

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

**November 2021**



## The veteran gardener

TV presenter Charlie Dimmock  
answers your questions

### **Inside:**

Farewell to Chairman Paul  
Adventure in Llandudno  
Final chapter of Harry's war



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss



# Shared memories

## Contents

- 03** Editorial welcome
- 04** Your welcome from our Chief Executive
- 07** Your welcome from our Chairman
- 11** Charlie Dimmock answers your questions
- 14** In Your Community
- 16** Christmas gifts to order
- 17** News
- 19** Farewell to Paul Luker
- 22** Services and Centres update
- 24** National Creative Project
- 27** Collaboration in Colour
- 31** Carers Review
- 32** You said, we did
- 34** In the archives: Clare Balding
- 36** Adventure in Llandudno
- 41** Occupational Therapy Week
- 43** Harry Garthwaite's story: Invasion!
- 46** Family News
- 48** In Memory
- 52** Memoirs of Bill Skinner
- 54** Quiz time: American states
- 55** Contacts

### Quiz answers - from page 54

**1.** Alaska and Hawaii **2.** Massachusetts **3.** Hawaii was the 50th state to join in 1959. **4.** Florida is the warmest and Alaska is the coolest **5.** Nevada (with 9 in of rain per year) **6.** California **7.** Wyoming **8.** 10 - Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana **9.** Virginia **10.** South Dakota



## On the cover

**TV presenter and gardening expert, Charlie Dimmock, took part in an online talk in October for Members and staff in our gardening groups.**



Welcome to your November issue of *Review*. By the time you read this, many of you will have taken part in Remembrance services around the UK, or joined in with the commemorations remotely.

I know this anniversary is a high point of the year for many of you; a treasured time for sharing memories and remembering old comrades. It must feel very special to be able to march together again after lockdown restrictions curtailed activities last year. I'm looking forward to sharing your experiences in the next issue.

As we pause to think about the extraordinary bravery of past and present servicemen and women, I'm delighted to be able to share the final instalment of Member Harry Garthwaite's Second World War memories on page 43. The former RAF pilot, who is now 101, describes his experience of D-Day and remembers a fun chance meeting with a world-famous entertainer.

Speaking of fame, I was lucky enough to sneak into an online event for our gardening groups recently, featuring a talk by celebrity gardener Charlie

Dimmock. Charlie shared her tips for creating a garden that's easy to maintain and stimulates the senses, and was wonderfully down-to-earth and honest, especially about her own garden. You can read an extract on page 11.

Also, in this issue, we say a sad goodbye to our Chairman Paul Luker as he steps down from his role. Paul has given wholeheartedly to the charity, both as Chairman and, prior to that, as a trustee, and I'm sure I'm not the only one who will miss his humorous and insightful messages in the *Review*. Our President Colin Williamson has penned a lovely message about him on page 19.

I hope you enjoy the read. Don't forget, we have a special Remembrance memorial on our website at this time to honour all Members who sadly passed away in the last year. You can view it at [blindveterans.org.uk/tribute](https://blindveterans.org.uk/tribute). 🇬🇧

**Liz Millar**  
Editor





# The changing of times

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

On my way to our Harcourt Street office yesterday, I visited a Marks & Spencer Foodhall to pick up a sandwich and was struck by how orange everything looked. It's pumpkin time of year and the shelves



**Caption: Nick Caplin**

and floors seemed to be full of them.

Whilst there might be a supply shortage of many things at the moment for many reasons, we seem to be alright on the pumpkin front. Those of us who delight in pumpkin carving, have nothing to worry about. There will be plenty of material to work with.

The national interest in Halloween seems to be relatively new. I certainly don't remember quite such an interest in spiders webs, ghoulish costumes and pumpkin carving when I was young. The 31 October, the day of spooks and spectres, abuts All Saints Day and All Souls Day, which resonate a little more in my memory. It is an opportunity to reflect on lives passed.

I have in mind the image of cemeteries full of chrysanthemums as families make their tributes to loved ones



**Caption: Nick with Paul Luker and Members on Remembrance Day 2019**

departed, and of sublime music to aid reflection. It is Requiem time of year and I can so easily get lost in the music of Fauré and also Duruflé, a particular favourite of mine. Their music is sublime; deep and timeless, much as the memories of loved ones should be.

## Remembrance Day

Sticking with the calendar theme, and having safely navigated Guy Fawkes night (hopefully!), we are fast upon Remembrance. As mentioned previously, we have a different approach to the national

memorial event at the Cenotaph this year. Following the cancellation of last year's public event, we have a smaller contingent of 50 from the charity marching on Whitehall and representing Blind Veterans UK.

It's going to be fabulous to meet Members again in the flesh, and I am very grateful to our President Colin and his team for pulling together all the arrangements. In 2019, the last time it was possible for veterans to attend, the oldest veteran of the entire 10,000 on parade





was blind veteran, Ron Freer, at the remarkable age of 104.

Ron had been blinded in a Prisoner of War camp in the Far East in the Second World War and had become a Member of the charity thereafter and for the great majority of his life. He passed away peacefully at our Brighton Centre last year and will be front of mind for me, together with comrades lost in service, as we march past the national memorial. We will include interviews and photos in the next issue of Review.

### Our gratitude to Paul

We are approaching the end of the year and with it the change in our Chair. After nine years of sterling service to the charity, Paul Luker is standing down and handing the baton to Barry Coupe. Paul joined the Council of Blind Veterans UK in 2012 and became our Chairman in 2017. He has been on many different charity committees and has always been willing to step up where there was a need to support our work.

Being a trustee of a national charity these days is a significant responsibility and demands a lot of time. Our trustees are some of the most diligent and supportive volunteers and Paul is the absolute exemplar. His work has largely gone unseen to most, but its impact has

“Our trustees are some of the most diligent and supportive volunteers and Paul is the absolute exemplar. His impact has been remarkable”

been remarkable. As well as formal trustee business conducted in Council and committees, Paul has supported countless Member events over the years, particularly reunion lunches, which brought him alongside the veterans and gave him the opportunity to connect and hear first-hand of the work of the charity.

In the best of veterans' traditions, through his support to our great charity, Paul has continued to serve and I'm sure you will want to join me in giving him our heartfelt thanks for all that he has done. I should add that our thanks go to Sue, Paul's wife, for her patience and understanding which I am sure will have been tested now and again!

As Paul steps down, I am certain that he will remain a good friend to the charity, not least as he has agreed to chair our Pension Fund for the next three years. Cometh the hour, cometh the man. Thank you Paul, on behalf of us all. 🍷



**Caption: At the controls... Paul in 1971**

# Goodbye and thank you

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

Three things seem to be absorbing my attention at the moment.

The first is the forthcoming arrangements for Remembrance this year, following a 2020 in which almost

all our military commemorations were necessarily constrained or curtailed. I wrote last month about the importance of Remembrance to me; my apprehension about reinstating the formality and capturing the spirit →



“This will be my last missive for the *Review* and even on that one thing I have mixed emotions”

is more acute than I had expected. By the time you read this, we will know if in 2021 we have done justice to the fallen.

The second, is the pressing need for us to wind up our business at our Brighton Centre, but not before we have found an absolutely fitting and bespoke alternative. I desperately hope this will not remain unfinished business as I depart.



**Caption: Paul Luker**

Thus, the third is my imminent departure as Chairman of Council and it is on this that I will dwell. This will be my last missive for the *Review* and even on that one thing I have mixed emotions. As current and previous editors will testify, it takes a team of horses to drag me to the keyboard to cobble something together; I am invariably late and, I suspect, often completely miss the messages and insights that the Blind Veterans UK team were hoping for.

I can't help it. I walk for hours searching for inspiration, but inevitably find a thousand distractions. Ultimately, with the editorial boot on my neck, each month I force myself to the desk, where any preconceived ideas leave my head; a sort of stream of consciousness then appears to take over. I hate the prospect of formulating a piece but – once strapped to the computer – the words seem to flow by themselves.

I am very clear that after almost 10 years as a trustee, of which all but one has been as vice-chairman or chairman, my time has run its course. With the notable exception of Lord Fraser (whom modern governance zealots might believe was too long at the helm), one of our strengths has been to keep up a regular turnover of trustees with new energy, ideas and knowledge. Lord



**Caption: Paul with fellow veterans on Remembrance Day 2019**

Fraser was a very different person, a man of his time whose sustained energy and effectiveness, born of being a blind veteran himself, was crucial to carrying our charity through some bruising decades. We clearly owe him a huge debt and I would never cast myself in his league. Hence, I know I need to pass the baton on into new hands.

That said, I have enormous personal regret about being less connected with the charity in the future. As with so many things in my life, I embarked on my time as a trustee with only a half-formed notion of what the charity does. My first year was an epiphany as I discovered how much we offer. It's quite daunting to realise that as a trustee you bear significant

responsibility for what we do and, perhaps more pertinently, potentially what we don't do. They are two different but closely related things. The trustees drive the ambitions of the charity. They give direction, oversee standards and shape the future. And they have the ultimate financial responsibility for long-term solvency. In the “don't do” column, they carry the can for any omissions in our regulatory responsibilities to the myriad bodies that oversee us – which in turn forces us to ask the awkward questions of our staff and volunteers.

To some, this might be a massive disincentive to become a trustee, but we are blessed in Blind Veterans UK that our trustees see life differently. Your trustees are as fine a group →



“I have loved being part of your community, your humour, your banter, your spirit and your friendship. You are inspirational”

of professional, caring, dedicated and effective individuals as grace any charity's board. I have really valued their wisdom, advice, engagement, commitment and drive. They all care deeply about the charity and about you. They are fundamentally good people and I will miss their companionship enormously.

I am sure that I leave them and you in good hands. They have selected our current vice-chairman, Barry Coupe, to take over the helm. I know they have made an excellent choice. Barry's connection with St Dunstan's goes back to his birth. I will leave it to him to explain what that means next month. In the meantime, I could not be more confident that he is exactly what Blind Veterans UK needs and deserves as it moves through its next evolution.

I will also miss the many staff and volunteers I have come to know so well. You understand far more than me the difference they make. The people I see most are those who work in the centres, purely because they tend

to be the focus for big events. I am unflinching moved by the connection they have with Members, families and friends – never more evident than during the pandemic and reinforced by their inventiveness. I know that exactly the same is true of our community teams, although sadly my ability to connect with them has been much reduced in the last 18 months. Let's hope we can regenerate the physical community gatherings and reunion lunches as soon as possible.

But more than anything I will miss you, the Members. I had briefly thought to make this piece a vanity list of what has happened on my watch. In truth, for me, there has only been one compelling thing: I've had the unique opportunity to meet a fantastic group of people who have been given a bad roll of the dice. Those people are you, the Members of Blind Veterans UK (and, at the charity's heart, the St Dunstaners). You gave to your country and you deserve to be supported in your time of need. I have loved being part of your community, your humour, your banter, your spirit and your friendship. You are inspirational. In your darkest hours you rise above adversity. In my humble estimation, Blind Veterans UK is a very good charity and you warrant nothing less. I wish you all the very best for the future: Victory over Blindness. 🍀

# The veteran gardener

Earlier this month, we welcomed TV star **Charlie Dimmock** to share her tips for autumn with our gardening groups



**Caption: Charlie Dimmock**

## How did you get into gardening?

I started as a Saturday girl in a garden centre and I'd also spend hours helping my grandfather out, who was a gardener. I think I was just trying to avoid my grandmother because she'd curl my hair and put me into pretty frocks, which was really not my thing!

## What's your own garden like?

I get asked this a lot and I have to say that, at the moment, my garden is a total tip! I work away from home doing other peoples' gardens so never have time to sort my own garden out. I keep my front garden as a wild garden, much to the horror of my father. He says to me, "You're supposed to be a professional gardener!" But I just say to him, "I've got slow worms in my front garden!" I love the wildlife that wild gardens can bring.

## What can I do to improve my garden?

There's something about being outside in our garden that changes our →



state of mind. I'm sure most of us, over the past two years, have appreciated whatever outside space we are lucky enough to have. But although I'm involved with makeover programmes, I would never tell anyone to change their whole garden in two days because that's hard work!

I'd suggest you work on your garden in stages. It's very tempting to make all these big plans for your garden, but then you have to maintain it. I'm a practical gardener. We'd all love hibiscus borders but, at the end of the day, you've got to look after them.

Flowering shrubs are fantastic because they're easy to look after and bring structure to your garden. You just need to pick the right shrub for your garden. Look at your garden and consider



**Caption: Adding organic matter to soil helps it drain**

whether it gets very sunny or not. The type of soil makes a difference too. For example, heavy clay soil is high in nutrients but digging it can be a problem because it becomes very dry in summer and squelchy in winter. I'm on a sandy soil where I live, which is great because it's easy and light to dig, but it also drains quickly, flushing away a lot of the nutrients with the rain and drying out in the summer.

Either way, it's good to add a lot of organic matter to your soil - compost you've made yourself with all the peelings from the kitchen, or soil improver which you can get from your local recycling centre. It holds on to moisture and helps the soil drain.

### **What should I be doing in the garden at this time of year?**

Autumn is also a good time to tidy up the garden, but don't go overly tidy. You need to leave one or two areas a bit unkempt for the wildlife. This is also a really good time to plant trees and shrubs because the soil is warm and the rain and morning dew helps them root down and become very established, which means they have a better start.

If you've got tree fern you may want to protect it slightly with straw or hessian, especially the crown of the plant. And you may want to move your less hardy potted plants closer to the house

so they're in what's called the 'rain shadow' and slightly more protected.

You'll also be raking up leaves, of course, which make a fantastic garden compost. Keep them separate and use them for top dressing. If you want to collect seeds from your favourite plants, do it around midday once they've dried from the dew. And don't forget to label them. You might think you'll remember what they are but, I promise you, once you got three or four trays you won't!

### **What should I be planting for next year?**

Autumn is the best time to plant your spring bulbs, like your tulips, daffodils and crocuses. Plant them three times the depth. If you've only got a small space you can plant them in containers, though you may need to water them even in winter in case they dry out.

### **How do I create a sensory garden?**

There are some grasses that make a lovely rustling sound in the breeze, like pampass or millet or even sweetcorn. Then you've got bamboo - I know it's got bad press because it spreads, but the filosofi is quite well behaved - and love-in-the-mist or nigella, which has puffy sea pods that rattle.

The obvious plants for scent are lavender, roses and jasmin. If you're



COCO / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: Autumn is the best time to plant spring bulbs**

thinking about winter and early spring, there are plants with a really strong scent, even though their flowers are tiny, because they want to attract pollinators. For example, chimonanthus and witch hazel have lovely scents. Plant them somewhere not too breezy.

### **How do I attract more wildlife to my garden?**

No matter how small your garden is, the way to attract wildlife is to add water. Even a simple birdbath or a water feature with a solar-powered pump will bring in the birds to wash and drink. You'll also get insects and the insects bring other wildlife, so water is absolutely key in a garden.

Listening to the sound of the water is always lovely, too. And it helps you relax, which is what we should all be doing more of in our gardens. 🌿

# In Your Community

## Tameside Member completes one million metres challenge

A Member from Tameside in Greater Manchester has completed one hundred 10k runs to raise money for Blind Veterans UK.

Steven Dixon, 42, from Ashton-Under-Lyne, set himself the challenge over nine months, finishing with the Manchester 10k at the end of September. He says: "When I finally finished the challenge it was quite a relief – it felt like it was carrying on forever! It's been a struggle as there's



**Caption: Steven Dixon**

been a few injuries along the way. In the beginning I was averaging three to four a week but towards the end I was doing two a week."

Steven joined the Infantry in 1996. He was in the 1st Battalion Kings Regiment, serving in Cyprus, Northern Ireland and Kuwait, before being discharged in 2001. He lost his sight after leaving the Army when he developed amblyopia in his right eye and became a Member in February 2019.

He says: "The charity has helped me a lot and it's great to be able to do something like this as a way of giving back. In terms of my sight, my outer vision isn't too bad so I'm OK if I stay close to hedges or curbs. I do have assistance sometimes from my girlfriend and my sister who run with me, but their work commitments mean sometimes I'm on my own."

"Finishing the challenge feels like a nice accomplishment, particularly as I only got into running about two years ago as a way of getting fit. The charity really helped with this as I started to go to the fitness weeks at the centre in Brighton. If someone said to me



**Caption: The whole family completed the 17-mile walk**

18 months ago that I would have completed this challenge, I wouldn't have believed them!

"Now I've done it, I've decided to carry on running. I want to see how many more 10ks I can do up to the end of the year."

## Family take on walk in memory of their grandad

A family from North Wales have completed a 17-mile walk from Colwyn Bay to Prestatyn in memory of their grandad Griff Jones who sadly passed away due to Covid in September 2020.

Letitia Spencer from Prestatyn, took part in the walk alongside eight family members. She says: "Blind Veterans UK meant so much to our grandad. The charity gave him so many opportunities, equipment and trips and he would often go to the centre in Llandudno on holiday. He was

a well-loved Member there. We loved hearing about his adventures."

Due to the Covid-19 restrictions, the family were unable to visit Griff when he was admitted to hospital last year. However, they were able to communicate with him through his Synaptic mobile phone which we provided him with.

Letitia says: "He was in hospital for two months and it was tough not being able to go and see him, but we were able to contact him through his phone from the charity. We really can't thank you enough for that!"

As well as raising money, the walk gave the family a chance to come together and talk about all the memories that they had of their grandad. Letitia says: "We loved talking about happy memories of our grandad. His great grandchildren also took part in the walk and completed the full 17 miles! We will continue to help raise money for Blind Veterans UK in the future." 🇬🇧



# Order Christmas gifts and support Blind Veterans UK



## Christmas cards (pack of 10)

A pack of Christmas cards featuring a silhouette of our Victory over Blindness statue, otherwise known as 'the Lads'.

**£7.50** (including P&P)

## Pin badge

A 50mm x 35mm metal badge featuring 'the Lads' and manufactured in the UK.

**£5.99** (including P&P)

## 24ct gold-plated commemorative coin

A 39mm gold-plated commemorative coin with braille inscription.

**£24.99** (including P&P)

## Limited edition sterling silver commemorative coin

A 39mm hallmarked sterling silver commemorative coin with braille inscription (see the back page for more details).

**£95** (including P&P)

Find out more at [blindveterans.org.uk/shop](https://blindveterans.org.uk/shop)  
and place an order by calling our Supporter  
Services team on **0300 111 22 33**



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

Registered charity in England and Wales (216227) and Scotland (SC039411)



Registered with  
**FUNDRAISING  
REGULATOR**

# News

## Invitation to take part in VI study

Many people with vision impairment receive a lot of information and advice to help them, which might come from a number of different places.

Researchers at the University of Manchester are investigating whether this sort of information could be provided by a digital computer-based personal assistant, specially designed for those with sight loss.

**They are inviting visually impaired adults, who have access to a computer with internet connection, to try their prototype of this device.**

This is to help them find out whether the device easy to use, and how people feel about interacting with it.

## What's involved

The researchers will set up an online session for you to test the device and share your views of the experience. The session will take approximately one hour and will be recorded.

**All participants will be entered into a prize draw to win a voucher.**

The study is funded by the Macular Society and has gained Ethical Approval from the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee.

## To take part

- Please get in contact with **Professor Chris Dickinson** at [chris.dickinson@manchester.ac.uk](mailto:chris.dickinson@manchester.ac.uk)
- or leave a message on **0161 306 3874** and he will call you back. →



TARTILA / ADOBE STOCK



## Bowled over

Member and bowling champion, Ian Graham, encourages you to give visually impaired bowls a try...

“National anthems, competing nations, gold medals... No, I’m not talking about football or athletics. I’m referring to lawn bowls.

Visually impaired bowls is rapidly growing in popularity across the UK with more and more people realising its physical benefits, not to mention the camaraderie and sense of achievement it brings.



**Caption: Ian Graham with his coach, Kathleen, after winning the bowls UK singles in 2019**



GRANDADED / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: Bowls is a popular sport**

With lawn bowls there are no barriers when it comes to age or ability (or disability) and you can rekindle your competitive streak and make new friends. It can even inspire you to set new goals in life, whether it’s simply to enjoy the company as you play or to eventually represent your country at international level. Just have a go and see where it takes you.”

### To get involved:

- For Members in Scotland, Ian’s phone number is **07308 666232** and his email address is **[iangraham25@outlook.com](mailto:iangraham25@outlook.com)**
- For Members in England, please call David Stott on **07769 568680** or email **[stottvibe@gmail.com](mailto:stottvibe@gmail.com)**
- For Members in Ireland, please call Stephen Royle on **02890 657156** or email **[s.royle@qub.ac.uk](mailto:s.royle@qub.ac.uk)**
- For Members in Wales, please call Julie Thomas on **07874 203534** or email **[sgtmgf@icloud.com](mailto:sgtmgf@icloud.com)**

# A long-standing friend and an excellent leader

A tribute to our outgoing Chairman, Air Vice Marshal (Ret’d) Paul Luker CB OBE AFC DL. By Blind Veterans UK President, **Colin Williamson**



**Caption: Paul at the Cenotaph in London, Remembrance 2019**

I have been extremely fortunate in my time with St Dunstan’s and, subsequently, Blind Veterans UK to have served under four different Chairmen, each with their own unique approach to chairmanship and their own distinctive personalities.

Our outgoing Chairman, Paul Luker, is a long-standing friend of Blind Veterans UK who joined the board as a trustee in 2012. He enjoyed a very distinguished and successful career in the Royal Air Force and brought to the organisation an ability to expertly run an effective board, providing strong leadership and applying exceptional organisational skills.

Born Paul Douglas Luker in Downham, Norfolk in 1951, he joined the RAF →





**Caption: Paul trained as a helicopter pilot**

in 1968 and trained as a helicopter pilot. He served in Hong Kong, Northern Ireland, the Persian Gulf, the Balkans and Belize.

The next chapter in his eventful career saw him serving as Officer Commanding no. 7 Squadron and then Station Commander at RAF Odiham, the home of the UK Chinook force.

After attending the Royal College of Defence Studies, Paul went on to become Director of Overseas Military Activity at the Ministry of Defence in 1998. He then became Commander

of Joint Helicopter Command in 2002, which saw him take up the role of Deputy Commanding General of the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, before retiring in 2006.

Paul married his wife, Susan, whilst stationed in Hong Kong and now lives in Hampshire where he regularly carries out public duties in his role as a Deputy Lord Lieutenant. He can also be seen walking around the village of North Warnborough for his daily six-mile fitness regime.

In fact, walking became something

of an obsession with Paul as he challenged himself to walk the equivalent of 70 marathons in his 70th year to raise funds for and grow awareness of Blind Veterans UK. He also set himself a target of walking 70km in 24 hours, which he completed in June 2021.

Paul has been one of the most effective Chairmen in the charity's



**Caption: Paul and his family raising money for Blind Veterans UK**

**“Paul has been an extremely capable, professional and hard-working Chairman who has led by example”**

long and illustrious history. He uses his strong leadership skills – which every good chairman needs to have – to give strength and support to other board members, especially during the most challenging times.

A stickler for detail, Paul always ensures that the business is discussed in line with the agenda; that everyone's views are heard and debated; that clear decisions are reached and accepted; and that all agreed actions are carried out in line with the decisions made by Council. Overall, he has been an extremely capable, professional, hard-working and consistent Chairman who has always led by example.

Blind Veterans UK has been very fortunate to have had Paul Luker at the helm for the past three years. I'm sure that I speak on behalf of all of the Members, staff, volunteers and friends and family of the charity when I wish him well for the next chapter of his life.

As our friends across the pond like to say, “Thank you for your service!” 🇺🇸



# In the know about our services and centres

As we continue to operate with Covid regulations in place for your safety, we share an update about the support we are currently able to provide in the community and at our centres

## Support in the community

Blind Veterans UK is now safely providing the following support:

- A blended service of remote telephone and face-to-face support.
- Staff and volunteer face-to-face visits to Members unable to receive support over the telephone.
- Maintenance and delivery of equipment.

## Social groups

We continue to offer telephone and online groups for Members. Get in touch with your caseworker to find out what's on. And do let us know if you fancy starting a group yourself.

Although face-to-face social groups will remain on hold while we review our services, we're setting up small, temporary face-to-face groups where there is a specific need. Members will be identified and invited to join. We will always call prior to visits and wear masks when in close proximity.

## Member Support Hub

Our hub continues to run as usual and our recycling team are on the road delivering and collecting equipment. Although we continue to provide support remotely wherever possible, we're offering face-to-face support where there's an essential need and it's deemed safe.

- **Members can get in touch with us on 01273 391 447, Monday to Friday, 9am-4pm.**

## Respite and holiday bookings at our centres

When a respite or holiday booking is made at one of our centres, it's essential that you make sure we are completely up-to-date with your health, mobility and care information as this will ensure the correct level of support is available for you when you arrive. All Members and escorts are required to undertake a Covid-19 test 72 hours prior to arrival.

## Llandudno Centre

**19 October-8 January and 30 January – end of March:**

During these two sets of dates, the centre is offering respite stays for fully independent Members/escorts only, who do not require care support. Booking is limited to one week every three months, excluding Christmas.

## 9-29 January:

During these dates, the centre is offering only residential and nursing respite stays. This is for Members or escorts who require assistance or intervention from our care team.

- **The Llandudno Booking Office is open 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday. Call 01492 868700.**

## Brighton Centre

As we have permanent residents at Brighton, bookings for holiday or respite stays are dependent on the latest guidelines for care homes. Please call us for up-to-date information.

- **The Brighton Booking Office is open 8.30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Call 01273 391500.**

## Christmas and New Year stays

Requests for stays over the Christmas period should be made via your Community Support Worker. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, both centres can

only offer stays to fully independent Members and escorts who do not need the support or intervention of our care teams. Once the spaces have been allocated, Members who have been successful will be notified as soon as possible. The centres booking teams will not be able to take requests for these dates.

## Site moves update

### Brighton Centre

We are currently visiting prospective new sites to replace our Brighton Centre. Our search is based on an extensive set of criteria, particularly assessing whether each site is likely to offer a great Member experience. We have already seen a number of sites and will visit more over the coming weeks. Our team is committed to ensuring the new building provides what Members need and, as we narrow down our search, we'll be looking at how to further engage Members in the process.

### Harcourt Street

As many of you will know, we are considering what to do with our Harcourt Street building in London. After exploring all the options, the Board of Trustees have advised us to go ahead and test the market. We will update you all with how this progresses over the coming weeks. 🍷



# National Creative Project Programme

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

Your November programme of VI-friendly activities to get involved in – all from the comfort of your home.

### CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

Please call our bookings team on **01273 391455** for more information or to request an activity pack for the following creative activities. Kits and instructions will be posted out to you and there's the opportunity to take part in a telephone or video chat with other Members if you would like to.

#### Art:

#### Drawing for beginners and improvers (September, October and November)

This is an opportunity to learn, or improve your skills in, charcoal and coloured pencils drawing. You'll receive a project kit containing charcoal pencils, coloured pencils, a sharpener, blending sticks and eraser, and two softback sketchbooks, along with written guidance. We'll give you four themes - two to encourage charcoal pencil techniques and two that lend themselves to coloured pencil skills.

There will be an opportunity to join a group call by phone or video to discuss the themes with your peers

and our Art and Craft instructors. If you would like to share your completed work with our Members and supporters, you can return your sketchbooks to us and we will then send them back to you.

#### Craft:

#### Watermill – a woodwork project

We'll send you everything you need to complete this wooden model watermill. These are very simple kits with 65 pre-cut wooden pieces which slot together and are then glued. The assembled model is 6in by 9in by 4in (15cm x 22cm x 10cm) and you can sand and leave plain to smell and feel the natural wood or have fun painting it with the paints supplied.



**Caption: Donal Edwards - Fantasy Landscape**

The project comes with a group-call opportunity where you can join up to six other Members, and our craft instructors, for a helpful chat about your project.

#### Art & Craft:

#### Christmas table decoration

Create a beautiful decoration that can be brought out every Christmas. We will send you everything you need to create a lovely free-standing decoration for a mantelpiece or table, including a terracotta pot, a selection of artificial foliage and some sparkly

bits. Just be aware, the latest we can post out this project kit will be Monday, 13 December.

#### Gardening: Winter amaryllis

Amaryllis flower through the festive season, so this indoor gardening project will bring colour to your home through the winter months. We'll send you an amaryllis bulb, a planter and some soil so you can get planting and bring cheer to those darker days. The latest date for us to post this project kit will be Monday, 13 December.

■ **For more information or to request an activity pack for any of these creative activities, please call NCP Bookings on 01273 391455. For more information about the projects and groups, please visit our web page at [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)**

#### CREATIVE BOOK

The Creative Book Project is now at the assembly stage and closed to further contributions. Thank you to everyone who took part. Once the book and online resource are completed, we will share it with you through your *Review* magazine.

#### CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

We'd love to hear from anyone interested in joining a monthly telephone or video call chat group →



on any of the following creative topics:

**Gardening, knitting, woodturning, mosaic, painting or woodwork.**

Our hobby circles consist of up to six Members, plus two members of staff. Call **01273 391455** to join.

#### **New: Creative writing**

This is a group for those who would like to chat with fellow writers about their poetry or prose.

#### **New: Papercraft hobby circle**

A group for those interested in crafts using paper such as handmade card making, collage, decoupage and quilling.

#### **New: Clay work hobby circle**

A group for those interested in working with clay, kiln, oven or air drying and making things like pots, sculptures, jewellery or tiles.

#### **Photography**

We have a Facebook page for Members interested in photography (Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a weekly photography group. All welcome.

You can find out more about these creative circles, plus read Members' stories and view galleries of their work at [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)



**Caption: Michael Kaye - Dog**

We hope you enjoy our Collaboration in Colour article on the next page and the pullout poster in the centre spread. The project has been a real celebration of your creativity and comradeship and the unveiling of this art piece at our Brighton Centre feels like a fitting way to officially mark the first anniversary of the National Creative Project. The NCP programme is open to all Members, whatever your experience or creative ability so if you would like to try one of the projects or groups, please give us a call or speak to your Community Support Worker.

**Lou Kirk-Partridge and the National Creative Project Team.** 🐶

# A kaleidoscope of colour and texture

As we celebrate the first anniversary of our National Creative Project, we unveiled **Collaboration in Colour**. By project lead, **Lou Kirk-Partridge**

Collaboration in Colour is a stunning artwork made up of pieces created by Members though the National Creative Project packs, and staff and volunteer contributions.

Members who contributed were sent a pack containing everything they needed to create a few squares. Once all the squares were returned, the project team got to work building wooden frames to support the pieces. As the centres must comply with care home safe cleaning rules, each square was either set in resin or varnished so that the piece can be cleaned regularly.

As the final artwork was unveiled at our Brighton Centre, Members

and staff gathered to see it and hear speeches from project leads, Hattie and James, while our in-house chef did us proud with a celebratory cake.

James said, "This activity was conceived to celebrate the breadth of diversity within our organisation. We asked everyone to express themselves on 5in square bases in whatever style or medium they would like. This artwork celebrates our greater community by bringing together as many different contributions as possible and representing a united spectrum of colour and creativity."

Some of the Members who contributed couldn't believe it when →





**Collaboration in Colour, Mixed Media, 2021. Created by Members, volunteers and staff of Blind Veterans UK.**

“This artwork celebrates our greater community at Blind Veterans UK by bringing together as many different contributions as possible and representing a united spectrum of colour and creativity”

James Cowland,  
project lead



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss



they saw the final artwork. Win Amos said that while she was making the squares she had no idea they would come together as one collaborative piece. Meanwhile, Betty Tring said, "It's fantastic to see all the little squares! It's amazing. What lovely colours."

Collaboration in Colour is so striking when you see it up on the wall. A kaleidoscope of colour and texture, it's made up of just over 250 squares and covers about 18.5 square feet. The artwork is mixed media, so many of the squares are interesting to the touch.

The artwork will be displayed at the Brighton Centre until next Easter when it will be transferred to our Llandudno Centre for all our visitors to enjoy. After that, we hope to take it on tour. It's



**Caption: Collaboration in Colour on display at our Brighton Centre**

**“A kaleidoscope of colour and texture, the artwork is made up of just over 250 squares and covers about 18.5 square feet”**

proof of what can be achieved when our small contributions come together to create something amazing.

We launched the National Creative Project because we wanted to provide a meaningful activity that you could join in with from home. Our first activity kit was sent out on the 18 September and since then we've sent well over 1,000.

The planning and delivery of the National Creative Project has been taken on by staff who volunteered to be involved, on top of their other duties. It's thanks to their dedication and commitment that we have been able to offer you all that we have.

It's also thanks to the wonderful veteran spirit of adventure that so many of you have taken up the activities on offer, even though some of them may have felt a little daunting at first.

My sincere thanks to everyone who has taken part. 🍷

# Carers Review

The latest information, opportunities and stories for the family, partners and carers of our Members

## Carers and Family Members Engagement Panel

We held our first panel for carers and family members last month as part of the new Blind Veterans UK Member Engagement Initiative.

With four participants on the panel, we discussed communication, forward planning and how we can improve our support and advice for carers.

One participant, Trudy, said afterwards, "It was really good to be involved in the first family/carer engagement panel. Being given the opportunity to have a voice made me feel more visible and not so forgotten! I would highly recommend getting involved."

The principles behind the Member Engagement Initiative, led by Blind Veterans UK President, Colin Williamson, are:

- We work in a 'person-centred' way, which means that our Members have the opportunity to co-design the service they receive.
- Members will be informed about,

and have the opportunity to express their views on, service developments or changes

- Members will be involved in recruitment within the Operations Department
- Members will be involved on a local level to enable them to influence the development of community and centre-based services.

We want to work alongside all the people we support to make sure our services are as effective as possible. This also applies to the carers and family members of our blind veterans and we are keen that those of you who want to have a say, do.

The panel is held over video call on Microsoft Teams and attendees can also join through the internet or by phone. If you're interested in finding out more, just contact Stacey Barham.

- **What would you like to see on a Carers page? Contact Stacey Barham on 01273 391483 or at [stacey.barham@blindveterans.org](mailto:stacey.barham@blindveterans.org) to share your ideas.** 🍷





# You said, we did

Our President and Member Engagement Lead, **Colin Williamson**, shares your suggestions, concerns and feedback

As always we've received valuable feedback over the past month. One Member from Community 18 asked when the Brighton Centre will reopen.

**Lesley Garven, Brighton Centre Manager**, says, "As we have permanent residents at the centre, we have to be dependent on the latest guidelines for care homes. We

understand Members' frustrations about not being able to come to the centre, but our focus remains on keeping everyone safe and well during the pandemic."

- A Member from Community 9 asked why social media training isn't offered at the centres or in the communities.

**Carol Johnston, a Community IT instructor** says, "We do offer social media training, so please do ask if you would like to learn how to use Zoom, Teams or Facebook etc. Members' needs come first and as the use of social media is becoming more widespread amongst our Members, we think it's important that we can deliver this service.

- Another Member from Community 9 asked if our trustees get to see any of the Member feedback.

**Colin Williamson, Member Engagement Lead**, says, "We do have trustees sitting on the National Member Engagement Panel so any relevant feedback is seen by trustees and, if necessary, forwarded to those that have influence within the charity."

- A Member from Community 4 recently visited the Llandudno Centre and commented on the wide range of activities that take place there. He said there always was a variety of things on offer to suit everyone, though did ask if we could have more evening entertainment.

**Billy Baxter, Member Engagement Officer** and **Clare Griffiths, Activities Coordinator** at the centre, recently met and discussed the possibility of offering entertainment and what the

programme should look like going forward. According to Billy, there's a lot to look forward to!

- Another Member from Community 4 was concerned that, in his opinion, there isn't enough representation from Working Age Members on the National Member Engagement Panel.

**Colin Williamson, Member Engagement Lead**, says that both Members of staff who make up the WAM team sit on the panel alongside six Working Age Members. This means Working Age Members are proportionally represented and their particular needs are regularly discussed.

- Mike, who's a Member from Community 1, praised staff at the Llandudno Centre, calling them, "Angels without wings!" He also pointed out that the military connection between Members and staff is extremely important and said he generally finds it easier to get on with staff who have a military background.

**David Light, Community Team Leader** (Community 9) is involved with work in relation to the Military and Veterans Project Group, and is currently looking at the point made by Mike about the military connection between staff and Members. 🇬🇧



# Brought together by a love of horse racing

Volunteer **Lynette Denzey** has delved into our archives searching for well-known faces with a link to the charity. She continues her series with TV presenter, Clare Balding

Sometimes, when looking through back editions of Review magazine, we come across something that just pops off the page. This time, for me, it was the name Balding and a photograph from August 1972.

The photo is of the famous racehorse Mill Reef, winner of the 1971 Derby. Standing to the right of the photo, and wearing dark glasses, is blind veteran and St Dunstaner Robert (Bob) Evans. In the middle, wearing a cap, is Ian Balding, Mill Reef's trainer.

Ian is the father of national treasure, Clare Balding, herself a leading amateur flat jockey and Champion Lady Rider in 1990. Clare is a presenter on both radio and television, as well as an author, and a regular face covering the Olympics and Paralympics. She also presents the walking programme, Ramblings, for Radio 4.

Clare's brother, Andrew, has since

taken over the running of the Kingsclere stables, following the retirement of his father, and has trained some notable horses himself, including the winner of The Oaks in 2003. That win led to a very emotional post-race television interview with his sister Clare and with his father standing by. Cue much emotion and tears all round.

So, what is the connection with our charity and why was Bob Evans in the photograph?

As well as being a very successful trainer, Ian Balding was a keen jockey himself and he also played rugby. It was injuries sustained doing both that put him under the care of the blind veteran physiotherapist, Bob Evans, who treated his sporting injuries.

Bob became a Member in 1943, having lost his sight during night duty as a Leading Aircraftman with the RAF. Before losing his sight, he was a horse

racing enthusiast. After training as a physiotherapist with the charity he went on to work in partnership with another St Dunstaner, Ivor Nicholas, who already had a practice in Newbury and was finding himself too busy to cope.

The partnership worked well for a year or so, but then they decided to go their separate ways. Ivor made the move to Jersey and Bob took over the practice in Newbury, treating many famous jockeys including Lester Piggott, Joe Mercer and Jimmy Lindley, the jockey who rode Mill Reef for Ian Balding.

Jimmy was described as an ebullient character who regularly went to Bob



**Caption: Ian Balding and Bob Evans with racehorse, Mill Reef**

for physio treatment. Jimmy once said, "Bob keeps us going like clockwork. When the springs wear out, he puts new ones in."

This was a dream job for Bob, practising physiotherapy in the heart of racing country. He followed horse racing form through the Braille Sporting Record plus, of course, tips from the jockeys he was treating. When asked whether he gambled Bob said, "To enjoy betting you have to bet small. If you make the bets larger what was enjoyment becomes anxiety."

Bob continued working as a physiotherapist until his retirement in 1978. He died aged 79 in 1992. 🇬🇧



**Caption: A young Clare Balding on Mill Reef**





**Caption: Jules, right, enjoying an outdoor activity with his group**

# Adventure in Llandudno

As we emerge from the pandemic, our centre in North Wales has run a pilot Wellbeing Week for Working Age Members to help us assess how and what we offer moving forward in the new world we find ourselves in

The week focused on using the outdoor environment and adventurous activities to support Members' wellbeing. It provided them with ample opportunity to be active, in nature and learn new

things, while they connected with and supported one another. It also gave them the chance to push boundaries and have fun in a safe and supportive environment.



**Caption: The group at Aber Falls in Snowdonia National Park**

**To get a flavour of the impact of our Wellbeing Weeks, participant Jules Lee shares his reflective diary of the experience. Jules says:**

"My sight loss started about 15 years ago and, like a lot of people, I decided I wasn't really blind, I just couldn't see very well. I eventually joined Blind Veterans UK around four years ago and could tell straightaway what a wonderful charity it is.

"I've received so many benefits since I became a Member, from the brilliant introduction week at Brighton to my CCTV reader which has really enhanced my life. I've also got to know local Members and now volunteer as



a telephone befriender for the charity. Before I was just surviving; now I'm living.

"When I read about the opportunity to attend the Wellbeing Adventure Week at Llandudno, I thought it would be a good chance to do so much of what I have missed in the lockdown - get away from my flat, meet new friends and engage in some physical activity. I was so pleased to hear I had been selected and felt so fortunate."

**This is Jules' diary of the week:**

## Monday

We all arrived and met each Member of our small group, making the →



usual tentative introductions. During that first meal together we all started to get to know one another then we all walked down into Llandudno along the promenade down to the pier and back.

This was our first real chance to start the bonding process and my first feeling was that the week was really going to fulfil my hopes and expectations. At long last I was meeting new people and bonding in a way that I hadn't been able to do for 18 months. We didn't even feel the need to divert into a pub as we were all chatting and enjoying good laughs.

## Tuesday

The morning started with the not-so-unsurprising thick cloud cover and intermittent heavy rain showers. As we met for breakfast, we could feel the benefits of the previous evening's interactions as we sat down feeling we already knew each other. But setting off for a day of kayaking and paddle boarding, I had my concerns about how I'd deal with being in such a strange situation and wondered if the camaraderie we had started to build would hold when all were thrown into this different environment.

My fears were groundless. We laughed as we struggled into our wet suits and I was pleased to see I wasn't the only one to have gained 'lockdown pounds'!

**“Overall, it had been a majestic day and we all appreciated the efforts made to make it happen”**

The instruction, advice and support we had from the staff was quite wonderful. Their expertise gave us all confidence. Any doubts I may have had were allayed and I loved the paddle boarding.

The session was fulfilling for me in so many ways. I was interacting with and helping to support people I hadn't met 24 hours ago, I was doing meaningful physical activity and I was in the great outdoors, at one with nature. For me, the most magical element was taking quiet time to rest on our paddle boards in a mindful state and totally relax.

The discussion afterwards gave me a great opportunity to reflect on the fact that I had tackled my concerns about going into the water. I had learnt (and thoroughly enjoyed) the new technique of paddle boarding. I had rekindled my ability to totally trust what others are telling me and enjoyed a huge sense of freedom of the kind I hadn't experience for years.

As a group we'd all bonded really well and enjoyed laughs with - and at - each other. Where possible, we'd also helped one another. Overall, it had been a



**Caption: The group learning the art of Qi-Gong**

majestic day we all appreciated the efforts made to make it happen.

## Wednesday

We rose to sunshine and showers with plenty of wind (most of it natural, though last night's curry helped!). We were off tandem cycling - an experience new to all but one of us. I was fortunate to be paired with Philippe; a lovelier person would be hard to find and he was a perfect leader, instructor and conversationalist. I can't thank him enough for safely guiding me through the day.

We had a briefing before setting off on a gentle mainly downhill ride to the promenade. There, we entertained

some bemused onlookers as we practised our techniques before coming together for the big off. It would have been easy to have felt very vulnerable on the open roads, but having the support team in their vehicle and on their bikes reassured me that we were in no danger.

All different commands were being passed up and down but, in all honesty, the only one I listened to was Philippe and if he said we were going right it really didn't matter to me as I had little control over where I went! We had a beautiful ride along the coast in good weather and even though it was very windy this did not impact on me as I had my shield in front of me! →



“I really love how the week has helped to reawaken some of my more meditative and contemplative thoughts”

We had a lovely seafront lunch break, comparing notes on where in particular we felt the most pain (and we all seemed to have a common denominator for that!) and the cycle back to the base was equally enjoyable. Afterwards, we had some quiet time together and did a few gentle ‘warm down’ exercises. As before, talking about our experiences made me think more about what I had achieved.

### Thursday

Our final day of activity was hillwalking. It seemed only natural that it was cloudy and raining heavily when we set off on our walk to the edge of Snowdonia National Park. The walk was perfectly chosen as it was strenuous, though not so difficult we couldn't enjoy it. As always, we were blessed with great support staff and even had the bonus of receiving a brief introduction to the art of Qi-Gong, something new to me that I will be keen to follow up.

We reached the beautiful viewpoint of Aber Falls, where we enjoyed a photo opportunity, before setting off on an

equally pleasant walk back for lunch. Hopefully this evening we will further strengthen our new friendships as we go out for a meal and a drink...

On reflection, this week has given me so much more than I thought could have been possible. I have a new-found confidence in water and enjoyment of paddle boarding and love how the week has helped reawaken some of my more meditative and contemplative thoughts.

### Two weeks later

I feel more motivated and refreshed than ever. Instead of putting my walking boots away when I got home, I now put them on every morning and do what I call ‘active walking’ – fast walking for an hour in the park. Also, my community support worker, Noreen, has very kindly found somewhere local for me to take up paddle boarding. I'm deeply grateful to all the staff involved in making the week so special. 🍷

**Following the success of the week, we hope to be planning more Wellbeing Weeks at the centre. These may be themed around adventure or something different such as creativity, but will all focus on building resilience, goal setting and improving overall wellbeing.**

# How OTs make a difference

As we mark National Occupational Therapy Week, 1-7 November, **Marieke Hofsteede** from our Occupational Therapist Health and Wellbeing Team explains her role

This year, the focus of Occupational Therapy (OT) week is to shine a light on the role occupational therapists can play in addressing health equity.

### What is health equity?

The pandemic has highlighted how poverty, deprivation, employment and housing are closely related to health

and mortality. Health equity means fair opportunity to live a long, healthy life. Inequities in health are not inevitable or necessary, they are unjust and are the product of an unequal society.

### How occupational therapists work to help address health inequality

As a profession, occupational therapists are on the frontline of health equity and are uniquely placed to understand and tackle the challenges people face. Occupational therapists see health inequalities every day as they support and help those most in need.

An occupational therapist will consider your strengths, abilities and health care needs. They will find out what you want and need to be able to do and then consider if your environment - your home, workplace, school etc - supports or hinders your ability to →



ADOBE STOCK / ROBERT KNESCHKE

**Caption: OTs help make tasks easier**

do those things. They will look at how to make life easier for you and help you find ways to manage daily tasks and activities that may be challenging.

For example, the kind of areas an OT might support could be with self-care, household chores, getting out and about, adding adaptations to your home, finding or staying in work or

education, or taking part in social and leisure activities.

OTs will consider all your needs – physical, psychological, social and environmental – and find ways to make a real difference. They can give you a renewed sense of purpose, open up new horizons and change the way you feel about the future. 🌍

## From volunteer to OT student

**By Catherine Hardiman, final year Occupational Therapy student**

Little did I realise when I joined Blind Veterans UK as a volunteer in Llandudno in 2018 that three and a half years later I'd be working here on my final placement before qualifying as an occupational therapist.

Having seen in my family the challenges that vision impairment can present, I contacted the charity to ask about volunteering. I was impressed with how caring and supportive Blind Veterans UK is.

Working alongside staff in Llandudno, I was fortunate enough to see how much it means to Members to be able to spend time together doing things that are important to them,

whether it's trips to see 'the Lads' in Manchester, learning to cook and staying fit physically and mentally.

I learned more about how occupational therapists work, understanding what's important to Members then working with the rest of the rehabilitation team to find ways to overcome any barriers.

One day, one of the occupational therapists asked me if I'd like to retrain. My first thought was, "I'm probably too old!" However, I'm so glad I called the university.

Roll forward three years and I'm on my final placement back at Blind Veterans UK. I'm so grateful for the support and encouragement of all those I have worked with.



**Caption: Harry in front of the last airworthy Bristol Blenheim at Duxford**

# Invasion!

Member and former RAF pilot, **Harry Garthwaite**, aged 101, shares the final part of his fascinating experience of the Second World War

The day before the D-Day invasion I was sent to RAF Hawkinge (near Dover) where we were told we were flying army officers the next day, but I didn't know where they were going or anything about it at all. We got to Hawkinge and they said to us, "We're full, we've got no room in the mess, we'll have to put you up in a hotel in Folkestone." So that's what they did.

They picked us up early the next morning. It was D-Day and, although my memories are very sketchy, according to my log book, we flew all over the place with those officers. Eventually we arrived at Down Ampney and it was full of Gliders and Air Tugs. When I said I'd have to ring my base, I was simply told, "Sorry, you can't make or receive phone calls or take off →



as the airport is “isolated”. We just had to sit and wait until all of the Gliders and Tugs, which were full of army personnel, had taken off and then we were allowed to take off too.

About four days later I was sent to drop off army officers and bring the walking wounded back from Normandy and, eventually, we moved over to France permanently. We took 12 Austers over, flying in formation with a Walrus escort just in case anybody ditched. We had a one-hour-and-50-minute flight with just two hours’ worth of petrol. Luckily, we all got there safely.

The Ansons came over to Normandy where we were based near Bayeux. After the breakthrough at Caen we followed the Canadian army up to St. Omer. The flights got longer and longer as we delivered all the personnel and mail to the various units. We went from St Omer to Gent, from Gent to Antwerp... It wasn’t very pleasant in Antwerp because there were still Doodlebugs and V2’s exploding all over. Then we went to Gilze-Rijen in Holland, a one-time Dutch base which had been taken over by the Germans.

By this time, we’d established daily flights to Brussels, Northolt and Paris and, every so often, to Lasham in Hampshire. We also changed from the Anson 1 to the Anson 5, which was

**“We had a one-hour-and-50-minute flight with just two hours’ worth of petrol. Luckily, we all got there safely”**

a great relief as we no longer had to wind up the undercarriage by hand. The Anson 5 was a lovely aeroplane.

They established a leave centre in Cannes, so we got the occasional trip down there, landing at Lyon or Dijon to refuel. The second time I went I had to land at Nice and travel to Cannes by road. On the return journey, as we were driving in our Chevrolet, a little Fiat 500 hit us and tipped our car on to its side.

We climbed out and I discovered that two of our passengers were squadron leader Medical Officers. One of them asked me if I was alright and I said I was fine. He then said, “I don’t think you are. I think you’re suffering from shock.” I told him I was perfectly fine, but he insisted with a wink that I was in shock. It turns out this was the way to get another day in Cannes.

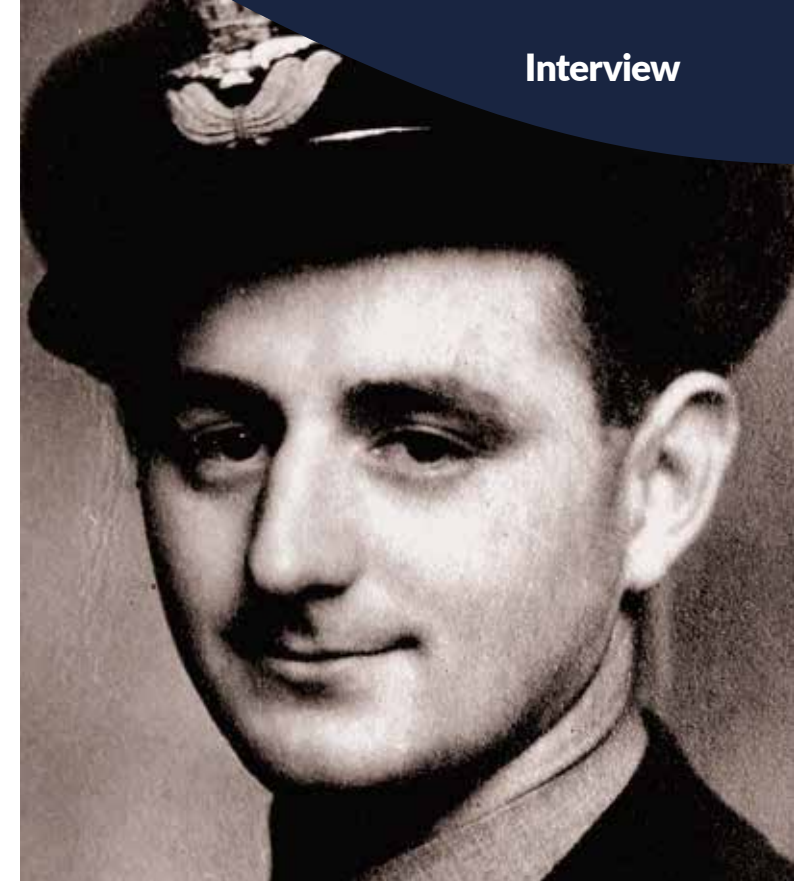
We went off for a swim and, as we were enjoying ourselves, we heard music coming from a super boat. A man on the boat shouted down to ask if they could join us. Suddenly someone in our group shouted, “It’s Bob Hope!”

He was visiting the American troops with Jerry Colonna, Frances Langford and Gail Patrick. They joined us in the water, swimming around, which was really quite something.

On another occasion, I took the Chief of Combined Ops, Brigadier Lucky Laycock (who later became the last Governor of Malta) down to Versailles in an Anson 1 for a meeting with Monty. We got into the aircraft and he asked me where my navigator was. I told him I didn’t have one as there were no spare navigators. As I started to wind the undercarriage up, he asked if the navigator would usually do that. When I said they would, he offered to do it. He then assisted me all the way to Brussels and on to Paris.

It was dusk by the time we got to Paris and I still had to get back to Celle in Germany. The next day I was very touched to receive a message that he had called to check I’d got back safely. I thought that was very thoughtful, especially for a man of his rank.

I was finally demobbed in December 1945 and went from Celle to Ostend by train, then boat to Tilbury and bus to Wembley Stadium where we received our demob suits and clothes. I then took the train home where I was offered two months demob leave. I returned to work on 1 February 1946



**Caption: A young Harry in wartime**

as a clerk at the Newcastle branch of an insurance company.

I married my wife Maisie on 29 January 1949. We had our son, David, and were happily married for 67 years, living in the same house that I live in today, until she died just before Christmas in 2015. I was diagnosed with macular degeneration in 2002. I can’t read now, even with a magnifying glass.

I heard about Blind Veterans UK through my RAF Association magazine. The staff have been amazing. I’ve been on fantastic courses and received life-changing equipment. The ‘table reader’ is a godsend for reading and doing crosswords. I feel the charity has given me a life again. 🍷



# Family News

## Birthdays

**Keith Plummer** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 15 November

**Thomas McKenna** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 1 December

**Desmond Mahoney** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 22 November

**James Bowles** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 22 November

**Jean Hughes** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 4 November

**Joan Harding** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 1 December

**Muriel Gaffney** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 14 November

**Neil Harris** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 27 November

**Basil Jewitt** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 29 November

**Bryan Wardell** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 23 November

**Constance Evans** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 18 November

**Eric Dallman** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 27 November

**George Boag-Munroe** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 29 November

**Stanley Vickers** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 19 November

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

## Condolences

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

**Lily Hague** who died on 29 August 2021. She was the wife of Gilbert Hague

**Jeanette Woodcock** who died on 30 September 2021. She was the wife of Michael Woodcock

**Alberta Cocks** who died on 2 October 2021. She was the wife of Vernon Cocks

**Shelia Bainbridge** who died on 1 October 2021. She was the wife of Jack Bainbridge

**Dorothy Forshaw** who died on 1 October 2021. She was the wife of Walter Forshaw

**Joan Thomas** who died on 30 September 2021. She was the wife of Elwyn Thomas

**Ilse Splaine** who died on 23 September 2021. She was the wife of Bob Splaine

**Angela Moss** who died on 20 September 2021. She was the wife of Jim Moss 🇬🇧





# 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

**Albert Allen** of Northampton who died on 23 September 2021 aged 97. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Navy.

**Geoffrey Arthur Alvey** of Belper, Derbyshire who died on 5 October 2021 aged 92. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Edward Cyril Arnold** of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire who died on 22 September 2021 aged 93. He served as an AC1 in the Royal Air Force.

**John Alan Bailey** of Hove, East Sussex who died on 13 October 2021 aged 98. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Robert Bales** of Reading who died on 15 October 2021 aged 101. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**Jack Barker** of Sheffield who died on 8 October 2021 aged 94. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**Geoffrey John Barker** of Rugby, Warwickshire who died on 12 October 2021 aged 93. He served as a Rifleman in the Royal Ulster Rifles.

**Derek Leonard Batt** of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire who died on 20 September 2021 aged 73. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

**Doris Benson** of Preston who died on 1 October 2021 aged 98. She served as a Petty Officer Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**John Arthur Bower** of Sheffield who died on 27 September 2021 aged 79. He served as a Private in the Royal Tank Regiment.

**Kenneth Leo Gaius Hodgskin Braund** of Huddersfield who died on 3 October 2021 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

**Robert Patrick Campling** of Newton Abbot, Devon who died on 7 October 2021 aged 97. He served as a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy.

**Henry Chipperfield** of Fakenham, Norfolk who died on 8 October 2021 aged 90. He served as a Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**Alfred Churchhouse** of Derby who died on 8 October 2021 aged 96. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Robert Henry Cowan** of Preston who died on 23 September 2021 aged 88. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**David Croombs** of Wokingham, Berkshire who died on 24 September 2021 aged 95. He served as a Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**John Ernest Dawson** of Nottingham who died on 8 October 2021 aged 96. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Joseph Dean** of Wigan, Lancashire who died on 29 September 2021 aged 90. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Edward Dickens** of Andover, Hampshire who died on 29 September 2021 aged 85. He served in the Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's).

**Raymond Eeley** of Dursley, Gloucestershire who died on 22 September 2021 aged 92. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**John Ellis** of Welshpool, Powys who died on 3 October 2021 aged 99. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Fusiliers.

**Graham English** of Fakenham, Norfolk who died on 24 September 2021 aged 89. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Edward Arthur Franklin** of Bristol who died on 29 September 2021 aged 93. He served as an Ordnance Artificer in the Royal Navy.

**Maxwell Alden Green** of Sandbach, Cheshire who died on 1 October 2021 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Marines.



**Charles James Hayden** of Newark, Nottinghamshire who died on 1 October 2021 aged 99. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

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**Edward John Holland** of Fontwell, West Sussex who died on 24 September 2021 aged 98. He served as a Corporal in the R.A.O.C / R.E.M.E.

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**Frank Brooke Howard** of Hyde, Cheshire who died on 1 October 2021 aged 94. He served as a Stoker 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

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**Thomas Henry Howes** of Nottingham who died on 11 October 2021 aged 91. He served as an Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Sydney Jarvis** of Widnes, Cheshire who died on 1 October 2021 aged 91. He served as a Sergeant Major in the Royal Marine Commandos.

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**David Arthur Jones** of Southsea, Hampshire who died on 19 October 2021 aged 87. He served as a Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

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**Robert Alexander Keays** of Newtownards, County Down who died on 30 September 2021 aged 83. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

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**George Ray Lord** of Brough, East Riding Of Yorkshire who died on 17 October 2021 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the East Yorkshire Regiment (The Duke Of York's Own).

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**Albert Ernest Mack** of Nottingham who died on 1 October 2021 aged 98. He served as a Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Terence David Martin** of Oxted, Surrey who died on 21 September 2021 aged 86. He served as a Driver in the Royal Signals.

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**Geoffrey Moss** of Woodbridge, Suffolk who died on 3 October 2021 aged 83. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Thomas Mullins** of Boston, Lincolnshire who died on 2 October 2021 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the General Service Corps.

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**Philip Powell** of Broxbourne, Hertfordshire who died on 2 October 2021 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Derek Edward Rawlings** of Dorking, Surrey who died on 28 September 2021 aged 88. He served as a Private in the R.A.O.C / R.E.M.E.

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**Molly Read** of Surbiton, Surrey who died on 30 September 2021 aged 97. She served as an ACW2 in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**Frederick George Richardson** of Brighton, East Sussex who died on 1 October 2021 aged 102. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Douglas Roberts** of Slough who died on 7 October 2021 aged 97. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

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**Peter Anthony Seaman** of Bristol who died on 23 September 2021 aged 83. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**James Sherratt** of Nantwich, Cheshire who died on 29 September 2021 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

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**Derek Victor Smith** of St Albans, Hertfordshire who died on 24 September 2021 aged 87. He served as a L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Charles Edward Stringfellow** of Chorley, Lancashire who died on 7 October 2021 aged 87. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Educational Corps.

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**Brian Tarrant** of Portsmouth who died on 29 September 2021 aged 62. He served as a PO/Wren Radar Mechanic in the Royal Navy

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**Yvonne Traynor** of Hounslow who died on 14 October 2021 aged 96. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Ivy Laura Trickett** of Christchurch, Dorset who died on 13 October 2021 aged 99. She served as a L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**Keith Urwin** of Chester Le Street, County Durham who died on 1 October 2021 aged 89. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Eleanor Barbara Wales** of Chester Le Street, County Durham who died on 20 September 2021 aged 105. She served as a L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**Leslie White** of Scunthorpe who died on 5 October 2021 aged 92. He served as an Acting Leading Stoker Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

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**Anne Patricia Williams** of Chester Le Street, County Durham who died on 1 October 2021 aged 88. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

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# Bombs and bogies

We continue our story of Member **Bill Skinner's** memories from wartime Hull

That year, 1943, Hitler brought out his latest terrifying weapon; the V1 flying bomb. This had a massive warhead and was a terrible weapon to unleash on civilians. You could hear them approaching long before they reached their target. Most of them were dropped on London. I don't know if any were dropped on Hull, but I think maybe one or two were.

The sound they made was like a grumbling sound; something like a motorcycle running at low speed. When the sound stopped, that was the critical time, because they would immediately begin to fall and a few seconds later you would hear the tremendous explosion.

The RAF couldn't shoot them down for fear of blowing themselves up as well. The balloons were almost ineffective, because the Germans fitted the wings of the flying bombs (doodlebugs, as they were known) with cutters, to cut the wire hawsers that secured the balloons to the ground. The RAF came up with the idea of flying alongside the bomb and placing the aeroplane wing

under the flying bomb's wing and then tipping it over. This was an incredibly brave thing to do!

During the summer of 1943, Brian and I became motorised, so to speak. We were in the street kicking a ball about with a couple of other lads when this contraption went flying by with someone running behind it. We all ran to the end of the road to see what it was. Two of the lads from the bottom end of Kathleen Road had this thing on wheels. "What is it?" I asked the one called Malcolm.

"It's a bogie," said his younger brother Roy. "Our Jack made it." Jack was about a couple of years older than me and never bothered with any of our gang. We all had a good look at it, but they wouldn't let us try it out. "When we get home," I said to Brian, "we will get the wheels out from behind the shelter and the planks of wood. I think I could make one of those!"

It was the next morning before we could attempt to make our bogie. Our next-door neighbour, George, managed

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**Caption: A German crew rolls out a V-1 bomb**

to get the screws undone on the axles and I selected one of the planks, about 5ft long by about 9 inches wide; this did for the body. It was easy to find two cross members to fix the wheels to. The problem was fixing the front member so it would turn both ways. After some deliberation and consultation with other members of our gang, I thought, of course, the two men at the balloon!

Problem solved. They fixed us up with a nut and bolt; drilled a hole in the main board and the front axle and assembled it for us (running errands had its reward). Brian climbed aboard and, with a broken broom handle off the bomb site, I was soon running around Kathleen Road, with Brian whooping

and shouting, "Faster!"

With coal becoming harder to get hold of we soon put our bogie to good use. If you went to the corporation dust yard in Chapman Street, you could buy four wooden tarry insets for 6d, from roads that had been damaged by enemy bombing. The drawback with the logs was the mess they made in the hearth! The reason for the coal shortage, was a lack of miners.

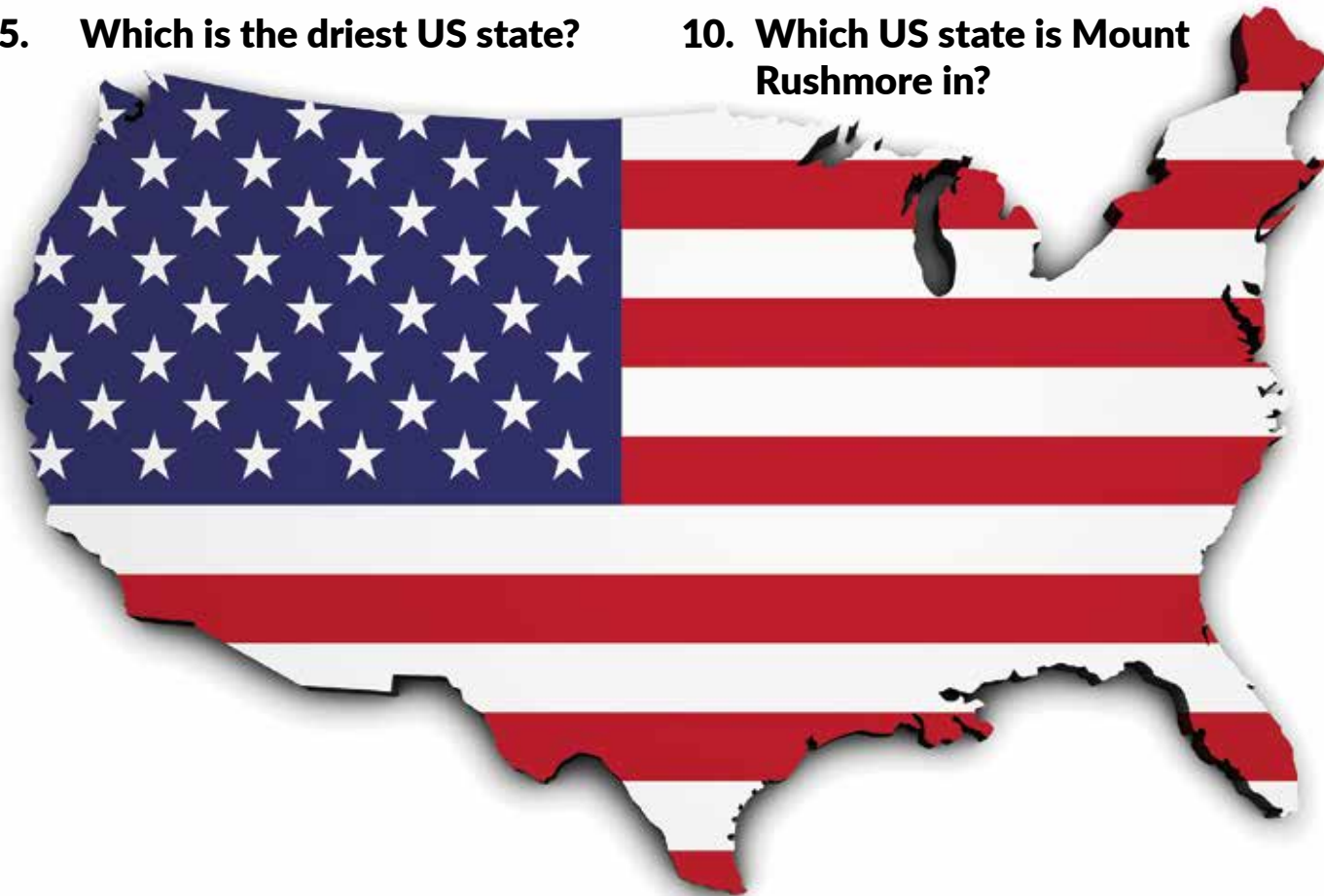
Our mam was delighted with our transport, so I was on the up again! Brian and I even did a couple of runs for near neighbours, for a few coppers. Suddenly, the war didn't seem to be too bad after all. 🍒



# Quiz time

Quiz master and Member **Ron Russell** tests your knowledge of American states

1. Which two American states border with no other states?
2. Which is the state with the longest name of one word?
3. Which state was the last to join the union?
4. Which is the warmest state and which is the coolest?
5. Which is the driest US state?
6. Off which state lies the Channel Islands?
7. Which state is Yellowstone National Park mainly in?
8. Through how many states does the Mississippi River pass?
9. In which state is US national military cemetery, Arlington?
10. Which US state is Mount Rushmore in?



## 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.**

**Review Editor:** You can telephone the editor on **020 7616 8367** or email her at [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk).

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