

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

May 2021

**HRH The Duke  
of Edinburgh**

1921-2021



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

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### On the cover

We remember the passing of HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh



# A misanthropic view

'Good things come to those who wait', so the saying goes, and nowhere is this truer than the beginning of the end of our lockdown period. Everywhere we look, things are slowly returning to normal and – whether we like it or not – we are slowly reverting back to a semblance of the world as it was before this began. So, all things considered it should be easy to just pick up the pieces and carry on?

For some of us, this is no doubt true. Some people will indeed just be able to 'adopt, adapt and improve' but others will find it hard to make that first step to – in some cases literally – emerge into the light. Incidentally, I consider myself to be among that last category – after the shops opened for the first time in mid-April visiting my local town centre was a surreal experience.

Watching people jostling into each other, tripping each other up and generally getting in each other's way, I actually found myself wishing it was quieter again. Equally the increased traffic noise from outside my house has begun to irritate me – something it never did before – and once again my peace and quiet has become a valuable commodity.

Now, I have no doubt that this may seem like a misanthropic view to take, and that I should be outside clicking my heels together like Gene Kelly in *Singin' In The Rain* – or Morecambe and Wise if you prefer. My point is that everyone is different and has a different view of the world and how it should be.

I'm going to end on a very different tack. Like all of you I was saddened to hear of the death of HRH Prince Philip The Duke of Edinburgh. Despite his advanced years, there was something about him that made you think he would last forever, and be as solid a part of this country as the bedrock it's built on. I never had the privilege of meeting him, but am sure that if I had been able to do so, it would have been a memorable and enjoyable experience.

This country will be a sadder place without his charismatic figure, and I know that in reality, we shall not see his like again. 🍷

**Chris Gilson**  
Editor



# Your voice counts

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

April is the time of year when we draw the financial year to a close and look back to see how we have done.

In April 2020, the year ahead looked bleak. We were firmly restrained under the first lockdown, national activity had ground to a halt and



**Caption: Nick Caplin**

our best laid plans for the year were looking increasingly unlikely. They were difficult days, but it's at times like these when the good stand to the fore and weave magic.

Our operations teams, supported by our Centre, Engagement and London staff, moved from face-to-face support for our Members to telephone response and the National Support Service. The Brighton Centre staff turned their focus to providing a safe and happy environment for the permanent residents, while battling to keep the pandemic outside the door.

And our Engagement team used its collective wit and skill to press the case for support in every way possible. I really felt for them, they had developed great plans for fundraising through the year that sadly had to be consigned to the shelf

**“Our Engagement team used its collective wit and skill to press the case for support in every way possible”**

as we entered lockdown. Yet they rose to the challenge magnificently, particularly in attracting pandemic-related grants from Trusts and Foundations, and in telling our charity's story to raise interest and gather supporters. Remarkably, by the year end they were within 10 per cent of the income target that we had set them at the start of the year, which is great testament to the staff and to all our supporters.

## **Demanding action**

However, underlying this credible performance is a worrying trend that now demands action. Simply put, our income has not increased as quickly as had been envisaged and planned when we wrote our current strategy in 2017 to transform the lives of thousands more blind veterans.

Most significantly, our income from legacies is consistently more than 25 per cent under our original planning assumption, where legacies provide the largest contribution to our income by some margin. Sustained shortages

in legacy income have a cumulative effect. We have been running a planned deficit for several years, supported by our strong reserves, but we need to take note of the growing income challenge. It is time to take stock and to adjust our sights.

We have used the last few months to examine options for returning to financial balance. Fortunately, our financial reserves remain strong, helped by skilful stewardship of our investments and property and therefore we have time to plan for change in a measured way. There is no need for us to take precipitous action to address the income shortfall.

This financial strength places us at an advantage compared to several charities in the vision and veterans' sectors who have been forced to make swifter change. We will follow a measured approach to change, unless there is a clear opportunity that works to the benefit of the charity and, most importantly, you - our Members.

## **Early steps**

That said, we have been able to take early steps which will help our position. As previously covered, and capitalising on its remarkable success to date, our research



department is setting up as a new and independent charity - BRAVO VICTOR - which is receiving considerable interest and support. BRAVO VICTOR is moving to be self-sufficient and it will also provide benefit to Blind Veterans UK through Intellectual Property income in years to come.

We are conscious that we sit on a valuable asset with our Harcourt St Headquarters in London, yet the pandemic year has demonstrated that we will only require a fraction of its space going forward. We are therefore examining options for this prime site, including leasing the spare capacity or selling it to provide a much smaller headquarters facility elsewhere.

We are fortunate to own this building and could now be able to put its value to better use in supporting our Members. In addition to real estate, we are also looking at how we can reduce costs across the charity. There are many ways that this will be possible, including better use of technology and reductions in the requirement for staff to travel.

We have also started a review into all service delivery areas of the charity. Building on the experience from our successful National Support Service throughout the pandemic, we are



**Caption: Sir Arthur Pearson, 1st Baronet, in 1918**

“This financial strength places us at an advantage compared to several charities in the vision and veterans’ sectors”

going to develop this support to Members further, in and close to their homes, as well as adjust and develop our Centre services. This review is designed to improve and protect the charity in the future and to ensure we will always be here to support Members for as long as we are needed.

### **How you can be involved**

I value your thoughts and ideas and want you to be involved in this review as much as possible. In 2020 we successfully trialled two community Member panels, which provided the opportunity for our veterans to provide feedback on local and national services and feed into future plans.

I am delighted that these panels will now be rolled out from June 2021, with the ambition to have one in every community by the end of the year. The panels are open to all Members and the feedback gained will help shape our future services.

I would therefore encourage you to consider joining a panel. More information about these panels can be found later in this issue of Review, and your local community team will be in touch with you directly when a panel is set up in your local area.

Alternatively, if you would prefer to feedback on any aspect of our service individually then you also have the option of using our Feedback email address which you can write to directly at [feedback@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:feedback@blindveterans.org.uk).

Change can be very unsettling, especially when it affects things that we have known and become accustomed to. We will all be working hard to ensure that the changes being considered are consistent with the values established by Sir Arthur Pearson at the charity’s foundation in honing our ability to achieve victory over blindness. All parts of the organisation will be working closer together over the next few years to make sure we have a charity that we can be confident will best serve those we support for another 100 years. And we will continue to provide high quality, national support to you, our Members, as and where you need it, in order to help you to achieve the independence and fulfilment that you deserve. 🇬🇧

# An honour and a pleasure

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

Having read our Chief Executive Nick Caplin's opening piece, you can probably anticipate that my note for the Review this month might be a little more serious than I sometimes manage. In fact, if I seem a little downbeat at the outset, bear with me. I am drafting this just prior to HRH The Duke of Edinburgh's funeral and, as a Deputy Lieutenant for Hampshire, I have been involved in the process of changing plans for the local civic aspects of his death in the context of our emergence from lockdown.

It has been an interesting week. It is an open secret that arrangements surrounding Prince Philip's death had long been on the stocks but – in the actual event – two things particularly have thrown them out of kilter. The first, of course, is the Royal Family's absolute intent to show

an example to us all of compliance with the Government's Covid-19 rules, no matter how restrictive. The second is the fact that no matter how official planners might have tried to interpret what should be organised, few managed to anticipate how this marvellously focussed and dedicated man had his own, far more connected, view of what would be right on the day. As has been so often the case, I sense he has been a far better judge of British and Commonwealth public opinion than many commentators.

## **An honour and pleasure**

I confess to a prejudice. I had the honour and pleasure of meeting him on several occasions. On most of these I was of little concern to him. He was, quite rightly, far more interested in connecting with the men and women with whom I served and, perhaps as importantly given some



**Caption: Chairman Paul Luker's father driving HRH Prince Philip at RAF Tengah in 1959**

of the circumstances, their families. But two stories stand out for me. The first concerns my Dad. In 1959, Prince Philip made a formal tour of Singapore in the run-up to its independence, during which he visited RAF Tengah where my father was based.

Dad was selected to be his official driver throughout the tour. That alone was a moment of great pride for him – but it was eclipsed by the fact that the Duke delayed his departure with his entourage to take time to speak to my father personally and thank him. A little thing for HRH. A massive moment for a

corporal MT driver in the RAF.

The second concerns me. The current Mrs Luker and I had been invited to Buckingham Palace as guests of the Royal Marines in 2004 when they celebrated their and the Duke's birthday (their Captain General). I was invited because I had the Commando Helicopter Force in my command and, as it turned out, I was the only officer there not dressed in Royal Navy or Royal Marines uniform. After Beating Retreat, we retired to St James's Palace for a reception, at which the Duke of Edinburgh



made clear that he was intent on meeting everyone. Except, it seemed, us. Having walked every room and spoken to everyone else, it looked as though he was on his way out when he suddenly darted towards us and stopped immediately in front of me, the only officer in the Palace in RAF uniform. With an almost cartoon twinkle in his eye, in a stage whisper he said, “What are you doing here? Come to the wrong party?”. While the media would probably have been aghast, we were delighted. As any military person would recognise, he used humour to make us feel especially welcome.

### **Ardently traditional**

He was, of course, a far more complex man. On the one hand he could be ardently traditional. He knew the value of customs, formality and routine; at first hand, he knew how that binds servicemen together. But he was also a subtle moderniser. Only now are we, the public, gaining an insight into the depth and breadth of his vision and energy when it came to driving change. I think the real gift he had was in understanding two critical elements. The first was that these values need not be sacrificed in making change; indeed, they can be the underpinning that ensures it is effective. The second was timing: knowing not just that change

becomes inevitable but, much more importantly, in judging the moment when it is right.

I can't pretend that we, the trustees, come close to the Duke's sense of timing or rightness. But I feel sure he would applaud two aspects of what we now must do. The first is to confront the reality of the situation that we currently face and that we predict we will face for some time.

As Nick says, that reality starts with how much income the charity is likely



**Caption: Paul Luker**

“With an almost cartoon twinkle in his eye, in a stage whisper he said, “What are you doing here? Come to the wrong party?””

to receive in the coming years. In the last four years we have pursued a strategy which involved both using our financial reserves to subsidise annual activity and in investing in new income-generation initiatives. Sadly, despite some magnificent work by our engagement team, the stark fact is that we continue to spend far more than we are bring in. We are unlikely to grow our donation base much and, as the public's recognition of the military diminishes, we are probably going to see some reduction. As you all know from these pages, we are very active in developing new income streams, but the fact is we now need to cut our cloth differently.

The second is that we have had a wake-up call in the last year because of how we have been obliged to deliver services. Far from being a bad news story, I think this is something we should be trumpeting. Our staff's agility and flexibility has come to the fore. This is something of which to be immensely proud; it would be a

dreadful mistake to just consign this to a temporary blip. In truth, it has shown us that we can probably do our work better by moving on from our old ways of working, reaching more members, more frequently, and with more effect.

### **Better protected**

In business shareholders are often told by their Board that their dividends will be better protected by necessary economies. Although we have to be business-like, Blind Veterans UK is not business-driven. True we have to economise in some areas. But the absolute purpose here is little to do with an overweening business ethos.

It is entirely to do with ensuring that we can continue to deliver relevant, high-quality services in the best way possible, into the future. Every one of those four elements sits at the heart of what we are about to embark upon: relevance, quality, effectiveness and future-proofing. Clearly another crucial driver is also affordability but the evidence of the pandemic years is that we can do this differently, without compromising on our values. In doctrinal language, we might look at changing the ways and means but we remain committed to the ends. At which point the Duke of Edinburgh, while agreeing with the intent, would probably call me a pompous arse. 🍷

# Royal memories

HRH Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh visited our Brighton Centre twice. We present a selection of images from those visits

Views 1-8 show the visit of HRH The Queen and Prince Philip to Ovingdean on 19 July, 1985 at the formal opening of the new South Wing. Views 9-10 were taken on a previous visit 23 years earlier on 16, July 1962.





# Beware of scams

Have you received a strange call lately asking for money? Maybe an odd letter or e-mail? **Alice Tow** explains more

It can be hard to tell if something is a scam - that's why they work and catch many people out. Fraudsters are cunning and adapt quickly to convince you into parting with your money.

This can all sound quite scary, but Age UK has a very useful page on its website to help us learn about scams and fraud. It shares information about pension scams, phone scams and cold calls, doorstep scams, staying safe online, investment scams and postal

scams. There is also information about what to do if you think you've been scammed and what you can do if you're worried that someone is being scammed.

You can order printed copies of any of its guides and factsheets by calling the Age UK advice line on **0800 678 1602**. Lines are open 8am-7pm, 365 days a year.

■ **Age UK: Scams and fraud page:**  
[bit.ly/3edGkoD](https://bit.ly/3edGkoD)

# Our services moving forwards

A letter from your Chief Executive, Major General (rtd)  
**Nick Caplin CB**

## Dear Members,

I trust that you have felt the care of Blind Veterans UK during this difficult time. Even though we have been unable to see most of you in person, in our centres or your homes, we have strived to ensure your safety and wellbeing through our National Support Service during the winter lockdown.

Going forwards, we want to do as much as we can for you while being cautious as the vaccination programme rolls out and Government restrictions are gradually lifted. It is important to understand that although many of our Members, staff and volunteers are now vaccinated, there are still those who are not, including their families. At a time when we are still learning about the impact of the vaccine on transmission, it is right we continue to be cautious in our approach.

## The next six months

Our learning from the last year has shown how impactful and successful

our remote work as part of the National Support Service has been. We'll be working with you – our Members - as well as staff over the coming months to see how we can develop our services to continue with aspects of our remote work in conjunction with face-to-face support moving forwards.

## Over the next six months, we will:

- Continue providing remote support to Members through remote telephone social groups, the National Creative Project and the Remote Rehabilitation Service.
- Where urgent needs cannot be met remotely, we will prioritise those Members for essential face-to-face support and Centre stays. Staff and volunteers can only meet our veterans in person alongside the established risk management process and with approval from the Community Team Leader.
- Hold consultations with Members and staff to gather feedback and test different ways of





blended remote telephone and face-to-face support. You'll notice in this month's edition of the Review information about new Community Member Panels being rolled out nationally. These panels provide the opportunity for Members to provide feedback on local and national services and feed into future plans for Blind Veterans UK.

- Ensure that social groups will remain online. 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.

## Our Centres

Our Centres are once again looking forward to opening their doors at a reduced capacity from May 2021 via the Critical Care Pathway to those of you 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. We are continuing to monitor closely to see when the restrictions are eased or lifted entirely.

The Leader Buildings at the Llandudno Centre are now available for Members and their families to book independent

## “Our Centres are once again looking forward to opening their doors at a reduced capacity from May 2021”

holidays. Think Airbnb but with facilities designed for you in a beautiful part of North Wales. The stay would be at the reduced rate of £36 per person per night as self-catering. Transport will not be provided and there will be no access to the main building. If you would like to enquire about booking an independent holiday, please contact Llandudno Reception Desk on **01492 868 700** who will be able to confirm eligibility and availability. The pathway for this service will be through a conversation with your case worker.

The Centres currently need to help those in greatest need, but we are continuing to monitor closely to see when the restrictions are eased or lifted entirely. Both Centres look forward to welcoming you back.

## 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 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, Members can always get in touch with us if they need anything. Please call us on **01273 391 447**, Monday-Friday 9am-4pm.

## Events in 2021

We explained in February of this year that we will not be planning formal Reunions in 2021 following consultation with regional staff and a panel of Members. Even with the vaccination programme well underway and restrictions not allowing large gatherings to take place until at least June, it would be unfair for Reunions past this date to go ahead when many others before June would have had to be cancelled. Regarding how we will commemorate the Cenotaph weekend, we are waiting for a clearer picture of Government guidance later in the year before making any plans. We will also wait to hear from the Royal British Legion as to what the event might look like this year.

## Regular review of services

We are mindful that we must continue to be flexible with our approach, as this is an unprecedented time and anticipating changing government guidance can be challenging. Therefore, we will continue to review our services regularly over the next six months and

take into consideration the progress of UK Government and devolved administrations' plans.

We also recognise the potential that localised measures could be implemented in the future should there be a surge in Covid cases in a particular area. Our risk management process and community structure allows local teams to recommend changes to services in their local area if a high level of cases is causing concern, or Government guidance alters for their locality.

Your well-being and that of our staff and volunteers is our priority. What is offered, at the various alert levels, is designed to provide the support that you need while protecting you, our staff and volunteers.

## And finally...

A huge thank you from me and all the staff for your patience, for your support and camaraderie and for the encouragement that you are giving each other during difficult days. The Blind Veterans UK family is remarkable. 🇬🇧

Yours Sincerely,



**Nick Caplin**  
Chief Executive



**Caption: We need your input to help shape the future of our charity**

# Calling all Members

Would you like an opportunity to help shape future services for Blind Veterans UK? **Michele Manville** explains how you can

Last year we successfully ran two community Member panel pilots. These provided a structured opportunity for our veterans to feed back their thoughts about local and

national services and give input into future plans for Blind Veterans UK. The overriding consensus from the Members who joined was this is a welcomed opportunity and

they would like to see it become a permanent feature.

We are delighted to announce that it has been agreed to roll out the Members' panels nationally, this may be one per region initially or one per each community team. In addition, it is envisaged that a national Members panel, made up of representatives of local community team panels will be created once local panels are established in time also.

It is anticipated that community Member panels will initially be delivered remotely in similar vein to the remote social groups, although the opportunity to meet face-to-face will be considered when it is safe to do so.

Through the challenging circumstances of the last year we have seen that coming together through remote means enables some veterans to be able to join the panels who would not normally participate. For those who are not able, or do not wish to join Member panel groups, individual opportunities to feed into panels has proved successful too.

## Ideas for consideration

The panels provide a forum to discuss policies being considered and for our veterans to discuss and present ideas for consideration. We are really keen

**“We are really keen to develop a strong mechanism for our Members to know how to feed into the charity”**

to develop a strong mechanism for our Members to know how to feed into the charity and ensure they receive feedback.

We feel this is especially important and exciting as we consider how best to use our resources as we carefully ease out of the pandemic. The panels are open to all, and attendance at the meetings can be as flexible as you determine. Your local community team will be in touch with you directly when a panel is set up.

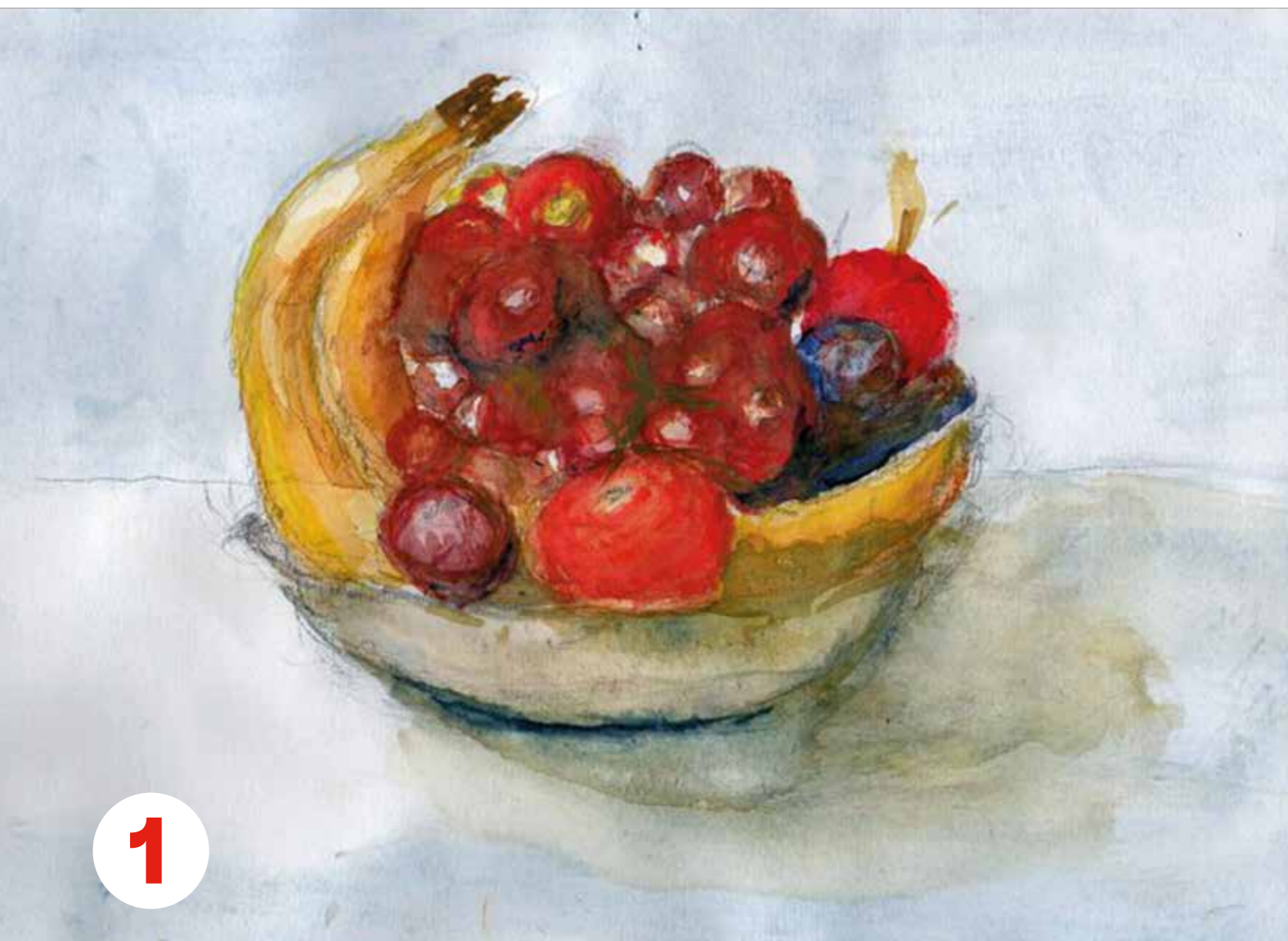
I asked Member Ted Davies, for a comment after he participated in the panel. He said,

“I was honoured to be invited to join the pilot panel of Members and enjoyed the chance to put forward my views on Blind Veterans UK. I am proud to be a volunteer and speaker both for our charity and my involvement in assisting the charity staff in working for the Members' interest. My life is enriched by my involvement in our work together.” 🇬🇧

# The gallery

We present a selection of original artworks produced by our veterans for the National Creative Project

**Captions:** 1. Maurice Dawe - Still Life, 2. Alan Warren - Time passes by at Felixstowe, 3. Brian Heather - Dial M for Murder, 4. Microsoft Teams  
5. Peter O'Malley - Eireen Field Kanku Dai, 6. Maurice Dawe - Still Life, 7. Rita Scarratt - The Ice Puddle





**Photo caption: Jim and McIntosh skulling on the Thames at Putney**

# The blind cattleman - the story of Jim Scrymgeour

Information and Archives Executive **Rob Baker** tells the story of Jim Scrymgeour, who overcame his blindness with great success

Our early veterans sometimes went on to have careers in occupations which were not traditionally associated with the blind, and one such was James Tindal Steuart Scrymgeour. Known as 'Jim',

Scrymgeour was one of many Antipodeans who came to us and spent time at our hostel in Regent's Park 'learning to be blind' before, in most cases, returning to live in their home country.

Born in 1885 in New Zealand, Jim Scrymgeour had worked on the land prior to the outbreak of the First World War. His family had moved to Queensland in 1908 and together with his brother Jim managed pastoral properties there on behalf of their father. Jim specialised in looking after, breeding and exhibiting the cattle, and his brother in managing the sheep.

Jim enlisted in 1915 but a severe drought resulted in it being necessary for him to remain working and his service was delayed for 12 months. After this he served as a Trooper in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Australian Light Horse regiment in Palestine. He lost his sight in the Jordan Valley campaign in July 1918 after suffering a bullet wound to the head while going to the aid of a fellow soldier. He was also wounded in the ankle. Jim then spent several months in a military hospital, battling with malaria.

## Braille and typewriting

Jim came to our hostel in October 1919 and stayed with us there until November 1920. He learned Braille and typewriting and trained in poultry farming. In addition to his formal training while with us, Jim, who had always been a keen sportsman, participated enthusiastically in the activities we offered - in particular rowing.

After returning to Australia, and following a period of ill-health, Jim was keen to start the marathon work of building up and managing a shorthorn stud. He acquired a property called "Netherby" near Warwick, in Queensland. He started breeding cattle and horses there and before long was winning competitions in the area. His focus was on shorthorn cattle while his bull, Netherby Royal Challenge, went on to win six grand championships at the Royal Queensland Show in Brisbane. Jim built up a 400-acre stud and was also a regular and highly-regarded judge at agricultural shows, including the leading shows in Brisbane and Sydney. His stud set an Australian record price in 1954 for a bull named Netherby Mark Twain, which sold for 5,300 guineas.

Jim went on to continued success and competition wins with his cattle, and he wrote several books of autobiography, including about his military experiences and, in 'Reminiscences of St Dunstan's', about his time with us in Regent's Park. Written in the third person, this is a notably lively and vivid read, and a valuable record of this early stage in our history.

Jim also served as President and later Patron of the Warwick →

sub-branch of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, and in 1954 he was awarded the Order of the British Empire for services to the cattle industry. At the time he said "I feel deeply honoured by what has happened. After passing through St Dunstan's Hostel when the First World War ended, I felt confident that I could breed good cattle. It was an ambitious dream in those days, but I was convinced I could do something in a humble way towards assisting and improving the standards of the cattle industry in Queensland."

**One of the most successful breeders**

Jim died in 1965, having become one of the most successful cattle breeders in Australia. Our then Chairman Lord Fraser, writing in his book 'My Story of St Dunstan's' told of his ability to judge cattle - 'He could tell the fine points of a shorthorn by running his hands over it - and he had wonderful remembering hands'. He also paid tribute to Jim's strength of character in continuing to pursue his chosen career despite losing his sight - 'He had been to an agricultural college before the War, and cattle-breeding was his future. Blindness raised obstacles that ingenuity could overcome. To find his way to the various yards in his stud farm he put up a series of overhead



**Caption: Jim Scrymgeour at St Dunstan's, London in 1920**

wires with running ropes hanging down.'

He was survived by his two daughters, Diana Lugsdin and Patricia Maclean, both of whom continued the long family tradition of agricultural interests. As Jim states in Reminiscences of St Dunstan's: "To St Dunstan's is a grateful tribute paid, for "Victory over Blindness", the motto of that glorious institution".

With grateful thanks to Jim's grandson Graham Lugsdin for help with information and for his kind permission to reproduce family photos of Jim. These and other photos and a digitised interview with Jim have been added to our archives. 🇬🇧

# What we do best

Unable to hold our annual Founder's Day Awards as usual, this year we recognised our Member's achievements in a different way as **Mark Wheeler** reports.

Over 100 years ago, Sir Arthur Pearson, the Founder of Blind Veterans UK, secured our first home, St Dunstan's Lodge in Regents Park and we moved there at the end of March 1915 - for decades our beneficiaries were known as St Dunstaners. The charity was founded on Sir Arthur's principles and his belief that sight loss should not prevent anyone from leading the life they choose.

At Blind Veterans UK we have always supported and celebrated the principles of Sir Arthur, and have taken the opportunity to recognise the achievements of blind veterans at this time of year.

This year, despite not holding our awards, we wanted to mark Founder's Day and celebrate the spirit of so many of our veterans and the way they have overcome the challenges of the pandemic.

**Joining our family**

Our veterans talk about joining the Blind Veterans UK family, and this year



**Photo caption: Christine Collins has supported us by creating art to be auctioned**

has seen that family support each other and the wider community more than ever and in many ways. This includes veterans like Garry Stevenson who has been virtually training and supporting others to learn skills such as wood turning.

Hundreds of our Members have →

“Having a creative outlet has been so important for many of us over the last year”

also been supporting each other by simply picking up the phone and making a call. Knowing that a friendly voice is at the end of the line is a tonic during the isolation of lockdown.

Blind veteran Simon Mahoney stepped forward right at the start of the pandemic and has now made over 150 hours of befriending calls to fellow blind veterans.



**Caption: David and Jean Gant walked 75 miles for us for the 75th anniversary of VE Day**

Barrie Hathaway has been supporting his local community team in welcoming a new blind veteran to the charity who joined us during lockdown. His weekly calls have been a great support to her and helped her begin to come to terms with her sight loss.

When lockdown started, Sonia Griffith-Jones was concerned about those veterans who live on their own and helped set up two “buddies club” calls each week, keeping all those veterans connected.

### A shining example

Our veterans have also set a shining example by giving back to their local communities over the last year.

Normally blind veteran Ken Facal is a physical training instructor at his local gym. Throughout lockdown he turned to YouTube to provide free workout videos to help people to stay fit and healthy. Other veterans, like John Hardy, have taken more direct action to support their local community on the ground by supporting with things like pharmacy and food deliveries.

Last year we were all inspired by the fantastic fundraising achievements of Captain Sir Tom Moore and many blind veterans wanted to do their bit to give something back to the charity that



**Caption: Our Founder, Sir Arthur Pearson**

supports them. These included Colin Hawkins who walked 63 laps of his local park in time for his 63rd Wedding Anniversary and raised over £4,500 for Blind Veterans UK.

Having a creative outlet has been so important for many of us over the last year and our National Creative Project has supported hundreds of blind veterans to continue or even take up new hobbies. Some veterans like Christine Collins decided to create art to be auctioned in support of Blind Veterans UK.

After receiving support with shopping and pharmacy deliveries in the early days of lockdown, David and Jean Gant decided to join a community of

blind veterans to walk 75 miles for the 75th anniversary of VE Day as their way of giving back.

### Like no other

The charity has pulled these stories together to release a short film highlighting the achievements to allow us to still mark Founder's Day. You can enjoy this film at [www.blindveterans.org.uk/foundersday](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/foundersday)

The last year has been like no other. But one thing that hasn't changed is our blind veterans' ability to achieve truly amazing things and inspire us all while proving that those principles, set out by Sir Arthur Pearson over 100 years ago, still reflect the spirit of our blind veterans today. 🍷

# In Your Community



**Caption: John Nicol rescued the family on board the yacht using his own boat**



**Caption: The moment when the yacht exploded in Conwy Harbour**

## Blind veteran saves family of three from yacht inferno

A blind veteran from Conwy helped to rescue three family members from a yacht which caught on fire in Conwy Estuary on Saturday, 3 April.

John Nicol was travelling from Conwy Harbour to Puffin Island with his friend when they noticed the yacht on fire in the distance.

The pair turned around and went towards the uncontrollable fire. John says: "I am a member of North Wales Cruising club and every year we go out for our first sailing of the year to check that the yachts are fit to sail after the winter. Just as we set out my friend pointed out the fire so we immediately went over to see if we could help".

John managed to safely get the mother and son of the family onto his boat before providing the skipper of the yacht with a fire extinguisher.

Unfortunately, the six-foot flames were far too fierce, but John managed to help the skipper onto his boat moments

before the yacht exploded. John says: "I have sailed for 50 years and was a coast guard for 18. Luckily, I know all the procedures, so I was able to give the coast guard all the information they needed. It all happened so quickly. It was awful what happened, and I feel dreadfully sorry for the family but luckily no one was hurt".

## Armed Forces Day remote celebration event

We'd like to invite you all to take part in a telephone event to help celebrate Armed Forces Day, which we'll be holding on Friday 25 June at 1100. As you are aware, because of the current pandemic and the government's advice on social distancing, large gatherings are still not permitted so events surrounding Armed Forces Day, which is usually celebrated in typical flamboyant military fashion on the last Saturday in June, will be severely curtailed this year. As a result, we are inviting our Members to join us in a celebration of song, humour and reminiscence with an opportunity to enjoy the company of your fellow Members.

The event will last for approximately one hour and if you would like to join



**Caption: Member Simon Brown in his first game as Captain of Leeds Rhinos rugby team. Played against Wakefield on 25 April, it was a draw.**

in via your telephone, please get in touch with your community teams at the earliest opportunity and book your place as numbers are limited for what we hope will be a fun-filled tribute to our Armed Forces, both past and present!

■ **The event will also be available via a Freephone telephone number for a month, starting on Friday 25 June, by dialling 0800 160 1178.** 📞

# 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.

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](mailto:natalie.piedade@blindveterans.org.uk)  
or  
[nick.caplin@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:nick.caplin@blindveterans.org.uk)



# Staying powered up

In an age where batteries are in just about everything, what do you need to know? **Bryan Kilburn** explains how to get the most out of them

There are many different sizes of batteries, and just as many manufacturers and often it doesn't really matter which make of battery you use for low power items such as a television remote. More important devices that we rely on, such as magnifiers, should have better quality batteries installed. Cheap pound shop batteries will last hardly any time and may not even work to start with. Rechargeable batteries are good in some situations, but people often don't realise that they're slightly lower voltage and therefore do not perform as well as standard batteries.

We would always recommend a good make, non-rechargeable battery to use in your magnifier. You can buy batteries online at retailers such as Amazon or eBay, buying in bulk for much less cost.

## Tricky to do

Batteries can be changed in most items including the humble liquid level indicator, but often this can be tricky to do. If you're finding this difficult and don't have anyone to help you with this, then often the local shop keeper will sell you the battery and put it in for you – it's always worth asking. I also know many people who use their CCTV to see what they're doing when changing those fiddly little batteries.

I'm sure that you all know about the talking watch shop that we recommend for changing the battery in talking watches. We need to be helping the planet by avoiding new items when a new battery would work. There are safety considerations with batteries, and they do have some nasty contents such as acid and lead. Never charge non rechargeable batteries and dispose of batteries either responsibly at a local shop that has a recycling point, or by following your local refuse instructions. Small batteries can be very dangerous to children so please keep this in mind. 🍷

# Bonding over Alexa

There is much talk of Alexa and we've run many great articles about her in Review – now **Bryan Kilburn** looks at points made on this subject by our Members



ADOBE STOCK / TANAONTE

## Caption: We all use Alexa differently

We have been running Alexa phone groups over the lockdown period when our veterans have been sharing their use of Alexa and talking about their exciting discoveries together. It has been clear that no two people use it the same - some people just use Alexa for the time and radio, others use it for all sorts. The beauty of this type of equipment is that how you use it is up to you.

Here is a list of the top features our Alexa groups identified as useful to them -

- Announcing time and date

- Listening to local and international radio
- Weather forecasts
- Reminders and alarms
- Kitchen timer
- Looking up information and interesting facts
- News
- Music, available with appropriate subscription
- Looking up and following recipes
- Sporting news including football results and fixtures
- Access to the Bible and daily verses
- Bus and train times
- Talking books, currently only with subscription service
- Linking to Sonic 2 speaker/USB player for portable speaker.
- Adjusting Alexa's speed of speech

There are many other features and it would be impossible to mention them all here. Remember, you can already get Review on your Alexa.

For more information and advice please contact the Member Support Hub (MeSH) on **01273 391 447**. 🍷

# National Creative Project programme for May

## Creative Activities. Creative Book. Creative Hobby Circles.

Welcome to the May programme of visually impaired-friendly activities to get involved with from home.

Call our Bookings team on **01273 391 500** 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 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](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)



**Caption: Grow your own tumbling tomatoes**

## Gardening

### Tumbling tomatoes

Spring is here and it's time for planting produce to enjoy over the summer. This quarter's project is tiny tumbling tomatoes. Enjoy watching your plant grow, the smell of the leaves and finally, delicious and colourful fruits, all on your windowsill. Your kit will include everything you need. During the project there will be the opportunity to join a phone chat group with other veterans and our project team to discuss how your tomatoes are growing, and all other things garden related.

## Art and Crafts

### Flags of Hope

Get involved with this simple craft

project creating designs using oil pastels on fabric flags for display 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.

It also features the opportunity to take part in a group telephone chat with other Members to exchange ideas, support, and encouragement.

## Creative writing

### Wordsmiths

Have fun trying out some poetry using our suggested words as a starting point for each line. This sort of poetry is called 'acrostics' and if you enjoy writing or word puzzles, this is the project for you. We will send you a project pack with suggested words as a starting point 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 about ideas and our project team will be on hand with guidance and support.

## Art:

### Painting for beginners and improvers – March- May project.

The themes include seascape with yachts, springtime, self-portraits with objects, and fantasy. These are painting challenges with support, for you to learn to paint or improve your skills. With your permission your work may appear in our online project gallery.

We will send a painting project kit and you may use your own materials too. With a new project every 2-3 months, sign up for just one or for each time. There will be the chance to meet other Members and our Art and Crafts instructors for chat and tips by phone or video call if you would like.

## Craft:

### BirdBox – A woodwork project

A bird box or bird feeder kit from [ritohobby.co.uk](http://ritohobby.co.uk) is available for you to assemble at home.

The pack includes our own adapted set of instructions, all the necessary softwood pieces for one bird box 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 Crafts: Collaboration in colour – 'Yellow and Green'**

Take part in a collaborative multimedia art piece inspired by patchwork quilt panels.

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 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. Please call our Bookings team on **01273 391 500** 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](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp).**

### **Blind Veterans UK CREATIVE BOOK – open for contributions**

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

### **To inspire you to create a piece for our Creative Book, the theme for May is 'A Sense of Place'**

Feel free to capture what is around you and what has become important to you during the pandemic. Do you have a regular walk that you could capture on camera or describe in words? If you are feeling artistic maybe try capturing it on paper by tracing your route. Try closing your eyes and in a single line, map your walk from start to finish. Tracing it in your mind and on the paper. Feel free to look back at previous themes to inspire you to create a contribution.

Previous themes have been:

- **What has kept me going**
- **Hopes and dreams**
- **Spot the difference**

Please email your contributions to: [creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk)



ADOBE STOCK / JEDNURG

**Caption: What's kept you going through lockdown? The NCP would like to hear**

Or send it by post to **Blind Veterans UK, Unit 1 The Courtyard, Woodlands, Bradley Stoke, Bristol BS32 4NQ** and we'll send you a submission form. 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 391 500** 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.

**Basketry. Creative writing. Gardening. Knitting. Model-making. Woodturning. Mosaic. Painting. Woodwork.**

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 pros 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](mailto:mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk)**

You can see more information about all the projects above, stories and quotes from Members participating, and see galleries of work from some of the projects at [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)

Spring is the time for new beginnings and these projects are open to you whether you are a seasoned crafter, artist, poet, gardener, or a complete beginner. If you are not sure about your creative skills but you fancy 'having a go' please do. Our NCP team and fellow Members will be there to support and encourage you. You might just surprise yourself. 🍌

# Folding can be fun

The art of origami is a relaxing pastime, which is also surprisingly simple to do. Our **Well-Connected** team shows you how

Origami is the art of paper folding, which is often associated with Japanese culture. In modern usage, the word “origami” is used as an inclusive term for all folding practices, regardless of their culture of origin.

## Instructions to make an Origami car:

**Step 1:** Start with a square sheet of paper.

**Step 2:** Fold the paper in half, top to bottom, then unfold.

**Step 3:** Now fold the paper in half again, left to right, and unfold again.

**Step 4:** Fold the bottom edge to the centre crease.

**Step 5:** Diagonally fold down the left and right side of the bottom flap. This forms the wheels.

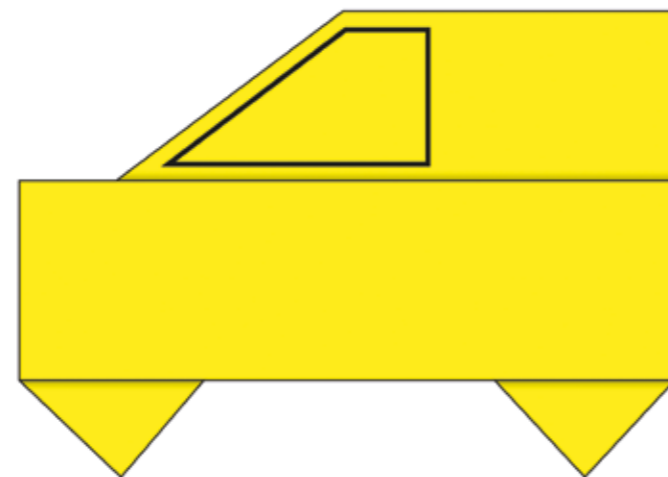
**Step 6:** Fold down the top part at the horizontal crease, covering the wheels entirely.

**Step 7:** Now fold about three quarters of it back up.

**Step 8:** Fold down the top right corner like the picture.

**Step 9:** Turn the figure over and now you know how to make an origami car. Just draw on the windows and doors and you can design your own dream car! 🚗

■ For more information and additional models: [origamiway.com/easy-origami-for-beginners.shtml](https://origamiway.com/easy-origami-for-beginners.shtml)



**Caption: Fold your own car with our guide**



ADOBE STOCK / RAWPIXEL.COM

**Caption: Meeting friends and family after so long could be a challenge**

# Taking it easy as we re-emerge from lockdown

It has been a long road for all of us through the lockdowns. And as we tentatively re-emerge into the world, there will be mixed feelings. You may be full of enthusiasm and excitement and ready to leap back into socialising. Or you may have felt well suited to the enforced introversion and isolation and

feel fear at the thought of expectation and pressure to resume social life. Or, you may feel a mixture of both, and everything in between.

**Here are a few thoughts to consider as we take those first steps.**

Anxiety is normal. And can be



useful. It helps us process fears and worries. And, in these incredibly challenging times, it has been present in all our lives. Allowing ourselves to acknowledge our anxiety as a normal and understandable response to change (even if it is change we want) is the first thing we should do.

Remind yourself that you can ease yourself in gradually. You do not have to say yes to every invitation or plan. And you can change your mind. What might feel ok one day, might not feel ok when the time comes. And, that's ok. Practice a simple phrase that you can use when you feel unsure or unready. For example, 'Thanks for asking me to coffee, but I am not quite ready to start socialising much



**Caption: We will be able to socialise again**

**“You are not the only one who will be feeling like this and we need to be kind and sensitive to each other”**

yet. I'll really look forward to spending time with you when it feels right.' Or suggest something you might feel more comfortable with, like a walk in the open air.

Being open about our understandable anxieties allows others to do the same. You are not the only one who will be feeling like this and we need to be kind and sensitive to each other.

This is also important when you do go out. You don't have to perform or feel any way other than how you are at that time. By being open about how you are really feeling will enable more relaxed and meaningful re-connections for everyone. The best thing we can all do in this time of readjustment is to act with kindness, towards ourselves and each other. And to cut ourselves some slack when it feels tough.

We will be able to enjoy being with each other again and we have a chance to tune in to ourselves and make that re-emergence as stress free and special as it can be. 🍷

ADOBE STOCK / FOCUSANDBLUR



# The Arts keep us well

**Nadia Wazeera** explains how taking part in art-related activities can keep us healthy for longer

The Arts make a powerful contribution to our health and wellbeing. Perhaps we have always known this as we remember life changing moments including going to the theatre, when connecting to the words and sounds of a piece of music or creating something

from scratch and feeling really satisfied with the process.

In 2014, The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing was formed to improve the awareness of the benefits of the arts can →

bring to health and wellbeing. During 2015-17, it conducted an inquiry with partners to research and make recommendations to improve policy and practice. The 2017 report, 'Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing', contains evidence of ways in which arts engagement can improve wellbeing across our lives from childhood development to wellbeing of workers and older adults.

The findings included an analysis of data from more than 15,000 older people published by Age UK in February 2017 and found that engagement in creative and cultural activities made the highest contribution to overall wellbeing. The



**Caption: Art is beneficial to well-being**

**“During Covid-19, the Arts and creative thinking have helped us connect to one another and express ourselves”**

report also looks at how the arts can provide significant help in meeting the quality of health outcomes, for example those with dementia and their families.

It is predicted that, by 2040, 1.2 million older people in the UK will have a dementia diagnosis. It states, “dancing, painting or playing a musical instrument can boost brain function, potentially helping to delay the onset of dementia” and how “handling evocative objects, can help the recall of memories in people with dementia.”

The Rt Hon. Lord Howarth of Newport Co-Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing said, “The evidence we present shows how arts-based approaches can help people to stay well, recover faster, manage long-term conditions and experience a better quality of life.”

### **High life satisfaction**

The Arts Council of England conducted an evidence-based review called 'The Value of Arts and Culture to People



ADOBE STOCK / ACKF

**Caption: Dancing boosts brain function**

and Society' in 2013. It documented how “participation in culture is significantly associated with good health and high life satisfaction”.

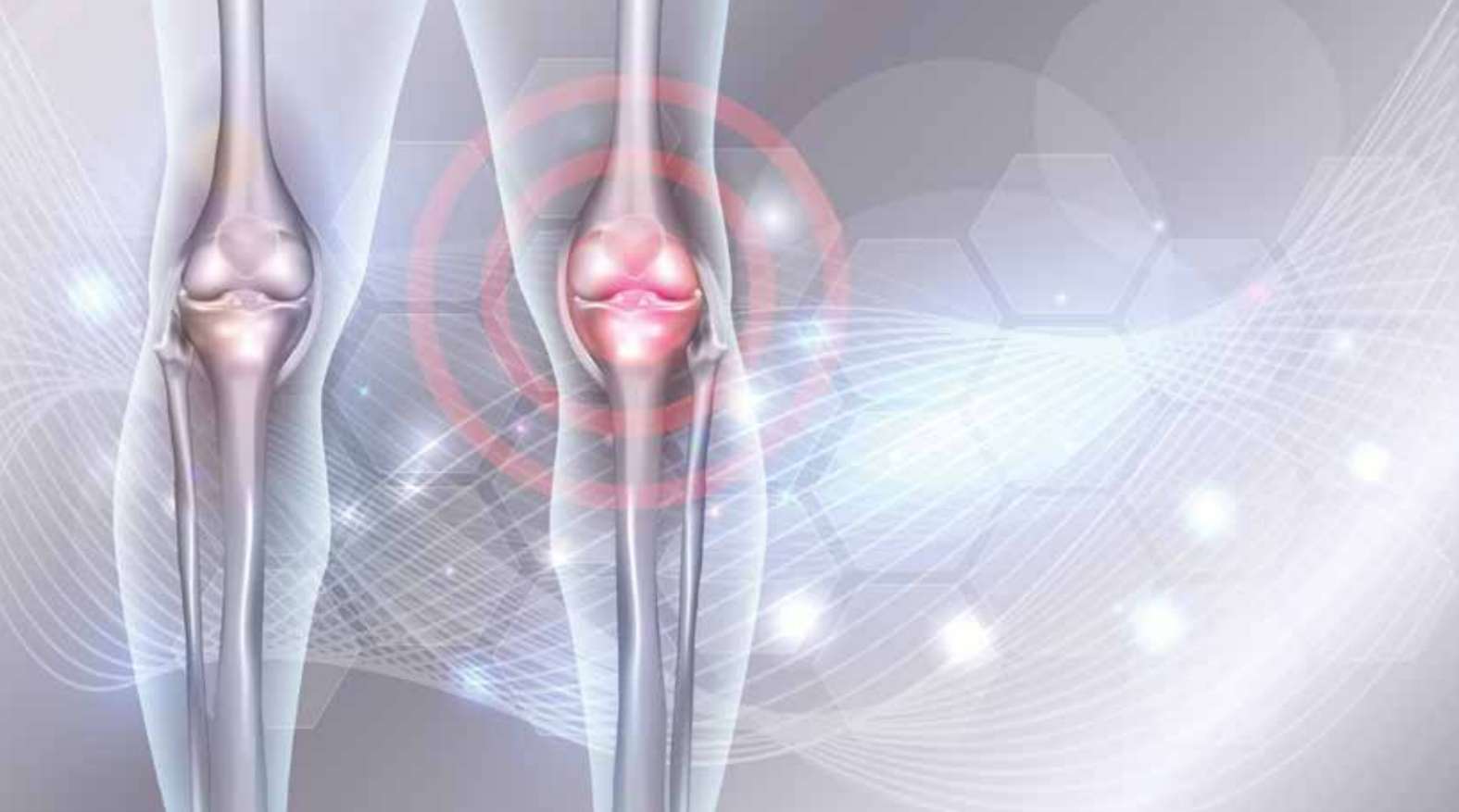
In this review the Chair, Sir Peter Bazalgette, highlighted the gaps in research and difficulties posed in evidencing qualitative outcomes but reassured that there would be a committed movement towards this with considerable grants to studies and research. He also said, “when we talk about the value of arts and culture, we should always start with the intrinsic – how arts and culture illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. This is what we cherish.”

During Covid-19, the Arts and creative

thinking have helped us connect to one another and express ourselves. A UK study of adult mental health during the pandemic has found that more than a fifth of a 70,000-person sample engaged more with the arts during lockdown than before. As we look to a post pandemic world, the value of arts, health and wellbeing will be increasingly important.

Art participation can support preventative health programmes and therefore save the public purse over time, in addition to alleviating the difficulties presented from poor health. Art and culture support our ability to connect to ourselves and one another, it gives a voice to our experiences. After a year of challenges, the arts have re-invented ways to reach audiences and established new ways of working. Art participation supports everyone of all ages to thrive, not just survive. Indeed, this doesn't take away from the huge challenges to the arts infrastructure, which needs support, and art venues will be glad to open their doors once safe to do so.

Nonetheless, the powerful effect from the arts is to be celebrated and experienced by all. If you feel art is for someone else, it's well worth re-thinking and challenging yourself to consider ways that activities can add meaning to your day to day routine. 🎨



**Caption: A sensible diet can keep your bones healthy and strong**

# Eating for healthy bones

The **Well-Connected** team gives you tips to make sure your diet is also keeping your bones strong

Some people find their appetite starts to drop as they get older. Eating less can make it more difficult to get the nutrients you need to keep muscles and bones strong and healthy.

Staying active will help to keep your appetite up. But if you don't feel like eating much, it's still important to stick to a healthy, balanced diet.

**For healthy muscles and bones, you need calcium, vitamin D and protein -**

- calcium makes our bones (and teeth) strong and rigid
- vitamin D helps our bodies to absorb calcium
- protein is important for muscle strength

Another reason to eat a balanced

diet is that it will help you to maintain a healthy body weight. Being underweight is linked to a higher risk of fractures.

If your diet isn't as good as it should be, you may want to consider taking a dietary supplement. Go for one that contains calcium and vitamin D. Your GP or pharmacist can help you choose one that's suitable for you. Some medicines can affect your appetite. If you think a medicine you're taking may be affecting your appetite, perhaps because it makes you feel nauseous, talk with your pharmacist or GP. They may be able to suggest an alternative.

## Vitamin D:

- Vitamin D is important for both strong muscles and healthy bones. Our bodies make vitamin D from the action of the summer sunlight (from late March/April to the end of September) on our skin.
- People who are not often exposed to the sun should take a daily vitamin D supplement.

## These include people who:

- are not often outdoors, such as those who are frail or housebound
- are in an institution, such as a care home
- usually wear clothes that cover up most their skin when outdoors

- have dark skin, such as those of African, African-Caribbean and south Asian origin, might not get enough vitamin D from sunlight, so they should consider taking a supplement throughout the year.

Some foods contain vitamin D. These include oily fish such as mackerel and salmon, eggs, foods fortified with vitamin D such as fat spreads, and some breakfast cereals. But it's difficult to get enough vitamin D from food alone, so all adults are advised to consider taking a daily vitamin D supplement, particularly during the winter months (October-March).

If you have osteoporosis, your GP may prescribe a calcium supplement, too.

## Other ways to protect your bones

Other things to consider to help prevent falls and fractures:

- get your hearing checked – ear problems can affect your balance
- look after your feet – foot pain can affect your mobility
- review your medicines with your GP or pharmacist – some medicines can make you feel dizzy or drowsy

It's important you do not stop taking a medication without getting medical advice from a health professional. 🌐

# Family News

## Birthdays

**Donald English**, who celebrates his 101st birthday on 30 May

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**Elsie Hayes**, who celebrates her 101st birthday on 14 May

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**Henry Hogg**, who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 17 May

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**Leslie Hutt**, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 28 May

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**Agnes Kelly**, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 27 May

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**Enid Morgan**, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 27 May

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**Beatrice Simpson**, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 30 May

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**Kenneth Simpson**, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 8 May

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**Walter Stead**, who celebrates his 101st birthday on 3 June

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*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**

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**Susan Buchanan** who died on 20 March 2021. She was the wife of Munro Buchanan

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**Maria Butler** who died on 1 April 2021. She was the wife of Arthur Butler

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**Jacqueline Downs** who died on 11 April 2021. She was the wife of Richard Downs

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**Robina Fleming** who died on 1 March 2021. She was the wife of Stanley Fleming

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**Erna Furness** who died on 1 February 2020. She was the wife of Harry Furness

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**Freda Hamby** who died on 1 April 2021. She was the wife of Jack Hamby

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ADOBE STOCK / ALICE\_D



**Catherine Jepson** who died on 6 March 2021. She was the wife of Ralph Jepson

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**Christine Legg** who died on 16 March 2021. She was the wife of John Legg

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**Myrtle Mann** who died on 13 April 2021. She was the wife of Michael Mann

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**Marie Reid** who died on 25 January 2021. She was the wife of William Reid

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**Margaret Taylor** who died on 2 April 2021. She was the wife of George Taylor

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**Joyce Thornley** who died on 1 March 2021. She was the wife of Walter Thornley

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**Rosemary Wilden** who died on 1 December 2020. She was the wife of Brian Wilden 🇬🇧

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# 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 Bamping** of Salford died on 24 March 2021 aged 82. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Richard Dennis Beagarie** of Whitley Bay, Tyne And Wear died on 7 April 2021 aged 74. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

**Bernard Bladen** of Wolverhampton died on 31 March 2021 aged 95. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**David Walter Alexander Bothwell** of Lymington, Hampshire died on 15 April 2021 aged 91. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Arthur Brown** of Plymouth died on 9 April 2021 aged 97. He served as a Rifleman in the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

**William Burke** of Manchester died on 3 April 2021 aged 93. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Educational Corps.

**Neville John Buss** of Andover, Hampshire died on 29 March 2021 aged 82. He served as a Major in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**John Carter** of Warrington died on 1 April 2021 aged 83. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

**Nelson Edward Collen** of Haverhill, Suffolk died on 18 April 2021 aged 90. He served as a Petty Officer Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**Antony John Cornes** of Northwich, Cheshire died on 29 March 2021 aged 82. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**Bernard Coupe** of Blackburn died on 1 April 2021 aged 82. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Robert Curtis** of Waterlooville, Hampshire died on 10 April 2021 aged 93. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

**Gerald Danter** of Southport, Merseyside died on 1 April 2021 aged 93. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Philip Anthony Doughty** of Chesterfield, Derbyshire died on 28 March 2021 aged 94. He served as a Petty Officer Radio Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**John Keith Dowson** of Lostwithiel, Cornwall died on 11 April 2021 aged 86. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Gordon Evans** of Didcot, Oxfordshire died on 1 March 2021 aged 80. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**Brian Finnigan** of Wigan, Lancashire died on 12 March 2021 aged 92. He served as an Air Mechanic in the Royal Air Force.

**John Foley** of Swindon died on 26 March 2021 aged 87. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Keith Walter Thomas Ford** of Weymouth, Dorset died on 14 March 2021 aged 90. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**James Frazer** of Gateshead, Tyne And Wear died on 1 February 2021 aged 93. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**James William Green** of South Shields, Tyne And Wear died on 1 April 2021 aged 96. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**Mary Margaret Hartley** of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands died on 7 April 2021 aged 99. She served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Terence Hawes** of London died on 9 April 2021 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Educational Corps.

**Brian Haywood** of Newcastle Upon Tyne died on 1 February 2021 aged 90. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

**William Hewson** of Kingston Upon Thames died on 16 March 2021 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Armoured Corps. →

**Alan Thomas Holden** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 1 April 2021 aged 89. He served as a Sick Berth Attendant in the Royal Navy.

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**James Arnold Irving** of Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey died on 30 March 2021 aged 97. He served as a Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

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**Michael Paul Jones** of Canterbury, Kent died on 19 March 2021 aged 81. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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**David James Kearle** of Port Talbot, West Glamorgan died on 24 March 2021 aged 89. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Engineers.

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**George Long** of Cromer, Norfolk died on 1 April 2021 aged 92. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Tank Regiment (Royal Armoured Corps).

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**John Henry Mcconachie** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 23 March 2021 aged 86. He served as a Sergeant in the Special Air Service Regiment.

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**Leon Mcguire** of St Helens, Merseyside died on 20 January 2021 aged 91. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Royal Artillery.

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**Matthew Metcalf** of Sunderland, Tyne And Wear died on 19 April 2021 aged 96. He served as a Stoker 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

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**Emlyn David Morgan** of Warwick died on 9 April 2021 aged 106. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**John Jeremy Mountford** of Morpeth, Northumberland died on 7 December 2020 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers.

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**James Francis Laurence O'Toole** of Scarborough, North Yorkshire died on 2 April 2021 aged 94. He served as a Writer in the Royal Navy.

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**Brian Pattrick** of Bury, Lancashire died on 7 April 2021 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Lancashire Fusiliers.

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**Peter Frederick John Petch** of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk died on 30 March 2021 aged 86. He served as a Private in the Suffolk Regiment.

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**David Peterson** of Liverpool died on 28 February 2021 aged 73. He served as a Private in the Lancashire Regiment.

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**Lyn Price** of Wrexham, Clwyd died on 8 March 2021 aged 94. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**George Norwood Pringle** of Polegate, East Sussex died on 24 March 2021 aged 83. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**William Procter** of Leyland, Lancashire died on 27 March 2021 aged 87. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

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**Leonard George Pugsley** of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire died on 17 April 2021 aged 89. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**Dennis William Sarginson** of Scunthorpe, South Humberside died on 5 April 2021 aged 58. He served as a Corporal in the Army Air Corps.

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**Victor Richard Southon** of Brighton died on 5 April 2021 aged 87. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**John Stephenson** of Keighley, West Yorkshire died on 18 March 2021 aged 86. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

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**John James Stevens** of Radstock died on 4 April 2021 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Suffolk Regiment.

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**David Alexander Mckay Stevenson** of Wimborne, Dorset died on 23 March 2021 aged 77. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

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**John Telford** of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 23 March 2021 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in the King's Regiment.

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**John Tobin** of Coventry died on 1 December 2020 aged 89. He served in the Royal Signals.

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**George Trainor** of Choppington, Northumberland died on 1 September 2020 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**Sidney David Turvey** of Bicester, Oxfordshire died on 7 April 2021 aged 96. He served as a Stoker 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

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**Dennis Ward** of Helston, Cornwall died on 28 March 2021 aged 91. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Colin Whittle** of Settle, North Yorkshire died on 31 December 2020 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

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**Brian Wilden** of Hampton, Middlesex died on 1 September 2020 aged 83. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Felix V P Wilenius** of South Shields, died on 1 December 2020 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Oxfordshire And Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

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# Through the eyes of a child

We present the first part of Member **Bill Skinner's** memoirs, beginning with his first memories of growing up in Kingston-upon-Hull during wartime

Perhaps, before I start my story, I should give a little insight into my grandparents on both sides of the family.

All of my father's family lived in and around Cumberland Street, Hull. Grandad and grandma Skinner had seven children; Tom was the eldest, followed by Liz, then my dad William, then came Alice, followed by Lily, then Sally and finally Arthur – quite a large family. It must have been very difficult in the early 1900s bringing up a large family. My dad, William, (who like me preferred to be called Bill), was born on January 14, 1910. My grandad, my Uncle Tom and my dad all worked at the Isis Oil Mills in Stoneferry. It was known in those days as Wray Sandersons.

My grandad and grandma Smith lived in Lake View, Swan Street, which was also around the Cumberland Street

area. There is something of a mystery regarding my mother's family, although my grandma Smith (née Chapman) was sent to a convent in Ireland. She also came from a large family - I know of three brothers she had. She went into the convent at an early age and was known as 'Sister Ursula'. Her real name was Elsie Chapman.

My grandad Smith was named John but was always known as 'Jack'. He was born in London. I know nothing about his early life except that Jack was a foundling and was apparently found on a tailor's doorstep. The tailor and his wife brought him up and he eventually joined the Army. When they came to Hull, my grandad worked on the King

**“They lived in Barmston Street and were known to me as “grandad and grandma across road”**



**Caption: Troops of 9th Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment, helping to clear bomb damage in Hull**

George Dock as a sworn weigher. This was, in those days, a very responsible job.

## Renounced her vows

Grandma Elsie renounced her vows, left the convent and returned to Hull. She became pregnant with my mother, who became her only child, christened Ethel Chapman. When my grandma and grandad Jack met up and married, my grandad wanted nothing to do with a baby that was not his. She was brought up by one of Elsie's

brothers and his wife. That is why I always claimed to have three grandads and three grandmas. They lived in Barmston Street and were known to me as “grandad and grandma across road”.

My father and mother were married in 1933 and I was born on January 16, 1934, two days after his birthday (I think I was his late birthday present). I was followed by my brother, Brian, born February 27, 1937 and then my sister, Marie, on 2 May 1941. →

My first memories were as a five-year-old starting school in the Easter of 1939. I had a little red pedal car, and I remember my dad fastening a rope to the front of it and towing me to the school. The school I attended was Lincoln Street Infants. School for me at first wasn't a particularly happy time. I was born left-handed, and the teachers tried to make me use my right hand. If I didn't, they would hit me across the knuckles with a rule. This eventually caused me to develop a stammer. It was only after my mother

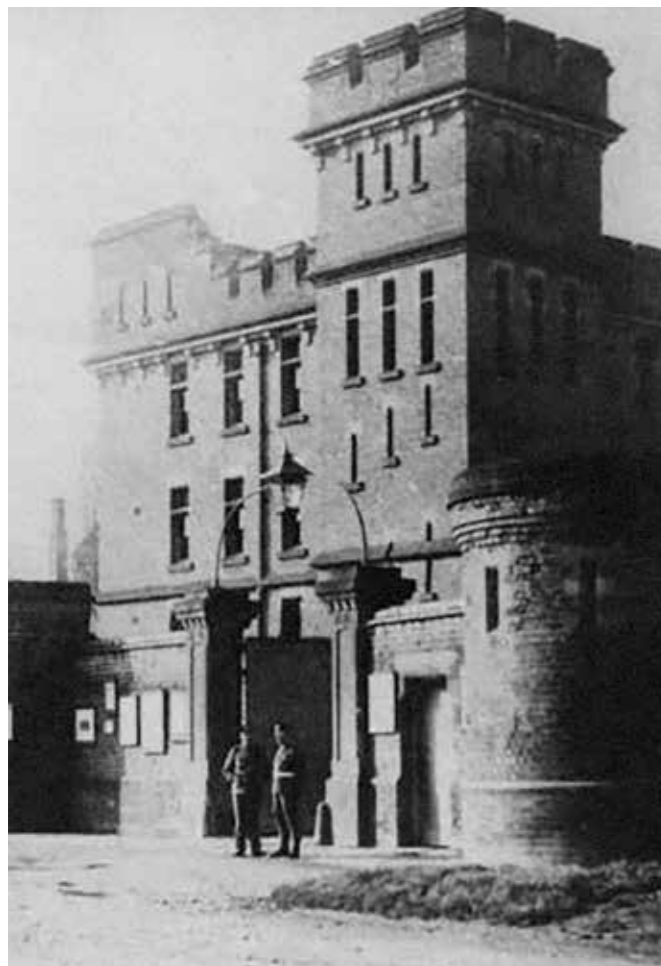
took me to the doctors and he told her I was stressed over something that my mother went to the school and sorted that out. Very soon the stammer disappeared.

### The onset of war

Later that year war broke out and my dad and my uncles just seemed to disappear. I wasn't aware of it, but they had been called up to do their duty. My father was enlisted on October 17, 1940 in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. at Beverley Barracks. I know this is a fact because I still have his original pay book. He was only in the army for a few weeks when he had to go into hospital at Beverley Base with an ingrown toenail, caused by his boots being too small. I remember my mother taking me to see him. It was a disaster for me. He had been given a boiled egg for his tea; I knocked it over – all over his bedspread. The Matron went mad at me and so did my mother.

Soon after he came out of hospital, my dad was posted to Sheffield to an ordnance depot and was made a storeman. I suppose the good thing was he was in England and not on the front line, but he may as well have been on the moon for all the difference it made to me and our Brian. 🍷

■ **Read the next part of Bill's story in June's issue**



**Caption: Victoria Barracks, Queensgate, Beverley, circa. 1940**

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## Contact details

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**Member Support Hub: 01273 391 447**

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