a younger one called Miss Upshaw, except she wasn’t new, I was informed by one of the other lads. Apparently, she had just got married to someone in the RAF. She was nice and not grumpy, like Miss Lewis who [thankfully] went back to teaching the older children. 🍷



Caption: Longer evenings mean more time for enjoying the outdoors

Longer days mean a brighter mood - it’s time to get moving

Your Well-Connected team suggests ways of making the most of the days as summer begins

As the evenings get brighter, the weather (hopefully) gets better and Covid-19 restrictions begin to ease, now is the perfect time to get outside and get moving to look after your health and improve your overall wellbeing.

The benefits associated with being active are more important now than ever before, with the pandemic exacerbating sedentary behaviour and hugely increasing the population of adults who are classed as ‘physically inactive’ (completing less than 30 →

“Try setting yourself a daily goal of trying to move more outside, however small to start with”

minutes of exercise a week). Now, with lockdown measures easing and longer warmer days approaching, it's the perfect time to ensure that you exercise and move every day, whether it's a structured exercise program or class, a cycle or a run, gardening, housework, or a simple walk around the block, moving more and being active is instrumental in boosting your mental, physical, and social wellbeing. Any amount of physical activity can help clear your head, keep you active, support muscle and bone function, and potentially provide an inexpensive opportunity to socialise with a friend.

After what felt like an extra-long winter with so many restrictions in place, getting out into the sunshine and open air has never felt more appealing. The longer spring and summer days make it easier to factor time for moving and exercise into your day with the added benefits of getting the much-needed Vitamin D that your body requires. Vitamin D also known as the 'sunshine vitamin' (due to its ability to be absorbed by the

body in response to sunlight) provides and promotes all kinds of health and wellbeing benefits such as supporting bone, muscle and cardiovascular health, enhancing your immune system, protecting against disease, regulating hormones, optimising brain function and health with the increase in serotonin, plus many, many more. You can reap these benefits in as little as 10–30 minutes a day depending on your skin sensitivity, where all the usual precautions should still be taken by applying a high factor sun cream to avoid any harm to your skin, wearing a hat and keeping well hydrated.

Daily goals

Try setting yourself a daily goal of trying to move more outside, however small to start with, and build upon it slowly. Along with exercising outside, consider having one of your meals in an outside space such as lunch in the garden, or a picnic in the park with family or friends to feel the benefits of being out of the house with a change of surroundings to release those feel-good feelings, brighten your mood and ensure adequate Vitamin D consumption.

Our Health and Wellbeing Teams can support you with getting active again, so please discuss with your community support worker if you are interested or if you want further advice in this area. 🌱



ADOBE STOCK / DIEDOVSTOCK

Caption: Planting and growing can bring great peace of mind

Green fingers

Our Well-Connected Team looks at the health benefits of gardening

Gardening is one of the few hobbies that can improve our mood, physical health, cognitive skills, social connections, and spiritual wellbeing, while also helping the planet. Let's take a closer look at how beneficial gardening is –

Mental health

- Watching plants grow can give us a sense of hope when things around us feel challenging
- Success in the garden, particularly when we've grown something from seed, can give us a huge →

sense of achievement and pride

- The garden is always changing; each season brings something new and nothing ever stands still. This can help us to cope with change outside of the garden, enabling us to look forward and plan for the future
- Gardening can be very relaxing and is a great time to practice Mindfulness. Paying attention to nature, the soil, the weather, and wildlife can give us a break from our own thoughts and feelings

Physical health

- Research has shown that older



Caption: Sharing tea with a friend in the garden is always pleasant

people who garden regularly are more likely to remain fit and mobile than those who don't

- Gardening involves physical skills such as bending, reaching, leaning and squatting; all of which help maintain good balance
- Lifting tools and plants, digging new beds, clearing and pottering about in the garden are all great ways to keep fit, build strength and maintain a good range of movement in our joints
- Even if you don't have a garden, potting/repotting houseplants and regularly watering them will build strength in your arms and get you moving around the house

Cognitive skills

- Gardening can help increase our concentration and attention span, which will also benefit our memory
- Cognitive skills such as planning, prioritising, working out timings, problem solving and organisation are all used and improved while gardening. Gardeners will often think about what, where and when to plant. We'll come across difficulties and experience failures, but we'll use our cognitive skills to learn and adapt

Social connections

- Being out in the garden, even if it's just to sit with a cup of tea, will

“We can make a huge difference by planting a wide variety of plants to provide shelter and food”

make us visible to our neighbours. You may find that passers-by wave, nod and say hello. These may seem like tiny connections, but they're all helpful in reducing isolation and loneliness

- Gardening can also help us build friendships and connections within the community through sharing excess fruit and vegetables, or seeds, cuttings and bulbs. If we offer to share with others, we may even get some new plants back
- People love to talk about their gardens, even if they're not into growing themselves. It's a great conversation topic, sharing advice and stories about what you're growing or discussing plants and wildlife you've noticed

Spiritual wellbeing

- Whether you're religious or not, there's something very powerful about feeling connected to something larger. Connections with nature and the environment can bring a sense of connection to the planet



Caption: Gardening can help maintain native species

Environmental benefits

- Many native species of wildlife are decreasing in numbers, but we can make a huge difference by planting a wide variety of plants to provide shelter and food. Try to have plants that flower or produce fruit and berries at different times of the year so there's always food and pollen available
- If we reduce our use of pesticides and allow some pests into the garden, these will encourage birds and hedgehogs to come and feed on them. The more birds, the better the bird song 🐦

Hitting the high notes

You might not realise it, but singing can lift your heart and make you healthier

Research into the benefits of singing for overall health and wellbeing is growing rapidly and is overwhelmingly positive. Studies have shown the effects of singing on people with Multiple Sclerosis, homeless people, those living with dementia or any number of other conditions. It has been shown that singers report significant psychological, emotional, physiological and behavioural improvements such as mood, breath control, posture, functional and cognitive ability and perceptions of self-efficacy, among other things.

Studies have shown that when people sing, endorphins and oxytocin are released by the brain which in turn lowers stress and anxiety levels and boosts confidence. Oxytocin (a natural hormone produced in the hypothalamus) also enhances feelings of trust and bonding which explains the reports that singing also improves depression and feelings of loneliness. Singing strengthens the immune system. Immediately after singing, studies have shown that singers had higher levels of the protein Immunoglobulin A, an antibody known to benefit the immune system.

Research has also shown that the increased airflow in your lungs during singing lessens the likelihood of bacteria flourishing in your upper respiratory tract. Singing also improves breathing, overall health and can alleviate chronic pain symptoms because it stimulates the vagus nerve, which is a key part of the parasympathetic nervous system.

Music is used all round the world as part of healing and therapy and is an important part of social bonding. It is an overwhelmingly joyful and healthy thing to do – so whether your thing is The Beatles or Barbershop, opera or the Delta blues, find a choir and sing it out loud! 🎤



Caption: When you sing, your stress levels fall

Family News

Birthdays

Harry Garthwaite who celebrates his 101st birthday on 4 June

Dorothy Britton who celebrates her 101st birthday on 6 June

Charles Taylor who celebrates his 101st birthday on 12 June

Eve Lathom-Sharp who celebrates her 105th birthday on 15 June

Dorothy Wilson who celebrates her 100th birthday on 16 June

Elizabeth Wooldridge who celebrates her 101st birthday on 19 June

Eleanor Wales who celebrates her 105th birthday on 21 June

Ronald Smith who celebrates his 101st birthday on 26 June

All information was correct at the time of going to press

Condolences

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

Barbara Israel, who died on 28 May 2021. She was the wife of Ronald Israel

Margaret Walpole, who died on 21 May 2021. She was the wife of Hubert Walpole



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

Frederick Allen of Durham died on 9 May 2021 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the Durham Light Infantry.

Roy Almond of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 20 April 2021 aged 97. He served in the Royal Artillery.

Robert Amos of North Shields, Tyne And Wear died on 1 May 2021 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in the Durham Light Infantry.

Thomas Appleby of Newcastle Upon Tyne died on 28 April 2021 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Doreen Barns of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire died on 1 April 2021 aged 97. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Gordon Patrick Berry of Horsham, West Sussex died on 1 May 2021 aged 76. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Parachute Regiment.

Josephine Bloomfield of Southsea, Hampshire died on 9 May 2021 aged 94. She served as a Wren in the Royal Navy.

Albert Richard Bowles of Sherborne, Dorset died on 14 January 2021 aged 96. He served as a Lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy.

Gerald Bernard Bridgman of Haywards Heath, West Sussex died on 12 May 2021 aged 98. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

William Henry Brown of Preston, Lancashire died on 21 April 2021 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Army Air Corps.

Evelyn Buletson of Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire died on 4 May 2021 aged 95. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Alan Charles Bye of Swindon died on 1 November 2020 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

John Joseph Cairns of Cramlington, Northumberland died on 6 May 2021 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

John Clines of Taunton, Somerset died on 1 April 2021 aged 97. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Neal Collier of Cwmbrân, Gwent died on 20 April 2021 aged 81. He served as a Gunner in the Monmouthshire Regiment.

David Andrew Crisp of Taunton, Somerset died on 6 May 2021 aged 63. He served as a Junior Medical Assistant in the Royal Navy.

George Dean of Chorley, Lancashire died on 1 May 2021 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Sidney William Charles Deverson of Dartford died on 2 May 2021 aged 99. He served as a Leading Electrical Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

Derek Dennis Everett of Ipswich died on 1 May 2021 aged 85. He served as a Corporal in the Suffolk Regiment.

Ian Shepperd Ferguson of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire died on 1 May 2021 aged 89. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Bryan Ernest Garner of Sheffield died on 8 May 2021 aged 63. He served as a Driver in the Royal Corps of Transport.

Peter David Goble of Okehampton, Devon died on 1 May 2021 aged 93. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

Robert Greggs of Consett, County Durham died on 15 May 2021 aged 96. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

John Trevor Price Griffiths of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 29 April 2021 aged 85. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Philip Denis Hall of Sunbury-On-Thames, Middlesex died on 29 April 2021 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles). →

Albert Hanley of Gateshead, Tyne And Wear died on 1 May 2021 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

Douglas Harrop of Leek, Staffordshire died on 15 April 2021 aged 95. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

William Edward Hindley of Caereinion, Powys died on 28 March 2021 aged 94. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

Daphne Hinton of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire died on 8 May 2021 aged 102. She served as a Petty Officer in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Geoffrey Hodges of Hereford died on 25 April 2021 aged 86. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Harry Hodson of Lincoln died on 4 May 2021 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

George Holland of Ellesmere Port died on 8 May 2021 aged 95. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Gerald Roy Jeffery of Plymouth died on 19 April 2021 aged 79. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

Colin Robert Jones of Devizes, Wiltshire died on 1 May 2021 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

Kenneth John Lansley of Cullompton, Devon died on 27 April 2021 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Patrick Lawler of Abergele, Clwyd died on 5 May 2021 aged 89. He served as an Aircraftman 1st Class in the Royal Air Force.

Peter Leaney of Wrexham, Clwyd died on 1 May 2021 aged 87. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Stanley Harry Lince of Norwich died on 14 January 2021 aged 84. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

Kenneth William Mardling of Swindon died on 22 April 2021 aged 85. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Terence John Middlebrook of Manningtree, Essex died on 29 April 2021 aged 91. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Gordon Mills of Edinburgh died on 4 May 2021 aged 99. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Leonard Verdun Moyle of Camborne, Cornwall died on 13 May 2021 aged 93. He served as a Private in the General Service Corps.

Douglas Parker of Sheffield died on 29 April 2021 aged 98. He served as a Lance Corporal in the East Yorkshire Regiment (The Duke of York's Own.)

Walter Partridge of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 25 April 2021 aged 100. He served as a Sergeant in the Lincoln And Welland Regiment.

Gordon Pickering of Abergele, Clwyd died on 3 May 2021 aged 88. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

George Edwin Pointer of Brighton, East Sussex died on 18 April 2021 aged 97. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

James Pratt of North Shields, Tyne And Wear died on 1 May 2021 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Army Air Corps.

Norman Pryer of Houghton Le Spring, Tyne And Wear died on 1 April 2021 aged 100. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

John Quinn of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 14 April 2021 aged 94. He served as a Private in the South Lancashire Regiment (The Prince of Wales' Volunteers)

Jack Raynor of Wigton, Cumbria died on 18 April 2021 aged 81. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps King's Dragoon Guards.

Graham Ronald Richards of Epsom, Surrey died on 24 April 2021 aged 85. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Alexander Safaty of Crewkerne, Somerset died on 21 January 2021 aged 99. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Scott of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 27 April 2021 aged 85. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

Harry Simcock of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 14 May 2021 aged 99. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Robert Rodney Skipp of Abingdon, Oxfordshire died on 23 April 2021 aged 93. He served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Engineers. →

David Bradbrook Spink of Reading died on 18 April 2021 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Eric Stringwell of Pudsey, West Yorkshire died on 23 April 2021 aged 94. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Ernest John Symons of Penzance, Cornwall died on 23 April 2021 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Arthur John Thame of Baldock, Hertfordshire died on 15 May 2021 aged 98. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

Kenneth Toyne of Lincoln died on 24 April 2021 aged 96. He served as a Stoker in the Royal Navy.

Dennis Tymon of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 17 April 2021 aged 85. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Albert Gordon Ward of Nottingham died on 1 May 2021 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Charles George Warman of Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire died on 18 May 2021 aged 102. He served as an Electrical Artificer in the Royal Navy.

Colin Desmond West of Brighton, East Sussex died on 5 May 2021 aged 88. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

David Whittle of Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside died on 10 May 2021 aged 77. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

Moelwyn Williams of Swansea died on 7 February 2021 aged 98. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

George Wills of Ryton, Tyne And Wear died on 16 April 2021 aged 83. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

Thomas Wilson of Newcastle Upon Tyne died on 1 May 2021 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

Joan Rosamund Wintle of London died on 21 April 2021 aged 88. She served as a Petty Officer Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Lillian Mary Zundel of London died on 1 May 2021 aged 94. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Belonging and purpose

Inspired by Ron Frost's recent article, Member **John Munro** recalls some of his own scouting memories

I enjoyed reading Ron Frost's tale of meeting the Chief Scout and King George VI in April's *Review* magazine. My reason for writing is to say how much Scouting gave me a sense of belonging and purpose.

I was 'in care' from day one, as my mother couldn't look after me. Being moved around and finally fostered in Surrey, not very happily in a private arrangement – there was no social services in 1935. I was nine when war was declared in 1939 and we had to quickly put up blackouts on all our windows, and build an Anderson shelter in the garden. But it filled with water, so we dismantled it and erected it over the foster-mother's double bed. Pa had a separate room.

Venturing forth

One evening I ventured forth to join the Scout troop in Ewell. I was welcomed warmly, and the following week passed my Tenderfoot and was enrolled in the Owl patrol. I became obsessed with gaining badges - on a visit to London to see my mother, she took me to the Scout Shop in Buckingham Palace

Road, and bought me the big Badge book and a sheath knife! That wouldn't be allowed these days.

On another visit to London I introduced my mother to her future husband.

My mother would visit occasionally →



Caption: Going camping was the best...

but I didn't really know her – she was more like an aunt. I enjoyed staying in her house in Bedford Square. One evening the three of us got into the little service lift to go up to bed when the lift suddenly stopped between floors. We were stuck there for 10 hours, until the boilerman came in at 7 am. Fortunately there were no air raids that night.

In the Scouts I worked for my second-class badge. If you got six other badges you got green and yellow cords. Then I passed all the tests for my First Class badge and had 12 badges – but I couldn't swim, and so lost my First Class badge. I might have become a King's Scout, like Ron, if I had been able to swim.

A Swift promotion

I was promoted to PL (patrol leader) of the Swifts. There were eight of us, including Keith, my Second. We had a merry time, learning our knots and the Scout Law. I recall the jingle - Trusty, loyal, helpful, brotherly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, and pure in body and mind.

Going camping was the best. First, we had to dig latrines, gather firewood, erect tents, hammer in the guy ropes, dig hip-holes and put groundsheets down. Baden-Powell told us in his book *Scouting for Boys*, to make sure you

have more insulation under you than on top – use newspaper, etc. But the worst for me was trying to extract the rations required from my foster mother. I knew what I was entitled to; I did all the shopping each Saturday, as she had bad legs.

I took my patrol to camp one weekend. I'd never been allowed to cook "because of my germs", I had been told. I chose to cook spotted dick for pudding. But it just wouldn't cook over my campfire – the sticks were damp. So, the lads had to go to bed hungry.

One badge I got with pride was for National Service after 100 hours. My friend and I cycled to Horton hospital with matches to give to the wounded soldiers to light their 'fags' and we served meals, ran messages and really enjoyed being part of the war effort. I once spotted a pair of jackboots dangling from a trolley – the nurses treated all patients regardless of nationality.

I was good at art at school, and decided to produce a patrol magazine – *Swift Monthly*. It only appeared once. I finally taught myself to swim at 16, but by then I had left the Scouts and was working in an advertising agency before joining a youth club. But I shall always be grateful to 'BP' [Lord Baden-Powell] for showing me the way. 🍷

AGENTURFOTOGRAFIN / ADOBE STOCK



Contact details

Contact address Blind Veterans UK,
12-14 Harcourt Street, London,
W1H 4HD, **0300 111 22 33**

Member Support Hub: 01273 391 447

New Members: If you know someone who could be eligible to join Blind Veterans UK, they can phone our Membership Department on freephone **0800 389 7979**.

The Brighton Centre 01273 307 811.

The Llandudno Centre 01492 868 700.

Review Editor: You can telephone Chris Gilson on **020 7616 8367** or email him at revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk.

We value your feedback and use it to improve and develop the services we provide. If you would like to provide feedback on the magazine or any aspect of our services then please email us at feedback@blindveterans.org.uk or call **0300 111 22 33**

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.