

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

February 2023



Inside:

SAS legend
Mike Sadler
shares
his story

**What we
do for love**

Trudy's Valentine's Day
tale of deep devotion



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

Centre Supplement 2023 coming soon...

Get ready for a full programme of exciting activities at our centres in Llandudno, Brighton and Rustington.

We're currently putting the finishing touches to our Centre Supplement, which is packed with information about all the activities available at our Centres this year. There's a whole range of themed weeks to choose from including arts and crafts, military

history, outdoor adventure and festive celebrations. And each one has been specially designed with your wellbeing in mind. The supplement will be with you soon, so do have a look through and register your interest. We look forward to welcoming you! 🍷

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Quiz answers - from page 48

1. Cupid 2. Elizabeth Taylor 3. Four Weddings and a Funeral
4. Taj Mahal 5. HM Queen Elizabeth II 6. Mr Darcy 7. b. Romeo and Juliet 8. Ingrid Bergman 9. False 10. Alfred Tennyson

On the cover

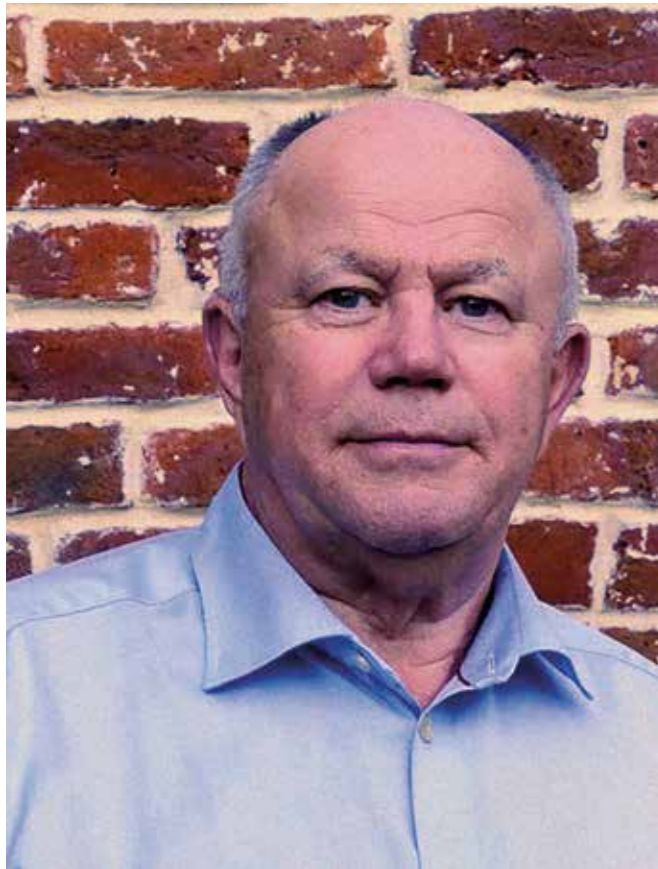
Carer Trudy Pile and her husband Mark, who's a Member, during their Silver Anniversary cruise five years ago, celebrating 25 years of marriage.



A positive start to the year

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

I hope you had a peaceful Christmas and New Year. Mine was anything but as I spent much of it with my four grandsons, aged nine to 16 months, even roaming the streets dressed as Father Christmas at one point!



Caption: Barry Coupe

We kick off the year with exciting news of the appointment of our new Chief Executive Officer, Adrian Bell. A former Royal Navy Commodore, Adrian has had a long and fulfilling military career and also has strong experience of leading military and blue light charities. I am confident that he will be a great asset and look forward to welcoming him when he joins us in the spring.

We are also thrilled to soon be rolling out a full programme of Centre activities once again, after all the disruption from the pandemic. Our Centre staff have worked hard to produce a year-round programme packed with lots of fantastic activities to suit all tastes which can't fail to bring fun and friendship to your year.

Alongside this, following a review of our services, which included discussions with Members and staff, the Operations team have been busy developing a new, more sustainable

“Around 273 tonnes of rubble has now been removed – the equivalent of two and a half Boeing aeroplanes!”

service offer. This is really important if we are to continue our excellent work into the future.

The offer will include a mix of services, some reinstated from our pre-Covid days and some developed during the pandemic. They are also planning for future requirements and have done a brilliant job in making sure that you still receive all the support you need. Our Director of Operations, Nicky Shaw, shares more details on page 6.

And, of course, we will be opening our new Centre in Rustington later in the year. Although there's still lots to do on the construction, I'm happy to share that the building is shaping up very nicely. Just to give you an idea of how extensive the work has been, around 273 tonnes of rubble has been removed – the equivalent of two and a half Boeing aeroplanes!

In December, I had the great pleasure of visiting one of our Members who is local to Rustington, Graham Forshaw. Graham got in touch as he wanted to



Caption: Our Rustington Centre

give me something very special – a silver pair of scissors he once used to cut the ribbon at an official opening when he was a Councillor for West Sussex County Council. He served on the Council for 25 years, so really gave his life to supporting the area.

Now in his 80s, Graham is sadly very ill, but this didn't dampen his spirits as he presented me with the scissors in a beautiful box in anticipation of the grand opening of our Centre. I was very moved by his enthusiasm and promised to keep them safe until we're ready to use them. I can't wait. 🎉

Looking forward to a sustainable future

As we kick off the year, our Operations Director **Nicky Shaw** shares an update about our services



Caption: Nicky Shaw

You may remember that in past communications, we've spoken about a need to review our services and return to a more sustainable footing. This is so we can better meet the needs of Blind Veterans UK Members, both now and into the future.

This review was undertaken during the pandemic and included a consultation with a number of you about our work. All the information gathered went on to help inform the design of a new service offer which we are beginning to put in place.

Many of the services in this new offer will be familiar as they were running before the pandemic or developed during the lockdown. At the same time, we've looked at how best to respond to your needs while managing our resources more efficiently.

The following is an overview of the services we will offer going forwards.

Something for everyone

We are delighted to be able to continue providing a wide range of activities to support your wellbeing. These include local social groups, activities and events, centre holidays and wellbeing programmes, plus

regular communication from us and the chance to be involved in a Member engagement panel.

All Members can access these services as soon as they join. You can refer yourself or be referred by a staff member or volunteer. The activities have been designed to provide connections, camaraderie and help and advice to improve your quality of life.

Our local social groups are particularly valued as they help you make more connections. We want to work with you to develop these groups, some of which may be run by local partner organisations in your area.

Likewise, we saw a huge number of events return last year and expect more to be held throughout 2023. If you're not already involved, then we really encourage you to find out more from your community support worker.

Help to achieve your goals

If you have a goal in mind; something you'd really like to accomplish, then no matter how big or small, as part of our service we'll help you get there.

Our teams can help with independent living skills, assistive technology, equipment allocation, centre experiences and emotional support with adjusting to vision-impairment.

We will work with you to identify your needs and help you overcome whatever barriers you face in relation to your sight loss.

Specialist support

Also, if you're going through a difficult time, we'll make sure you get the additional specialist help you need. And since we work closely with lots of partner organisations, we can put you in touch with anything more local to you that may be beneficial.

Military recognition

We know the charity's military heritage is hugely important to you and, as such, we have identified a need for a new staff role. Our new Member Engagement and Military Lead will ensure we keep the military identity and Member voice at the forefront of our service delivery.

The role will represent the charity externally in the military and veterans' sector, support the delivery of national military-related events and share knowledge about military culture, process and protocol. Recruitment for this role is already underway.

We are looking forward to seeing this new offer come to life over the coming year and hope you feel reassured that our priority is always to make sure you have all the support you need. 🌍

News



Caption: Douglas Dale

A sad farewell to Doug

It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of Douglas Dale, the friendly face at our HQ reception for many years. Douglas died on 15 December after a long battle with cancer.

For many of you, Doug will have been the first contact that you made with the charity when weekly surgeries were held in Harcourt Street for those joining. He was also the friendly voice on the end of the phone and cared

greatly about all our Members. He will be sorely missed, and our thoughts are with his family.

Last chance to take part in national Veterans' Survey

You may remember that in the December issue of *Review*, we told you about the Government's first ever exercise to collect feedback from veterans across the UK, co-ordinated by the Office for Veterans' Affairs and the ONS.

This important survey gives you and your family the chance to provide direct feedback about your experiences, describing what life is really like for vision impaired veterans. Your responses will help guide future Government action.

■ **While the online survey (ons.gov.uk/VeteransSurvey) closes on 2 February, there's still time to submit the paper survey as the deadline isn't until Friday, 17 February. You can order a large print paper copy by calling the ONS on 0800 085 7376.**

Calls from Clariant coming soon

Every year we ask 200 Members to take part in our Member survey between February and April. Those asked are selected at random, so you may receive a call from a representative at external research company, Clariant Research, requesting a short interview.

The questions cover your experience of the charity and at no point will you be asked to share any information about your finances.

If you have any questions about the survey, please call our Member Support Hub on **01273 391447**. There is no obligation to take part.

New CEO announced

Our Board of Trustees is delighted to announce the appointment of Adrian Bell as our Chief Executive Officer.

Adrian served in the Royal Navy, commanding three warships and was Commander of British Forces Gibraltar. He left the Navy in 2010 and became Chief Executive of the Kent, Surrey & Sussex Air Ambulance Trust. He is presently Chief Executive of the Royal Navy & Royal Marines Charity.



Caption: Adrian Bell

As Nick Caplin has now left the charity, to facilitate a smooth transition until Adrian arrives, our Director of Resources, Greg Allen, will hold an interim CEO role until Adrian formally joins us in the spring.

Can you help our partnerships team?

Blind Veterans UK has the chance to be selected as a charity partner by business management software organisation, Access. To help with this, we'd love to hear from anyone with a contact at The Access Group.

■ **If you can help, please get in touch with our Corporate Partnerships Manager, Rachel Covey at rachel.covey@blindveterans.org.uk** →

Blind veteran awarded MBE

Member Bob Splain is awarded for community work, writes William Witt

One of our Members, Bob Splain, 87, has been awarded an MBE for services to his hometown of Atherton.

Bob started doing community work following his wife's cancer diagnosis in 1988. Despite only being given a few months to live, treatment from The Christie Cancer Charity meant that she survived, so the couple spent the following 26 years raising over £90,000 for the charity.



Caption: Member Bob Splain MBE with his late wife, Ilse

Bob then went on to become a Local Councillor for Wigan Council and Chairman of the Royal British Legion Atherton branch. Wanting to further support his local town, he became a referee in his local football league, District Chairman of Atherton Scouts, and Governor for the local school. He is also a Trustee for the Cenotaph in Atherton, responsible for its maintenance and upkeep.

He says: "I was born and bred in Atherton and passionate about the area. I'm extremely proud and feel very privileged to have been awarded an MBE. I have to say, I was extremely surprised when I got the letter through. I'm over-the-moon.

"My wife passed in 2021 and it's sad that she's not here to enjoy this achievement with me. We worked together to raise those funds and I know that she would have been absolutely made up about this.

"I'm 87 years young. Despite my declining vision, I'm still active and plan to continue supporting my local community in any way that I can."

"It's also an honour to be part of the Blind Veterans UK community. It's been amazing and I couldn't have managed without it. I'll continue to support it for as long as I can." 🇬🇧



Caption: Trudy and Mark celebrated their anniversary on a luxury cruise

What we do for love

Carer **Trudy Pile** opens up about the challenges of helping her husband, Mark, through his sight loss journey - and the deep devotion that's seen them through

I started seeing Mark when I was 19. Funnily enough, I'd been school friends with his first wife and even went to their wedding.

Back then, we'd all go to the pub, and me and Mark would have this ongoing joke about running off together. There

was nothing in it, of course - just a laugh. Then we gradually lost touch until one night, purely by coincidence, I flagged down a taxi only to find Mark at the wheel. He told me they'd split up. And that's when it all started.

By the time I was 22 we'd already →

had our first son, Christopher, while Ben wasn't far behind. It's amazing to think that we have a grandchild now and we've been married for 30 years. I was left a bit of money a few years ago, so we splashed out on a cruise to celebrate our silver wedding anniversary. We felt we deserved a bit of luxury, especially as our journey hasn't always been easy.

Mark was born with a squint which unfortunately developed into amblyopia, whereby the brain doesn't compute what the eyes see. At first it didn't affect him too badly, but by the time he was in his 30s, his sight was so



Caption: Posing with a surfboard

bad that he had to give up his driving work. Now in his 50s, he has about 15% of his vision left.

Mark's sight loss had a huge impact on our family life. For years he shut down and became severely depressed, even suicidal for a time. It was horrendous. The kids were still in primary school, and I was on tenterhooks all the time. The worst thing was that he wouldn't talk about it. He just kept it all inside.

Eventually, he took himself off to the doctor's in desperation, crying his eyes out, only for the receptionist to turn him away saying no one was available.



Caption: All dressed up for dinner

“Suddenly, it was as if we were part of a bigger family in which everyone was going through exactly the same as us.”

This triggered a flame in me and, I must admit, I lost my temper. I marched round there and read them the riot act.

After that, Mark received counselling from social services, but he was still completely dependent on me and wouldn't venture out on his own. It wasn't until he became a Member of Blind Veterans UK that this changed. I'm not exaggerating when I say the charity gave me back the man I married and helped us both achieve so much more than we could have imagined.

I remember our induction week at the Brighton Centre like it was yesterday. Mark wouldn't speak to anyone for the first three days – he just felt too low. But then we attended a group session for Members and their carers and, suddenly, it was as if we were part of a bigger family in which everyone was going through exactly the same as us. It was such a relief!

After that, Mark started participating more and more. To see him open up and accept help for the first time was

amazing. Even small things made a difference, like the staff getting him to use a talking watch when for ages he'd kept saying to me he didn't want one.

Over the next few years, Mark became so much more independent. He got a guide dog and started travelling to London and Brighton on his own. And the staff were so supportive of his interest in photography. They even built him a workshop in our garden and helped him hold his own exhibition.

Thanks to all this, Mark ended up setting up a photography group for Members, which is still going strong. In fact, it was one of the charity's most attended online groups during the lockdown – the famous photographer, Rankin, even attended a session!

I must admit, at the beginning, all the focus on Mark sometimes left me feeling like a bit of an outsider. But as time went on, the charity started running sessions specifically for us carers. This helped me so much. I'd say it almost saved my sanity, to be honest.

For the first time, I was able to build my own network of support and, to this day, I'm still very passionate about supporting other carers. I've facilitated many carer discussion groups and helped organise carer breaks and craft activities. I've learnt that





Caption: The couple have been married for 30 years

having something for myself makes all the difference to our marriage.

Sadly, as the saying goes, you just never know what's around the next corner and, last year, we received the devastating news that Mark has an aggressive form of cancer. The treatment has been brutal but, safe to say, the Blind Veterans UK community has been amazing, especially our team leader, Colin, who visits often and has been a great support to us both.

It's been the toughest time imaginable, and we don't know what lies ahead, but I feel so proud that I've been there

for Mark through everything life's thrown at us. I know I'll continue to take care of him to the end if I can. It's what we do for love and I wouldn't have it any other way.

A few months ago, we went out for some fresh air and a gentle wander round the shops. At one point, Mark disappeared off and I eventually tracked him down in the local jewellers. He was buying me a locket for when he's gone.

After all we've been through, here we are, still together, still in love. And in the end, that's all that matters. 🌍

Get your nominations in!

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

We are delighted to announce the return of our annual Founder's Awards, previously put on pause due to the pandemic.

The awards mark the anniversary of the founding of 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 Members and family members who share the same

boundless spirit as our founder and wish to fulfil their potential and help others to do the same.

This is a fantastic opportunity to celebrate all that's great about our charity. Those nominated for the awards can be put forward by Members, staff, volunteers, family members or friends.

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 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. →



Caption: Founder's Awards 2016

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 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 (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 –

Member, spouse, widow and widower
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)

This award recognises a family member, relative or friend of a Member who has provided them with an exceptional level of care, enabling the Member to live with dignity and pride. 🇬🇧



Caption: Member Eddie Gaines with his award in 2019

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.

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

There are three ways to nominate:

- Complete the online form by following this link, or scanning the QR code below: <https://forms.office.com/e/MBCwLWY7Tu>
- Enclosed in this edition is a paper version of the nomination form with instructions of who to send it to.
- Call your local community team to complete the form verbally.

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!

Nick's final tour

In December, our outgoing CEO, Nick Caplin, visited our centres to bid farewell to staff, Members and volunteers, writes **Mark Wheeler**

As Nick Caplin was getting ready to leave Blind Veterans UK after eight years at the helm, he grabbed a last chance to spend time at both our centres to share precious memories.

During his leaving presentation at our Brighton Centre, Lesley Garven, spoke



Caption: Gary and Nick

of his care, dedication and famous optimism, and thanked him for his unwavering support.

She then presented him with a handmade shepherd's crook, blessed by our Padre, the Rev. George Butterworth. The crook had hung on the walls of the centre since being honed by Glyndwr Shoesmith in 1994, a St Dunstaner who was totally blind.

Lesley said the crook represented the positive impact that Nick has had on the centre during his tenure, and the legacy he leaves behind.

In Llandudno, everyone gathered to say goodbye in an incredibly joyful occasion, full of laughter. Nick was presented with a hamper full of Welsh goodies, along with a beautiful collage of photographs to remember all the happy times he's spent at the centre.

In addition to this, he was also invited to our HQ in London for a special presentation where he was given a gift



Caption: Peter with the wooden box and his engraving of 'the lads'

crafted especially by Members Gary Stevenson, Peter Kay and Bill Mooney, on behalf of everyone.

The trio created a unique wooden box, engraved with the Blind Veterans UK logo and the famous image of 'the lads', and contained two pens, one for Nick and one for his wife, Isobel.

Gary made the box using his bandsaw after finding a very special piece of wood for the task. He says: "I wanted to find wood that had something significant about it and couldn't believe

"After creating the box and lining the two drawers in the colours of the Army Air Corps, it was passed on to Peter"

it when I was told that a wooden pillar from the building in Llandudno was available to use.

"It had been removed to make way for the seating area under the stairs, so it really was very special in being an actual part of the building."

After creating the box and lining the two drawers in the colours of the Army Air Corps, Nick's former regiment, it was passed on to Peter who got to work engraving it with the two images. The final piece of the puzzle was completed by Bill who crafted the two original pens to be kept in the drawers.

Nick was absolutely over-the-moon to receive the gift. He said: "This really is the most amazing gift. I will always be able to look at it and touch it and remember my wonderful years at Blind Veterans UK.

"I want to thank Gary, Peter, and Bill – the best bit about their outstanding work is that it's a perfect example of what our Members can achieve." 🍷

Our very own rogue hero

As a founding member of the SAS and real-life star of a BBC TV drama, Member **Mike Sadler**, who turns 103 this month, tells Mark Wheeler his incredible story



Caption: Mike Sadler, the last surviving founding SAS member

Growing up in London in the 20s, Mike Sadler never could have imagined he'd end up as a real-life legend depicted in BBC mini-series, *SAS Rogue Heroes*.

After his school days, the former SAS soldier, who turns 103 this month, moved to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in the hope of becoming a farmer. However, a series of unexpected events led him along a different path.

Mike explains, "I moved with the goal of becoming a farmer, but then the war broke out in 1939. I joined the Rhodesian Army, eventually becoming part of the anti-tank detachment."

"We went on to East Africa, then up through the country to North Africa, digging trenches in the sand. Then I went on holiday to Cairo and met up

"I was astonished to think that you could find where you were on the ground from looking at the stars"

with a group of fellow Rhodesians. We had a jolly party for two or three days and they asked me if I'd like to join them in the Long-Range Desert Group (LRDG). Just two or three weeks later I was accepted."

The TV mini-series, and the book by Ben Macintyre on which it's based, portrays Mike as someone who had an almost superhuman gift for navigation, something he says he first picked up with the LRDG.

He says, "We headed to Kufra in Southern Libya in a re-supply column and on the way down, crossing the desert, somebody in the party was doing astronavigation, something I knew nothing of.

"I was astonished to think that you could find where you were on the ground from looking at

the stars. I watched them for a couple of nights and when I got to Kufra the first thing they said was, 'Would you like to be a navigator?' I said yes straight away and cast aside my anti-tank gun.

Mike spent a fortnight learning the rudiments with a merchant service officer. He then joined a patrol and went out on a number of 'behind the lines' operations with the Rhodesian forces (S2) where he eventually came across infamous SAS founding member, Paddy Mayne.

Mike says, "I'd never heard of the unit before. They'd just had their first disastrous parachute operation and we were sent to camp for a few days outside a place called Jalu to meet them.



Caption: SAS Rogue Heroes poster

"I was introduced to some of the survivors of the SAS operation and was told to take one of them, who turned out to be Paddy Mayne, to a place in the west, 300 miles across the desert. We were round the back of German lines and had an observation for some time. As a result of this, the leader of the unit, David →

Stirling, co-opted me into the SAS and thereafter I became an SAS chap. I had to go and complete the parachute course to join and get integrated properly. That was the end of the LRDG for me.”

Mike’s first memories of what had not yet officially become the SAS are remarkably clear as he recounts his first mission which saw 24 aircraft and a fuel dump destroyed by just six men.

He says, “Paddy was set on destroying as many aircraft as possible. This was the beginning of all that. He was a very interesting character, but also a very nice and talented chap.

He’d made himself a solicitor before the war and was a good person. He deserves more recognition than he got.

“I feel the less suitable aspects of his character have been promoted, but he was a very complex fellow and I got on very well with him. He had a rather strange sense of humour which some people had difficulty understanding.”

Even though the TV drama portrays the desert conditions as extremely tough, Mike says he enjoyed his time with the SAS and was sorry to leave the desert when they did.



Caption: Mike with David Stirling who founded the SAS

“I was a passable navigator and that was my use. It was mainly a matter of taking a lot of attention and not jumping to conclusions. I was rather patient and that suited the requirement.

“I greatly enjoyed it, even though it involved staying up half the night to find stars that were suitable and keeping all the records and correcting them each night to start off with a new record the next morning.

“I really liked the desert, even though it was very uncomfortable at times. I’m sure there must have been many times that I hated it, but I don’t remember them.

“None of our vehicles had windscreens or tops so we were very exposed to the weather. We didn’t travel in the day if we could help it, but sometimes it couldn’t be helped. I ended up with a couple of desert sores, but others had it far worse. Paddy had them particularly badly.”

As depicted at the end of the first series of the TV show, in January 1943 Mike accompanied Stirling on what would turn out to be the SAS founder’s last operation.

While heading across the Tunisian desert to meet the British-American

1st Army, the group was ambushed by a German unit and Stirling was captured. He spent the rest of the war as a prisoner of war in Colditz. 🇩🇪

■ **Read Mike’s amazing tale of escape and guiding the group over 100 miles without maps in next month’s Review.**

Who was Paddy Mayne?



Lieutenant-Colonel ‘Paddy’ Mayne is a legendary figure in the history of the Special Forces. A

professional rugby player with a turbulent character, he played a vital role in the early successes of the SAS, becoming one of its most important commanders.

Following its disastrous opening operation, Paddy led a small group on an attack of an airfield in Libya, during which he destroyed 24 aircraft by attaching bombs and shooting up the cockpit. He also famously wrenched out the control panel of one aircraft – a Herculean act, which has gone down in SAS legend.

IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS / WIKIPEDIA

Time for a spring clean

Feeling sluggish? We share five simple ways to give your health and wellbeing a boost

Spring is finally on the horizon and with the arrival of a new season comes a fresh opportunity to shake up your health routine.

It's normal to let things slip when it comes to looking after ourselves, so what better time to start again with these these five quick and easy steps.

Drink more water

It's a message that's been drilled into us since childhood – and for good reason. Drinking H₂O is important for our health and wellbeing. NHS guidelines recommend we glug between six and eight glasses a day to help stay hydrated. Our bodies are made up of around 60% water, after all, so drinking plenty of it can help maintain that balance, while aiding digestion, circulation and brain function.

Experts also recommend a glass of water first thing in the morning,

when you wake up, to kickstart your metabolism and aid digestion. You could try keeping a tumbler by your bed to fix this in place as a part of your rise-and-shine routine. And don't forget that the water in other drinks, such as squash and tea, counts too.

Hit snooze

Let's be honest: getting more sleep would probably be at the top of most of our wellbeing wish-lists. After all, there's no denying the power of a good snooze, from improving concentration to reducing stress levels and boosting the immune system. But with the word 'insomnia' being Googled more in 2020 than ever before, it's clear we're not all resting as easily as we might like. Who can blame us, with all that's happened over the last few years?

Happily, help is at hand. If you're struggling to drift off, you can switch up your routine by asking Alexa to

play relaxing music or gentle breathing exercises. Both should be more efficient than simply counting sheep...

Get outside

The days are getting longer and the sun might start to make an appearance soon, so why not make the most of spring in all its glory? Being in nature has been found to have a whole host of wellbeing benefits, from improved mood to lowered stress levels.

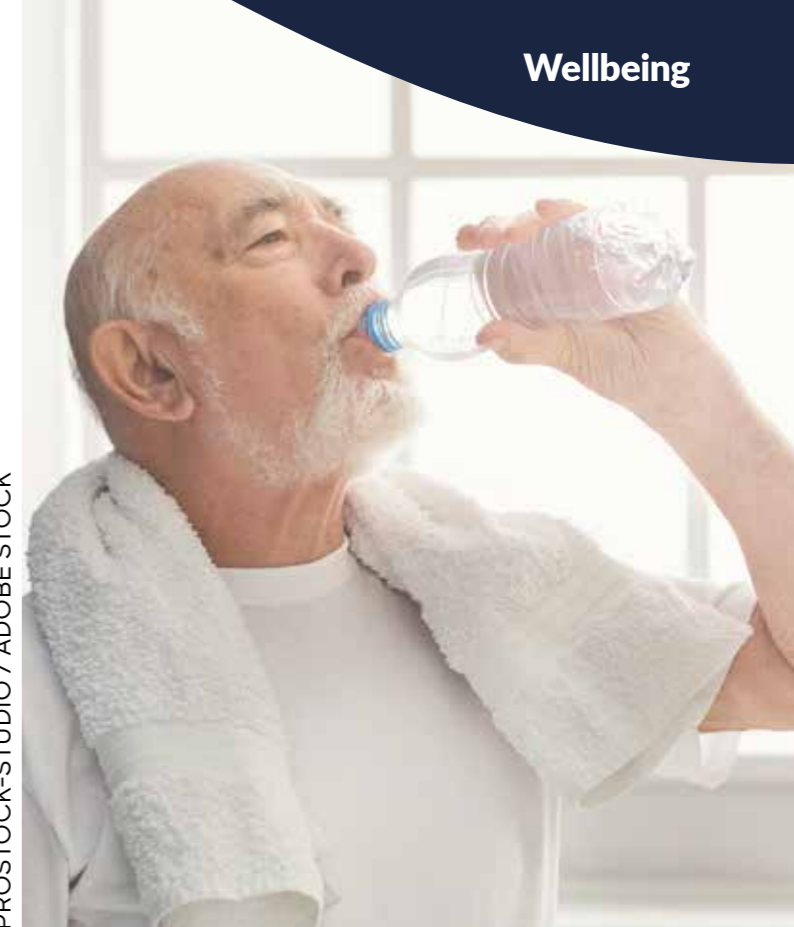
You don't need to spend a whole day outside to reap the benefits. Incorporating a daily lunchtime walk among trees or flowers into your wellness routine could be beneficial, or you could spruce your house up with greenery and bring the concept of 'plant bathing' into your home.

Pick up a new skill

Why not spring-clean your skillset as well as your wellbeing routine? Learning something new has a surprisingly vast number of potential wellbeing benefits, from boosting your confidence to giving you a sense of purpose.

And the sky's the limit when it comes to learning. We'll be running loads of different themed weeks at our centres this year from arts and craft to military history. Take a look at our Centre Supplement when it lands on your doorstep to find out more.

PROSTOCK-STUDIO / ADOBE STOCK



Caption: Drinking water in the morning kickstarts our metabolism

Move your body

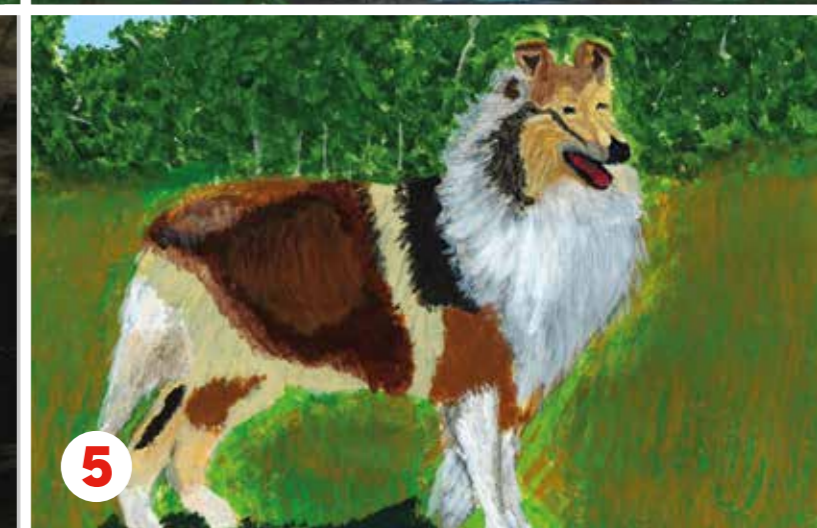
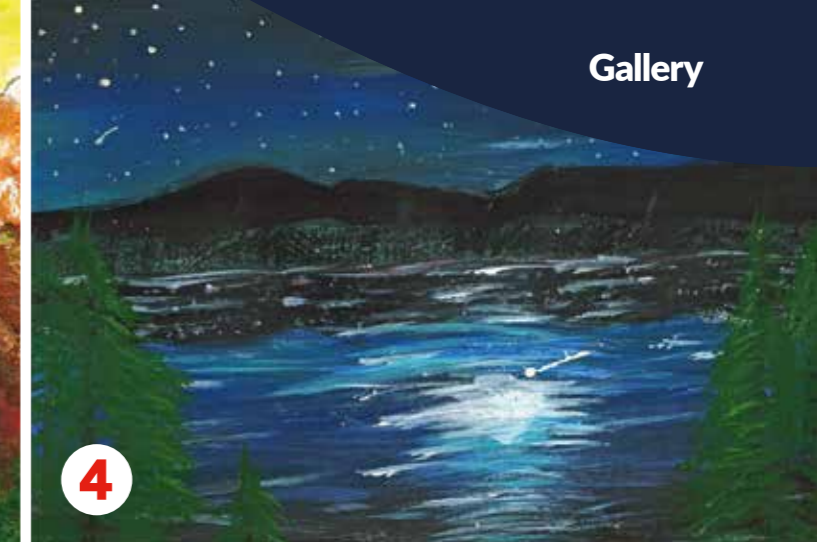
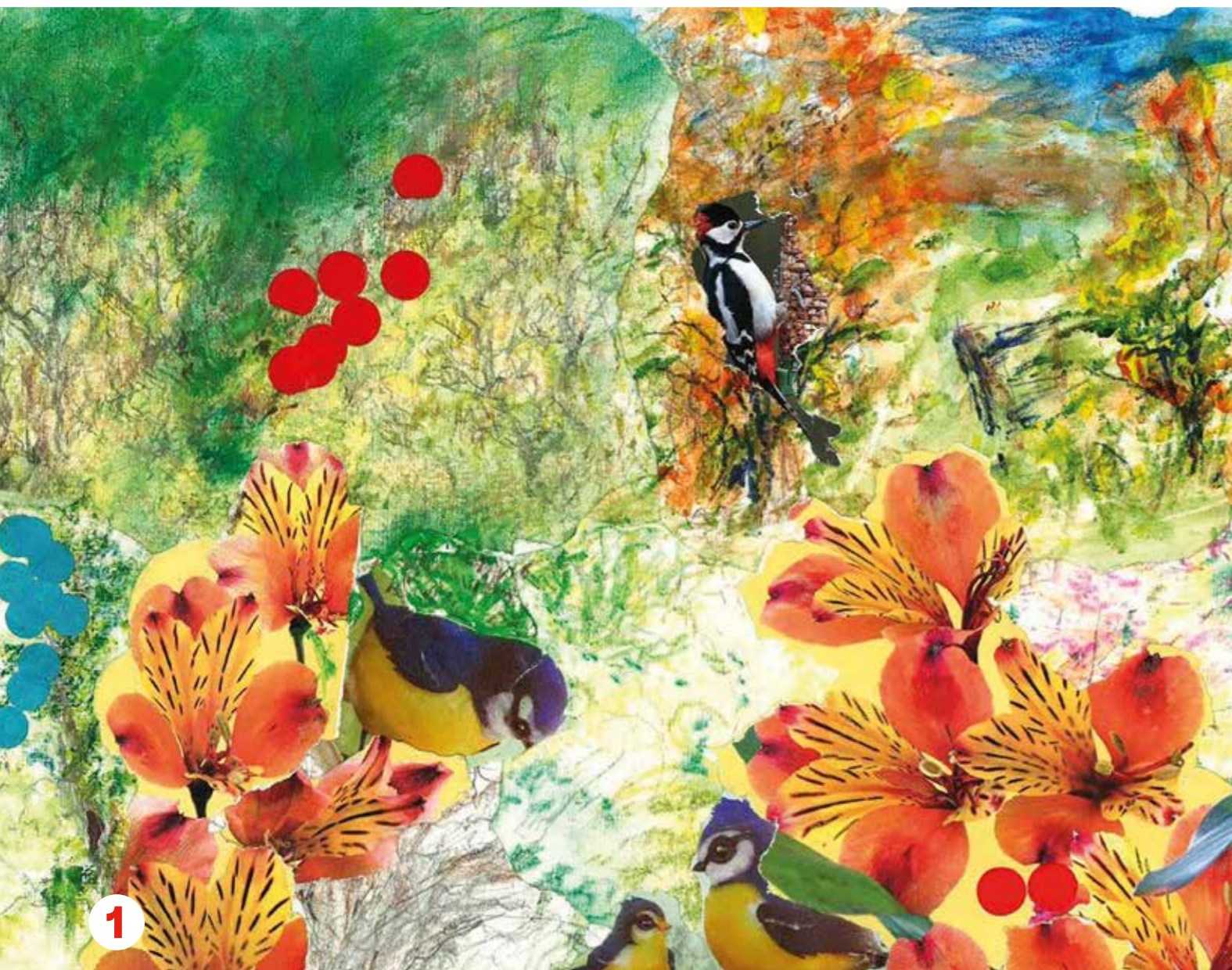
Like it or loathe it, there's no denying the benefits of exercise. Not only can it help to keep us physically fit, but it can actually boost our health and wellbeing in all kinds of different ways, from improving memory and brain function to reducing feelings of anxiety and depression.

And the thing about exercise is you can get started any time. So, why not shake up your routine by setting yourself a realistic challenge such as a daily walk or a trip to the local gym? Pop your trainers on, add some mood-boosting music to your playlist and you'll be good to go. 🏃

Artistic flair

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

Captions: 1. Rita Scarratt - Birds in the garden 2. Janet McCormick - Mountain scene 3. Marjorie Paton - Mountain scene 4. Mike Godley - Starry night 5. Peter King - Rough collie 6. Bill Ridgewell - Night fishing off Chesil



Health matters

Vice President and Member Healthcare Consultant **Chris Cardwell** tells you all about the help available from the Veterans Trauma Network



Caption: Olen Camp in Belgium

Many years ago I fell backwards out of a Bedford truck. Luckily, I landed relatively safely and apart from bruising, damage to my pride and ribbing that lasted longer than the resultant pain, I eventually emerged unscathed.

This occurred at Olen Camp in Belgium when we were undertaking exercises in how to evacuate casualties by

helicopter. I could so easily have been such a casualty myself and was very fortunate to have got away without serious injury. Some are not so lucky.

Many veterans continue to suffer from injuries and ailments as a result of their time in the Armed Forces long after they have left. This is why I wanted to tell you about the NHS England Veterans Trauma Network (VTN).

The VTN was formed because veterans often have a unique set of health needs resulting from their service and this can require a carefully tailored response from the NHS. It doesn't matter how long ago the problem occurred, nor how severe it is. If it relates to your service and is a physical condition, then that can be enough for you to access this specialised help.

How it works

The VTN has a number of hospital-based surgical and medical consultant leads scattered throughout NHS Trusts in England. These consultants work

with military and civilian clinicians and military charities to determine the best clinical care pathway for veterans.

One of the strengths of this approach is that the consultants concerned will have served in the Armed Forces or at least have some understanding of service life and the circumstances and culture under which you served.

This level of insight is more likely to ensure that you will be guided to the most appropriate team and, while it doesn't mean you will be given earlier appointments or treatment (this should be based on clinical need), it should mean that you and your family are treated with fairness and respect.

The conditions treated

There's no prescriptive list of ailments treated by the VTN – all you need is a physical condition linked to past service and not a mental health matter (for which there are alternative arrangements).

Many veterans are referred with muscular skeletal problems (related to bones, muscles, and joints etc), while others might require pain management or have neurological problems (brain injury, for example). The current number of cardiac, rheumatology, ENT, dermatology and ophthalmic and other referrals are low, but this shouldn't

BUMBLE DEE / ADOBESTOCK



Caption: Veterans can access help

put anyone off from seeking advice whatever the medical condition.

How to access the service

The first step is to talk to your GP. They can complete a referral form which is sent to the VTN. You should then be contacted by a Veteran Support Worker.

What fellow veterans say

The feedback from veterans who have used the VTN has been very positive, saying the support made them feel valued. If you need more information, just ask your community support worker who will be happy to help. 🇬🇧

■ **Chris Cardwell is a member of the NHS England Veterans Trauma Network Programme Board**

Our national creative wellbeing programme

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

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 February, March and April. The theme is 'Spring' and 'Valentine's' so expect lots of flowers and hearts! This is



Caption: Freesias

a lovely creative project for Easter and you can make birthday cards or notelets to help you keep in touch with your loved ones all year round.

GARDENING

Freesias

Our gardening project this month is growing delicate trumpet shaped flowers to brighten up your windowsill. 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 for this project including bulbs, compost and a galvanised bucket. You just need to supply some TLC to guarantee a colourful display.

CRAFT

Stephenson's Rocket - wooden model project

Make your own wooden model locomotive with the help of our VI-friendly instructions. The Rocket is an early steam locomotive designed by Robert Stephenson which won

the Rainhill Trials of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway held in 1829.

This fun and challenging kit comes with pre-cut wooden pieces which you can sand, slot together and glue. It's 10 in x 5½ in x 4 in (26cm x 14cm x 10cm) and paint is included for those of you who'd like to add some colour.

ART

Painting for Beginners and Improvers - February, March, April

Whether you're brand new to painting or a seasoned expert, our painting project will encourage you to pick up a brush and see what you can do. The themes for spring are 'Winter Wonderland' and 'Tuscan Village' and we'll introduce you to the VI friendly art of finger painting too, so you can work out which works best for you. Do send us your best work for us to share online and maybe even in *Review* magazine.

■ **To request an activity pack or simply find out more, please call our bookings team on 01273 391455.**

You may have noticed that we've changed our name! No longer the National Creative Project, we are now known as the National Creative Wellbeing Programme. After kicking off this creative project in the



BELAHOCHÉ / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Painting for Beginners

pandemic, it's proved so popular that we've decided to keep it going and this month's activities are the first designed by our new National Creative Wellbeing team.

Every Member is welcome to sign up and our projects have all been carefully designed to be VI-friendly and as accessible as possible.

So, if you haven't taken part before, why not give it a go? We'd love to have you on board. 🎨

Lou Kirk-Partridge, Dave Bryant and Sue Kaulsi

National Creative Wellbeing Team at ncwt@blindveterans.org.uk

Family news

Birthdays

Jeffrey Broadhurst who celebrates his 100th birthday on 7 January

Arthur Warwick who celebrates his 101st birthday on 8 January

Christine Power who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 8 January

Leonard Hale who celebrates his 100th birthday on 8 January

Andrew Thomson who celebrates his 100th birthday on 11 January

John Humphreys who celebrates his 101st birthday on 14 January

Iris Ray who celebrates her 101st birthday on 16 January

Jean Lacock who celebrates her 104th birthday on 19 January

Nancy Paterson who celebrates her 101st birthday on 19 January

Alison Binns who celebrates her 100th birthday on 21 January

Eric Taylor who celebrates his 101st birthday on 20 January

Fanny Hugill who celebrates her 100th birthday on 22 January

Harold Griffin who celebrates his 100th birthday on 20 January

Irene McNeal who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 24 January

Reginald Slater who celebrates his 101st birthday on 24 January

James Thompson who celebrates his 100th birthday on 25 January

Wilfred Osborne who celebrates his 101st birthday on 28 January

William Palin who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 30 January

George Barnes who celebrates his 100th birthday on 1 February

Barbara Glanfield who celebrates her 100th birthday on 3 February

Edna Kirby who celebrates her 101st birthday on 5 February

Alice Robinson who celebrates her 101st birthday on 5 February

John McOwan who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 6 February

Roy Horlock who celebrates his 101st birthday on 7 February

Rebecca Urwin-Smith who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 8 February

Ken Hobbs who celebrates his 100th birthday on 12 February

Margaret Wilson who celebrates her 100th birthday on 12 February

Queenie Hall who celebrates her 100th birthday on 16 February

Marjorie Hanson who celebrates her 100th birthday on 16 February

Beryl Tatchell who celebrates her 101st birthday on 17 February

Muriel Elhen who celebrates her 101st birthday on 21 February

Mike Sadler who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 22 February

Ivy Chafer who celebrates her 101st birthday on 25 February

Mary Hitchcock who celebrates her 100th birthday on 25 February

Frank Buttery who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 2 March

Condolences

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

Elizabeth Hansell who died on 31 October 2022. She was the wife of Eric Hansell

Jillian Sally Smith who died on 18 November 2022. She was the wife of Michael Smith

Mary Colette Quinn who died on 17 December 2022. She was the wife of James Quinn

Joy Elizabeth Grout who died on 1 January 2023. She was the wife of John Grout

John McLean who died on 20 December 2022. He was the partner of Marion Knapman

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

In memory

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following Members and we offer our heartfelt condolences to their widows, widowers, families and friends

Raymond Vivian Anstee of Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire died on 5 December 2022 aged 97. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Samuel Charles Apps of Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 31 December 2022 aged 102. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

Geoffrey Austin of Greenhithe, Kent died on 23 December 2022 aged 91. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Joan Awbery of Norwich, Norfolk died on 1 November 2022 aged 102. She served as a Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

John Bainbridge of Bishop Auckland, County Durham died on 11 December 2022 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Durham Light Infantry.

Ronald Ball of Narberth, Dyfed died on 19 November 2022 aged 90. He served as a Lance Corporal in the REME.

Geoffrey Banks of Preston, Lancashire died on 1 December 2022 aged 90. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Kenneth Barker of Tonbridge, Kent died on 16 November 2022 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

James Fyfe Barrett of Weston-super-Mare, Avon died on 17 December 2022 aged 93. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

John Charles Beauchamp of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 28 November 2022 aged 102. He served as a Private in the Princess Louise's Kensington Regiment.

Alfred Victor Bennett of Arundel, West Sussex died on 27 December 2022 aged 92. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Terence Best of Poulton-Le-Fylde, Lancashire died on 27 October 2022 aged 102. He served in the in the Royal Navy.

Harold Bird of Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire died on 3 January 2023 aged 103. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Harry Bowell of Blackpool, Lancashire died on 22 September 2022 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the REME.

Albert Bradley of Stockport, Cheshire died on 9 December 2022 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Jill Brice of Brighton, East Sussex died on 23 December 2022 aged 93. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Brian Brown of Brandon, Suffolk died on 22 October 2022 aged 87. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

William Gerald Bunn of Brighton, East Sussex died on 4 December 2022 aged 94. He served as a Sick Berth Attendant in the Royal Navy.

Clifford Burgess of Ely, Cambridgeshire died on 26 December 2022 aged 96. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Arthur Charles Clark of Hockley, Essex died on 17 December 2022 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Walter Denis Clayson of Staines-Upon-Thames, Middlesex died on 7 December 2022 aged 96. He served as a Sergeant in the REME.

Alfred Cleal of Bolton, Greater Manchester died on 15 November 2022 aged 94. He served as a Petty Officer Telegrapher in the Royal Navy.

Lorna Mary Cockayne of Christchurch, Dorset died on 5 December 2022 aged 97. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Eric Colman of Brighton, East Sussex died on 23 December 2022 aged 93. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Kenneth Charles Connelly of Staines-upon-Thames, Middlesex died on 24 November 2022 aged 97. He served as a Guardsman in the Coldstream Guards.

Valentine John Cooper of Solihull, West Midlands died on 7 October 2022 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

Alan Corcoran of Cheadle, Cheshire died on 12 December 2022 aged 79. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Andrew Cottrell of Hull, Yorkshire died on 5 December 2022 aged 60. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Ronald Cragg of Haywards Heath, Sussex died on 10 December 2022 aged 96. He served as an Engine Room Artificer in the Royal Navy.

Desmond Crocker of Bridgwater, Somerset died on 16 November 2022 aged 93. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

George Alfred Crookes of Bilston, West Midlands died on 22 November 2022 aged 100. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Bernard James Dunbar Davies of Altrincham, Cheshire died on 25 December 2022 aged 99. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Clement John Donald Denny of Purley, Surrey died on 4 December 2022 aged 91. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Robert Charles Feltham of Stanley, County Durham died on 23 December 2022 aged 101. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

Harry Flanders of Romford, Essex died on 8 December 2022 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

Michael Henry Foden of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 5 November 2022 aged 84. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Michael Forbes of Inverurie, Aberdeenshire died on 2 January 2023 aged 76. He served as a Leading Airman in the Fleet Air Arm.

Charles Dickson Forman of Edinburgh died on 14 November 2022 aged 97. He served as a Stoker 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

Reginald Foxwell of Bristol died on 26 December 2022 aged 96. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Navy.

Harry Gibbins of Waterlooville, Hampshire died on 14 October 2022 aged 92. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Robert Garrett of Isle of Man died on 1 December 2022 aged 90. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

William John Gilbert of Newport, Gwent died on 15 November 2022 aged 82. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

William Benjamin Gough of Dudley, West Midlands died on 8 December 2022 aged 98. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Hammersley of Bilston, West Midlands died on 24 October 2022 aged 87. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

James Hankinson of Nantwich, Cheshire died on 31 December 2022 aged 96. He served as a Stores Assistant in the Royal Navy.

Joseph Hardstaff of Hereford died on 22 November 2022 aged 87. He served as an Air Commodore in the RAF.

Frank Harrop of Romford, Essex died on 25 December 2022 aged 96. He served as an Acting Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Kenneth Hawley of Prestatyn, Denbighshire died on 25 December 2022 aged 73. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

John David Hayman of Bedford died on 13 November 2022 aged 83. He served as a Major in the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers.

Ian Higton of Rhos on Sea, Conwy died on 1 November 2022 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

Horace Hugh Holvey of Lincoln died on 9 December 2022 aged 97. He served as a Stoker 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

Victor Leslie Hudd of Deganwy, Conwy died on 30 December 2022 aged 97. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Stanley Hughes of Rochdale, Lancashire died on 13 November 2022 aged 93. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

Alan Hughes of Paignton, Devon died on 15 December 2022 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

William George Inchley of Swindon, Wiltshire died on 16 December 2022 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.



Derek Harold Jefferies of London died on 9 November 2022 aged 96. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

Alexandria Sydney Jennings of Burnham-On-Crouch, Essex died on 13 November 2022 aged 91. He served as a Sapper in the REME.

Arthur William Ernest Johnson of Northampton died on 21 December 2022 aged 98. He served as an Air Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

William Joinson of Scunthorpe, Lincolnshire died on 29 November 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Liam Thomas Kelly of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire died on 30 December 2022 aged 49. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Margaret Kenyon of Abergele, Clwyd died on 25 December 2022 aged 98. She served as a Private in the Army.

John Kimber of Brighton, East Sussex died on 8 November 2022 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Edward Francis Lackenby of Stockton-on-Tees, Cleveland died on 11 December 2022 aged 89. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Teresa Mary Lee of Rickmansworth, Hertfordshire died on 25 December 2022 aged 73. She served in the Royal Naval Reserve.

Alan Lees of Tamworth, Staffordshire died on 4 December 2022 aged 99. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

John Lewis of Bolton, Greater Manchester died on 3 December 2022 aged 84. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Tank Regiment.

Jeffrey Locker of Peterborough, Cambridgeshire died on 18 November 2022 aged 69. He served as a Guardsman in the Army.

Douglas George Luck of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 7 November 2022 aged 95. He served as a Craftsman in the REME.

Stephen Lynn of Halstead, Essex died on 15 December 2022 aged 103. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders (Princess Louise's).

Brian Francis Mahoney of Lewes, East Sussex died on 23 December 2022 aged 90. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Artillery.

Alfred Marney of Maidstone, Kent died on 14 December 2022 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Peter Massam of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 1 January 2023 aged 76. He served as a Private in the Royal Anglian Regiment.

Matthew Francis McHugh of Sale, Cheshire died on 1 September 2022 aged 87. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Cyril John Medlin of Pewsey, Wiltshire died on 23 December 2022 aged 87. He served as a Corporal in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment.

Allen John Micklewright of Swansea died on 16 November 2022 aged 94. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Joseph Reginald Milburn of Durham, County Durham died on 5 January 2023 aged 93. He served as a Craftsman in the REME.

Brian Nicholas Mingay of Norwich died on 26 October 2021 aged 84. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Judith Moody of Southampton died on 18 November 2022 aged 81. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Gerald Moore of Lewes, East Sussex died on 27 December 2022 aged 98. He served as a Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

Douglas Victor Morss of Preston died on 6 November 2022 aged 96. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

John Robert Newell of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 18 December 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment.

Rowland Nixon of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 24 December 2022 aged 86. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Hugh Lawrence Nyss of Harlow, Essex died on 1 December 2022 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Vincent Victor O'Halloran of Liverpool died on 4 December 2022 aged 93. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

Angela Mary O'Reilly of Birmingham died on 23 December 2022 aged 89. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

Joan Patricia Osborne-Walker of Norwich died on 9 December 2022 aged 101. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxilliary Air Force.

Tudor Owen of Deganwy, Conwy died on 4 January 2023 aged 91. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

Jean Owens of Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire died on 12 November 2022 aged 94. She served as an A.C.W. in the Women's Royal Air Force.

Owen George Pampling of Haverhill, Suffolk died on 19 December 2022 aged 98. He served as a Coder in the Royal Navy.

Walter Edward Parr of Pwllheli, Gwynedd died on 2 January 2023 aged 98. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

Arthur Graham Parry of Deeside, Flintshire died on 23 November 2022 aged 95. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

Blodwen Phillips of Denbigh, Clwyd died on 5 November 2022 aged 93. She served in the in the Women's Royal Air Force.

Keith Mark Plummer of Abingdon, Oxfordshire died on 23 November 2022 aged 103. He served as a Lieutenant in the REME.

Maurice Leonard Potter of Rugby, Warwickshire died on 12 November 2022 aged 89. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Peter Pugh of Stoke-on-Trent died on 17 November 2022 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Staffordshire Yeomanry (Queen's Own Regiment).

Jean Elsie Redmore of Northampton died on 1 December 2022 aged 84. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Royal Air Force.

Victor Leslie William Redstone of Stoke-On-Trent died on 18 November 2022 aged 100. He served as a Warrant Officer in the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment.

Derrick Rex of Coventry, died on 28 November 2022 aged 92. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Kenneth Richards of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 21 December 2022 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

James William Richardson of Spennymoor, County Durham died on 1 December 2022 aged 93. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Geoffery Robinson of Reading died on 7 December 2022 aged 98. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

Alan George Sands of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 16 October 2022 aged 92. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

Neville Scott of Stafford died on 27 October 2022 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Leonard Seaton of Bradford died on 9 December 2022 aged 91. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Kenneth Simpson of Sleaford, Lincolnshire died on 20 November 2022 aged 101. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Stanley Wilson Sims of Newport, Dyfed died on 1 November 2022 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Christopher Sinclair of Glasgow died on 21 December 2022 aged 87. He served as a 1st Class Engineer in the Royal Navy.

Denis James Skelland of Stafford died on 28 November 2022 aged 87. He served as a Squadron Leader in the Royal Air Force.

Phyllis Eileen Smith of Buntingford, Hertfordshire died on 23 November 2022 aged 95. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Michael David Smith of Colchester, Essex died on 27 November 2022 aged 88. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Lennie Gordon Smith of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire died on 1 January 2023 aged 96. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Francis Scott Souness of Southampton died on 1 January 2023 aged 92. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

Haydn Staniford of Reading died on 25 November 2022 aged 88. He served as a Gunner in the Army.

Anthony Steel of Dorchester, Dorset died on 1 January 2023 aged 68. He served as a Leading Air Engineering Mechanic (Radio) in the Royal Navy.

Charles Stephenson of Chester Le Street, County Durham died on 9 December 2022 aged 85. He served as a Driver in the Royal Signals.

Linda Stewart of Spalding, Lincolnshire died on 14 December 2022 aged 73. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

Ruby Helen Stubbs of Derby died on 12 December 2022 aged 103. She served as an A.C. 1 in the Women's Royal Air Force.

Olive Elizabeth Tasker of Brighton died on 1 December 2022 aged 94. She served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Thornfield of Pinner, Middlesex died on 4 December 2022 aged 89. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Dennis Thornton of Weston-super-Mare, Avon died on 20 December 2022 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

John Turner of Widnes, Cheshire died on 1 November 2022 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Douglas George Twomey of Worthing, West Sussex died on 26 November 2022 aged 94. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Fusiliers.

Jack Haydon Waring of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 9 November 2022 aged 91. He served as a Leading Patrolman in the Royal Navy.

Ian Robert Webb of Slough died on 28 December 2022 aged 80. He served as a Rifleman in the Royal Green Jackets.

John Emrys Williams of Abergele, Conwy died on 1 January 2023 aged 93. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Winifred Joan Williams of Poulton-Le-Fylde, Lancashire died on 14 December 2022 aged 97. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Terrence Williams of Bedford died on 30 December 2022 aged 86. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

Raymond Charles Wood of Crawley, West Sussex died on 17 November 2022 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the 17th/21st Lancers.

Greater love hath no man than this

Member **Peter O'Malley** describes his trip to London last November for the National Remembrance Parade



Caption: Peter, centre, with Nick Caplin, right, Remembrance 2022

It was the Saturday evening of Remembrance weekend. After spending two weeks fundraising for the Poppy Appeal with my local Royal British Legion at a service station, I set off to London with my guide, Victor.

While we waited for the train, we talked to two young lads who asked us what the poppy meant. We explained that it's a symbol of hope and remembrance. The message needs to be understood by the next generation.

At Marylebone station, we were guided through a gate opened for us by a railway attendant. He acknowledged us with gratitude for our military service. A taxi then took us to the hotel and on arrival, I gave the driver a £20 note, refusing Victor's attempts to pay, but then a member of the public appeared and paid the fare for us. Four guys came up and shook our hands. The guy who paid didn't seem to want to let my hand go. →

We then gathered with Blind Veterans UK staff and Members in the hotel. Our charity is full of characters and legends, and it always amazes me how much staff help us to get together for remarkable events like this. After a great evening, Victor and I retired early (after midnight!).

Breakfast the following morning was excellent, reminding us of past days enjoying a full English in the forces. Then we made our way out of the hotel to the taxi rank and were driven to Trafalgar Square by a kind-hearted taxi driver who didn't charge us a penny.

I enjoyed a bit of banter with the driver, telling him I thought he was going the long way round and explaining that when I used to be a mini-cab driver, I did all my own accounts. He said he was going to drop me off at the Treasury as he thought they might want to have a word with me.

We arrived and walked through Admiralty Arch, between The Mall and Trafalgar Square, where the security checked us through. An infantryman with a gleaming musical instrument told me the difference between a trumpet and a bugle. He said he was a good player, but I thought he sounded like he needed a bit more practise before being let loose on people's ear drums!

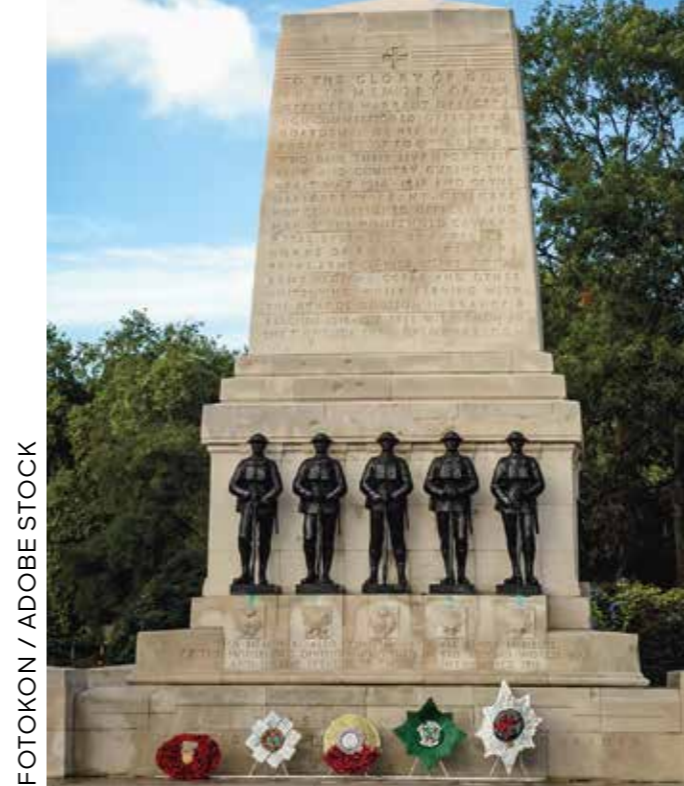
We got to Horse Guards Parade and stood together as a charity. The veterans of air, land and sea, who work for London Regional Transport, formed up beside us as they usually do, wearing their smart blue jackets and caps. "Never on time," jested a Guards Sergeant Major. Then our blind veterans joined in: "Late as usual. Ding! Ding! Tickets please."

Soon Blind Veterans UK former CEO, Nick Caplin, came to chat to me. Kind words; words of encouragement and words of praise. Nick was clearly feeling the sense of dignity, devotion to duty and protection of freedom that the occasion marks.

Just standing in Horse Guards Parade gives you a sense of what selfless service looks like, especially when the Chelsea Pensioners pass by. They received such heartfelt applause from all the veterans, as did the paras, marines and Gurkhas.

The Falkland veterans stood out with their blue, white and green scarves. Unfortunately, there were too many widows and orphans wearing their black and yellow scarves.

We seemed to be the last leaving Horse Guards Parade this time. Passing through the small arch and turning right into Whitehall to a loud chorus



Caption: The Cenotaph

of applause from the public was so uplifting. We came to stand at the same place as last year, opposite Downing Street, near to the Cenotaph. The wreaths were laid in silence, one by our new King, marking a new era.

The whole weekend was like a dream. The familiarity of friends, the military parade orders, the marching, the camaraderie... And then the solemn silence, sacred hymns and the prayers.

We heard Big Ben begin to chime to the sound of the cannon fire and repeat the chimes, eleven times. Then absolute silence, apart from the screeching of sea gulls as if they were in agonising pain reminiscent of the sacrifices made.

This silence is our time, our moment, of living in the here and now, reflecting

on the sacrifices made for our freedom. This is a treasured moment and a sacred, solemn reminder of the price that had to be paid to enjoy the opportunities that living in freedom gives us. A gift from our Armed Forces.

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John, Chapter 15, verse 13.

***They shall grow not old
As we that are left grow old
Age shall not weary them
Nor the years condemn
At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We shall remember them.***

Then, appropriately, the band played edifying music to bring joy to the hearers. Those who made sacrifices wished that future generations could experience freedom. This wish has been fulfilled. There's nothing quite like marching behind a guards' band. We received the Royal Salute and returned to Horse Guards parade.

After the event, we found our taxi driver friends who took us back to the hotel where we said our goodbyes to friends, staff and guides. The railway company had waived fares for veterans and so we travelled home first class, no less – a truly fitting end to a first-class experience. 🇬🇧

Quiz time

As we celebrate Valentine's Day this month, we test your knowledge on love and romance

1. In Roman mythology, who is the son of Venus?

2. Which Hollywood star famously had eight marriages to seven men?

3. The song 'Love is all around' by Wet, Wet, Wet was the soundtrack to which British rom-com?

4. Which beautiful Indian palace was built as a symbol of love to an emperor's wife?

5. Who famously said, "Grief is the price we pay for love"?

6. What's the name of the male love interest in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*?

7. Who were William Shakespeare's star-crossed lovers?
 - a) Anthony and Cleopatra
 - b) Romeo and Juliet
 - c) Posh and Becks

8. Who starred opposite Humphrey Bogart in the 1942 classic film, *Casablanca*?

9. Men buy more Valentine's cards than women. True or false?

10. Which English poet said, "Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all"?

Answers on page 2



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3 Queen Square, London,
W1N 3AR, **0300 111 22 33**

Member Support Hub (MeSH):
01273 391 447

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

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2023

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Draw opens **28 December 2022** and closes **24 March 2023**

The draw will take place **31 March 2023**

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