

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

April 2023



Iraq war: 20 years on



Inside:

Ken and Margaret
turn 100

Healthy eating
on a budget



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss



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Quiz answers from page 46

- 1. Daffodil 2. Q and Z 3. c) His wine and parmesan cheese
- 4. Appendix 5. Bruce Wayne 6. a) Poker 7. Margaret Thatcher
- 8. Watches and clocks 9. c) 1960 10. Football pools

On the cover

Members Ben Shaw, Simon Brown and Craig Lundberg before and after they were seriously injured and lost their sight while serving in Iraq.



Caption: A Member waves a Union Jack flag in our Brighton Centre

Are you ready for 6 May?



As plans for the Coronation of King Charles III ramp up, don't miss this opportunity to get involved.

With street parties, bunting and pageantry galore, this historic occasion promises to be a celebration like no other as our new King and his Queen Consort, Camilla, are formally crowned at Westminster Abbey.

If you'd like to take part on behalf of Blind Veterans UK, we have plenty of ideas you can try, from a fancy dress lunch to a right royal quiz. We can also provide free online resources to support your event. 🇬🇧

■ **For more information, simply visit blindveterans.org.uk/events or call us for a chat on 0300 111 2233.**

A huge privilege

An introduction from your new CEO **Adrian Bell** who joins us later this month

I'm hugely grateful for the opportunity to write to you all, introduce myself, and tell you a bit about myself.

I am a Royal Navy veteran. I served for 30 years as a Warfare Officer and had the privilege of commanding three warships. My final appointment was as Commander British Forces Gibraltar. It was whilst in Gibraltar, although



Caption: Adrian Bell

nothing to do with it, that I made my decision to leave the Navy.

Although I probably didn't feel so at the time, I look back now and feel very fortunate to have served in the Falklands conflict. I was a midshipman in one of five trawlers, HMS Northella, that was taken up from trade and commissioned as a warship for the duration. The experience taught me so much in such a short period of time and shaped not only my career, but also my life in many ways.

It was the right time for me to leave the Navy 12 years ago. I had always been interested in working and serving in the charity sector, and leaving opened a new world for me to gain fresh experiences. My career thus far has seen me lead a Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust) and then The Royal Navy and Royal Marines Charity (RNRMC).

I have had five very happy and fulfilling years with the RNRMC, but when

I saw the chance to apply for this position, I seized the opportunity to serve a particular cohort of people so deserving of all our support.

I will write in a future piece about my own personal connections to sight loss and how these play another important part in the pride I feel as I prepare to start as your new CEO.

I see this role as a huge privilege, probably one of the greatest of my life, and I am mindful that this is a charity with both a rich history and also a very bright future.

I appreciate that CEOs come and go and some of you will have seen a few I'm sure! All any of us can do is recognise that, for however long we are here, we are custodians of a charity and a service that is very special indeed, especially to all those we support; indeed, many of you will still be here long after the likes of me have moved on. I do not underestimate that responsibility which will always be at the forefront of my thinking.

So, as Chief Executive, I can assure you all that each and every day I serve I will be thinking about what this charity means to you, our Members, and the fact that we have a duty to ensure we leave it in the best possible condition for those we are supporting today and



Caption: Llandudno Centre

those yet to come. This is what drives me and hopefully will always inform and support the decisions I need to make.

It's also why I'm really looking forward to getting to know our Members; hearing from you, the people we support, about what is important to you, what you value most, and what you expect of us. This will always be the best guide for me as I honour the responsibility of ensuring the best possible support to our vision-impaired ex-Servicemen and women.

I really look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the coming months and also updating you all on my first experiences with this wonderful charity. 🌍

News

It's full steam ahead at our Rustington Centre

Our Rustington Facilities Lead, Janine Marsh, shares an update on the building work at the site of our new Centre.

"Entering spring, the daffodils are starting to emerge and bloom and so is the build at Rustington.

"I'm happy to tell you that the

structural steel work has now been completed, which means the internal walls are going up at a rate of knots. Also, new drainage and flooring is being constructed in the lounge area outside the kitchen, which has been moved from its original position.

"Mechanical and electrical works are full steam ahead. Walls have been chased, miles of wires have been run the length of the building and two new lifts are being installed.

"However, in my opinion, the most significant work is the location change of the building's entrance. This signifies a real changing of the guard from the building's previous owners, The RAF Benevolent Fund, to Blind Veterans UK.

"The old entrance has been completely bricked off now and you can only gain access now through the newly constructed entrance, which is parallel to the road and in line with the horizontal wing. I was privileged enough to be one of the last people to walk through the old entrance before it was closed off. A moment in history!

"Now that the structural work is done, everything will continue to accelerate. The site is currently a hub of activity with many different trades working hard to put the meat on the building's new bones."

Alan's in The Dog House

Our very own Member and trustee, Alan Holderness, has appeared on popular animal shelter TV series, *The Dog House*.

The Channel 4 show follows the shelter's staff as they try to find [→](#)



Caption: The new entrance at the Centre



Caption: The electrical cables



Caption: Alan with Duchess

homes for their rescued pooches. In the episode, Alan, who lives in Lancashire, opens up about his sight loss as he and his partner, Jane, find their perfect companion.

Alan said, “We actually filmed the programme almost a year and half ago, during Covid. After I finally caved in and agreed to having a dog, Jane got in touch with the programme without telling me.

“Once we’d been through the preliminary interviews with the show, we travelled down to the rescue centre in Godmanchester a few times and they recorded us for about 13 or



Caption: Alan at the shelter with his partner, Jane, meeting Duchess

“She shuffled in, nose to the ground, did a circuit of the pen then climbed over my legs and fell asleep in between us”

14 hours in all. It was interesting to see how they edited it in the end to create the story. They almost made me look human!

“I didn’t want to get a little dog because I thought I wouldn’t be able to see it and would accidentally kick it, so they offered us a lurcher at first – really beautiful but only six months old and so fast and full of energy. Jane would have taken her in a heartbeat, but I knew I wouldn’t have been able to keep up. It was hard saying no.

“Luckily, the centre called us again soon after and offered us a basset hound called Duchess. So back we went. It was lovely when we first met her - she shuffled in, nose to the ground, did a circuit of the pen then climbed over my legs and fell asleep in between us. I guess it was meant to be. I can’t imagine not having her now. She rules the roost!

“Sadly, all my mentions of Blind Veterans UK were cut and I wasn’t even allowed to wear my branded



Caption: Debra Stephenson in the famous Mastermind chair

T-shirt on the show. Still, since it’s aired I’ve received feedback that it’s helped raise awareness about my genetic eye condition, retinitis pigmentosa, and sight loss generally, so I’m pleased about that.”

■ **You can still tune in to watch Alan in series 4, episode 6, on the Channel 4 website at [channel4.com/programmes/the-dog-house/](https://www.channel4.com/programmes/the-dog-house/)**

TV star Debra Masterminds a donation for us

TV personality, Debra Stephenson, has recently appeared on BBC show,

Celebrity Mastermind, to raise money for two charities including Blind Veterans UK.

The actor, comedian and impressionist, who appeared in Bad Girls, braved the famous black chair to answer questions on the life and times of John Lennon.

After finishing third on the day, she said: “I’m grateful to Blind Veterans UK for helping my grandad at the end when no one was allowed to visit him in the lockdown of 2020.”

The episode, seventh in the current series, is still available to watch on BBC iPlayer. 📺

Get your nominations in!

Help us find the most deserving winners for our Founder's Awards 2023

If you haven't sent us your Founder's Awards nominations yet, don't worry – there's still time.

These annual awards, previously put on pause due to the pandemic, mark the anniversary of the founding of



Caption: Garry Cowan collecting his Founder's Award in 2018

the charity when Sir Arthur Pearson opened the doors to war-blinded veterans in 1915 for the very first time.

They recognise the inspiring contributions of those who share the same boundless spirit as our founder and help us celebrate all that's great about our charity.

Those nominated are put forward by Members, staff, volunteers, family members and friends, so it really is a chance to show appreciation to those who go above and beyond.

Read on for the list of categories for this year's awards and how to nominate.

Member Awards

Inspiring Community Award

This award goes to a Member of Blind Veterans UK who has demonstrated inspiring behaviour



Caption: Member Hugh Megarry receiving the Ted Higgs Prize in 2018

through voluntarily contributing to their local community.

Life Beyond Sight Loss Award

This celebrates a Member whose sight loss journey has led them to excel in **discovering** or **re-discovering** a skill or activity.

Creative Award

This award recognises endeavour in a creative activity such as art, handicrafts, sculpture, writing, photography or music.

Sporting Achievement Award

This is a celebration of an exceptional sporting achievement during the award year.

Vocational Award

This award recognises enthusiasm and attainment in education, vocational training or employment.

Outstanding Achievement Award

This award recognises a Member who has achieved an outstanding level of independence via their participation in an activity.

This could be a **new recruit** who has demonstrated outstanding achievement within the first 12 months of joining the charity, or it could go to a **long-standing Member** who has demonstrated outstanding achievement within their long service, or membership, with the charity. →

Camaraderie Award

This award recognises a Member who has gone above and beyond to support another Member on their sight loss journey.

Ted Higgs Prize**(war-blinded Members only)**

This goes to a war-blinded veteran in recognition of lifetime achievement.

Member And Family Awards**Inspiring Community Award**

This award goes to a Member, spouse, widow or widower who has

demonstrated inspiring behaviour through their contribution towards the development of the Blind Veterans UK community.

Carers Recognition Award (carers only)

And last but certainly not least, this award recognises those who care for Members - a family member, relative or friend of a Member who has provided them with an exceptional level of care and support, enabling the Member to live with dignity and pride. 🇬🇧

How to nominate

Please nominate those you feel are eligible to be a recipient as they have really excelled in their endeavours to make a difference.

There are three ways to nominate:

- Complete the online form by visiting blindveterans.org.uk/founders2023, or scanning the QR code below.
- Fill in the paper version of the nomination form which was sent with the February issue of *Review*.
- Call your local community team and they will help you to complete the form verbally.

If you have any difficulties with the nomination form, or need the information in an alternative format, just contact your community team.

You have until 23 April to get your nominations in. More information will be shared over the coming months and the award ceremony will take place in the summer.



**Scan me
to nominate
someone!**



Caption: Member Simon Brown

The Iraq war: 20 years on

To mark the 20th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq, **Hazel Wills** speaks to three inspiring Members who lost their sight while serving on the frontlines

On 20 March 2003, the United States and her allies invaded Iraq. After six weeks, President George Bush announced combat operations were over, but British soldiers remained there for another six years as attempts to stabilise the country failed and an

insurgency against the occupation ensued. During operations, 179 British troops or Ministry of Defence civilians died and many more were seriously injured. Three Members, Simon, Ben and Craig, who lost their sight in the war, talk about their experience. →

Simon

Simon Brown and his squadron, 2nd Lancashire, was among the first to cross the border into Iraq 20 years ago.

Simon says, “When we first arrived, I remember it being quite surreal. You’re going through the really rural areas just over the border and the local people have got no access to any media whatsoever. They’re waving at you and putting their thumbs up. They had no idea what was going on.”

But it was during Simon’s second tour of Iraq in 2006 that he was severely injured, leaving him blinded.



Caption: Simon before his injury

On 6 December, he set out with his team on a patrol mission in Basra and successfully recovered a vehicle under heavy fire. Heavy dust prevented the recovery vehicle from safely manoeuvring to pull away. Simon put his head out of the turret to check the route was clear and, as he pulled back in, felt an impact on the side of his face. He had been shot.

The bullet caused his palate to collapse and he had to hold his own airway open for the 25-minute journey back to base. He remained conscious until he arrived at medical facilities and was placed in an induced coma.



Caption: Simon today



Caption: Craig in the army

Seventeen days later Simon woke up in a Birmingham hospital, his face encased in a metal cage.

“It took a while to comprehend my injuries and much longer to come to terms with the news that I’d lost my sight. When I did start to understand this a bit more, that’s when I got angry, then upset, then depressed. I just felt cheated. I felt like I’d done everything right on the battlefield and this is what I got for a reward.

“I was thankful to join a community of veterans who understood my situation. The charity showed me what the possibilities were and gave me the tools and the confidence to try myself.”



Caption: Craig today

Craig

Craig Lundberg went to war in 2003, a week after his 18th birthday. He and his regiment, First Kings, were excited to be heading to Iraq.

Craig says, “All I ever wanted was to be a soldier. I’d trained so much to do my job, but then I went out there and quickly realised that it’s not a game or a war film. It’s actually real.”

Craig’s second tour of Iraq began on Remembrance Sunday in 2006.

“By then I was a commander, and I could see that the young lads I oversaw were excited just like I’d been at first. I knew the reality, →

though, and knew that they would soon experience it too.”

Craig was based in Basra working alongside special forces on reconnaissance; his regiment was averaging a strike operation every three days. The day he was injured, he'd been dispatched as part of a team to arrest terrorists.

“My job was to raid the house, secure all the men of fighting age and put the women and children in a separate room. That day all hell broke loose.

“I was on the building's roof, fighting for about 20 minutes before I was struck by two rocket propelled grenades. They're normally used for shooting at armoured vehicles or helicopters and the damage they inflict is brutal.”

Craig received serious injuries to his arms and head. He was treated in Basra and Balad then sent to Germany once he'd been stabilised.

Back in the UK, he spent months in hospital. He was determined to adapt to sight loss and get mobile again.

During a visit to one of our centres, Craig met a Second World War veteran who'd been blinded at the Battle of El-Alamein in 1942.

“George shared with me how angry he'd been until one day he thought, 'Who am I actually angry with? Where's this getting me?' He told me to move past my anger and accept my situation. That meeting made me who I am today.

“I've learnt the importance of being positive. Dig deep and carry on and it'll be all right. It's just a matter of time.”

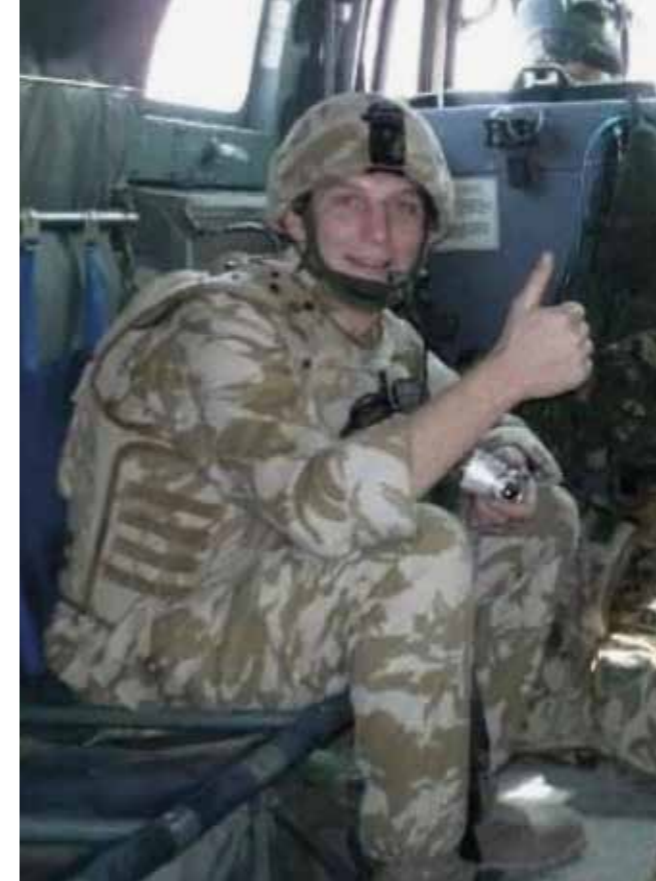
Ben

Ben Shaw's regiment, the 2nd Battalion Light Infantry, was sent to Iraq in May 2003. President Bush had declared combat operations over, but the fighting was still ongoing.

Ben says, “It was a mad dash to get ready to go to Iraq, but ultimately we were happy to be doing the job we'd been trained for. We spent the first week acclimatising, training and gathering kit.”

It was during Ben's second tour of Iraq in August 2006 that he was injured by a roadside bomb.

“During the first tour I'd gained combat experience and somewhat knew what to expect. We knew from watching the news that things had escalated since then with militia activity, but I wasn't worried about going back.”



Caption: Ben during his service

On 25 February 2007, Ben and his regiment were conducting routine patrols south of Basra. Their purpose was to deter the enemy from firing at the bases.

“A roadside explosive device was set off as we drove along. The explosion ripped off the door on my side of the vehicle and I took the brunt of it – three pieces of shrapnel hit my head that day. I knew something had happened and I just remember everything going black.

“The next thing I remember is my friend holding a dressing to my head. I remember he looked horrified. He said, 'You'll be alright mate,' and I thought. 'Oh God.'”



Caption: Ben today

Sadly, the doctors and nurses at the US military field hospital in Balad were unable to save Ben's eyes.

“It was back in the UK that I discovered I'd lost my eyes. I remember feeling resigned to it. There wasn't much I could do. I couldn't turn back time.”

Ben now has two children and is the current European Winter PARA Sports snowboarding champion after winning gold in Poland in 2020.

“I didn't think I'd get back on a snowboard, but once the dust had settled, I realised I can do these things if I want to. The military way of thinking is to find a way to get it working. And we did.” 🇨🇪

Changes to your landline

The UK's transition from analogue to digital telephone lines

The UK's telephone network is being upgraded over the next couple of years, which means that landline services are changing.

You'll still be able to have a landline in your home, but the technology that

powers it will be a bit different and so you may need to upgrade some of your equipment.

Your telecoms provider will contact you ahead of this change taking place, so you don't need to take any action



Caption: A landline telephone

until they do. However, here are some frequently asked questions put together by Age UK.

What's happening to landlines?

The technology we currently use to make calls on landlines, called 'analogue', is being replaced with an internet-based version, called an 'IP network'.

The changeover needs to happen by December 2025, as this is when the old technology will stop working. Phone providers have already started work on switching over the network, but you don't need to do anything until they get in touch with you.

Why is this happening?

The equipment that makes the current landline network run isn't fit for the future and needs to be upgraded. The new system will use the internet to make phone calls.

Phone and broadband companies are leading this change, and the Government and Ofcom (the communications regulator) are supporting it.

What does this mean for me?

Everyone who has a landline will move over to the new system and phone companies will get in touch with each person individually. For lots of

people, the change will be as simple as plugging their phone into their broadband router. However, if your phone handset is very old, you might need to change it and your phone provider will advise you.

The switch may also affect telecare devices and personal alarms. While telephone service providers should be in contact before the switch takes place, you may wish to contact the supplier of any telecare devices to check they will work with the new system or if they need to be upgraded.

How will the new system be affected during a power cut?

Since the new system will work off your home electricity, if there's a power cut you won't be able to make phone calls. In these instances, phone companies are advising that you should use a mobile phone as a backup.

If you don't have a mobile phone or you live somewhere where there's poor signal, or you depend on your landline, for example, because you're disabled, your home phone provider should offer you a solution like a battery-operated handset. This will mean you can make emergency calls during a power cut.

What if I don't have internet?

As the new system runs off the internet, you won't be able to make →

calls without an internet connection at home. If you already have broadband, you can use that. If not, you should be given the option to use a simple internet connection just for making calls if you don't want a high-speed internet connection.

Will I have to pay more?

The largest provider of landlines, BT, has committed to not raising prices above inflation for 'voice only' customers – those who don't have home broadband. This commitment stands for at least the next five years and will mean that your bill should not rise significantly and you shouldn't face extra costs if you need a new simple internet connection to make calls.



CREATIVE SOUL / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Beware of scammers

Be aware of scammers

As the switchover is affecting millions of homes, this can create an opportunity for criminals to develop new scams and get in contact over the phone, via email, or even go door to door.

Remember, the key advice when someone is contacting you about the switchover:

- **STOP** – Taking a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information could keep you safe.
- **CHALLENGE** – Could it be fake? It is ok to reject, refuse or ignore any requests. Only criminals will try to rush you.
- **PROTECT** – Contact your bank immediately if you think you've fallen for a scam and report it to **Action Fraud 0300 123 2040**.

Other unscrupulous people may also try to sell you equipment or get you to sign up to expensive contracts that you don't need. Don't rush into any decisions, seek a second opinion, and speak to your phone company who will be able to advise you about what you need. 📞

- **For more information, please contact Age UK by visiting ageuk.org.uk or calling their helpline on 0800 678 1602.**



Caption: Ken and Margaret tune in for a birthday video call

Friends turn 100 on the same day

Last month, Members Ken and Margaret, who both served in the Second World War, celebrated their 100th birthdays – on the very same day

In February, D-Day veteran, Ken Hobbs, and Bletchley Park veteran, Margaret Wilson, were in the media as they turned 100 years old on the very same day.

Ken, who lives at our Brighton Centre, met Margaret when she visited for a holiday. It was on this trip that they found they were exactly the same age – to the day. The pair have →



Caption: D-Day veteran, Ken, opens his birthday card from King Charles III surrounded by family and friends at his party

remained friends ever since, catching up and always sitting at the same table for dinner during Margaret's subsequent visits to Brighton.

Both born on 12 February 1923, each celebrated their 100th birthdays at parties surrounded by friends and family. Ken's party took place at our Brighton Centre while Margaret's was at Inspire Youth Arts in Mansfield.

In the afternoon, the two friends enjoyed a very special moment where they were connected through a video

conference call to wish one another a happy birthday and show off their cards from the King.

For Ken, the day was even more special when his granddaughter, Stephanie, gave him the wonderful birthday present of a great-grandson, Sonny. Born at 7:57pm on Sunday February 12 and weighing 10 pounds 7 ounces, Sonny was born 100 years to the day after his great grandfather.

Ken said: "It's absolutely marvellous. Everyone is delighted. We're one big



Caption: Margaret with a photograph of herself in service

happy family. We're all very close. They'll be bringing the baby up to see me. I'm really looking forward to it.

"I'm so happy to have spent these last few years with Blind Veterans UK in Brighton. I've got a huge family and it was just amazing to have all my children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren here with me today."

Stephanie said: "It's just unbelievable and amazing how it's all turned out. My grandad is the rock of our family and I'm so proud of him. The fact that

"Who would have thought that we would make it all the way to 100 years old?"

Sonny was born on his 100th birthday is the most amazing coincidence and something we will remember forever. It's also a lovely early birthday present for his older brother Lennon, who turns five in a couple of weeks."

Over in Mansfield, Margaret was enjoying a celebration of her own. She was surrounded by family, friends and fellow Member, Simon, who recently supported her in writing her autobiography using equipment we provided.

She said, "Who would have thought that we would make it all the way to 100-years-old? I've had the best day surrounded by my wonderful family and friends and it was so nice to have the chance to speak to Ken and share a moment between our families."

Ken and Margaret's story proved very popular with the public, not only featuring in several national newspapers but also bagging a moving segment on BBC Breakfast TV.

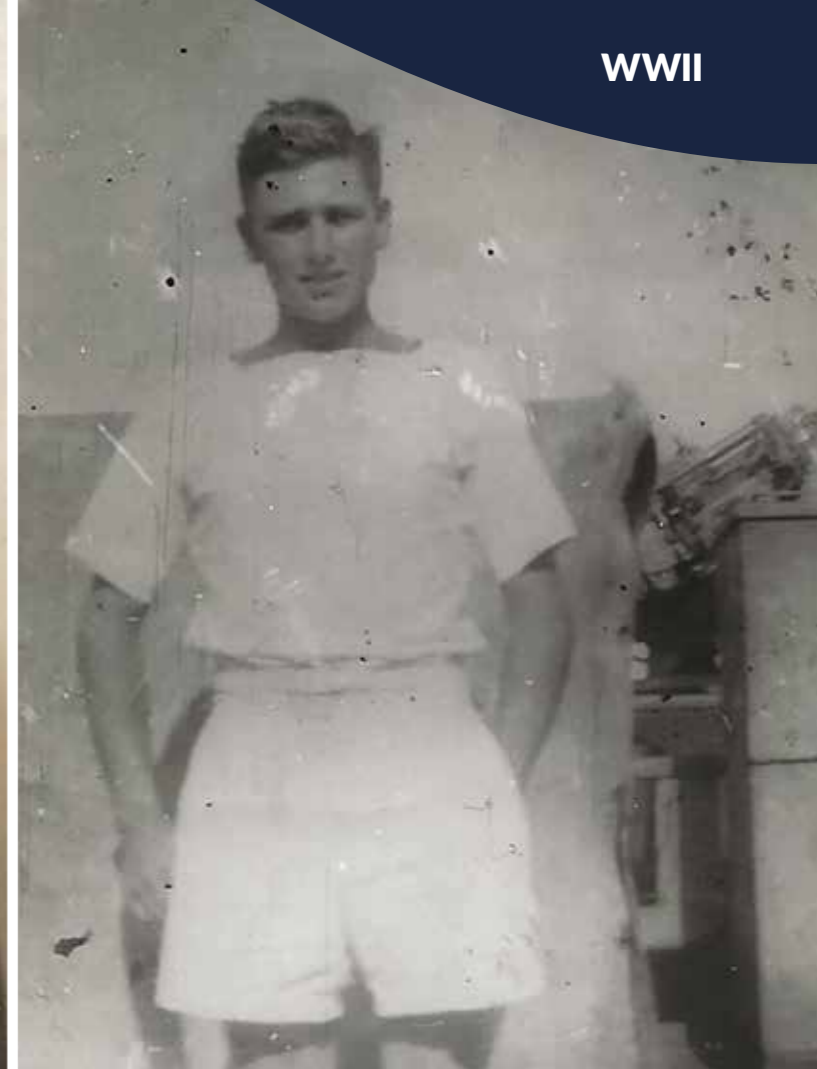
Huge congratulations to them both! 🎉



Caption: Eddie with some of the impressive models he's made from packs posted to him by our National Creative Wellbeing Project team



Caption: Eddie joined the Royal Navy in 1942 as a teenager



Caption: During his service in the Far East on HMS Suffolk

A good life

As Member **Eddie Tann** turns 100-years-old, he tells **William Witt** about his time in the Second World War and the help he's received from Blind Veterans UK

Eddie Tann loves making the most of life. From our National Creative Wellbeing Project to our centre breaks, he seems to throw himself into just about every activity our charity has to offer.

And as he gets ready to turn 100 years old on 11 May, he's still just as enthusiastic as ever.

"I've loved the holidays I've had in Llandudno and Brighton," he says. "The

staff are so wonderful and look after us magnificently. The food is brilliant and there's even entertainment every night. It's just incredible.

"I also love the creative projects. I've received lots of projects in the post to work on, like the watermill and plant bulbs. I've just received the pack for the model steam engine. I've always been very practical, so I really enjoy working on these things."

Eddie became a Member in 2020 after losing his sight to macular

degeneration. A Second World War veteran, he volunteered for the Royal Navy in January 1942 and was allocated to Chatham Barracks before being posted to the heavy cruiser HMS Suffolk, which at the time was docked in Newcastle.

His first excursions were on patrols across Norwegian coastline, ensuring that the Germans were not able to take land around the Arctic. The ship was then involved in convoy missions alongside other cruisers, aircraft carriers and destroyers to escort →



Caption: Eddie's homemade model pub, complete with customers' cars

merchant ships to the Soviet Union, ensuring safe passage of essential supplies and cargo.

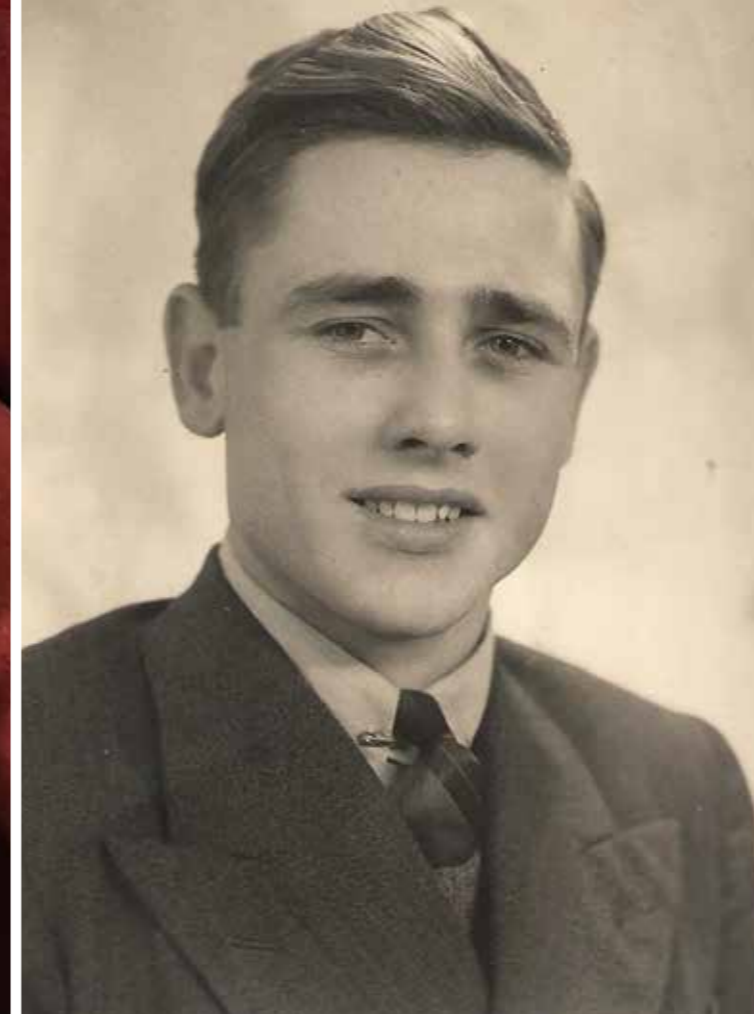
Eddie says, "I worked on the gunnery on HMS Suffolk, initially as a loader but worked my way up to QR3 (Quarters Rating, 3rd class). We had to keep an eye out for German U-boats and aircraft. The seas were extremely rough and it was freezing cold. We were lucky - around 100 ships were lost on that route. It was a dangerous business."

After a refit in London to put up-to-date guns and radar on the ship, HMS

Suffolk headed out to the Far East where it took part in the bombardment of islands which had fallen under the control of the Japanese. During one of these bombardments, the ship came under attack by Japanese torpedo bombers.

Luckily, there were no direct hits and Eddie went on to complete convoy missions to replenish recruits and supplies in Australia and Burma.

He says: "There was good and bad on the ship, but we just had to make do. You didn't really think about what might happen to you. You had a job to



Caption: A young Eddie

do, and you just did it. That's the way it was back then.

"I got to see three quarters of the world and I particularly enjoyed Australia and South Africa. While in Durban, I stayed with a South African school teacher and his wife. They were so kind to me and we stayed in touch for years, with them visiting me in England a number of times."

After the war Eddie became a decorator, a job which he held for over 40 years. Now, as he gets ready for his big 100th birthday on 11 May, he's grateful for the life he's had.



Caption: In Skegness

He says, "I've had a good life, been through a lot and made some great friends along the way. I'm looking forward to celebrating, although I'm not sure exactly what I will be doing. I'm sure I will be receiving a card from the King, which will be a nice thing for sure."

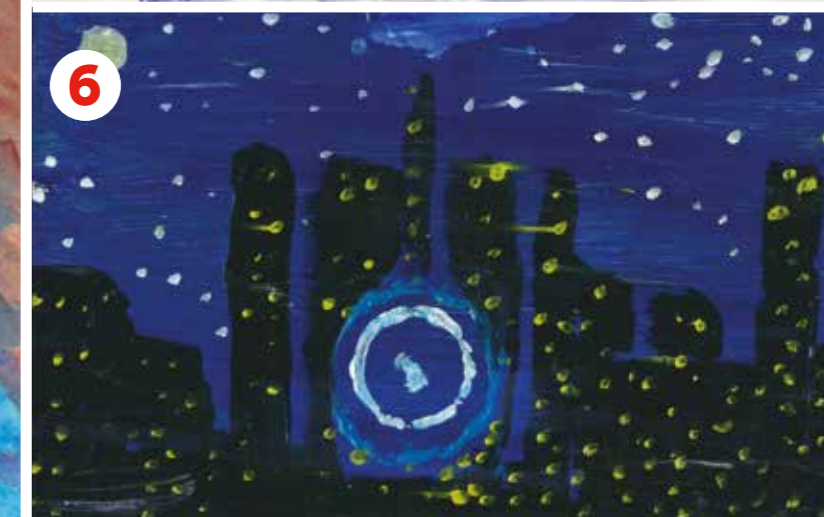
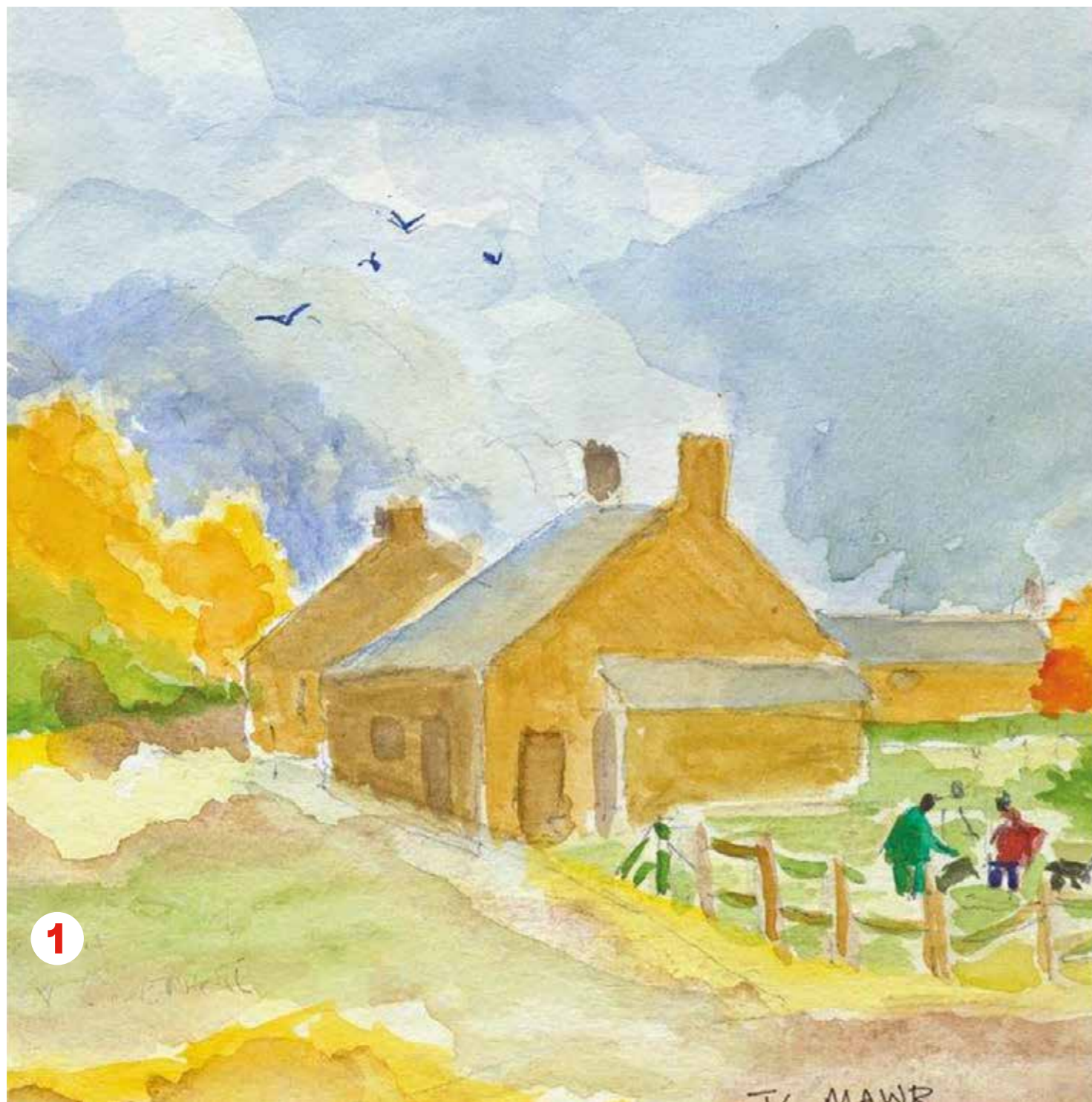
And, despite his long years, he won't be giving up on his creative projects anytime soon.

"The projects keep me occupied. I don't have to worry about doing them quickly - I can just do them in my own time. I love that." 🍷

Artistic flair

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

Captions: **1.** John Hodges - Autumn Machynlleth Powys **2.** Jack Carter - Sunflower **3.** Peter King - Untitled **4.** Donald Edwards - Fantasy Landscape **5.** Eddie Edrich - America's cup **6.** Matthew McGowan - Cityscape





Caption: Chris, centre, with his wife, Kim, and fellow Member, Wayne Perry, at the Cenotaph in London in 2021

A sense of pride

Former Navy Radio Operator, **Chris Maskell**, 64, tells **Lily Roubians** how he feels about becoming a Member

At what age did you join the Navy?

"I was 16 when I joined. I left school on the Thursday and on the Sunday I was at HMS Ganges in Suffolk. I had a great time. I used to box when I was a little kid and when I joined the Navy, they had a competition called the Kelly Squadron Boxing Championships, which I won. I still have that little trophy

presented by the Captain. I went on to win the Navy Novice Boxing Championships.

"When I got to the age of 19, they transferred me to Submarine Service, which was extremely boring, so I quickly transferred into the Royal Air Force and volunteered for a special unit



Caption: Chris, top, with his father and, bottom, as a young boxer

called Tactical Communications. We went all over the world and I loved it. I eventually left when I was 30 as I felt I was too old to still be running around. It was great, though. If I was 16, I'd do it all again."

Tell me about serving the Queen?

"During the Queen's Silver Jubilee, I was on a ship called HMS Antrim. When she toured the Caribbean Islands, we were the guardship for the Royal Yacht. We were in America for about six months. It was a brilliant time.

"Every day the Captain of our ship would go for his evening meal with the

Queen and Prince Philip. I was a radio operator and we used to get all the latest news from the UK then make a mini newspaper and hand it around the ship. One of my friends, Morris Perkins, used to do these funny little cartoons for the newspaper and one day the Queen asked our Captain, "Who does all these little pictures? Bring him for his tea tomorrow."

"So, Morris went and had tea with the Queen! When he came back we asked him what it was like and he just said, 'Oh, I don't talk to you little people no more!'

"Those who served on the Royal Yacht always said what a beautiful lady the Queen was. When they were at sea and out of sight of the journalists, apparently she used to invite them to have parties on the ship. They said she was a really, really good lady."

When did you join Blind Veterans UK?

"It was 2019 I think. I've got a bad recent memory because I had a brain tumour, which is why I lost my sight.

"I've lost a lot of memory from the six years before my operation. I can't remember my parents passing away or my sister. I vaguely remember them being ill, but I just can't remember going to the funerals. I can still remember my time in the forces, though. →

“When I first started losing my eyesight, I was at St Helens Hospital and I’d see the leaflets for Blind Veterans UK and think, “Nah, I won’t bother.” Then someone from the local authority encouraged me to sign up and I still didn’t bother.

“By 2019, I was seriously sight impaired and my eyesight was getting worse. I was at St Helens Hospital and the ophthalmologist sent me to get a certificate. Turns out the woman who gave me the certificate, Maria Pikulski, was a Member. A fantastic lady... I’m getting a bit emotional here as she died last year. Well, she got me signed up.

“All the little things I’ve done with Blind Veterans UK, like going to the Cenotaph for Remembrance, have given me a sense of belonging again. My wife marched with me at the Cenotaph last year as my guide. We both felt so proud. I was even on the telly! My little granddaughter’s always asking me to march up and down the house with her now.

“My three brothers joined the Navy and my grandfather received a commendation from The King for bravery in the Second World War – my nan gave me the telegram from The King congratulating him on his award. I’ve also got medals from my great grandfather. He joined the army

when he was 13 in about 1873. He fought all through the First World War and survived. He got a medal from the Somme, a medal from Ypres. He was 103 when he died.”

What does it mean to be a Member?

“When we were at the Cenotaph last year it was the first time I was with a group of Members. I’d never met most of them before, but it was as if we were all friends. So, to me, being a Member is about being part of something. I always wear my Member’s badge when I’m out. I bought myself the branded baseball hat too – I always have that on!

“After we were at the Cenotaph with the other Members, my wife said to me, ‘You’re all the same! You’re all walking around and talking, and bumping into each other, but you all act as if there is nothing wrong with you!’

“We just get on with life – it’s part of our military training. You just carry on as normal and do the best you can.”

What would you say to anyone who supports the charity?

“I’d pat them on the back! I’ve been involved with fundraising for the charity before, but I’ve got lots of things wrong with my health at the moment, including prostate cancer. Hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, I’ll be out there shaking the bucket again!” 🇬🇧

TATIANA / ADOBE STOCK



Caption: Frozen foods are cheaper and can help avoid waste

Healthy eating on a budget

Our ROVIs and our Centres catering company, Thomas Franks, share ways to buy good food for less

Eating well doesn’t need to break the bank. There are many ways to keep the costs down without compromising your health. Here are some ideas to keep healthy and reduce your food bill.

Frozen fruit and veg

Look down the reduced aisle for vegetables and fruit going cheap

and if you can’t use them immediately most can be frozen. Buying your fruit and veg already frozen can also be a good way to save your pennies. They’re not only cheaper, but as you only use what you need for each meal you will inevitably avoid waste. They are a great time saver too, as they need little – if any – preparation. →

Frozen meat and fish portions

Individual meat and fish portions can be expensive, so either buy large bags and freeze in portions or choose frozen bags of meat fillets and mince.

Try a local butcher

If you have a butcher nearby, they sometimes do cheap deals, and you can always freeze additional portions if you can't use them all straight away.

Shop in the evening and focus on discount sections

The evening is when supermarkets sell food that's close to its sell-by date, such as bread, meat, fish, and

vegetables at a reduced price. Much of it can be frozen if you can't use it straight away.

Buy 'own' brands

Often the difference between basic and premium brands is in the packaging and the price. Switch to supermarket own brands to cut the cost.

Buy in bulk

If your weekly budget allows, try and buy bigger packs of long-life ingredients like rice and pasta. Even canned food is often sold in four or eight packs at a cheaper price per portion.

“If your weekly budget allows, try and buy bigger packs of long-life ingredients like rice and pasta”

Ask for assistance

If you can't see very well then it's often necessary to ask for assistance. Take this opportunity to get some insider knowledge on deals and discounts around the shop.

Plan your meals

Thinking ahead means you're less tempted to overspend. If you know what you're eating each day, it will stop you buying impulse goods. Try and stock up on your staples in one trip to save money and time, too. For those with sight loss, this may mean finding a good way to create a list.

Add flavour with dried spices and herbs

Even the simplest of dishes can be enhanced with a dash of herbs or spices. If you use garlic and ginger a lot, consider buying a jar of chopped ginger and garlic which can be stored in the fridge.

Make up batches of meals

If you don't want to cook different dishes each day, simply double up a

recipe or choose one that serves two to four portions. You can then either keep the rest in the fridge for two to three days or freeze. For those with sight loss it may mean thinking how to label things up, perhaps a thick pen on plastic tubs, elastic bands around things or organising shelves so you know where things are.

Shop seasonally

It stands to reason that in the middle of winter you'll be paying a bit more for berries or tropical fruit. Select fruit and vegetables in season and you'll save money.

Market stalls

If you have a market nearby, shop there for your cheap fruit and vegetables.

Learn to adapt

If a recipe calls for canned tuna but there is a special offer on canned salmon or sardines that week in the supermarket, then change the recipe. The same applies to meat and poultry recipes – experiment to save money. Remember too that vegan dishes using tofu, canned beans or lentils are often cheaper.

Love your leftovers

Recycle your food. With a little adaptation you can transform your leftovers into another meal for the following day. Do not throw the →



Caption: Markets stalls often sell cheap fruit and veg

food out. Leftover vegetables, rice and pasta for example can be added to a soup or stew to bulk it up further.

Package your food well

If you can't see the food well it can be difficult to work out what's in a tin, let alone what the best before date is, so it becomes more important than ever to be organised. Simple solutions such as using a thick pen to write on items or putting one or more elastic bands, pegs, paper clips, string or coloured tape around items to differentiate between products can work well. There are specific items out



MAKSIM KOSTENKO / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Microwaves save money

there to help those with sight loss stay organised. Get in contact for advice.

Use the microwave

If you can't see well, the humble microwave can be easy and safe. It not only saves you time and money but there are also lots of simple meals such as soup and scrambled eggs that can easily be cooked in a microwave. Supermarkets have many canned meals options, as well as microwave rice, so a good hot meal can be simple and cheap, like microwave sausages from Walls which cook in one minute.

Try a slow cooker

The simple slow cooker is very energy efficient and great for soups, stews, curries and more. Of course, everything takes time to cook this way but it's cheap to run, you can do large batches and timing is easy. It's great for those who want a simple on/off controls approach to cooking.

Save on lighting costs

Those with sight issues usually need more lighting, so you could save a little power by preparing your meals during the daytime when less lighting is needed. This is also the case with other tasks such as cleaning and washing up. 🗑️

- **For more money-saving tips, visit blindveterans.org.uk/resources**



Caption: RNIB provide a range of services for carers

Carers Review

Upcoming activities for the families and friends who care for our Members and help them with the day-to-day

What RNIB can do for you and your cared-for person

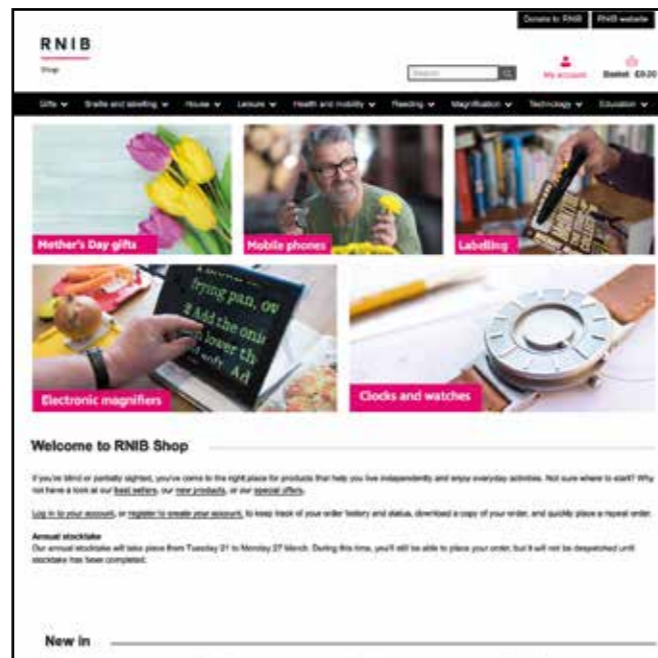
We recently hosted a talk from Nicola from the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) at the Brighton Centre who shared information about their products and services. These include:

- A service offering information, advice, as well as practical and emotional support.
- Living Well with Sight Loss courses.
- Opportunities to connect with others over the phone, online and at events.
- Accessible reading materials, →

such as Talking Books, newspapers and magazines.

- RNIB Bookshare, a free online collection of educational books and resources.
- An online shop selling products to help you live independently.
- A personal transcription service
- An apprenticeships scheme

- **For more information, please visit their website at rnib.org.uk, or contact their helpline on 0303 123 9999, helpline@rnib.org.uk or ask Alexa: "Alexa, call RNIB Helpline".**



Caption: RNIB has an online shop which sells useful products

Carers and families engagement panel

Are you a carer to a Blind Veterans UK Member? Then why not get involved in shaping the support you receive from the charity by joining our carers and families engagement panel?

The panel meets once a month to discuss the needs and experiences of our carers, and suggest ideas for social activities, and how we can best share valuable information with one another.

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

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

National Creative Wellbeing Programme

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

Call us on 01273 391447 for more information and to sign up for any of these activities and hobby circles. Our projects come with VI and reader-friendly instructions and the option of audio instructions on a USB stick.

CRAFT

Spring greetings cards

Spring is in the air and we'll send you

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



Caption: Willow basket

GARDENING

Freesias

Our gardening project this month is delicate trumpet-shaped flowers to brighten up your window sill. Watch them grow into a magnificent display with a scent to lift the spirits, even on the greyest of days. We'll send you everything you need including bulbs, compost and a galvanised bucket. Just add some TLC for a colourful display.

Let us know if you'd like to join our monthly gardening hobby circle to chat with other Members and receive support with this project. →

CRAFT

Stephenson's Rocket – wooden model project

We'll send you everything you need to make your own wooden model locomotive. The Rocket is an early steam locomotive designed by Robert Stephenson and this is a fun and challenging kit with pre-cut wooden pieces which you can sand, slot together and glue. The finished model is 10 inches x 5½ inches x 4 inches (26cm x 14cm x 10cm) and paint is included for those of you who'd like to add some colour.

Let us know if you would like the opportunity to join our woodwork hobby circle to chat with others and receive support with this project.

CRAFT

Willow basket

Make your own round rattan basket in time for Easter. Measuring 6 inches x 6 inches x 3 inches (15cm x 15cm x 8cm), this is a lovely size for storing your chocolate! You'll need to soak the canes provided in a sink or bowl when you are ready to weave the outside of the basket.

CRAFT

Coronation crown mosaic

Celebrate the Coronation of King Charles III with a beautiful crown mosaic designed especially for



Caption: Coronation crown mosaic

Blind Veterans UK. We'll send you everything you need to complete this tactile, eye-catching souvenir which is a flat mosaic on a wooden base measuring roughly 7 inches x 8 inches (18cm x 20cm). No need for any tile cutting as all pieces are ready to use.

ART

Painting for beginners and improvers – February, March, April

If you're new to painting this is a great way into the pastime with some popular and interesting subjects. If you've painted with us before, we hope to broaden your skillset. The themes for spring are 'Winter Wonderland' and 'Tuscan Village' and we'll also introduce you to the VI friendly art of finger painting. Focus on what catches your

interest or give them all a go. Do send us your work to share online and maybe even in *Review* magazine.

You're welcome to sign up for our painting and drawing hobby circle if you'd like to discuss your work with other Members and specialists.

■ **To request an activity pack for any of these projects, or find out more, call us on 01273 391447.**

CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

Please call **01273 391447** if you're interested in joining one of our monthly groups over telephone or Teams video call. Facilitated by the NCWP team, Members with a shared interest meet for a chat and to share tips and ideas.

Gardening

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

Knitting, crochet or weaving

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

Painting and drawing

If you enjoy making art or you're just starting out, this is the space to chat with other VI artists and

exchange ideas, tips and support.

Woodwork

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

Photography

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

If you're visiting our Llandudno or Brighton Centres, you can ask to see sample packs of all our projects above, and some of our past projects too. Just speak to our Centre teams who will be happy to show you.

We love to hear your feedback and see photos of you with your work. Please email us at NCWT@blindveterans.org.uk or snail mail to **Brighton Centre, Greenways, Ovingdean, Sussex, BN2 7BS**, letting us know if you're happy for us to share them on social media.

Wishing you a wonderful spring holiday. 🌸

Lou Kirk-Partridge and the National Creative Wellbeing Programme team

Quiz time

Our quizmaster **Ron Russell** tests your general knowledge

1. **What's the common name of the spring flowering plant, narcissus?**

2. **Which two letters are the highest scoring in Scrabble?**

3. **What did Samuel Pepys bury in his garden to protect it from the Great Fire of London in 1666?**
a) His diaries
b) His wigs
c) His wine and parmesan cheese
4. **Which organ of the body is most commonly known as being useless?**

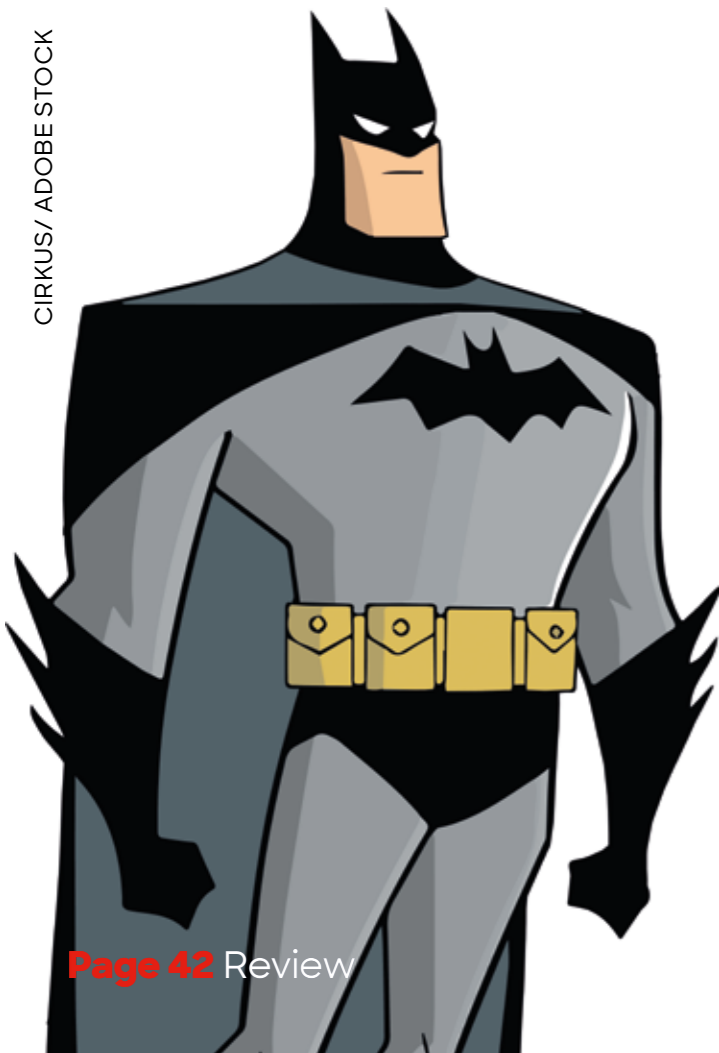
5. **When Batman isn't being Batman, what's his name?**

6. **In which card game might a shoe be used?**
a) Poker
b) Snap
c) Monopoly
7. **Which Prime Minister officially opened the M25?**

8. **What does a horologist repair?**

9. **In which year did conscription end in the UK?**
a) 1946
b) 1954
c) 1960
10. **What does 'April Fools' mean in Cockney rhyming slang?**

Answers on page 2



CIRKUS/ADOBE STOCK

Family news

Owen Hillier who celebrates his 101st birthday on 5 April 2023.

Robert Wheelhouse who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 18 April 2023.

Arthur Lawson who celebrates his 101st birthday on 19 April 2023.

James Fenton who celebrates his 101st birthday on 21 April 2023.

Cynthia Holden who celebrates her 101st birthday on 22 April 2023.

Stanley Booker who celebrates his 101st birthday on 25 April 2023.

John Mott who celebrates his 100th birthday on 26 April 2023.

Thomas Donovan who celebrates his 100th birthday on 29 April 2023.

Joyce Poolman who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 30 April 2023.

William Feeley who celebrates his 101st birthday on 2 May 2023.

All birthday 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.

Dennis Croft who died on 13 February 2023. He was the husband of Mary Croft.

Eileen Jenkins who died on 1 September 2022. She was the wife of David Jenkins.

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

Edward John Abraham of Kidwelly, Dyfed died on 26 February 2023 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Arthur Nigel Adams of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 8 February 2023 aged 89. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

William Adamson of Aberdeen died on 1 February 2023 aged 92. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Kevin Barry Beahan of Preston, Lancashire died on 1 February 2023 aged 91. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Malcolm Bestwick of Rossendale, Lancashire died on 2 February 2023 aged 86. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Cyril Bourne of Buckingham died on 13 January 2023 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

Stanley Bousfield of Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 7 February 2023 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Sidney Cohen of Ilford, Essex died on 9 February 2023 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

George Richard Dale of Wimborne, Dorset died on 19 February 2023 aged 99. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

John Daveridge of Leicester died on 16 January 2023 aged 79. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

John Arthur Dobbins of Birkenhead, Merseyside died on 10 February 2023 aged 86. He served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Peter Donaldson of Bournemouth died on 22 February 2023 aged 63. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Granville Elson of Oldham died on 22 February 2023 aged 90. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Anthony Ewins of Seaford, East Sussex died on 16 February 2023 aged 88. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

James Hannigan of County Antrim died on 28 November 2022 aged 99. He served as a Captain in the Ulster Defence Regiment.

Constance Hatfield of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 31 January 2023 aged 100. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Dennis Francis George Hodgson of Whitby, North Yorkshire died on 30 December 2022 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

Derek Hollamby of Buxton, Derbyshire died on 16 February 2023 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Air Force.

Peter Horn of Cwmbran, Gwent died on 20 February 2023 aged 101. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Colin Illingworth of Lancaster died on 28 February 2023 aged 94. He served as a Cook in the Army Catering Corps.

Eric Johnson of Castleford, West Yorkshire died on 24 January 2023 aged 93. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

Michael Jones of Sherborne, Dorset died on 24 February 2023 aged 101. He served as a Wing Commander in the Royal Air Force.

John Ivor Francis Jones of Newtown, Powys died on 28 January 2023 aged 98. He served as a Private in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

James Smith Kinghorn of Dereham, Norfolk died on 8 September 2022 aged 99. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force. →

John Marsh of Manchester died on 1 February 2023 aged 93. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Peter Matthews of Stevenage, Hertfordshire died on 17 February 2023 aged 90. He served as a Private in the West Yorkshire Regiment (The Prince Of Wales's Own).

Douglas Matthews of Blackwood, Gwent died on 21 February 2023 aged 65. He served as a Private in the Grenadier Guards.

Patrick McSweeney of Bromley, Greater London died on 20 February 2023 aged 97. He served as a Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Peter John Murdoch of Newport, Gwent died on 16 February 2023 aged 93. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Walter Edward Ransom of Blandford Forum, Dorset died on 1 February 2023 aged 99. He served as a L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

John Alexander Rook of Enfield, Middlesex died on 10 February 2023 aged 89. He served as a Pilot Officer in the Royal Air Force.

Robert Shiels of Coleraine, County Londonderry died on 30 December 2022 aged 86. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Howard Smith of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 1 February 2023 aged 89. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Anthony John Stevens of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire died on 1 December 2022 aged 89. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

John Wyndham Tatum of Hove, East Sussex died on 1 December 2022 aged 89. He served as a S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Andrew Decosterd Thomson of Ayr, Ayrshire died on 1 February 2023 aged 100. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Graham West of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 26 February 2023 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Williamson of Brigg, North Lincolnshire died on 15 February 2023 aged 88. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

AGENTURFOTOGRAFIN / ADOBE STOCK



Contact details

Contact address Blind Veterans UK,
3 Queen Square, London,
WC1N 3AR, **0300 111 22 33**

Member Support Hub (MeSH):
01273 391 447

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

A different format?

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

The Brighton Centre 01273 307 811

The Llandudno Centre 01492 868 700

Review Editor: 0300 111 22 33 or
revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

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

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

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



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Did you know, almost two thirds of our donations come from gifts in Wills?

These legacies mean we can continue giving vital, lifelong support to veterans with sight loss



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

To find out more, call our Gifts in Wills Team on: 0300 111 22 33 or email giftsinwills@blindveterans.org.uk