

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

September 2020



## Inside:

Armed Forces  
Covenant - what you  
need to know

Photography group

## In the open air

Not Forgotten visits Brighton



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss



# Bright jewels in the sky

I've always said you can't beat a good war film. Sit down with a pack of digestives, cup of coffee and you're away. And there's some great ones to choose from – Battle of the River Plate, A Bridge Too Far, Too Late the Hero and so forth. But there is one that stands head and shoulders above the rest, for me at least, the 1969 epic production of Battle of Britain. More than any other film it instilled in me from an early age a love of aircraft and the RAF, and a hero worship for the people it portrayed – those servicemen known as 'the Few' after the phrase used by Winston Churchill. The reason I mention it though is because this year is the 80th anniversary of the battle, and the time of year it was being fought was now over the skies of (mainly) southern England.

It's a sad fact that very few of the Few are left. As I write this, only Group Captain John Hemingway remains out of just under 3,000 who were awarded the Battle of Britain clasp, while 510 were killed at the time. In my previous employment I was lucky enough to interview three of the Few and it proved to be the three hardest interviews of my career to date. Why? Because I simply did not know what to say to men like these, to who I owed

such a large debt. To a man they were modest, almost self-effacing, with a quiet determination that shone through from their days of glory. I could have sat and listened to them forever.

When 15 September comes around later this month, I shall take a few long moments out to reflect on what those young men achieved in those very dark days of 1940. War is in its very nature horror and death and suffering, but under such adverse conditions shine bright jewels of humanity, bravery and courage. That summer of 1940 saw that happen, and Britain find the determination and strength to keep on going.

To return briefly, but relevantly to the film. When the credits roll at the end, they are prefaced by the casualty lists of the battle, grouped by country and type of aircraft. I have seen that list countless times, but every time I see it, it makes me go cold when I think of the sacrifice, I hope I have adequately explained why. 🇬🇧

**Chris Gilson**  
Editor



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### On the cover Brighton residents enjoy a concert from the Not Forgotten Association





# Collaboration

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

I have spent the last few weeks thinking more about the nature of our charity, our history and heritage, and what that might say about our future as we anticipate the world post COVID-19. What are the essential characteristics of our charity that will help to define our approach going forward? I settled on a number of themes and thought that I might bring these to life a little in the Review over the next few months. My first theme is collaboration.

When Blind Veterans UK was founded (initially as the Blinded Soldiers and Sailors Care Committee, soon afterwards becoming generally known as St Dunstan's) in 1915, it was a unique organisation. No comparable body with the aim of comprehensively training, rehabilitating and providing ongoing support to blind people existed anywhere in the world. Our distinct and unique character was the result of the remarkable vision, energy and indefatigability of our founder Sir Arthur Pearson. However, it is also fair to say that not even Sir Arthur could do everything by himself and support

from, and active collaboration with, other individuals and organisations was vital for our early success. It has remained so ever since.

## Early links

Key early links were with the RNIB, and to a lesser extent the British Red Cross. At the time when the first of those blinded in the First World War were coming to hospitals in this country, Pearson was Treasurer of the RNIB (then known as the National Institute for the Blind). His concern for these men led to his development of what he later termed (in his book about us, *Victory Over Blindness*) '...a Hostel where they could "learn to be blind" which was made manifest through our creation'. The support given to Pearson by individuals within the RNIB, notably the blind veteran of the Boer War Sir Ernest Beachcroft Towse and by the organisation as a whole, helped facilitate our creation and also our ongoing work: for example, our first property in Brighton, in Queen's Road was supplied to us by the RNIB just a few weeks after we came into being.

We were technically under the wing of the RNIB, particularly in respect of fundraising, until 1922 when we finally formally separated. However we built on our early links and subsequently continued to collaborate in many and various ways, sometimes aided by having individuals with strong links to both charities, such as Godfrey Robinson, a blind veteran from the First World War who became Chairman of RNIB in 1952. However, it is also clear that there has always been a general willingness to work together on initiatives which would benefit all the blind. The outstanding example from

our early years is in the development of talking books, with the driving force being our then Chairman Ian Fraser (later Lord Fraser of Lonsdale), himself a blind veteran. We worked in collaboration with the Technical Research Committee of the RNIB on the development of the vinyl records and the recording process and also shared the cost of the production of them.

## Broadening the scope

A key element of Pearson's original idea was to broaden the scope of employment opportunities which →



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUM / WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

**Caption: Soldiers on the Somme in 1916 , one year after the foundation of the Blinded Soldiers and Sailors Care Committee**

were traditionally available to the blind. Some of the occupational skills which we taught in our early years were not new – basket making, for example, was long-established as a practice for the blind in this country. However others, such as massage or physiotherapy, telephony and poultry farming were either only recently established or had very few blind practitioners. It was Pearson's vision and tenacity that resulted in these becoming successful occupations for many of our blind veterans. Beyond this it also needed supportive organisations who understood that Pearson was right.



**Caption: Nick Caplin**

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapists started receiving blind masseurs for its examinations, both civilian and war-blinded, from 1916. Barclays Bank was a notable example of a business that we worked with very positively: it introduced a scheme to employ blind telephonists and many of our blind veterans worked for them. The influx of trained and capable employees we provided for workplaces, allied with the progressive attitudes of some employers, must have helped to change societal attitudes for the better.

International connections and collaboration have also adorned our history, and although many of these have been relatively high-level it is also the case that individual blind veterans holding no formal position within the charity have often proved wonderful ambassadors for us and developed and strengthened bonds with overseas bodies. One such from our early years is Robert Middlemiss. A Sergeant-Major in the 2nd King's Own Scottish Borderers, Middlemiss had been blinded during the battle at Gallipoli. While with us in our Regent's Park base, he was asked to go to the United States for a year-long lecture and fund-raising tour on behalf of the B.F.B. (British, French, Belgian) Permanent Blind Relief War Fund.

The B.F.B. Fund was then a new

organisation which had been set up by an American businessman, George Kessler and his wife Cora Parson to provide financial support from those in the USA to the war-blinded in Britain, France and Belgium, with committees being set-up in those countries (later after America entered the war a committee was also set up there). Unsurprisingly, Sir Arthur Pearson was involved and we were among the recipients of funds. Middlemiss and his wife spent a year in the USA and Canada on this extraordinary lecture tour, spending time with not only the Kesslers but others including the famous deaf-blind activist Helen Keller, who worked with Kessler on the B.F.B. Fund. His visit was very successful in raising both funds and an understanding of what could be done for those blinded in the war.

### **Still a key theme**

Collaboration remains a key theme for us today. It makes every sense to share ideas, challenges and opportunities where collectively we can be greater than the sum of our parts. For example, our links with RNIB remain strong both at a national and local level and we receive tremendous support from them in particular areas such as disability advice and talking books. Our community teams have developed outstanding relationships with local partners to assist our work with blind

veterans in their local areas. We are working collaboratively with the Macular Society, Fight for Sight and Scottish War Blinded in a pioneering project to find a successful intervention for Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD). Within the military sector we work routinely with others within the Cobseo family of military charities to provide solutions for veterans' needs, including funding support where appropriate.

The international theme is one I will return to, but I thought I would briefly mention here our collaboration with the US Blinded Veterans Association and our recent shared initiative to create a Joint Ocular Trauma Task Force. With the backing of both governments, this body aims to provide policy, procedures and advice for serving personnel to help protect against sight loss and to treat vision injury quickly and effectively as and when it happens on the battlefield of today.

Whatever the post COVID-19 world looks like, I am certain that collaboration with other organisations will be an increasingly important opportunity for us. Relationships set up with thought and care can be game changing and add great value to our blind veterans as they battle their sight loss, and that is our defining purpose. 🇬🇧





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**Caption: The Battle of Britain Monument. Victoria Embankment, London**

# Meriting closer inspection

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

I think all small boys probably have heroes. Mine were mainly sportsmen but, given my strong RAF background, there were also a few military characters as well. Over the years,

our heroes fall from grace and are replaced- but almost always they would be very familiar names. So, it might come as something of surprise to learn that my current crop of heroes

will probably not have a particular ring to them.

E B Ashmore, Robert Watson-Watt and AF Watkins or Edward Ellington. Do they mean anything to you? No? Well how about Reginald Mitchell, Sydney Camm and Ernest Hives? Or Joan Mortimer, Elspeth Green and Helen Turner? Albeit a little tenuously, they all have something in common – something that will be commemorated in mid-September this year. By contrast any mention of Bader, Stanford Tuck, Leigh Mallory, Park or Dowding would almost certainly give the game away. They are all, of course, in some way connected with the Battle of Britain which reached its climax 80 years ago this month.

You deserve some explanation. The final five individuals need little if any introduction and, in truth, I don't particularly single them out as my heroes – although Douglas Bader presented me with the only school prize I ever won. Mortimer, Green and Turner were awarded the Military Medal for staying at their posts at RAF Biggin Hill during an incredibly intense bombing raid; the first women to be awarded that decoration - it was a matter of controversy at the time. Mitchell, Camm and Hives were the force behind the development of the Spitfire, the Hurricane and the Merlin

engine, widely acclaimed as the battle winning technologies.

The other four individuals are definitely more obscure and merit closer inspection. Ashmore was the General charged with establishing a defensive plan for the protection of London from air attack in the Great War, a plan which remained in place in principle until well into the 1930s. In 1935, following results observed from a caravan parked in a muddy field near Weedon, involving a Handley-Page Heyford bomber flying across a radio signal from the Daventry short wave station, Watson-Watt and his assistant Watkins were allocated a budget →



IMPERIAL WAR MUSEUMS / WIKIPEDIA COMMONS

**Caption: Air Chief Marshal Sir Keith Park - Commander of 11 Group RAF in 1940**



of £12,300 to develop what would later become known as Radar. Just as importantly, Edward Ellington was the largely unsung hero who brought all of this and more together to enable the war-time commanders to create the wherewithal to prosecute a successful battle.

### **An astonishing transformation**

Ellington – or to give him his full title, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Edward Ellington GCB CMG CBE – was Chief of the Air Staff between May 1933 and September 1937. He, more than any other commander, probably did more to shape the RAF such that it was ready to fight in 1940. He is possibly the least



**Caption: Paul Luker**

remembered of all the RAF Chiefs; he was awkward, taciturn, and distant and – many thought – unremarkable and ineffective. Yet, despite being described as “a misanthrope” and “a cheerless cove”, an astonishing transformation was initiated for the RAF on his watch. A plan to grow the size of the RAF to include some 167 fighter squadrons, the introduction of new fighter and bomber aircraft, the establishment of an early warning system and a complete overhaul of the RAF Command structure (leading to the birth of Fighter Command) all came about under Ellington.

You might well ask why I have focussed on these relatively little-known names, when there are other household ones much more commonly associated with the battle and – to be fair – much idolised by me in my youth. I think the main reason is that the more I have read on the Battle of Britain, the more I have been a little aggrieved that, to corrupt Churchill’s words “Never in the field of human conflict was so much attributed by so many to so few”. I take nothing away from the airborne gladiators. They were, in their own right, battle winners. But Churchill’s desire to present them as latter-day knights-errant falls well short of the whole story.

As is so often the case, the Battle

of Britain was won as much by the Many as it was by the Few. In the aftermath of Dunkirk, Churchill needed a successful hero and Fighter Command was able to fill that gap (more accurately its pilots). But they, in turn, were massively dependent on a team. The ground crews, support staff and fighter controllers made up that team but so too did a cohort of civilian participants.

Without question the skill, determination and bravery of the pilots ultimately claimed the victory but much else contributed to it – all delivered by that wider military and civilian team. RAF losses prior to the Battle were already unacceptably high; the Battle of France had seen the loss of 400 Hurricanes and 67 Spitfires, with 280 pilots dead and 60 wounded. Consequently, on the eve of the battle, Fighter Command could muster just 226 Spitfires and 344 Hurricanes to face a daunting Luftwaffe force of some 2,780 modern bombers and fighters. Yet by the end of the chapter, despite losses of over 1000 more fighters, the RAF had accounted for almost 2,000 Luftwaffe aircraft. How?

### **Shadow factories**

One reason was another initiative adopted in Ellington’s time to build shadow factories capable of turning instantly to manufacture new aircraft.

At the height of the battle, despite enemy attacks, British civilian plants were producing 400 aircraft each month, compared to Germany’s rate of just 190. Another reason was the ability of the RAF to sustain operations, both at the airfields but also crucially across the whole of the radar, reporting and control system. Little credit seems ever to have been given to the General Post Office (GPO) for this but, in fact, it was mainly GPO engineers – out in the open – who kept the communications lines open. We should also give some credit to the ingenuity and speed of decision making by the sector control staff. It should have been impossible, given the limited range of radar, to scramble fighters to gain sufficient height in time to make a bomber intercept. So instead, the sector HQs anticipated raids by also watching for signs of Luftwaffe escort fighters taking off from the French forward bases, which were in radar range.

The full list of reasons is even more extensive and all of them carry a litany of human stories. So, as the media make much of The Few this September, by all means commemorate their valour and sacrifice. I certainly will; the Battle of Britain is in any airman’s DNA. But spare a thought too for the essential support provided by an equally hard-working and gallant “Many”. Great things come from good teams. 🇬🇧

# In Your Community

## Never give up

Just over a year ago, Member Martin Forrester was ready to hand back his arts materials and stop his lifelong hobby of making models. Staff were able to convince Martin to have another go and support him to carry on. Martin visited the Llandudno Centre and worked on an unfinished six-year project, a Second World War-era German Tiger tank. Martin's attention to detail caught the interest of Members, volunteers, visitors and staff alike. The work in progress was a conversation starter - - particularly for those who also served on tanks.



**Caption: Martin's Tiger tank**

During lockdown, other Members have encouraged Martin to make replica tanks to the ones they served on. In particular, he has made models for Billy Baxter and John Endres. Billy's AS-90 Self Propelled Gun even has his '10 Alpha' call sign. John served in the same cavalry regiment, 4th/7th Dragoon Guards, approximately 40 years before and Martin has enthusiastically made him a model Centurion tank. Billy said he was really proud of Martin's achievements.

Martin said, "I enjoy spending hours at a time making models in my summer house. I start about 5am, and spend all day making till around 6 when I'll go in for dinner. I also do my exercises in the same space throughout the day. Keeping busy really supports my well-being."

Just before lockdown when the Tiger was completed, an Acrylic Fabrications Specialist company - K2 Associates - kindly made a bespoke case for Martin's work. K2 Associates said how impressed it was, adding, "We were so taken with the quality of workmanship and detail in the model, it just seemed like the right thing to donate a case for

it and leave the funds available to help others."

Nadia Wazera from the Llandudno Health & Wellbeing Team commented, "We are currently looking to celebrate Martin's success and loan the work to a museum so the general public can interact with and learn about our work. We are grateful to K2 for their support and endorsing Martin's artistic talents".

## Across the Beacons

Blind Veterans UK Health & Safety Manager Rachel Jones from Hay-on-Wye took on a 20 mile off-road running challenge in the Brecon Beacons National Park, following the cancellation of what would have been her 16th consecutive participation in the Great North Run, raising money for the charity.

She first became interested in the Great North Run as an 11-year-old, hearing about the launch of the first ever event. She says: "I've had an interest since it was first launched and years later following the complicated birth of my son I wanted to take part and give back to the charity that had supported me during that time."

Rachel first participated in 2005 and subsequently completed every race



**Caption: Rachel Jones**

since then for 15 consecutive years. She was signed up to take part in 2020 but the event was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

"I was gutted when I found out that it was cancelled. So I got together with my friend Ange and we decided to take on a 20 mile off road running challenge in the Black Mountains at the eastern end of the Brecon Beacons National Park."

The 20 mile challenge took Rachel →



and Ange six hours to complete and saw them gain 3,300 feet in elevation. Rachel raised £495, smashing her £300 target. She says: "It was a big challenge and I was exhausted by the end of it. But it was so worth it knowing all the while that the money I raised would be going to such a good cause. It was also really special to get to the top of the hills that had been restricted during lockdown."

## Ron finds his phone

86-year-old Member Ron Zaple from Plympton, Devon has revitalised his contact with the outside world thanks to his new Synapptic-enabled phone.

Ron attended a training and rehabilitation week in Weston-super-Mare last year, where he saw other Members using their Synapptic smartphones. He says: "I heard how great these little devices were for keeping in touch with family and getting online, even when severely sight impaired. So I requested one."

He underwent some initial basic training, but couldn't quite follow and struggled for some time. Finally, he got in touch with Phil Smith, his community support worker, who arranged some one-to-one training over the phone. Following a weekly training schedule,

Ron was able to use his Synapptic phone to text and email his family and friends as well as search the internet and listen to the radio, keeping him fully connected with the outside world during lockdown.

Ron says: "Without the training on this phone I don't know what I would have done during lockdown. I didn't go out at all so it was the only communication I had with the outside world. I was able to keep in touch with my children and grandchildren in Australia and the UK, as well as keep up to date with the local and world news. I tell you what, it was an absolute lifesaver."



**Caption: Ron getting to grips with his new Synapptic-enabled phone**

## Visitor for you Ma'am...

Tony Bostock, a 54-year old RAF veteran from Romsey in Hampshire cycled 100 miles from his front door to Buckingham Palace after Ride London was cancelled.

He was hugely disappointed when the event was cancelled but wanted to honour the funds he had raised for our charity by taking on his own version of the race. He says: "It's been a roller-coaster of a year and I was extremely disappointed when Ride London was cancelled.

Tony planned his route to pass RAF Odiham and Aldershot Garrison on his way into London. "Passing the bases was symbolic. They've been instrumental in supporting Gulf War veterans so I wanted to cycle past as a gesture. I was thinking about the sacrifice members of our Armed Forces have made for us all as I rode."

Tony set off at 6.30am and finally reached Buckingham Palace at 5pm after a full day of riding. By taking on the challenge he has raised £860 at the time of press. If you would like to help Tony raise even more money, his fundraising page is here: [uk.virginmoneygiving.com/AnthonyBostock](https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/AnthonyBostock).



**Caption: Tony Bostock at the end of his trip**

With all manner of fundraising events being cancelled due to the ongoing pandemic, Tony gave a message of encouragement for anyone in a similar position to himself: "I can completely understand the disappointment people must be feeling when something they have been working towards is cancelled. However I think with a bit of creative thinking we can do something even better and in the current circumstances, even more memorable." 🇬🇧



# Hidden in plain sight

When Wareham-based Member **Gordon Johnstone** saw a local gardening challenge, he just couldn't resist

When working on my garden, I was asked by a passer-by if I felt I could also manage to look after the Wareham Town Pound, which is just across the road. My answer is not fit for publication in full, but part of it was, "Who do you think I am - Schazam the Wonder Man?" However, some while later I told my friend Valerie the story and said, "What do you think of that lot over there? They have asked me if I would to take over the garden in the 'Pound'"

She was quite non-committal about it, but later on asked me if I thought we could manage it between us. Knowing that she is a very good plantswoman, and keen gardener, I had no hesitation in saying yes. This was a few weeks before lockdown, but as it took us a while to take over, Valerie only had two or three visits to help, before she was locked down as she lives on the other side of town. Despite this setback, I

continued to have good advice as we kept in touch via the telephone.

The 'Pound' measures approximately 7.5 by 6 metres and had been neglected, due to lack of volunteers. 'Hidden in plain sight', is a saying that came to mind several times. This resulted in something like 14 barrow loads of weeds, brambles and old dead growth to dispose of. While all this work was going on, nearly everyone seemed to be in lockdown, and nobody came within 10 metres. We were also very lucky with the weather, with it being mostly sunny. Now it is looking much better, but somewhat Autumnal, due to the lack of rain in this area.

## Marking out borders

The Pound belongs to the local Rempstone Estate, and is run by the Wareham and District Development Trust. We were given some hanging



**Caption: Before and after shots of Wareham Pound - pay it a visit if you're in the area**

tiles from the house of my daughter and her partner, and I have used those to mark out the borders from the grass area in the centre. The whole area is now looking quite passable, and we have some quite interesting plans for next year.

We have been able to hold four

separate lessons in there for our Spanish language class, which is much more interesting outside in the sun. So, as you can hear, I was lucky with the weather and the work, which also includes the Wareham in Bloom garden. If any of you are in the area, you are cordially invited to visit the 'Pound', in Pound Lane. 🌍



# Ever increasing circles

Member **Fred Finlay** makes a request for our woodturners to unite

When I was first diagnosed with wet and dry age-related macular degeneration I was devastated at losing my cherished car due to an immediate driving ban, while my golf suffered to such an extent that I was as miserable as h\*\*l.

I was accepted by Blind Veterans UK and during my induction week at the Brighton Centre, I spotted the woodwork shop. I expressed an interest, and was called back for a basic course. What a change this has made to my life - although I had last used a lathe as a 15-year old during my RAF apprenticeship, I was given lots of help



**Caption: Fred's well-equipped workshop**

which has set me off with a wonderful relaxing hobby.

Through the charity I have been loaned a set of basic chisels, and I subsequently sold my golf clubs and bought a lathe of my own. My kids came to the party, and gifted me a stack of wood blanks to set me off. I already had a significant workshop having spent 35 years making golf clubs and restoring vintage motorcycles, so I am fully equipped with tooling.

Is it possible to start a group of woodturners so we can chat and maybe get together on Zoom for example, to discuss both what is a wonderful, relaxing hobby, and how we can overcome our vision induced problems, while benefitting from some advice? 🇬🇧

If you're interesting in forming a woodturning group with Fred and others then please pass on your contact details to the editor of Review at [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk), or call **0207 6168 367**.

# In the open air

Our Brighton Centre residents were treated to an outdoor concert from the Not Forgotten Association writes **Emma Allum**

In 1919, Miss Marta Cunningham, an American soprano, visited a Ministry of Pensions Hospital. What she saw there would lead to events that would brighten the lives of many service men and, eventually, women.

With the support of the Royal Family



**Caption: Enjoying the open air at Brighton**

and many benevolent minded members of the public, Marta created The Not Forgotten Association, dedicated to bringing sunshine to those who fought for our country in the First World War. What started off as an organisation that would arrange hospital visits and concerts, with tea drives and gifts of fruit, chocolates and cigarettes, then became a major force in the drive for rehabilitation of those injured in combat. The Second World War was to create even more former servicemen and women in need of support, and although the amount of members dwindled in the 1960's, the deployment of British Armed Forces in modern day conflicts means that their work is still ongoing.

Blind Veterans UK has a long association with The Not Forgotten. Did you know that the yearly Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, to which we have been invited every year, is arranged and paid for by The Not Forgotten? We have been on trips to The Bluebell Railway, for a ride →



on the steam trains and a ploughman's lunch and to Runnymede for festive river cruises, which include a wonderful three-course Christmas lunch and entertainment.

### Two free concerts

In addition to all of this, The Not Forgotten also offer us two free concerts every year, an offer that we gratefully accept. Under the leadership of compere Mickie Driver, Members living at, or visiting the Brighton Centre have the opportunity to experience a high standard variety show, with a mix of music hall, opera and popular music being performed. Add in a sprinkling of costume changes and background scenery, coupled with the real enjoyment coming from the faces



**Caption: The variety show in action**

“The Second World War was to create even more former servicemen and women in need of support”

of those performers, and you'll get the idea of how wonderful these concerts are.

This year, as The Not Forgotten turned 100 years old, the event organisers faced an unprecedented question: How on earth do we continue providing entertainment and joy to those who need it, whilst observing physical distancing rules? They rose to the occasion magnificently. Initially starting off with free online concerts, they then decided they could do more, and as some restrictions were lifted, put their plans in motion.

For Blind Veterans UK, it meant that the first concert in five months was held in the Inner Garden. Our permanent residents (and staff) were treated to a superb concert, where everyone sang along to remembered songs and danced to others, enjoying themselves immensely and topping it all off with ice-cream provided by TNS. Everyone was at a safe distance and all guidelines observed. It was a truly wonderful afternoon. 🍦

# Batting for the blind: cricket and Blind Veterans UK

**Rob Baker** tells the story of our charity's involvement with that most British of sports – cricket

With sporting activities so much disrupted of late, the current cricket season has been affected like everything else. However, it nevertheless seems timely to think about blind veterans and cricket, a

sport we have over the years come into contact with in a variety of ways.

Sporting activities were an important part of the rehabilitation of the blinded servicemen returning from the →



**Caption: Denis Compton at our Brighton Centre's then shooting gallery**



First World War who came to 'learn to be blind' at the headquarters of St Dunstan's (as we were then called) in Regent's Park. Although a regular 'Cricket Ball Throwing Competition' was popular with the men we did not hold cricket team competitions of the kind we did with football and other sport.

We were located nearby to Lord's and our former Chairman Lord Fraser later wrote of how our veterans were invited there by the Marylebone Cricket Club, as they were to football and boxing matches. He noted that although sighted companions would kindly give commentaries to them, other sounds would at times render them



**Caption: Denis Compton (right)**

unnecessary, with 'the crack of leather on willow that denotes that the ball has been struck with the middle of the bat' being 'perhaps the most strongly associative sound of all'.

### **Jockeys and members**

Lord's was also the venue for a what appears to have been an annual fundraising match for us which took place in the 1920s between jockeys and members of the racing press. Film footage from one of the matches, from 1923, survives and can be found, free to watch, on the British Pathe website at [britishpathe.com/video/come-on-steve-1](http://britishpathe.com/video/come-on-steve-1) - its title refers to Steve Donoghue, the leading flat-race jockey of the time.

This was not the only example of support from the cricketing world in our early years. We received several visits in our early years from the Reverend Canon Frank Hay Gillingham. Ordained in 1899, Frank became Curate of Leyton, which qualified him to play for Essex County Cricket Club. He did so, clerical duties permitting, between 1903 and 1928. Frank also served as a Chaplain to the Forces during the war, and he went on to become the BBC's first 'ball-by-ball' radio commentator.

A more famous visitor was Ernest Hayes, MBE, who played for Surrey, Leicestershire and England before the



**Caption: Jack Hobbs and unknown masseur**

First World War. After serving in the war Ernie returned to Surrey in 1919 but only played one season before retiring from professional cricket. He took an active interest in the charity, which in 1921 included acting as the referee at a football match! This was the final of the Sir Arthur Pearson Challenge Cup – our own version of the FA Cup, in which the teams took penalties against a sighted goalkeeper. Another sporting celebrity of the day, Ernest Williamson of Arsenal, kindly lent his services in goal.

### **A variety of links**

Many of our blind veterans have become masseurs or physiotherapists, and this has provided other links to cricket. We have a photograph from 1925 of one of them treating the

famous Surrey and England cricketer, Jack Hobbs, later to become Sir Jack. Unfortunately we have not yet identified the masseur who is treating him.

Further celebrity support came after the Second World War, when Middlesex and England cricketer Denis Compton visited our Brighton Centre, chatted with our veterans and spent time at our rifle range. Denis also had a highly successful career as a footballer.

Women's cricket has grown in popularity in recent years and one of its pioneers was Rachael Heyhoe (later Heyhoe Flint) who captained the England Ladies team from 1966 to 1978. In 1970 Rachael was a guest at our annual reunion event for →



those of our veterans who had lost their hands as well as their sight. Other guests included Leonard Hobbs, son of Jack Hobbs.

1970 was also the year in which Barclays Bank started its Blind Telephonists Cricket Club. We had developed very good links with Barclays long before this, with many of our veterans who had trained as telephonists working for them and with them also providing fundraising support for us. By 1970 according to Barclays themselves it had more than 150 blind telephonists working in their London branches alone. The bank describes how 'the game was played with as strict an adherence to the rules as possible



**Caption: Denis Compton chats to our veterans**

using a large plastic ball filled with lead that when bowled, created a "swishing noise and bounced with a pitter patter sound" '. You can read more about the links between Blind Veterans UK and Barclays Bank and about their cricket club at [home.barclays/news/2019/11/from-the-archives-the-blind-telephonists/](https://www.home.barclays/news/2019/11/from-the-archives-the-blind-telephonists/)

### Recent years

In more recent years we have established good relationships with cricket in Sussex. Our late blind veteran Gary Ogden played for some time with the Sussex Sharks blind cricket team. A number of our veterans have visited Sussex County Cricket Club and Sussex County Cricket Museum. In 2014, we played Southern Rail in a match kindly hosted by Sussex County Cricket Club and led by a member of the Sussex Sharks, Toby Collins.

Blind cricket now has its own organisation for England and Wales, Blind Cricket England & Wales, and there is an England men's VI team and a UK-wide women's VI team. Interest and engagement will doubtless continue to grow and with it further opportunities for Blind Veterans UK and our veterans to engage with and enjoy the game. 🏏

- You can find out more about Blind Cricket England & Wales at [bcew.co.uk](https://www.bcew.co.uk).

# The Armed Forces Covenant - what you need to know

**Simon Mahoney**, Blind Veterans UK Member and volunteer explains how the Armed Forces Covenant can have an impact on you

The Armed Forces Covenant is important for all of us who have served, and our families. It is an agreement formalised in 2000 between those still serving, veterans, their families and Government to treat us fairly.

This means the Armed Forces community has the same access to government and commercial services and products as any other citizen.

This support is provided in a number of areas including:

- Education and family well-being
- Having a home
- Starting a new career
- Access to healthcare
- Financial assistance
- Discounted services

**The Covenant's two principles are that:**

- The Armed Forces community should not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services in the area where they live
- Special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.

### Working together

Local authorities and the armed forces family are encouraged to work together to establish a covenant in their area in order to understand, support and integrate the military into their local community. However, covenants in each area may look quite different from one location →



to another. This is a scheme where one size does not fit all, and the nature of the support offered will be determined by both need and capacity.

Since the 'community covenant' was launched in June 2011, every local authority in mainland Great Britain has signed a 'community covenant partnership' with their local armed forces and there are now positive benefits as a result. The community covenant is now known simply as the

Armed Forces Covenant. Many local authorities have an 'Armed Forces Champion'. The role of a 'champion' is often to make sure that the local authority achieves its commitments to the armed forces community and any blockages are resolved.

If you are a member of the armed forces, a veteran, or a family member, then you are entitled to a wide range of support.

At first sight this does not seem

**“If you are a member of the Armed Forces, a veteran, or a family member, then you are entitled to a wide range of support”**

anything to get the pulse racing. If we take a closer look, then we find it has the ability to make our lives a little easier. For us as veterans, one of the most important parts of the covenant is the way in which it can fast track us within the National Health Service (NHS).

To be able to access this fast track two things have to happen. Firstly, you have to know the covenant exists - well now you do - and the NHS needs to know you are a veteran.

### **Your opportunity**

Many GP's express ignorance of the covenant, and if that is the case then this is your opportunity to educate them. You need to contact the practice manager of your local practice and explain that you are a veteran, and under the terms of the covenant you would like the records of yourself and family marked appropriately.

Sounds like a lot of fuss, doesn't it? All

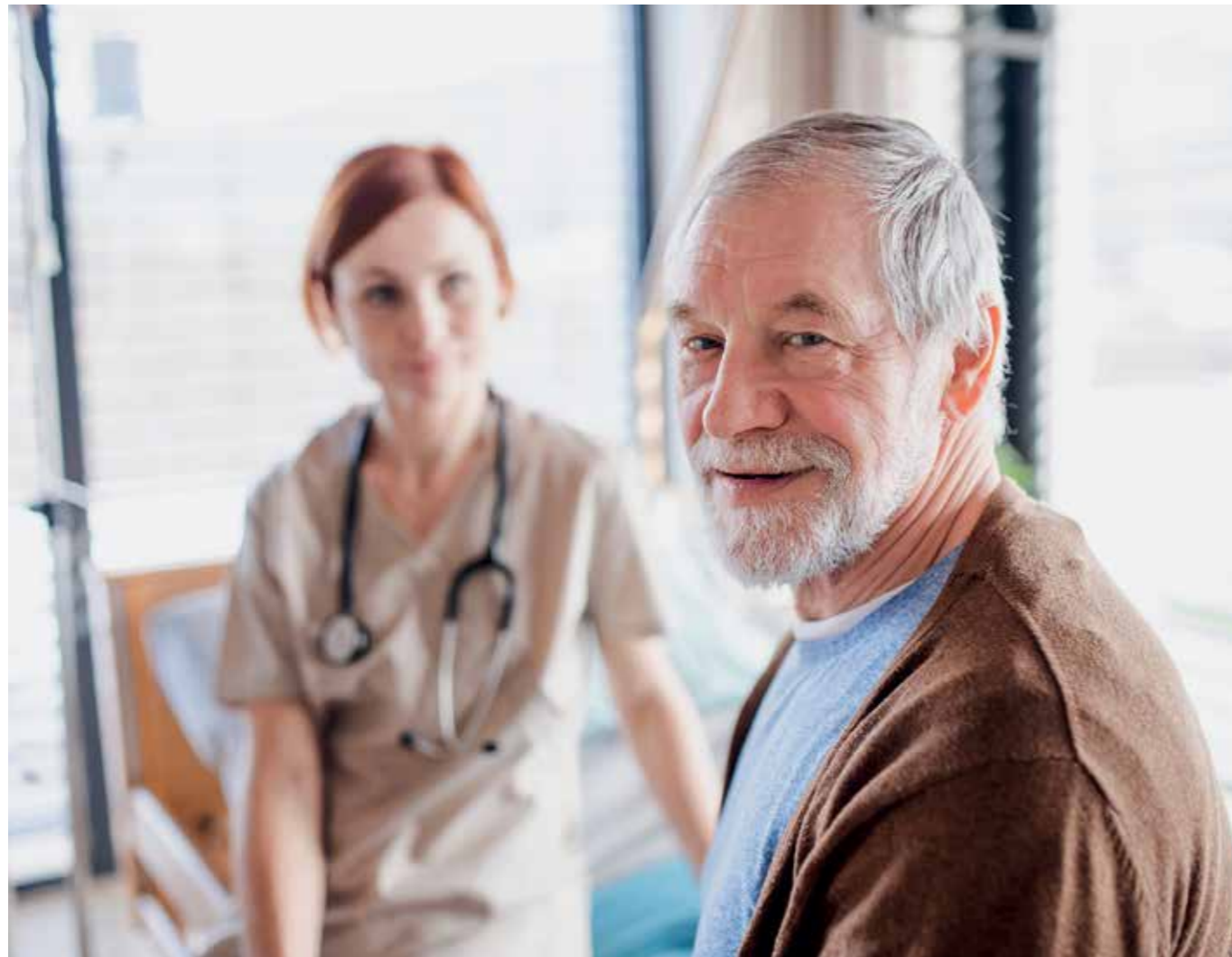
I can say is that generally I get a same day or next day appointment with my chosen doctor every time, while a friend's hospital appointment was moved forward several months in one case.

The scope and influence of the covenant has been steadily growing since its beginning. One of the great things about it is that it has brought a number of military charities into a strong alliance. These include The Royal British Legion, SSAFA, Blind Veterans UK and Combat Stress to name but a few.

### **So, how do we access the advantages of the Covenant?**

While I have briefly explained how to get yourself recognised by the NHS, other areas may not be as simple. You can always ask your community support worker, or if you want to do a little digging for yourself then computer searches such as: 'Armed Forces Covenant' and 'Veterans Gateway' will give you a sizeable amount of information.

Many of you will say you do not need charity but this is not charity. This is your recompense for being prepared to put yourselves on the line. We are all part of the reputation of the armed forces, and as such we have a right to ask for the best. 🇬🇧





# Happy snapping

Member and photographer **Mark Pile** explains how you can meet weekly with other photographers online

This all came about while I was in a Working Age Members meeting in which part of the agenda was finding ways to help other Members online during the lockdown period. The only thing I really know about is photography, so I suggested that I set up a group session, and the following week we sent out an invite for our veterans to come along and join what at that point was an online Zoom meeting to chat about photography.

Around six of our Members came along, so as first times go it was a great success with lots of humour and chat. This went on for several weeks before we changed to the Teams online platform which let us have longer meetings. Members may join in by video call or telephone call.

I also thought this may complement the Blind Veterans UK Photography Facebook page, so after a conversation

with its administrator Nick Barber he agreed it could be a benefit. I asked Nick to put a few words together here about the page, and he said,

“Blind Veterans UK’s photography Facebook page was founded on 27 August 2015 (happy fifth birthday). It was started for Members to showcase their photographic work, allow constructive comments, pick up tips and general photographic chit chat. Our membership has grown steadily to 95 Members, including staff who also enjoy photography. There is a wide and varied subject matter on show, from landscape to model photography.”

But to continue with our story, we carried on with the online chat group

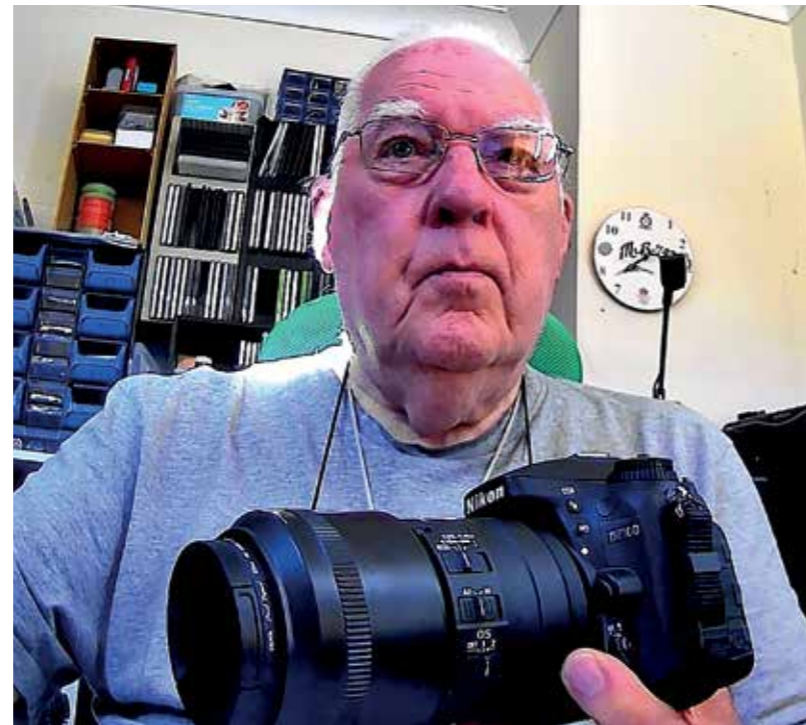
for several weeks with only Working Age Members, but after a chat with them it was decided to open it up to all Members that wished to come along. The following week a few more of our veterans participated, which was absolutely wonderful and as the weeks went on the numbers grew.

## Joining by phone

I was receiving emails from community support staff asking if I could talk to Members all over the country about the sessions, and see if it was something they would like to be part of. For the most part it was yes and they all joined in to the point we can now have 13 attendees most weeks, including two that have joined in by phone thanks to help from Glynis Gillam. →



**Caption: Zebra portrait by group member Robert Eaglestone**



**Caption: Brian Julian**



**Caption: Colin Adamson**



**Caption: The assembled Photoweek group**



One of the group is Member Andy Bache, who says, "I only ever really took photographs using my iPhone, but was recently given a Canon 40D digital camera. As a complete novice I really didn't have a clue what I was doing, it was a case of hope for the best! I was apprehensive about joining the Photography Group as I thought I would look stupid and out of my depth, oh how wrong I was. I get excellent help, information and tips from very knowledgeable Members who have vast experience in all aspects of photography as well as chatting to those like me, who are just starting out. I am now taking some really nice pictures and love seeing other Members work and how they took them."



**Caption: Andy Bache**

It was also decided by the group that we should invite staff and volunteers that enjoy photography, and because most of the Photography Weeks trips we have at the Centres would not have happened without them. During these online sessions we think of it like we are all sat in a café with a mug of tea, coffee or something stronger just enjoying a good chat about a subject we all enjoy - there is no pressure it's just a place to come and chat.

Member Brian Julian says, "Having worked through Box Brownie to Nikon I became a Member of a photo group that showed and discussed photography. It has become practically defunct now.



**Caption: An atmospheric Andy Bache image**

I wanted to join your group to learn more about how other veterans manage their photography. I am a happy snapper and not into one aspect of photography."

Over the past few weeks we have changed it around a bit. Every two or three weeks we invite someone to come along and talk about their life in photography which has worked really well, so far we have had Mark Kingston, Lou Kirk-Partridge and David Bryant, and I am always looking for more volunteers from inside and outside of the charity so - if you, or someone you know - could help then please get in touch with me.

### **Subject matters**

Another one of our veterans is Colin Adamson - "I joined in the photography chat because I have always had an interest in the subject, and when I was in the Royal Navy I was ship's photographer on HMS Glasgow and HMS Cardiff. When I left the navy, I didn't really do much in the way of taking pictures but now I'd like to get back to a hobby I really enjoyed, and joining in with the online chat I thought it would be a fantastic way to get going again. I was right, there is such a vast range of varied experience within the group and everyone is friendly while the chats are always good and very entertaining - long may they continue.

Being able to chat with so many people across such a great distance around the country is absolutely fantastic."

On the weeks in between the chats we now have a subject matter chosen by a Member that will link up with the fortnightly Facebook challenge that is organised by Nick Barber, usually the winner of the previous challenge chooses the topic for the next fortnight.

Moving forward, we are just hoping to encourage more vision impaired people to take up photography and keep a good chat group going long after lock down, while maybe Members living relatively close together will be able to meet on photography days out. Remember, you don't have to be using a camera to capture your images - iPhones and tablets count as photography in today's world.

The fun starts at 15:30 every Thursday. If you would like to join in then please contact me for the link, or talk to your community support worker. I can also phone you into the chat, so you don't have to have a computer. The only criteria is you must like taking photos! 🇬🇧

■ **You can reach me by e-mail at [mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk), or on my mobile at 07584 056 459.**





# Starting a new page

One way to unwind and de-stress is by keeping a journal. Our Wellbeing team shows you how to get started

## Emotional Intelligence, how does it happen?

Writing a journal - otherwise known as a diary - gives voice to our thoughts, feelings and supports our ideas. In the

same way that physical warm-ups work, visual exploration loosens up your expressive muscles. A journal will help manage emotions and process them, this will encourage self-awareness

## Well connected

A wellbeing space for Blind Veterans UK members



“Habits formed in one area of life have a tendency to domino onto other healthy habits”

and support our relationships with ourselves and others. Otherwise known as Emotional Intelligence, we can develop our levels of empathy by increasing our understanding of everyday life and occurrences. Journaling also boosts memory and comprehension. We re-call events, and through our hands can formulate words to document them.

## Healing, how does it happen?

Expressive writing is a route to healing – emotionally, physically, and psychologically. Dr James Pennebaker, author of the self-help book ‘Writing to Heal’ has seen improved immune function in participants of writing exercises. Stress often comes from emotional blockages and overthinking. He explains, “When we translate an experience into language we essentially make the experience graspable.”

In doing so, you free yourself from mentally being tangled in traumas. Studies have shown that journaling lowers anxiety and stress, and induces better sleep.

## Taking care of your mind, how?

Journaling encourages reflection and brings you into a mindful state - worries and frustrating thoughts can lose their edge when actively engaging in the moment. It is proved to stretch your IQ and is a great way to take care of your mind and body. A journal can support goal setting - the act of visualising your goals helps activate signals to the brain that this is important: just like a highlighter pen, your goals will stand out and allow you to find ways to make your dreams and ambitions a reality.

## A positive habit? Tell me more

Making time to write your journal helps create a routine. Like a muscle, the more you exercise it, the stronger it becomes. Habits formed in one area of life have a tendency to domino onto other healthy habits and expressing gratitude in your diary can support you in harvesting the nourishing activities you participate in. Acknowledging them helps you to reap their rewards and plan them in more, thus gaining control of the parts of your life you can adapt and compose. Journaling about a positive experience allows your brain to relive it. It also reaffirms →





your abilities when the ugly head of self-doubt appears. These reflections can become a catalogue of personal achievements that you continue to go back to.

### Unlock your creativity

Creativity is key when journaling. There is no right or wrong. This is your story, unique to you. Unlocking creativity is like warming up our muscles through movement. Connect to your inner voice by experimenting and thinking about what makes you tick - everything from your favourite colour to what food you enjoy the most, as well as memorable experiences you have with other people. All this information can be stored like an archive in your journal. You can flick back through your creation, just like an old photo album that brings back fond memories. 🍷

## Top tips from your Team

- **Treat yourself to a folder, a notebook or sketchbook, something you enjoy handling.**
- **Use collage to develop imagery, everything from old magazines, to tickets from journeys can all be stuck into your book. Collect bits and pieces, and store them in an envelope ready.**
- **Experiment with ways to attach, as well as glue you can use a stapler, fold or use different coloured tapes.**
- **Don't worry about lengthy sentences, one word is sometimes just as powerful. This will act as a prompt for you.**

**Good luck, and happy journaling!**

# Skin deep

Your skin works hard to keep you healthy, and you can return the favour by taking care of it. Here are some tips from our Wellbeing team to help you keep your skin feeling good



### Sun Care

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) rays, which are the main cause of skin ageing and can cause skin cancer. Sunburn can significantly increase the risk of skin cancer, so it's important to protect skin against sun damage at any age.

To help protect yourself:

- spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm
- cover up with clothes, a hat and sunglasses
- use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30

You need to spend some time in sunlight so your body can make vitamin D, which is essential for healthy bones.

### Smoking

Smoking is linked to early ageing of the skin. It's thought smoking reduces the

skin's natural elasticity by causing the breakdown of collagen and reducing collagen production. Collagen is a protein that supports skin strength.

### Alcohol

When you drink alcohol, your body and skin can become dehydrated, leaving the skin looking older and tired. Drinking water can help your skin stay hydrated. When you have alcohol, try to drink within the recommended limits and have a non-alcoholic drink, such as fruit juice, between alcoholic drinks.

### Washing your skin

Try to use mild soaps or bath oils. Too much washing or using harsh soaps can wash away the natural oils that keep our skin healthy.

If you have dry skin, do not use harsh alcohol-based products as these can irritate skin and dry it out.

Moisturising can help prevent dry skin. If you have oily skin, avoid oil-based products and choose water-based ones instead. 🍷



# National Creative Project September Programme

## Creative Activities. Creative Book. Creative Circles.

Welcome to the first programme of activities that you can get involved with from home.



### Letter writing:

**'Key Letters' A project to re-connect, with typed or hand-written letters, using the postal service.**

E mail is all very well but the thrill of having a letter arrive on your doorstep is indeed a rare gift in these days of technology and fast paced living.

#### **"But who will I write to?"**

We can make suggestions for correspondents and assist with contacts.

#### **"But what will I say?"**

We can make suggestions for content and help with spelling, grammar and punctuation if required.

#### **"But I've forgotten how to use my technology"**

Our IT Instructors can give you a call and talk you through the basics again, (and maybe share some new tips and tricks!). Your helpful kit will include

paper, a writing guide, envelopes, pens and organisers.

### Art & Craft:

**'Where there's tea there's hope'  
Tea cup art project**

As an antidote to the worries of the pandemic, this art project explores the symbolism of a cup of tea. Tea represents comfort, hope and people coming together as a community.

Members are invited to design a tea cup. The designs will form part of a group image to be printed on tea towels, alongside an uplifting phrase referencing tea, such as 'Life is like a cup of Tea, the flavour is all in how you make it' and 'With a cup of tea in your hand everything is possible'.

This is an open invitation to all Members to have a go, have fun being creative and help us spread a little joy and hope.

### Art:

**Painting for Beginners and Improvers.** A painting challenge with support, for you to learn to paint or improve your skills. We will send a painting project kit if you need it (or you may use your own painting materials). With a new project each month you can sign up for just one or sign up every month. There will be the

chance to meet other Members and our Art & Craft team for chat and tips by phone or video call if you'd like.

### Gardening:

Time for Thyme. Take some time for yourself and grow an aromatic herb garden on your window sill. We will send a simple kit with thyme seeds and all you need to get started. As your herb grows we would love to keep in touch and hear all about how you are getting on.

■ **Please call our Bookings team on 01273 391 500 for more information or to request an activity pack for the CREATIVE ACTIVITIES above.**

### The Creative Book Project

The COVID-19 pandemic has presented us with difficult and emotional challenges, and has asked each of us to look towards our inner resolve, to come together and find a way through it.

Blind Veterans UK's Creative Book Project has been set up so that we may capture the thoughts and experiences of Members, Staff and Volunteers, and to act as an archive of our experiences. It is our intention to then have the book published in both physical and virtual formats, with accessibility options so that all →



may share our own experiences and reflect on the experiences of others.

We will be asking for Contributions for the Creative Book, with more details of how to get in touch, in next month's Review. In the meantime if you'd like to have a think about your experiences to date and how you might like to record them that would

be wonderful. Contributions may be in the following formats; text, pictures, audio and spoken word, and could include poetry, prose, paintings or photographs.

We look forward to you being in touch and hearing about your experiences.

The Creative Book Team 🇬🇧

## Creative Hobby Circles

We would love to hear from you if you are interested in joining a regular telephone or video call chat group in one of the subjects below.

### Woodturning Group.

Filip Lament  
01492 868 727 [filip.lament@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:filip.lament@blindveterans.org.uk)

### Mosaic Group.

Dave Bryant  
07443 548 391 [david.bryant@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:david.bryant@blindveterans.org.uk)

### Painting Group.

Hattie Lockhart-Smith  
07525 690 288 [hattie.lockhart-smith@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:hattie.lockhart-smith@blindveterans.org.uk)

### Woodwork Group

James Cowland

07858 148 080 [james.cowland@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:james.cowland@blindveterans.org.uk)

### Knitting Group

Sue Kaulsi  
01273 391 500 [sue.kaulsi@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:sue.kaulsi@blindveterans.org.uk)

### Gardening group

Hattie Lockhart-Smith  
07525 690 288 [hattie.lockhart-smith@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:hattie.lockhart-smith@blindveterans.org.uk)

■ For our Photographers we already have a Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK Photography); and a Photography Chat Group.

■ For more information on the Photography group please contact: **Mark Pile. 07584 056 459 [mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk)**

# TV Licensing – how recent changes affect you

There have recently been important changes to the free TV Licence, if you are aged 75 or over, read on for more information



ADOBESTOCK / WILLIAM

**Caption: New rules were introduced this year**

After new rules were introduced on 1 August, 2020 anyone over 75 and not claiming pension credit now has to pay the full television licence fee.

If you are over 75 and currently have a free licence, you were covered until 31 July 2020 and should have been contacted by TV Licensing to let you know what you need to do.

■ **If you would like more information then call TV Licensing on 0300 790 0368 or visit [tvlicensing.co.uk](https://www.tvlicensing.co.uk).**

**Reduction on your TV Licence fee if you are registered as Severely Sight Impaired or Blind**

If you are registered blind (severely sight impaired) then you are entitled to a blind concession TV →



Licence, which gives you 50 per cent off the cost of your TV Licence. Unfortunately you are not entitled to this if you are registered as partially sighted (sight impaired).

The blind concession TV Licence covers anyone who lives with you, as long as the licence is in your name. If your licence is in someone else's name then you can change this and then claim the reduction.

### How to apply for your blind concession TV Licence

You'll need to complete an application form and provide proof of your registration status to claim the blind concession TV Licence. You can fill in the application form online at [tvlicensing.co.uk](http://tvlicensing.co.uk), print the form and then send it with proof of your registration status and payment to:

**Blind Concession Group  
TV Licensing  
Darlington  
DL98 1TL**

To prove you are registered (certified) as severely sight impaired, you must send a copy of one of the following two documents:

- The certificate from your eye specialist (ophthalmologist) that states that you are eligible to be

**“You'll need to complete an application form and provide proof of your registration status to claim the blind concession TV Licence”**

certified as severely sight impaired. This is called a CVI (Certificate of Vision Impairment), or BP1 if you live in Scotland

- A certificate or other document issued by, or on behalf of your local authority that shows you are registered as severely sight impaired with them.

Please don't send your original documents as TV Licensing only need to see a copy and there is always the risk that you could lose your original document in the post.

To find out how much your TV Licence could cost with the 50 per cent reduction visit [tvlicensing.co.uk/info](http://tvlicensing.co.uk/info).

- **If you have any difficulties with your application or would like more information then call TV Licensing on 0300 790 6117 or visit [tvlicensing.co.uk/blind](http://tvlicensing.co.uk/blind)**

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS / CPL PHIL MAJOR ABIPP/MOD



# A new look at the Hawker Hurricane

As we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, Member **Ken Grimward** looks at one of its unsung heroes

For some years now, I have held the opinion that the Hawker Hurricane fighter has never been given its rightful place in aviation history. Its stalwart service through the Battle of Britain and subsequent war years has marked this great machine as an enduring tribute to its designer, Sir Sydney Camm.

The Hurricane stemmed from a long

line of Hawker aircraft, all of which were biplanes, including the Demon, Hart and Fury, to name but a few. Its pedigree was assured. It was the first cantilever monoplane (single winged) fighter to be delivered to the RAF for active service that was equipped with eight machine guns, retractable undercarriage, and enclosed cockpit. It proved to be capable of reaching over 300mph in level flight. →



“When we list the virtues of this aircraft, it is not surprising why its pilots respected it so much”

One of the great moments in the genesis of the Hurricane was the foresight of the directors of Hawker Aircraft, in going ahead with full scale production without an official order from the Air Ministry. This made it possible to deliver some 500 Hurricanes to the RAF by the time war broke out on 3 September 1939, with the fighter equipping a total of 18 squadrons. At the time when the Battle of Britain began in July 1940, the order of the battle was 30 squadrons of Hurricanes and 18 squadrons of Supermarine Spitfires, making it quite obvious that the Hurricanes had the lion's share of the fighting.

When we list the virtues of this aircraft, it is not surprising why its pilots respected it so much. It had a wide undercarriage that meant it was good for landing on grass runways or any uneven surface, and it could take a considerable amount of damage to the airframe and still return. While not as manoeuvrable as some of its opponents, it was still relatively nimble, and packed a hefty punch. Vitally, it could be ready to return to

the fray after quick repairs due to its rugged wooden construction.

When recalling this great aircraft, it is a good time to remember it is the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain – one of the darkest and most dangerous times of our country in modern history. Had we lost this momentous air battle, we would have been invaded and brutally put to slavery along with all of the other countries the Axis powers overran. By virtue of our resolve and great bravery despite being outnumbered during those months between July and September 1940 we achieved a great victory to take its place in history books as being equal to Nelson's victory at Trafalgar and Wellington's victory at Waterloo.

We remember those pilots who gave their lives in this momentous battle and the two fighter aircraft that won the day, the Hurricane and the Spitfire, with the Hurricane being credited with 65% of German aircraft shot down during the conflict. I would like to see greater emphasis placed on this aircraft by our aviation journals to highlight the glaring fact that without the Hurricane, all would have been lost.

What more can be said about this great aircraft that served our country so well. 🇬🇧

# Family News

## Birthdays

**Joan Awbery** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 9 September

**Eric Batteson** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 8 September

**Robert Crum** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 14 September

**Anne Dickinson** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 8 September

**Frank Harrison** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 4 September

**Noreen Lincoln** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 7 September

**Lawrence McCarthy** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 13 September

**Daisy Morgan** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 21 September

**Norman Pryer** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 25 September

**Stella Savage** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 4 September

**Joyce Slattery** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 21 September

**Marjorie Theobald** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 5 September

**Evelyn Tilley** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 20 September

## Condolences

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

**Madge Fox** of Darlington, who died on 1 August. She was the wife of the late Howard Fox

**Kathleen Marsh** of Cowes, who died on 25 July. She was the wife of the late Gerald Marsh

**Joyce Medhurst** of Faversham, who died on 1 August. She was the wife of the late William Medhurst





# 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

**George Albert Allen** of Northampton died on 1 August 2020 aged 97. He served as a Sergeant in the Northamptonshire Regiment.

**Arthur Aspinwall** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 28 July 2020 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Light Infantry.

**Joyce Ellen Austin** of Thames Ditton, Surrey died on 14 August 2020 aged 98. She served as a Leading Aircraftwoman in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

**Thomas Norman Baillie** of Bootle, Merseyside died on 3 August 2020 aged 93. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

**John Baker** of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 27 July 2020 aged 99. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Lawrence Betteridge** of Barnard Castle, County Durham died on 12 August 2020 aged 74. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Dennis Buckley** of Stoke-On-Trent died on 17 August 2020 aged 89. He served as a Sergeant in the Welsh Guards.

**Jeffrey Burdett** of Derby died on 2 August 2020 aged 96. He served as a Stretcher Bearer in the Home Guard.

**Mary Patricia Burgess** of Pickering, North Yorkshire died on 27 July 2020 aged 99. She served as a Corporal in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

**Brynley Crates** of Penarth, South Glamorgan died on 26 July 2020 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Joseph William Howard Dickinson** of Buxton Road, Macclesfield died on 2 August 2020 aged 87. He served as a Lieutenant in the Mercian Brigade.

**Joan Victoria Helen Gravestock** of Brighton died on 7 August 2020 aged 98. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Enid Gray** of Hove, East Sussex died on 15 August 2020 aged 100. She served as a Nurse in the Voluntary Aid Detachment.

**William Arthur Gwilliam** of High Peak, Derbyshire died on 12 August 2020 aged 95. He served as a Trooper in the Reconnaissance Corps.

**George Walter Hayes** of Worksop, Nottinghamshire died on 9 August 2020 aged 93. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Peter Hodgkinson** of Belper, Derbyshire died on 15 August 2020 aged 89. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Laurie John Honey** of Hampton, Middlesex died on 16 August 2020 aged 96. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**David Ireland** of Penrith, Cumbria died on 1 August 2020 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Air Force.

**Peggy Johnson** of Matlock, Derbyshire died on 6 August 2020 aged 100. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**John King** of Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire died on 26 July 2020 aged 94. He served as a Wireman in the Royal Navy.

**Elvin Lucy** of Liverpool died on 14 August 2020 aged 95. He served as a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force.

**Iain James Fisher Mcphail** of Chorley, Lancashire died on 28 July 2020 aged 88. He served as a Leading Signalman in the Royal Navy. →



**Robert Joseph Morris** of Newport, Gwent died on 30 July 2020 aged 82. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Dervish Niazi** of Enfield, Middlesex died on 13 August 2020 aged 101. He served as a Private in the Cyprus Regiment.

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**Kenneth Noon** of London died on 20 July 2020 aged 83. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

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**James Alexander Overton** of Harrogate, North Yorkshire died on 20 August 2020 aged 85. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Harold Owen** of Accrington, Lancashire died on 2 August 2020 aged 87. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Raymond Frederick Phillips** of Worcester died on 10 August 2020 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Sussex Regiment.

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**Gordon Frederick Picken** of Derby died on 7 August 2020 aged 87. He served as a Lance Sergeant in the Coldstream Guards.

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**Dennis Arthur Ridge** of Stoke-On-Trent died on 27 July 2020 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Cameronians (Scottish Rifles).

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**Leslie Rushby** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 5 August 2020 aged 95. He served as a Lance Corporal in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

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**Peter Saunter** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 26 July 2020 aged 92. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Walter Henderson Sharp** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 1 August 2020 aged 106. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

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**Eric John Slade** of Brighton died on 1 August 2020 aged 92. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Donovan Smith** of Brighton died on 28 July 2020 aged 81. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Artillery.

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**Derek Squire** of Brighton died on 17 July 2020 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**John Stanner** of Bourne, Lincolnshire died on 20 August 2020 aged 81. He served as a Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Leonard Stevens** of Poole, Dorset died on 1 August 2020 aged 92. He served in the Royal Artillery.

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**Derrick Rowland Thomas** of Poole, Dorset died on 24 July 2020 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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**John Tudor** of Prestatyn, Clwyd died on 31 July 2020 aged 82. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Robert Alexander Walker** of Mid Glamorgan died on 16 August 2020 aged 92. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Peter Alexander Warner** of Tamworth, Staffordshire died on 11 August 2020 aged 96. He served as a Temporary Sub Lieutenant in the Fleet Air Arm.

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**Barry Norman Whitman** of Glasgow, East Renfrewshire died on 26 July 2020 aged 84. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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# More about Alexa

The Alexa Team presents the latest in a series of articles designed to help you get the most out of your device

Hello and welcome to the latest features to help you to get the most out of your Amazon Alexa smart speaker. As always we are keen to hear from our Members about their experiences in our “Alexa Backchat” section, so please do contact the team if you have any questions or suggestions for future articles.

This month, we are going to focus on

some games that will help keep you entertained if you find yourself not going out quite as much at the moment and we will introduce you to your next favourite celebrity chef, Alexa...

## Game Time on Alexa

We have mentioned it before, but it is worth remembering that there are literally hundreds of game skills on Alexa and it is impossible to list

them all. But if you are struggling to remember a particular game or want to try something different, just say “Alexa, play a game”.

Alexa now categorises the types of games to make it easier to pick one that you would like. They include, puzzles, trivia, music, TV, adventure, animal games and so many more. Alexa may recommend a game, but if you don’t want that one, just say no and ask for more options. When you hear a category you would like, just say the chosen category when she asks you. Below are some of our favourite games.

## Test your trivia knowledge

There are many trivia quizzes on Alexa, some more difficult than others and on various subjects. But if you love quiz shows like The Chase or even Pointless, then there is a whole world of quizzing out there to keep your mind busy.

**The “Daily Quiz” is a good quiz to start out on and not too hard, great if you’re a beginner. You get five random multiple choice questions and just have to answer A, B, C or D in three minutes or less.**

Say “Alexa, play the daily quiz”.

After each question you need to say “Alexa” before giving your answer as either A, B, C or D.

**If that is a little tricky, to start with, try playing “True or False”,** “Alexa play true or false”.

When you feel you’re ready, why not challenge yourself with “Quick Fire Quiz”, here you have one minute to answer the question with what you think is the right answer, just say “pass” if you don’t know. The objective is to maintain as much time as you can from your first timed minute, before the next level. You gain time for each correct answer, but you waste time when you get an answer wrong.

It remembers your best score and tells you if you have beaten it or how much you missed it by. If you feel like a challenge, just say “Alexa, play quick fire quiz”.

**If you like some of the TV game shows, try any of the following;** “Alexa, open who Wants To Be A Millionaire”

“Alexa, open the Chase”

“Alexa, open Deal or no Deal”

“Alexa, open Pointless”

You may hear a category called “Button Games”, these are games that allow you to play “fastest finger first” games among two or more people. This requires the addition of physical hand held buttons that can be bought from the Amazon online store.



**“A great feature that we love, is that you can pause the recipe while you prepare each step”**

There are currently around 70 games that can be played with Echo Buttons, including Trivial Pursuit. If you sometimes get frustrated that your sight doesn't allow you to participate in family games as you once did, these allow you to compete on a more even playing field, but Alexa won't be able to help you when it comes to beating the youngsters and their knowledge of modern music and pop culture!

### **Cooking with Alexa**

If you are a fan of Master Chef or The Great British Bake-Off, you probably have your own favourite chef or style of food. Alexa can help you be a top chef in the kitchen too.

**Apart from being able to set up to 20 different timers, each with their own name, for example “Alexa, set potatoes timer for 20 minutes” or Alexa, set my chicken timer for 1 hour 40 minutes”, Alexa can give you recipes and help you with the ingredients and take you through it step by step.**

“Alexa, give me a recipe for a lamb casserole”

“Alexa, give me a recipe for scones”

“Alexa, give me a recipe for slow cooked brisket”

“Alexa, give me a recipe for carrot cake”

“Alexa, give me a recipe for a hardboiled egg”

That last one may have sounded a bit obvious, but there are actually over 280 recipes for hard boiled eggs, according to Alexa. There are literally thousands of different recipes available, just ask Alexa to give you a recipe for anything and before long, you could be the next Jamie Oliver or Delia Smith,

A great feature that we love, is that you can pause the recipe while you prepare each step and ask Alexa to continue when you are ready or go back a step if you want to check something. A good tip is to go through the whole recipe and practice with these commands so that you are not concerned about navigating and you are familiar with the recipe when you're ready to start cooking.

As always, if you have any questions or suggestions yourself or would like to know more about them, please call the Members Support Helpline on **01273 391 447**.

We hope you enjoy exploring the world of Alexa and we'll look forward to bringing you more ideas, tips and tricks, in our next issue. 🍷

## Contact details

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

**Member Support Hub: 01273 391 447**

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

**The Brighton Centre 01273 307 811.**

**The Llandudno Centre 01492 868 700.**

**The Booking Office for the Brighton Centre:** To book accommodation at the Brighton Centre please telephone **01273 391 500**. If you have care needs please first contact your Team Leader or Community Support Worker (CSW).

**The Booking Office for the Llandudno Centre:** To book accommodation at the Llandudno Centre please telephone **01492 868 700** for bookings and ask for the Booking office. If you have care needs please first contact your Team Leader or CSW.

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



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

### **A different format?**

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





# TAKE ON THE VETERANS VIRTUAL 75 CHALLENGE!

Take on our virtual walking challenge in support of Blind Veterans UK - and walk 75km at a pace to suit you!

[BLINDVETERANS.ORG.UK/VIRTUAL75](https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/virtual75)

## VETERANS VIRTUAL 75 CHALLENGE

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Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss