

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

November 2020



Taking flight

Talking with Member
Harry Garthwaite

Inside:

Keeping active during winter
Working Age Members
National Creative Project



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

A reversal of fortune

By the time you read this, our country will – once again – have been thrust into another ‘lockdown’ situation – a word that is becoming sadly only too familiar. It would be nice to think that by now we have come ‘old hands’ at this kind of thing, but as with any resurgence of restriction, it will bring negative and even resentful feelings on many levels.

Not least of these will be the restrictions on our commemoration of Remembrance this year. For many of you, the National Service of Remembrance is a high point of the year – the moment when the world stops, even for just two minutes, and commemorates those who both gave the ultimate sacrifice and continue to do so in their own way.

This year there will be no proud parade through London’s streets or a lowering of the flags at the Cenotaph. I cannot begin to imagine the sad impact this will have upon many of you, whether you wished to attend or simply watch on television. Yet all is not lost. This year we are taking part in a range of virtual remembrances of our own – from one broadcast live at the National Memorial Arboretum, to our own ‘listen and join in’ sessions.

These will allow you to talk to your comrades once again, and present the opportunity to swap stories, memories and friendship. From the bottom of my heart I hope that this is the case, and that it will alleviate some of the frustration that this pandemic has caused to our nation on what is your day.

As ex-servicemen and women, you were trained to fight in whatever measure you served. This time you continue to fight an invisible enemy, one that remains silent and deadly – it’s a different kind of war, and we are all involved.

I will be keeping the two minutes silence while thinking of those who have gone before and you all as well – my readers, and the veterans that I serve in producing this magazine. You can rest assured that you are not forgotten and that you continue to remain special to our nation – regardless of what is occurring to deflect its attention. 🇬🇧

Chris Gilson
Editor



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On the cover

Member and RAF pilot **Harry Garthwaite** begins telling his story in this issue



The appliance of science

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

Last month, Dr Renata Gomes and I were presenting at the Winchester College Studium. This is a day in the year when external speakers are given the opportunity to talk to the boys on subjects that do not naturally fall



Caption: Nick Caplin

out of the current curriculum. Mindful that our Founder Sir Arthur Pearson had attended Winchester from 1880-82, we grabbed the opportunity to bring to life his achievements with the charity and spoke to the boys over the internet for an hour on the subject of Victory over Blindness with a particular focus on technology and innovations. Researching for this talk was fascinating. Blind Veterans UK has always looked to use, and sometimes develop, technology. Much of this work has been to help our own Members and the challenges that they have faced, but we have also been keen to help the wider blind community and have often acted in collaboration with other organisations here and abroad.

Sir Arthur Pearson was always open to new ideas and was keen to use the technology of the day. This was sometimes adapted relatively simply



Caption: Members listening to talking books by gramophone

to meet our needs. For typewriting training, which was a skill taught to nearly all our early blind veterans, an embossed scale was added to help the trainee gauge the position of the carriage. The surface of a few keys would be raised to help fingers remain on target.

Further adaptations would be made for those who had lost a hand, with a lever being added to shift the carriage, and for those with no hands, where a metal plate fashioned in a series of shallow gutters or grooves was used, and a 'striker' fitted to each of the artificial arms so that typing was possible by inserting the strikers through the holes in the plate to hit the keys beneath.

We also used the then relatively new inventions of the Braille writer and the Braille shorthand writer, the latter using a small machine which was fed paper tape. Braille shorthand would have been particularly valuable for any Member who wanted to go on to office and secretarial work. In 1949, we produced our own Braille writer, which unlike the most-used version, the Stainsby-Wayne, wrote upwards like a typewriter and was also designed for ease of operation for the one-handed.

Benefitting from learning

Several veterans also trained in what was then a relatively new occupation - telephony. A trainee would benefit from learning to write →

Braille shorthand, so that they could quickly and easily take messages. They would also keep a directory in Braille of numbers to be called. With larger business requiring several telephone operators, we were often able to place a number of veterans with the same companies, and Shell-Mex and Barclays Bank are examples of those who we developed good links with.

In our earliest days, most of our initiatives around technology were driven in the first instance by Ian Fraser, later Lord Fraser of Lonsdale, who having come to us in 1916 after losing his sight at the Battle of the

Somme would take on a number of responsibilities before becoming Chairman in 1921. Fraser writes in his memoir of how he had an interest in wireless dating back to his school days, and how this developed in the charity – ‘At St Dunstan’s, when I found I could do carpentry I took up my old hobby again. Others shared my interest and began to build receivers, for wireless was still a technical pastime rather than a form of entertainment.’

Fraser went on to be elected as President of the Radio Society of Great Britain, the association for amateur ‘radio hams’, as they were often known.



Caption: Ian Fraser and our Members listen to the wireless in June 1927

Later, having become an MP, he was able to pilot a bill to enable all blind people to own a wireless radio without needing a licence for it. Fraser was also involved in the founding in 1928 of the Wireless for the Blind Fund, supporting and working with Sir Ernest Beachcroft Towse, himself a blind veteran of the Boer War, who became the first Chairman of this new charity. As the British Wireless for the Blind Fund, it continues its work to this day. Blind Veterans UK has retained a keen interest in amateur radio, currently in the form of our Amateur Radio Society which was formed in 1976.

Lord Fraser was also the key figure in the development of talking books in this country. In our early days he had worked with a recording engineer at a studio at his home in Regent’s Park, close to our then headquarters. He recited poetry and speeches, experimenting with a Dictaphone which conveyed sound onto wax cylinders. In May 1934 we and the Royal National Institute for the Blind established a Sound Recording Committee to develop, manufacture and distribute talking book machines and records. Fraser was its first Chairman. The idea of a talking book lending library arose: initially this was based in Fraser’s studio, or as he described it, ‘a hut in my own garden’. The very first talking book in Britain

“In our earliest days, most of our initiatives around technology were driven in the first instance”

was recorded there by Anthony McDonald. Anthony went on to record many more talking books and, for good measure, to marry Fraser’s daughter Jean.

Talking books

The introduction of talking books clearly made an immense difference to the lives of the blind, and is attested by reactions from our own blind veterans of the time from the Review, such as this delightful response from Frank Braithwaite: ‘This is how I enjoy the Talking Book. Every night I shoot the wife off to bed, then make up the fire, draw my armchair near, and, after having got a bottle of Worthington and a cigarette going, I switch on the Talking Book...if the book is particularly interesting, it is possible I may have another disc and another Worthington, retiring to bed about midnight, taking care to replace disc in box and empties in proper place.’ However, something of a holy grail had always been the development of a machine which could convert print into sound. A machine called the Optophone had been developed which scanned type →

and used rotating discs to break letters down into five ranges of sound. This was however extraordinarily difficult to learn, and only a handful of people were able to use it with any fluency. One of them was a blind lady called Mary Jameson, who had a long association with us as a supporter and friend. We are very fortunate to have in our archives an original Optophone; only a few of these survive anywhere.

The Second World War brought to us a large quantity of newly blinded men and women, and, to a much greater extent than from the First World War, a significant proportion



Caption: Member Tommy Gaygan

faced additional challenges having lost a limb or limbs. To help them with specially designed gadgets and adaptations, in 1943 we set up a Research department. This resulted in numerous, often highly imaginative, creations which improved their lives in different ways. Examples included a gadget to enable handless people to make telephone calls using their feet, using a microphone fixed to the base of a plunger attached to a foot and a two-pedal foot unit to make the calls. Darts players such as Bert Baldwin and Dickie Brett had devices – originally automatic tweezers tipped with rubber attached, later a spring-loaded clamp – connected to their artificial arms, by which they gripped the darts.

This period also saw us establish a Scientific Committee. This engaged in wider experimental research and developed ideas that could be more widely used than just for our own blind veterans. It was initially chaired by Professor Edgar Adrian, a Nobel Prize winning physiologist. The committee looked at many issues including mobility and navigation aids and again took up the idea of text to speech reading devices. In the 1960s another machine, the Optacon, came to be and we trained several of our veterans to use it. It used a small camera to scan print and produce tactile sensations as the camera passed over the letters,

which it was possible to ‘read’ as whole words.

Further significant development with reading machines came in the late 1970s with the Kurzweil, which scanned printed material and produced synthesised speech from it, using an early computer to do so. Early testing of the Kurzweil in this country was undertaken by us and the RNIB.

Not all our research work involved such technically complex matters and the testing and introduction into this country of the long cane is an example of something less technologically sophisticated but still of great importance. For this work we collaborated with the RNIB and blind veteran Walter Thornton was our lead. Thornton’s efforts in communicating the benefits of this relatively simple but very effective new development were critical to its successful introduction in the UK.

The arena of sport

Sport was another arena in which technological innovation could be beneficial to our veterans. In 1976, in collaboration with Newhaven Archery Club, we developed an experimental archery course, making special aids to assist with safety, including boards for stance with foot-guides and T-pieces on a stand which could be raised or

lowered to suit the height of the archer and also enable fine adjustment of direction. Archery has proved popular with Members ever since and again we produced special devices where needed, such as for the late Tommy Gaygan, who was handless. He had artificial arm fittings and released the arrow by brushing a trigger release against his chin.

Looking ahead, our Research and Innovation department is actively engaged in technological innovation. For example, the results from our autonomous car trials are now informing the development of driverless cars for the vision impaired and disabled, which is an exciting prospect for all. The team is also working with partner organisations to explore ways to use technology to enable greater independence by helping with navigation, improving the understanding of the environment around the blind person, in a sense helping them to see in other ways. Furthermore, they are working on ways to make it easier for our Members to remain connected and to share information. This work requires vision and courage, something that our team have plenty of. And it is continuing the rich tradition of being pioneering and innovative that was started all those years ago by Sir Arthur Pearson and Lord Fraser. 🏹



Caption: Our Remembrance will be very different this year

Living with a new routine

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

There has been a distinct Groundhog Day feel to living with Covid-19. Despite the cycle of imposition, relaxation and reimposition of virus-

related restrictions, many of us will have noticed that a new routine has appeared in our daily lives – a routine with a distinctly repetitive feel and

“Funerals on my mum’s side of the family have always had an unintended comical side to them”

with fewer outlets for diversity.

Consequently, 1 October had a markedly odd feel to it for me. I slid out of bed just before 4am and was dressed and in the car by 4.15, heading to Gateshead from our home in Hampshire. I should stress to readers from the North-East that I am not suggesting for a moment that there is anything odd about Gateshead. The oddity was that I haven’t really travelled anywhere much in the last six months and so heading off for a round trip of some 650 miles in a day was a major break from my daily routine.

Another oddity of the day was the purpose of this trip. I was on my way to attend the funeral of my uncle (my mother’s brother, Les). There’s nothing odd in that, I know; at my age funerals tend to have replaced weddings as the main reason for a family gathering. But the oddity here was that it was being conducted under Covid-19 rules and so numbers were restricted. My brother, sisters and I had a sort of email conference in which I offered - and

they agreed - that I should represent our side of the family. There was then a slightly difficult phone call to my cousin, who was organising the funeral, to check if my attendance would be a problem within a maximum of 30 mourners. Tricky blighter, that one: “I would absolutely understand if you won’t be able to fit me in but, if there is space, I would really like to represent Mum’s side of the family. Yes, it would be just me.” Ironically, another cousin’s children had exhibited Coronavirus symptoms that morning and the family were self-isolating so space wasn’t a problem.

Under normal circumstances I would have headed north the day before, not least as the funeral was scheduled for 10.15am. Another oddity then struck. The North-East was about to head into increased lockdown measures that very day and it was unclear immediately beforehand what prospects there were going to be to book a hotel room or get a meal; I certainly wasn’t allowed to stay with any relatives in the area. And so, despite the unstated but probable view of the current Mrs Luker (“You don’t have to do this, you know; everybody would understand if you didn’t go”), I opted for the car and a return trip, all in the same day.

A reasonable question

You might reasonably ask why I →

did go? The first and shortest answer is that I think my Mum would have wanted me to. She belonged to a big family: nine children of which seven survived. She was number two and the eldest of two girls. After her mother died, despite the family being by then spread around the country, until her own death Mum took on a bit of a matriarchal role for those of the family who stayed in touch routinely. Les was the second youngest and had been the baby of the family while she was still at home (and they had been evacuated to Cumberland together with Mum's sister during the war). The second reason was more personal. When my folks had been posted overseas and I was sent to boarding school, Les used to try to keep me entertained during the school holidays when I couldn't



Caption: Paul Luker

travel to be with the family. So, I had always felt a debt to him. And the third reason was simply to show some support to my cousin's family.

Funerals on my Mum's side of the family have always had an unintended comical side to them. Perhaps the best-remembered episode is from another uncle's funeral in the 80s. My Mum, always a stickler for being well-turned-out, had been a little imprudent in her choice of footwear. The whole cortege dissolved into muffled giggles as, on a couple of muddy wet planks by the graveside, my mother slithered towards the edge in her high-heels and nearly joined her brother on the coffin. I didn't disappoint at this one. I hadn't wanted to travel up in my suit, so had identified from Google street-view a reasonably isolated area near the church where I could change. It hadn't occurred to me until I had my trousers off that this might also be popular dog-walking spot.

It was genuinely odd to find myself in a little Methodist church in Bill Quay on Tyneside, socially distanced with 29 other mourners barely recognisable to each other in face masks, forbidden from singing and going through the motions of a service. It was equally odd standing outside, resisting comforting hugs as we made our muffled condolences, before not 45

minutes later heading south in the car again. No wake, of course. I still think it was important to have been there – and I think my cousin, my family and – importantly – my Mum would have thought so too. But what surprised me was that as I sat through a brilliantly conducted service (considering the circumstances) I had more time to remember my Uncle Les. He was a kind and well-meaning man. He was also surprisingly accomplished in many things in his life and deeply respected by the many people he had quietly helped. That of course is the final reason to have been there: to remember him and what he achieved in his life – and to share those silent thoughts in the company of those who knew him.

In anticipation

Which brings me to Remembrance. I write this in mid-October with anticipation of greater restrictions on the way. Indeed, they are already being applied in the Midlands and North; London looks an imminent addition. So, Remembrance this year is already set to be a very much more muted affair than normal, both locally and at the Cenotaph. If the London event does go ahead, we already know we will be limited to a tenth of our usual contingent. Does that matter? In some respects, very much so. Those of us who have served probably share the



Caption: Wreaths at Llandudno's cenotaph

view that the ceremony and solemnity of the day is essential in keeping the sacrifice of service in the public's mind. Many of us who have had the honour of parading know too of the camaraderie the event generates. But in truth the really important thing is that we hold the memory whatever the circumstances.

In just the same way that unusual circumstances enforced a different funeral for my Uncle Les but without detracting from a very personal moment, the challenging events of this year will almost certainly bring about a more poignant Remembrance Day for us. Whatever the restriction on our personal participation in the ceremonies, I guarantee that our fallen comrades will, at the Silence, be more acutely in our thoughts. We will remember them. 🇬🇧

Thoughts from a Veteran

In this Remembrance month, Member and Llandudno-based Liaison Officer **Billy Baxter** talks about what the time means for him

I was asked by our editor about what Remembrance Day means to me and these are just a few thoughts that spring to mind.

The Nation pays its respect to the Fallen every year, reminded by the wearing of poppies, gathering around war memorials and attending church services. As a soldier who served in the Royal Horse Artillery (RHA) for over 20 years and being a member of Blind Veterans UK for the same amount of time, I have amassed many memories - all very personal and significant and I fear that it would indeed be a lengthy article I could write. With this in mind, I will endeavour to capture some of my thoughts and memories.

I will start with attending the National Memorial Service in London, standing

with thousands of veterans, gathered in a united collection of Services - all of us representing our organisations - a sense of pride being stood with my fellow veterans in view of the world.

The sounds of familiar military music beautifully played by the massed bands, the most familiar being 'Nimrod' played just before the Queen joins the ranks from the Foreign Office. The chimes from Big Ben, the minute gun firing and the state trumpeters sounding Last Post and Reveille. My thoughts during this occasion drift to my army days when I would be stood in another part of London, not too far away from Whitehall.

“I was privileged to represent 1 RHA for many years at this service”



Caption: My wife's great-grandfather served in the Royal Horse Artillery aged just 15

I draw your attention to the Gunner Memorial at Wellington Arch on Constitution Hill, near Hyde Park. I was privileged to represent 1 RHA for many years at this service, which was in its own rights quite moving and very special. Like many others it follows the same timings and drills but is made special by the closeness of being with fellow gunners still serving and the veterans remembering our Fallen. In addition, there is a service at the Machine Gun Corps Memorial at Duke of Wellington Place, with the ranks sadly dwindling in numbers due to the

great age of the veterans and widows attending. You will hear the guns of the King's Troop RHA firing the minute gun and once this task is complete, the guns are hitched to the limbers and three guns a half section walk past our memorial through Wellington Arch, to immense pride felt by all attending.

Llandudno memories

Just as special are my memories of attending the Remembrance service at the war memorial in Llandudno and at our Llandudno Centre, gathered around 'Captain Steves' memorial →

in our little courtyard, with family (that being our veterans and staff) and volunteers paying their respects.

My thoughts go to [my wife] Karen's great grandfather who served in the RHA during the Great War aged only fifteen years old. His picture adorns our wall at home in pride of place. The gun I served on in 'E' Battery RHA fired the first British artillery round of the First World War, and I remember re-enacting this in Belgium when I was a young gunner.

So being asked about Remembrance

conjures up many memories to me, but also a sense of pride and remembering the Fallen - not only in the two world wars - but of all the other conflicts since, together with the mates I lost and friends no longer with us. A sense of pride at being a blind veteran belonging to an amazing charity formed from the horrors of the Great War, and a pride that all of us veterans are united together in view of the world, supported by our family and friends.

I wear my poppy with pride and am proud to be a Blind Veteran. 🇬🇧



Caption: "...a sense of pride at being a blind veteran..."

A virtual Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day event

Every year, the National Remembrance Service is normally held at the Cenotaph in Whitehall on Remembrance Sunday. Many of you will have attended the parade to remember lost comrades and lay wreaths in their honour.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and in light of the risks posed, the Government has decided that the annual Remembrance Sunday March past the Cenotaph will not take place this year. However, through our charity's pioneering spirit, one of the things we've learnt this year is how to connect our blind veterans in new ways. Therefore, Remembrance this year will be a new way of our veterans coming together to remember and commemorate our fallen.

We will be connecting as many of you as possible on both Remembrance Sunday and on 11 November to do exactly this. Although not marching in London our blind veterans will have the opportunity to get together virtually at a 'listen and join in' party on Remembrance Sunday and in small local groups for a virtual service on Armistice Day.



We will remember them

Remembrance means something different to all of us. Here, Member **George 'Wilson' Taylor** adds his words



Captions: British troops, The Battle of the Somme, 1916

It began on 1 July 1916. It was intended to be the battle that would quickly bring to an end a war that had started two years previously.

I joined several hundred people from all over Europe on that battlefield to commemorate the occasion. It was the 80th Anniversary of 'The Somme'. We weren't there to glorify war – far from it. We were there to honour the memory of the thousands of young men who gave their lives in the "War to End All Wars".

I attended three Memorial Services at different locations. The first, around the lip of a huge crater formed by the detonation of 30 tons of explosives planted underneath an unsuspecting enemy.

The second, on a steep hillside overlooking a stretch of flat ground in front of a wood. At this site, on the first day of the battle, hundreds of young

men were decimated by the machine guns of the enemy as they advanced on their objective.

Here, during the singing of the last verse of 'Aberystwyth' led by a Welsh Male Voice Choir, a row of soldiers dressed in First World War uniforms and carrying their rifles at the 'port', advanced slowly across no-man's land. They moved as those they were honouring had done at that very minute eighty years before. As they disappeared into the wood, leaving narrow trampled trails in the green corn, a bugler sounded 'The Last Post', preceding two minutes of silence. A silence the like of which I have never experienced before. The lively sound of 'Reveille' brought us back to reality... yet still silence prevailed save for the cheerful skylark's singing as they had done those eight decades previously. It was very moving, and unutterable sad.

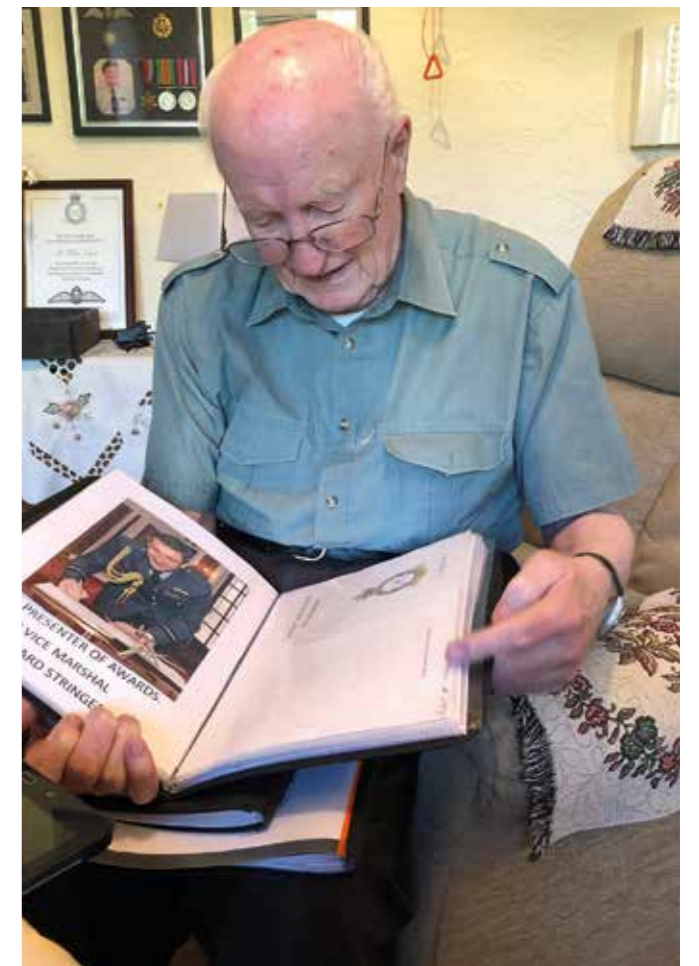
The third service was at the site of one of the largest War Memorials in the world. It overlooks rows of graves and bears on its walls the names of 72,000 dead with no known graves. Here, veterans of the conflict stood with tears running down their cheeks as they remembered their fallen comrades.

How short life is.

I was born just six years after The Great

War, In between then and now we have experienced another huge conflict. As a boy I understood little about my father's four years in the trenches.

Just like the young man I spoke to on my return as I waited to catch the last bus to Hazelrigg after an exhausting 15-hour trip returning from France. "I've just come back from The Somme Battlefield", I said, trying to make friendly conversation. "Never heard of it", he mumbled. I wish nobody had... I thought to myself. 🇬🇧



Caption: Member George 'Wilson' Taylor

Remembering others

Ron Murray's lasting legacy to Blind Veterans UK

Blind Veterans UK Member Ron Murray's son, Jeff, explained to me why his father decided to leave a gift to Blind Veterans UK in his Will.

"Dad was a perfect gentleman. I can honestly say I never heard him swear, not once. Nobody had a bad word to say about him.

In the Second World War Dad was involved in bringing war equipment from America on the Atlantic convoys. In 1941 his ship, the Javanese Prince, was torpedoed off the Butt of Lewis and sank. Later he took part in the D-Day Landings for which he was awarded the Légion D'Honneur. After the war Dad worked as a railway signalman and kept very active, even after he retired. It was a real blow to him when he started to lose his sight. Being unable to drive hit him badly, because he loved to travel all over the place.

That's when Blind Veterans UK came into his and Mam's lives. They gave them so much support including a magnifier which meant Dad could read the paper and keep up with his beloved Newcastle United. They visited the

Brighton Centre twice every year and Dad loved catching up with the other veterans. Dad's legacy to our family will be his good manners and kind nature. I'm enormously proud that his legacy to you will see your Members continue to get the care and support they need in the years to come.

Mam and Dad were always hugely grateful for the help given to them by Blind Veterans UK, and I am sure that you will put his gift to good use."

"Dealing with bereavement is difficult enough without legal proceedings pinned on top. But if you've got a Will in place, you have that peace of mind that should anything go wrong, your loved ones are looked after" Simon Brown – Blind Veterans UK Member

■ **Blind Veterans UK offers a free Will writing service to our Members. Mirror Wills for member's spouses and partners are also included in the service. For more information on the service or leaving a gift in your Will, please contact Jamie Rae by emailing legacies@blindveterans.org.uk or by calling 020 7616 7953.** 📞



Caption: Harry (second right) with the RAF Digby 'hack' - a DeHavilland Tiger Moth training biplane

Harry's war

Blind Veterans UK Member and RAF pilot Harry Garthwaite tells his story here with **Chris Gilson** in the first of a three-part serial of his life and times in wartime and beyond

When Harry Garthwaite celebrated his 100th birthday on 4 June this year, his street in Newcastle turned out to wish him Happy Birthday, while John Nicol - RAF veteran, author and supporter of Blind Veterans UK - called him for a chat. It was a fitting commemoration of a truly remarkable man, who I had been lucky enough to interview about his life just before lockdown and the

pandemic struck. These are Harry's own words, with the occasional note from me, and I'm sure you'll agree they make for interesting reading.

"I was born in Huddersfield on 4 June 1920 and went to primary school there – that's about all I can remember, my father worked for Lloyds Bank and was moved to West Hartlepool in 1928 →

as assistant manager so we weren't there for long.

"When I left school with my school certificate I went to work for the Scottish Union and National Insurance Company in West Hartlepool. Early in 1939, it was obvious there was going to be a war and I was considering joining my local territorials when an advert appeared in my local newspaper saying the Royal Air Force (RAF) was opening a Volunteer Reserve Centre and I applied. On 9 May, 1939 I was tested, having passed the entrance exam and a very stiff medical. After that, it was a case of attending lectures on the

theory of flight, navigation, armaments and the internal combustion engine.

"Flying was done at Greatham Airport, which is just outside Hartlepool, and I was on [deHavilland] Tiger Moths. I went solo after about eight hours and I'd had about 24 hours when war broke out and we were all called up on 3 September. There was considerable delay with all the volunteer centres being called up at the same time and there were holdups at the flying centres and the Initial Training Wings (ITW). Eventually I got to Hastings and the ITW there, and we continued with our lectures and square bashing. On



Caption: Harry (second right) in front of a Bristol Blenheim I - the type he flew at Church Fenton

wet days we did it in the underground car park there, and we were billeted in a block of flats opposite the pier called Regency Mansions."

Negotiating hurdles

After Hastings, Harry's training quickly progressed as he was moved around the country.

"From Hastings I went to Woodley Aerodrome [near Reading], to an Elementary Flight Training School [8 EFTS]. I was flying the Miles Magister [basic trainer], and actually Woodley was the site of the Miles factory, where they were producing the Master [advanced trainer]. Having successfully negotiated that hurdle I went to [10 Flying Training School] RAF Ternhill in Shropshire, flying the [two-engine] Avro Anson. Generally getting used to the aircraft, practicing bombing and things like that. We had our first casualty there when someone flew into the Wrekin [hill] on a night exercise. We also had to take our 'wings' exams, which I successfully passed and narrowly escaped - you had to have 67 percent in any one subject and an average of 80 over the five subjects, and I got 68 per cent in the internal combustion engine, but I had a couple of '90s' and 80-odds, so I had an average of 88.

"From there I went to RAF Church

Fenton [near Tadcaster, Yorkshire], to [54] Operational Training Unit (OTU) flying the Bristol Blenheim NF.I night fighter, and halfway through the course we had a lot of interruptions with fog and enemy intruders, so they moved us to RAF Aston Down near Stroud in Gloucestershire, and we finished our training there."

However, there was a nasty surprise for Harry just around the corner.

"While at Church Fenton I had a little problem connected with flying. We'd gone into Leeds to go to the pictures. When we got out it was thick fog, you couldn't see a hand in front of your face. I'd taken a car in there, and we didn't know what to do. There were four of us, so we decided to stay the night in Leeds, and ring the Aerodrome up and tell them what had happened, so I called and spoke to the orderly officer who said "You're very wise, you've done the right thing and we'll see you tomorrow when it clears". Well, it didn't clear until after lunch and when we got back, we reported to the adjutant, and he said, "The CO wants to see you." I said, "what for?" and he said, "I haven't any idea." So, I went in to see the CO, and he said, "Why didn't you come back last night?". I said that we'd told the orderly officer, and he replied "He did, did he? I'll have a word with him later. Haven't you heard →

of the train?”. I asked what the train had to do with it, and he said, ‘The last train out of Leeds is 11.30 to Church Fenton, you could easily have caught the train and gone back later to collect your car.’

“I said, “I didn’t know when I would have another day off in any case, it could be weeks and I couldn’t leave the car in the cinema car park all that time”, to which replied “That’s what you should have done, go away.” But that cropped up later, and it affects my life in the RAF does that incident.”

Cats eyes

Wiltshire was next on the agenda for Harry. “Leaving Church Fenton, I went to RAF Middle Wallop in Wiltshire, to 604 Squadron commanded by Squadron Leader John ‘cats eyes’ Cunningham. I wasn’t there very long actually because we soon converted to Bristol Beaufighters [NF.1 night fighters] and I couldn’t cope with the Beaufighter. I couldn’t hold the stick forward on take-off, to let go and pull the undercarriage up. As soon as I let go the nose came up, I had a couple of flights and on the third flight, when I landed, my flight commander Rory Chisholm was waiting on the tarmac for me. “What the B***** H*** do you think you were doing, taking off like that this morning?” I didn’t help things by saying “I always take off like that...”

So he wanted to know all about it, and was very sympathetic and helpful, and he decided he’d come up with me and see what happened, and of course up came the nose and he played with the trim, and we came back round and landed. He said, “I think I’ve sorted it now”, so we went down the runway and took off again and I couldn’t pull the stick back this time and we couldn’t get off the ground. So, he played with the trim again and we came back round and landed, and he said, “The first thing I’m going to say to you is I forbid you to fly the Beaufighter again! While you’re here you can carry on with the Blenheim.”



Caption: A young Warrant Officer Garthwaite

“We still had a few Blenheims left so that’s what I did – a few searchlight co-operations and abortive scrambles. In the Blenheim the [Airborne Interception equipment] AI was very primitive, in the Beaufighter it was brilliant. Nine times out of 10 you got a screen full of [electronic] ‘snow’, so we weren’t very successful at hunting out the enemies. Eventually the CO sent for me and said, “I’ve got you a posting now, I’m very sorry to lose you but Rory tells me you’re unable to manage the Beaufighter. You’re posted to 263 Squadron at Filton.” I said, “Where’s that?”, and he replied “Bristol”. I asked him what they were flying, but he didn’t know and so I got to Bristol and found out they were flying Westland Whirlwinds.

Convoy patrols

We did convoy patrols over the Western Approaches, and the odd scramble to try and catch the Focke-Wulf Fw190s that were dropping bombs on the south coast and disappearing very quickly, but we didn’t have much success with that. Then I came back from a convoy patrol and the adjutant said “The CO wants to see you”, so I went in to see him, and he said “Sit down Harry, I’m going to ask you a question and I hope you’re going to say ‘no’. I’ve got a signal from group saying that I’m to post any Blenheim-trained pilot to an OTU as an instructor. Are you a Blenheim-trained pilot?”

“I said, I’d love to say no, but yes I am.”. So, I finished up at Church Fenton again. Before I went, I told the CO, “They won’t want me you know, I had a few problems when I was up there last time. And he told me he was very sorry to lose me, but there was nothing he could do. So, I got to Church Fenton, and I walked in and saw the adjutant.

“Hello Harry,” he said, “have you come to see us?” “I’m your new instructor” I replied. “Are you? I’ve not heard anything about it.” So, I showed him a copy of the signal, and he says “Hmmm, well we haven’t had a copy of that yet. It’ll be interesting when you see the CO.”

The next morning, I went in to see him. I knocked on the door, and he just said “Come”, so I knew he was in a mood. I walked in, stood to attention and saluted and he took no notice, then he looked up. “What the B***** H*** are you doing here?” “I’m your new instructor.” “Over my dead body.” he said.

So, I showed him a copy of the signal, and eventually he said, “Go away and sit in the mess until I find out where I’m going to send you.” 🍷

Find out where Harry went next in part two of our feature.

Keeping active during the winter

Keeping on your toes is a good thing this winter, says the Wellbeing team



- If you do fancy going for a walk, why not go to a local supermarket or a shopping centre and have a walk around. At least you'll be dry and out of the elements when you're walking.

As the nights draw closer and the cold creeps in, going outside seems less inviting. The temptation to sit down at home in front of the television is ever appealing, but it's just as important to keep active during the winter months.

Here's a few things you can try:

- Try to not sit down for longer than an hour at a time, get up, go upstairs, go to the kitchen to get a drink, do an activity such as housework or some exercises such as drawing the alphabet with your feet, legs and arms while sitting down.
- Pop a song on and march in your chair to the beat.

The key is consistency and trying to make sure you do some movement every day.

There's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing

If you do want to do some exercise outside, the best way to ensure you keep to this is to plan the day ahead. Check the weather, set a time and get suitable

“If you do fancy going for a walk, why not go to a local supermarket or a shopping centre and have a walk around”



ADOBE STOCK / SEBRA

Caption: Even checking the bottom of your walking stick will help your mobility

clothing. This way, you're much more likely to stick to it and to go outside.

Footwear – choose footwear appropriate to the weather, slippers are not for the outdoors or sandals in the winter. Ensure the soles are intact and not sloped from wear and tear. Also ensure you can do up the laces or fastenings to get the most support from the shoe.

Gloves – gloves need to be warm, waterproof and have good grips, this way they cover all eventualities over the winter.

Base layers - layers of clothing are best to keep you warm. They help trap warm air given out from you. A base layer should be close fitting and have a wicking quality. The middle layer for thermal heat and ensure the top layer is windproof and waterproof if outside or warm again if inside. If you get too hot then you can take a layer off.

Bottom of walking sticks/walking aid – ensure the bung at the bottom of your stick is intact, not worn and hasn't dried out or become brittle. If it has, then get it replaced before it fails. 🛠️

Good for you

What Vitamins are important over the winter months to help keep your immune system strong? Our Wellbeing team explains

A healthy and varied diet is best, ensuring you are getting enough essential vitamins and minerals. Try to consume at least five fruit or vegetable portions a day to help you on your way.

Here are the key vitamins in order to keep your immune system strong:

- **Vitamin C** - offers protection against immune system deficiencies – found in the majority of fruit and veg, particularly high in citrus fruits and green leafy vegetables.
- **Vitamin D** – helps us absorb and metabolize essential minerals, promotes proper cell development,

and regulates the immune system, all crucial for disease prevention and basic life functions - found in milk, eggs, and oily fish.

- **Iron** – keeps your immune system strong and your energy levels higher - found in beans, dark leafy vegetables, red meat, poultry, seafood.
- **Zinc** – fights infection, helps your body repair – found in spinach, beef, beans, seafood, pumpkin seeds, and nuts.
- **Folate or Folic acid** – helps to regulate your body's cell production as well as your mood - dark leafy greens, beans, peas, lentils, avocado, nuts and seeds, and broccoli.

If you struggle getting the daily dose of these vitamins then you can always take a supplement but please consult your GP beforehand. 🇬🇧



ADOBE STOCK / CHRISTOPHER BOSWELL



What's been happening

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



Caption: Keeping busy during lockdown

Our communities

In August, we shared with you that we have developed a set of five plans for what we can deliver safely in each of the government's five alert levels. On 21 September, the UK raised the Alert Level from 3 to 4 meaning "the COVID-19 epidemic is in general circulation and transmission is high or rising exponentially".

Following this, we agreed we could continue to safely provide the following services to our Members:

- Provide telephone support through the National Support Service including regular phone calls if you would like them
- Maintenance and delivery of equipment to urgent cases →

- As an exception, one-to-one face to face support for Members with an urgent need
- Local support to Members for essentials, such as shopping and medication.

Where local restrictions are in place across the UK, community teams will adapt services to Members in that area based on these. If you are unsure of the services in your area, please speak with your caseworker.

In August 2020, we launched our new National Remote Rehabilitation Service, which provides members with the opportunity to receive

rehabilitation support remotely. This includes a range of services to help with your independence and safety at home; for example, assistance with technology, low vision assessments and support with health and wellbeing. If you would like to access this service, please speak to your caseworker.

We are running a growing number of telephone and online social and 'special interest' groups so that Members can meet each other regularly, catch up and share experiences. If you are a passionate football fan, interested in IT, crafts or just fancy a chat, get in touch with your caseworker and they will let you



Caption: Our Llandudno Centre

“We also welcomed a few Members and their families for independent holidays in our Leader Buildings at the Llandudno Centre”

know what's on. If you fancy starting a group yourself, let us know.

Member Support Hub

Our Member Support Hub continues to run as usual and we're working hard to restore our recycling service. Our drivers are starting to get back out on the road delivering and collecting equipment wherever it is safe to do so. Although we can't provide face to face support with equipment, we are doing our best to achieve this remotely. Of course, Members can always get in touch with us if they need anything - please call us on **01273 391 447**, Monday to Friday 9am-4pm.

Our Centres

This summer, our Centres opened their doors at a reduced capacity to members most affected by the pandemic. Isolation and testing measures were introduced in order to make sure we adhered to government guidelines. One Member, having been completely isolated since the

beginning of the pandemic, stayed at Llandudno last month. On his experience at the Centre, he said he never felt bored and really enjoyed the Arts and Crafts activities, as well as the fantastic food.

We also welcomed a few Members and their families for independent holidays in our Leader Buildings at the Llandudno Centre.

However, during October restrictions were implemented across Wales, including a short lockdown beginning on 23 October. Unfortunately, this meant us having to suspend the offer of self-catered independent holidays for Members and their families in the Leader Buildings.

Working with Public Health Wales, we can confirm we are able to continue offering respite to Members most affected by the pandemic at the Llandudno Centre. Public Health Wales and the relevant local Public Health authority will be involved in the decision-making process for each new Member attending for this reason.

Our permanent residents at the Brighton Centre are currently in good spirits, well entertained and have a wartime spirit of endurance, many of them taking it all in their stride. 🍷

Meeting Sir Robert

After our Chairman's column in the October *Review*, Member **Geoff Moss** recalls a time when he met one of his heroes during his service

I was a National Serviceman with the RAF Police between September 1959-61. After my basic training and a posting to the Police Depot at Netheravon, Wiltshire I arrived at top-secret RAF Bawdsey in Suffolk. I was very fortunate



Caption: Sir Robert Watson-Watt

to see out my service here until my demob'.

RAF Bawdsey was a radar station. It was divided into two parts - the domestic site which consisted of accommodation, stores, motorised transport, fire section and sports facilities. There was also a magnificent property which was called The Manor which had superb views across the North Sea and Felixstowe. The Manor was used as accommodation for Officer rank.

About one mile away was the serious working operational ROTOR Radar site, known as 'A' Site, while above ground Radar equipment could be seen, nodding, revolving or static.

At 'A' Site there was a Guardroom. The radar operators actually worked

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS.



Caption: Bawdsey Manor and the mouth of the River Deben

underground in a large bunker. The Site was also referred to as 'The Hole', while inside the guardroom there was restricted access controlled by the RAF Police. The radar was given an upgrade and reopened July 1961.

As mentioned above, I was on duty in the guardroom when Sir Robert Watson-Watt [the inventor of radar] paid a visit. The RAF Police were naturally aware that he was making a visit. During my watch Sir Robert arrived, and I booked him in as a visitor. Of course, he had to prove his ID with a document, and he signed in as a visitor after which I provided him with a pass.

Following my demobilisation in 1961, I

joined the Suffolk Constabulary, with my first station being Felixstowe. Eventually I married a local girl, then I became a village bobby and guess what - my beat included RAF Bawdsey.

I completed 30 years service, and we have lived in nearby Woodbridge for 35 years, with Bawdsey being about 15 miles away. Yes we are frequent visitors to Bawdsey - the quay, ferry and surroundings. I attend the Reunions which are held in The Manor. In the entrance to The Manor there is a memorial plaque dedicated to Sir Robert.

If any former RAF Bawdsey Members read this, I would be pleased to hear from them. 🇬🇧

Seasonal treats

We have some great ideas for Christmas gifts that can be bought directly over the phone from our friendly supporter care team.

In these difficult times, where you spend your money has never been more important. So, this year, we wanted to make a real push to offer gifts and commemorative products that would not only make ideal presents but also support Blind Veterans UK.

That's why we have included a special pull out 'gift catalogue' with this issue of *Review*. This details all the products we are offering and how to order them. We are proud to have sourced products entirely from the UK and many of these gifts are also handmade by small businesses with a military connection.



Caption: Our Victory over Blindness coin

These include the Blue Lemon soap company in Shrewsbury, which has supplied us with beautiful handmade soap gift sets in red, white and blue. We have also teamed up with the English Whisky Company, which is based next to RAF Marham in Norfolk. This award-winning distillery is supplying their signature single malt whisky in a glass decanter etched with our iconic 'Seven Lads' imagery.

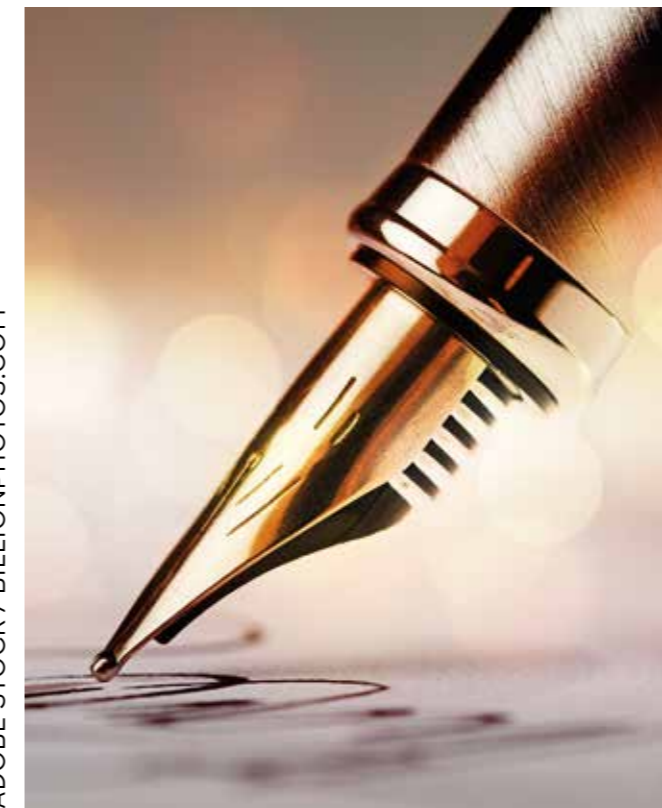
We are also offering our ever-popular Victory over Blindness coins in both sterling silver and 24ct gold plate. Both feature the work of the former chief artist at the Royal Mint.

- The revenue from these unique products goes directly into supporting Blind Veterans UK and its continuing mission. Please take a look at our Christmas catalogue and consider us for some of your gifting. Please also feel free to share these ideas with your friends and family. All products can be purchased through Supporter Services on **0300 111 2233**. 🇬🇧

National Creative Project November programme and Christmas projects

Creative Activities. Creative Book. Creative Hobby Circles.

Welcome to the November and Christmas programme of activities to get involved with from home. Please call our Bookings team on **01273 391 500** for more information or to request an activity pack for the **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES** below - kits and instructions will be posted out to you with the chance to take part in telephone or video chats with other Members. Our project packs last post out will be 16 December. We'll have a new Creative Activities programme for you in January.



ADOBE STOCK / BILLIONPHOTOS.COM

Caption: It's time to put pen to paper

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 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

Thank you to everyone who has taken part designing a ‘Teacup for our Tea Towel’ project.

This is a final call- out to anyone

who would like to take part. Simply phone the bookings number and we’ll get a creative pack sent out to you containing a cardboard teacup template, simple instructions and all the materials you need to create a wonderful teacup design.

When done just simply send back your teacup picture in the prepaid envelope and we’ll do the rest. We’ll put it together with other Members’ designs to create jazzy printed tea towels. All proceeds from the sale of the tea towels will go towards the Charity. There is no right or wrong just have fun and have a go.



ADOBE STOCK / DROBOT DEAN

Art: Painting for beginners and improvers November and December project.

These are painting challenges with support, to help 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 every two months, you can sign up for just one or sign up each time. There will be the chance to meet other Members and our Art & Crafts team for chat and tips by phone or video call.

Gardening:

A Christmas Bulbs pack to grow over the Festive Season, with the option of chatting to other members about your thoughts and experiences during your time of watching your bulbs growing. You will be invited to join our monthly ‘Time for Gardening’ group calls where you can share your thoughts if you like and enjoy discussion, talks and fun quizzes with a green-fingered theme.

Christmas Craft

Fancy having a go at making your own Christmas cards? We have put together Christmas packs containing all you need to make five handmade cards. Each pack includes an instruction sheet, five blank cards ready to decorate with envelopes,

a glue stick and a selection of embellishments to get creative with.

We should have enough packs available for everyone, however there will be a limit on the number of packs put together. So please do get in touch as soon as you can so we can avoid anyone being disappointed. Have fun, and Merry Christmas from the card making team!

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

Blind Veterans UK CREATIVE BOOK - now open for contributions

Thank you to all those who have contributed so far to the Blind Veterans UK CREATIVE BOOK.

As you may have read in last month’s Review one of the many pleasures of working for Blind Veterans UK is hearing stories of resolve, camaraderie and endurance shown by our veterans. This year has been no exception, and the COVID pandemic has again brought forward stories of challenges and situations that we could not have foreseen ourselves being in.

Blind Veterans UK wishes to



capture these real-life stories of its Members, members of staff and volunteers, and have launched the Creative Book project as a way of doing so. The Creative Book will showcase these real-life challenges, our thoughts and feelings and our solutions to them through a range of mediums from written word, spoken word, text, artwork and photographs.

During the life of the project we will be asking for contributions under the following three themes:

Reflection: An opportunity to share personal reflections on experiences from the start of the pandemic to present day.

Hope: An opportunity to share hopes for now and for the future.

'New Normal' An opportunity to share experiences as we move forward from lockdown with society and the economy opening back up.

We are now open for contributions under the theme of 'Reflection' If you wish to submit a contribution please let us know in the following way:

Members: Please contact your community support worker

Volunteers: Please contact your volunteer coordinator

So whether you are a budding artist, accomplished photographer or just wish to share your thoughts and feelings of the pandemic in a way that can be used as an archive for future generations, please do get in touch. 🌍

Creative Hobby Circles

We would love to hear from you on **01273 391 500** if you are interested in joining a monthly telephone or video call chat group in one of the subjects below.

**Woodturning. Mosaic.
Painting. Woodwork. Knitting.
Gardening.**

For our Photographers we have a

Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a Photography Chat Group.

For more information on the Photography group please contact Mark Pile on **07584 056 459** or e-mail him at **mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk**

Family News

Birthdays

James Bowles, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 22 November

Nancy Cole who celebrates her 100th birthday on 8 November

Muriel Gaffney who celebrates her 100th birthday on 14 November

Neil Harris who celebrates his 100th birthday on 27 November

Jean Hughes who celebrates her 100th birthday on 4 November

Desmond Mahoney who celebrates his 100th birthday on 22 November

Keith Plummer who celebrates his 101st birthday on 15 November

Condolences

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

Doris Southwold of Plymouth, who died on 1 October. She was the wife of the late Douglas Southwold

Grace Thomson of Inverurie, who died on 6 October. She was the wife of the late Alan Thomson

All 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

John Edward Baber of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk died on 1 October, 2020 aged 82. He served in the Royal Air Force as a senior aircraftman.

Alan Ernest Barker of Felixstowe, Suffolk died on 28 September, 2020 aged 96. He served in the Royal Armoured Corps as a captain

Royston Beard of Gloucester died on 11 October, 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Ralph Lancelot Best of Southport, Merseyside died on 26 September, 2020 aged 93. He served in the Grenadier Guards as a guardsman.

Colin Bernard Bromfield of Coventry, West Midlands died on 13 October, 2020 aged 89. He served in the Royal Engineers as a sapper.

Ivor Bumford of Derby died on 15 October, 2020 aged 97. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps as a private.

Christopher Buxton of Jersey died on 1 October, 2020 aged 80. He served in the Parachute Regiment as a corporal

Marcel Louis Cardon of Tonbridge, Kent died on 1 October, 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal West Kent Regiment as a private.

Francis Clarkson of Whitby, North Yorkshire died on 28 September, 2020 aged 86. He served in the Army Catering Corps as a lance corporal

Ronald Dagg Colborne of Bridport, Dorset died on 4 October, 2020 aged 95. He served in the 25th Dragoons as a sergeant.

Nancy Cole of Colchester, Essex died on 14 October, 2020 aged 99. She served in the Royal Air Force as a sergeant.

William Culshaw of Hythe, Kent died on 18 October, 2020 aged 99. He served in the Royal Artillery as a gunner.

John Norman Fieldwick Davenport of Woodbridge, Dorset died on 26 September, 2020 aged 92. He served in the Royal Navy as a commander.

Dennis Drinkall of Scunthorpe, South Humberside died on 13 October, 2020 aged 81. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps as a lance corporal.

Dennis Sidney Dyer of Surbiton, Surrey died on 17 October, 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Navy as an able seaman.

Gordon Edwards of Prescott, Merseyside died on 16 October, 2020 aged 83. He served in the Royal Air Force as an acting corporal.

Alexander Evans of Millom, Cumbria died on 1 October 2020 aged 86. He served in the Royal Air Force as a senior aircraftman.

Michael James Faithfull of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire died on 4 October 2020 aged 89. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal.

Francis Futers of Thatcham, Berkshire died on 1 October, 2020 aged 92. He served in the Royal Navy as a chief petty officer.

Harold George of Abbots Langley, Hertfordshire died on 22 September, 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman 1st class.

Harold Gooley of Prescott, Merseyside died on 21 September, 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Artillery as a gunlayer.

Edward Hambelton of Skegness, Lincolnshire died on 12 October, 2020 aged 84. He served in the Royal Signals as a sergeant.



Gerald Hancock of Bedworth, Warwickshire died on 14 October, 2020 aged 92. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman.

Douglas Harris of Cirencester, Gloucestershire died on 3 October, 2020 aged 91. He served in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry as a private.

Frank Hill of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 23 September, 2020 aged 99. He served in the Royal Artillery as a gunner.

Donald Hoare of Guernsey, died on 7 October, 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Artillery as a sapper.

John Charles Hobden of Lewes, East Sussex died on 5 October, 2020 aged 90. He served in the Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own) as a lance corporal.

Harold Hotchkiss of Scarborough, North Yorkshire died on 6 October, 2020 aged 97. He served in the General Service Corps as a sergeant.

Richard Leslie Hutchings of Trowbridge, Wiltshire died on 7 October, 2020 aged 93. He served in the Royal Navy as an able seaman.

George Johnston of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire died on 18 October, 2020 aged 102. He served in the Royal Signals as a signalman.

William John Alun Jones of Kidderminster, Worcestershire died on 24 September, 2020 aged 98. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal.

Griffith Jones of Prestatyn, North Wales died on 28 September, 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force.

Robert Keenan of Stockton-on-Tees, County Durham died on 12 October, 2020 aged 89. He served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as a craftsman.

Ian Duffus Kernohan of Helensburgh, Argyll and Bute died on 21 October, 2020 aged 81. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal.

Maxwell John Christopher Lawson of Wilmslow, Cheshire died on 28 September, 2020 aged 88. He served in the Royal Tank Regiment as a trooper.

Phillip le Mercier of Hunstanton, Norfolk died on 1 October, 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Navy as a signalman.

Frederick Bernard Lewis of Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire died on 22 September, 2020 aged 99. He served in the Royal Navy as a leading stoker.

Eluned Lloyd of St. Asaph, Clywd died on 8 October, 2020 aged 96. She served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment as a nurse.

Michael Martin of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 14 October, 2020 aged 94. He served in the Welch Regiment as a private.

Donald McKay of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 21 October, 2020 aged 85. He served in the Parachute Regiment as a private.

Raymond McLeod of Bedford, Bedfordshire died on 1 October, 2020 aged 92. He served in the Royal Signals as a lance corporal.

Derek Meacher of Bolton, Lancashire died on 24 September, 2020 aged 88. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal.

Bertram Stanley Moorhouse of Luton, Bedfordshire died on 1 October, 2020 aged 84. He served in the Royal Air Force.

James Parker of Preston, Lancashire died on 30 September, 2020 aged 85. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Olive Mabel Kirby Patten of Stourport-on-Severn, Worcestershire died on 3 October, 2020 aged 101. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a commander.

Henry Purdy of Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear died on 19 October, 2020 aged 87. He served in the Royal Air Force as a senior aircraftman.

Raymond Stephen Rees of Bristol, Avon died on 6 October, 2020 aged 87. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps as a private.

James Albert Rolfe of Liphook, Hampshire died on 8 October, 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Air Force as a flight sergeant.

Patricia Jeanne Sanderson of Preston, Lancashire died on 22 September, 2020 aged 94. She served in the Royal Navy as a wren.

Norman Sankey of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 7 October, 2020 aged 82. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps as a driver.



Victor John Seaman of Chelmsford, Essex died on 24 September, 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Navy as a telegraphist.

Edward Joseph Shaw of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 28 September, 2020 aged 84. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps as a private.

Bryce William Singleton of London died on 30 September, 2020 aged 86. He served in the Royal Artillery as a gunner.

William Slater of Colne, Essex died on 14 October, 2020 aged 82. He served in the Royal Pioneer Corps as a private.

Frank William Smith of Kidderminster, Worcestershire died on 25 September 2020 aged 98. He served in the Royal Air Force as a sergeant.

Andrew John Stevens of Swindon, Wiltshire died on 1 October 2020 aged 67. He served in the Royal Air Force as a senior aircraftman.

James Steward of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 20 September, 2020 aged 82. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps as a private.

Frank Sidney George Sutton of Exeter, Devon died on 12 October, 2020 aged 94. He served in the Merchant Navy.

Alan George Tait of Bournemouth, Dorset died on 4 October, 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Derrick Ernest Taylor of Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire died on 1 October, 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Navy as a stoker mechanic.

Brian Thurgood of Darlington, County Durham died on 13 October, 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force as a senior aircraftman.

Thomas Wallace of Wolverhampton, Staffordshire died on 17 October, 2020 aged 99. He served in the Royal Armoured Corps (20th armoured brigade group) as a private.

Herbert Laurence Woods of Beaumaris, Gwynedd died on 1 October, 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Artillery as a gunner.



Caption: Our current Amateur Radio Society was formed in 1976 with this callsign

GB3STD calling: the beginnings of our Amateur Radio Society

Rob Baker, our Information and Archives Executive talks about the start of a society in our history that remains active today

Amateur radio at Blind Veterans UK has a long history, dating back to our early years, when Ian Fraser, later to become our Chairman, and other of our First World War blind veterans, built wireless receivers for themselves at our then base in Regent's Park. However, our current Amateur Radio

Society was formed in 1976 by blind veteran Ted John, who became its first Secretary and Treasurer, with Bill Shea becoming the first Chairman.

An initial meeting in January 1976 was held at our Harcourt Street headquarters and formalised →



Clockwise: The start in 1976, Ted John (first secretary), turning 25 in 2001, Arthur Taylor and Bill Shea

Clockwise: A society trip to Jordan in 1990, Bill Shea, International callsign cards, our memorial clock

arrangements and elected officials. The main base for the society thereafter was though our Brighton centre. A follow-up meeting in March attracted 14 members and included a successful first call, to Australia, which prompted two replies from people who had formerly lived in the Brighton area. There was also a talk from a

guest speaker, on aerials. The society grew steadily from this. Its initial call sign was GB3STD and the list of abbreviations used at the time make for sometimes surprising reading. CUAGN can quite easily be worked out - 'see you again' - but the meaning of XYL is not perhaps so

obvious - 'ex young lady' i.e. wife! Nowadays the society has around 50 members, gets together around three times per year and uses the callsign MXOSBV. They award the G3MOW Memorial Trophy, named after the callsign of a founding Member, Wally Wardrop, each year to a member

of the society. They operate from Brighton and Llandudno, having assistance in Llandudno from the North Wales Radio Society. Here we have a selection of photos from the history of the Amateur Radio Society, taken from the archives of Blind Veterans UK. 🇬🇧

Getting back to work

Blind Veterans UK Member **Nigel Davies** tells the story of his fight against the odds and how he succeeded

Hi, I'm Nige' Davies, ex-King's Own Royal Border Regiment and a member of Blind Veterans UK for over 10 years.

It's been an amazing two months for me recently, and I would like to share my story with you in the hope it gives someone a little inspiration during these tough COVID-centric times. First, a little background knowledge...

Some 12 years ago I lost 80% of my eyesight due to a condition called Anterior Ischemic Optic Neuropathy. I had just been offered a great job as manager of a large health club but was unable to fulfil this role and ended up in a completely new stage of my life.

I decided to keep myself motivated by learning guitar. My goal was to have the confidence to play in public, which

I have now achieved as I am now involved in two local open-mic nights.

Close to my heart was keeping myself fit and utilising this to raise money for charity. Within three months of my sight loss I managed to climb Ben Nevis and then cycle back to York over the next three days, raising over £3,000 for a children's charity called CLIC.

I also completed the London Triathlon in 2010 in a time of 2hrs 43mins,

“As a member of Blind Veterans UK's Working Age Group, I receive regular email updates covering a range of topics”

raising over £1,000 for our charity. I was proud to receive an award for sports person of the year at our Founder's Day presentations in Llandudno, which was attended by my daughters and granddaughter. It was a proud moment for me.

Few and far between

Job opportunities have been few and far between, especially with sight loss, and nothing seemed to quite fit what I wanted to do or was able to carry out.

This was compounded last year when I suffered a major heart attack, leaving me thinking perhaps I would never work again.

However, two months ago, an amazing opportunity came my way. As a member of Blind Veterans UK's Working Age Group, I receive regular email updates covering a range of topics. This time, one that stood out for me was related to job opportunities, and I was delighted →



Caption: Nige' Davies and his collection of guitars

and enthused by a position as a VLISO (Veterans Liaison Support Officer) with Walking With The Wounded. This is a charity for ex-armed forces personnel that provides support for employment, mental health and care co-ordination programmes for veterans and their families who have fallen between the cracks, while empowering them to thrive once more in their communities.

It is an amazing opportunity for me to support any of our brothers or sisters in need. The help I have received over the years from Blind Veterans UK has proved invaluable, and for me this is



Caption: Nige Davies

an ideal opportunity to get involved in some way in aiding other veterans and their families, and giving them that awareness of being cared for and their independence back.

A daunting task

Stepping back into the working arena was a daunting task, but with help through my community support worker, my community team leader, the Working Age Members team, and most importantly from my family, I was able to create a current CV, submit a successful application, thrive in a competitive interview process, and set about tackling getting Access to Work support to facilitate me getting the technology I need to perform my role to the best of my abilities.

Blind Veterans UK and Walking With The Wounded have helped me get my pride and self-belief back, and I will now use my energy, passion and focus, to help provide the support that every single one of our veterans deserve.

If any one out there needs a friendly chat, or perhaps a little nudge in the right direction, please get in touch with me, and please remember the Blind Veterans UK team can help set you on your way and a bright new future can be discovered. 🌟

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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Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss