

# Review



The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

April 2022



## Finding hope in troubled times

Why our future looks bright at Rustington

### Inside:

Our support for Ukraine  
Peter's inspiring sight loss journey  
Memories of a globetrotter



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

# A new reality

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### Quiz answers - from page 54

**1.** Pontius Pilate **2.** True **3.** Gethsemane **4.** Forgiveness (According to the Gospel of Luke, he said, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.") **5.** Fry's **6.** True **7.** Simon of Cyrene **8.** Mary Magdalene **9.** Roast lamb **10.** The ears

## On the cover

The Member Design Group share their initial thoughts on our new centre at Rustington, West Sussex, which is undergoing major renovations.



Welcome to your April issue of *Review*. It's frightening to think how the world has changed since last month's edition. Ironically, in that one I wrote about International Happiness Day and the UN global happiness index, which has been topped by Finland for years.

Just a couple of short weeks later and the situation in Ukraine is causing untold misery across Europe and beyond, and no doubt making the Finns feel very uneasy, being that they also border Russia.

The Ukrainians are being forced to face a whole new reality as their lives are thrown into unimaginable danger and chaos. The towering spirit of this nation has been admirable – as has the outpouring of support for them – but, still, their situation is desperate. Our leadership team is, therefore, thinking very carefully about how we, as a charity, can use our expertise to help. You can read a summary of our plans so far on page 8.

We also share uplifting stories in this issue, despite the situation, to give you some much-needed hope. One

highlight is a report from our Member Design Group on their first recce of our new centre in Rustington; another is a refreshingly honest interview with Member, Peter, about how he came to terms with a new reality of his own: sight loss in his early 50s. Another still is a piece by 90-year-old globetrotter, John, who shares fascinating snippets from a life lived in different countries.

But I'm afraid the bad news keeps on coming and it's with deep regret that I end with the sad news that our Vice President and former trustee, Paul Palmer, passed away on 12 March. Paul was a popular Member whose full life embodied the Blind Veterans UK indomitable spirit of Victory Over Blindness. As this news has come in as we go to press, we will include a fitting tribute to Paul in the next issue of *Review*.

Please take good care. 🌍

**Liz Millar**  
Editor



# An irrational war

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

When I woke early on 24 February and heard the news about Ukraine, my heart sank. From time to time there are world events that feel particularly significant, and my sense was that the situation unfolding there was rapidly becoming one of those.

Sadly, that is proving to be the case – and then some. Behind every



**Caption: Nick Caplin**

headline there are real people who find themselves facing danger and uncertainty. Yet what has quickly become apparent is the remarkable character and resolve of the Ukrainians who, under strong leadership, are determined not to bow to tyranny and unwarranted aggression.

I've been asked by a number of people for my view on what Russia is up to; the intent of President Putin and the end state is he seeking. I have no answers. These events go beyond my experience and have gone way beyond the norms of rational behaviour as we would understand it.

For decades, in the UK, we have focused our military thinking and training on facing up to such aggression - motor rifle regiments, airborne brigades and combined arms armies have regularly and routinely featured in our wargaming and larger field exercises. Training and preparedness is one thing, but it is surreal to see this happening in real life.

The ray of hope lies somewhere in the values and hearts of good people, across all nations. I remain an optimist and confident that good will prevail.

These events are a timely reminder about how close our connections with Ukraine have become over recent years. The British forces and Ukrainian defence forces have regularly provided one another with training support. It was during one of these periods in 2007 that I found myself sitting alongside the Ukrainian Defence Minister at a Ministry of Defence dinner in London. We found common ground in Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (I had recently finished it; he had read it five times!) and the evening passed in a blink.

When I was subsequently working at the Royal College of Defence Studies in 2013, one of the most brilliant students on the course was a senior Ukrainian civil servant. He was the sharpest of intellects who could always be relied upon to ask the most incisive of questions of the guest speakers.

There is determination across our great country to help Ukraine in whatever way makes sense. If you would like to support, the Disasters Emergency Committee Ukraine Humanitarian Appeal is an excellent place to start. As a collaboration of 15 national

charities, it's well placed to provide rapid relief and assistance.

We have also been thinking carefully about what our Blind Veterans UK response should be. At the time of writing, the British Armed Forces are not engaged in this war, but it is prudent to ensure that we are ready to help should this situation change. We are therefore refreshing our plans to support wounded British serving personnel should this be required.

We are also considering how our special knowledge and expertise, forged through our long history of supporting the war blind, could be beneficial to others whose sight is damaged while defending Ukraine. We are exploring options to see if we can help the Ukrainians in their hour of need.

However, to be clear, the support of our Members will continue to be our priority and driving purpose. Nothing will compromise this and any support to the Ukrainians would need to be additional, funded by new money raised for the purpose.

I hope you agree that the scale of this tragedy behoves us to think very carefully about how we might be able to help, to plan where this makes sense – and then to act. 🇺🇰

# A united vision

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

As I write, the situation in Ukraine is worsening by the day and I am deeply concerned and appalled by what's happening there, as I'm sure you are too. The remarkable courage of the Ukrainians is a shining example to us all and we can only hope and pray for their safety and a swift end to the atrocities.

I believe it's important to focus on positives at this time, so would like to share news from an important meeting I had recently with a research



**Caption: Barry Coupe**

organisation we co-founded and continue to sponsor, Action Against Age-Related Macular Degeneration (AAAMD). We met to discuss a ground-breaking project they are embarking on to improve the chances for people with age-related macular degeneration.

A staggering 196 million people around the world suffer with this terrible condition, including many of our Members. But, although it's the most common cause of sight loss in the developed world, there isn't any treatment for the vast majority and no chance of stopping it early. The underlying cause is still unknown.

Funnily enough, just a couple of days before our meeting, I'd been to the opticians because I was feeling pressure on one of my eyes. My mother had macular degeneration in later life – she lived to 100 – and I know there's a hereditary component. I turned up for my appointment and they went the whole nine yards, giving me a scan and all the tests, and then comparing the results to those of two years ago. In the end, they told

me there's nothing wrong and I left feeling relieved in the knowledge that everything's fine.

However, in my meeting with AAAMD, I heard that it's currently impossible to detect macular degeneration early on. Of course, my question was, "Even though I've just been told that my macular looks fine, are you telling me there may be problems there that they simply can't detect?" I was surprised to hear that this is indeed the case.

So, there's an urgent need for this research, the aim of which is to find a way to diagnose the onset of macular degeneration earlier and, ultimately, find treatment that can deal with it.

This is a hugely exciting project for us to be involved in. While our goal at Blind Veterans UK is to support as many visually-impaired veterans as possible, the dream for this charity has to be that, one day, we're simply not needed at all. I really do hope that day comes.

Over the past few weeks, as I've been getting to grips with my new role and meeting staff teams, I've been struck by just how positive and unified everyone is. Nowhere is this more apparent than on the new Rustington Centre build, which I'm heavily involved in due to my architecture background.

BUMBLE DEE/ADOBE STOCK



**Caption: Ukrainian troops**

So far, I'm very pleased with the way it's all going. I feel confident it will be a really nice space and will offer you so much, even more than our Brighton Centre does.

I'm very much looking forward to hearing the views and feedback from more and more of you as the design and build continues to progress.

As far as I'm concerned, everyone in this wonderful organisation, whatever their skillset and experience, is an important part of the team. We have only one aim and that's to support you, our Members, in the best way we can. 🇸🇰

# Our support for Ukraine

Our CEO, **Nick Caplin**, outlines our organisational response to the conflict, as at the time of going to press



With the extremely tragic situation in Ukraine developing, some of you have been asking how we are responding and showing our support for Ukraine. I write to you today to let you know about the actions we are taking regarding your questions, as follows:

## How is Blind Veterans UK showing support for Ukraine?

Both our centres are showing signs of support and solidarity with Ukraine through the use of flags and colours lit up on our buildings. We are also in support of - and encouraging - staff, volunteers and Members who are able to, to give to the Disaster Emergency Committee ([dec.org.uk](http://dec.org.uk)) and local donation centres.

## In the event of UK military intervention, will we be ready to take in new Members?

At the time of writing, the UK Government has been clear that they do not intend to send British forces to Ukraine. However, we continue to look at our preparedness and are committed to providing support to future UK combat blind Members.

## Will we be supporting the combat blind in Ukraine?

One of our strategic objectives is to be a national force for good and we are starting to explore what we can do, with other organisations, to support those blinded in defence of Ukraine. This work is in its very early stages and we are drawing on a range of expertise from across the charity and beyond.

## What can I do to help?

We absolutely encourage anyone who can to donate to the Disaster Emergency Committee and similar humanitarian charities.

Thank you for all that you are doing to support each other as this terrible situation continues to unfold. 🇺🇰

# News

## Make a ribbon pin for Ukraine

This is an easy craft project to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine. With our thanks to Transport Service Driver, Mike Priestly, for the idea

### You will need:

- Blue ribbon (¾ inch/2cm wide max)
- Yellow ribbon (¾ inch/2cm wide max)
- Scissors
- A stapler or sewing needle, and thread or strong glue.
- A safety pin
- Button (optional)

### How to assemble your ribbon for Ukraine:

- Cut a piece of blue and a piece of yellow ribbon each about 8 inches or 20cm long.
- Lay the two pieces of ribbon flat, one on top of the other, so you can see both of the colours.
- Fold over to form the 'ribbon' shape. (See diagram above).
- Staple, sew or glue where the ribbons cross over.
- Sew or glue on a button if you wish.



- Sew a safety pin to the back, or safety pin directly onto your clothing.
- You could use blue and yellow felt instead of ribbon if you like.
- Or you could even use blue and yellow paper and tape the pin to the back.

- **We'd love to see your finished pins. Please do send us a photo at [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk)** →



**Caption: Ukraine ribbon pins**



## Neville and Ray do their bit for Ukraine

During a recent stay at our Llandudno Centre, some of our Members, including Neville Bowen and Ray Gauler, decided to knit woolly hats in the Ukrainian flag colours of yellow and blue to show their solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

These hats, and more to come, have been added to a number of other items collected at the centre for donation to a local collection centre. They will then be transported directly to Ukrainians in need.

## Register your place on Military Week, 12 June

Please join us in Llandudno in June for a special Military Week to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War.

This is a great opportunity for veterans to enjoy a week full of military-themed activities and swap experiences and memories. You'll get to listen to guest speakers, take part in a trip to the Imperial War Museum (North), and participate in visits to local units where you'll meet serving personnel and explore modern military hardware.

We've also been invited by the Royal British Legion to attend a Remembrance Parade during the week



**Caption: Military week at Llandudno**

at our local cenotaph on the sea front. This will be followed by a regimental-style military dinner where we dress in our best for the evening.

■ **To find out more and register your place, please contact the Llandudno Bookings Team on 01492 868700.**

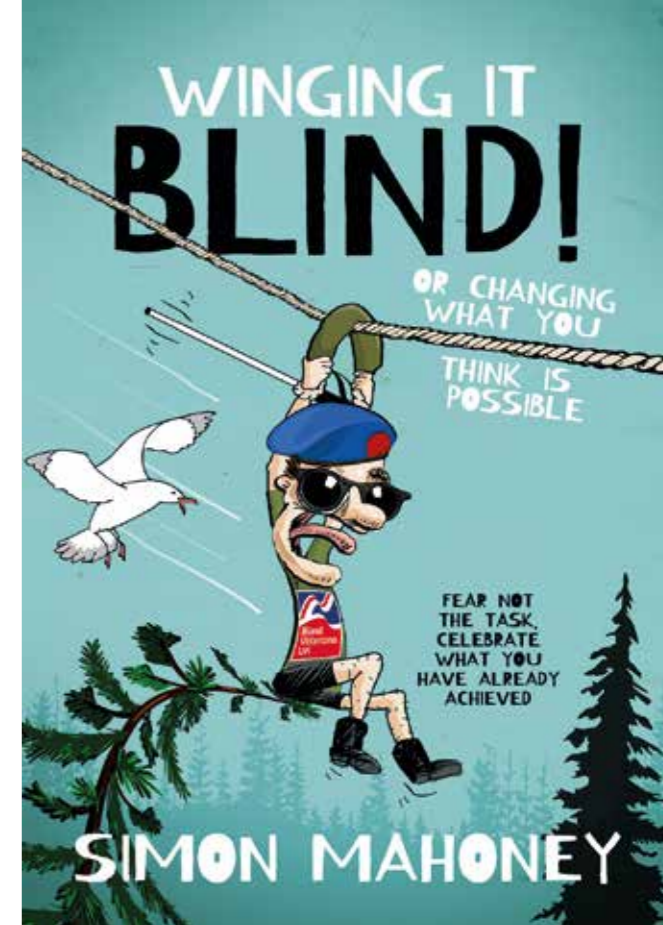
## Simon releases survival guide to sight loss

Member Simon Mahoney has published a new book to support others adapting to life with sight loss.

The book, *Winging it Blind*, is Simon's third and is packed with advice, information and guidance, not just for those with sight loss but for family members and professionals too.

Simon served in the Royal Marines in the 60s and lost his sight later in life due to glaucoma. He now says he feels incredibly grateful to have become a Member of Blind Veterans UK. His book was written using a specially-adapted PC and word-processing software we supplied.

Simon says, "Blind Veterans UK has always been there alongside me to navigate the challenges that arise when adapting to life with sight loss.



**Caption: Simon's book**

I can't thank this charity enough for the support I've received over the years. By giving me training on the computer, I'm now able to share my experience with others.

"All the support I've been given has been fantastic, from white cane training, which means I'm able to get out and about in my local area, to the general warmth and understanding of everyone involved.

"I thank God every day that I'm part of this wonderful charity." 🙏

■ **Winging it Blind is available to buy on Amazon and at [wingingitblind.com](http://wingingitblind.com)**

# A way out of the darkness

Member **Peter O'Malley** describes his journey of coming to terms with sudden sight loss

I lost my sight literally overnight when I was in my early 50s. It was a huge shock. Completely overwhelming.

I'd taken a break from my minicab business to care for my wife while she was ill. Soon after she died, I woke up



**Caption: Remembrance 2016**

one morning with very little vision. My first thought was that it was just sleep in my eye but, when it didn't shift, I assumed it was down to all the stress I'd been under.

I went to the doctor and he told me to get down to the hospital immediately. The consultant knew what it was straightaway - a very rare condition called AON (acute optic neuritis). It left me with just 5% vision in one eye.

I remember a staff member from Northampton Association for the Blind (NAB) coming round to talk to me, and very gently handing me a white stick. I just thought, "What? I'm not blind!" I just couldn't believe it.

At Blind Veterans UK, the process of being able to live well with blindness is summed up as the 'three As' - Accept, Adapt and Achieve. This means the



**Caption: Taking part in activities at our Llandudno Centre**

first step is to accept you're blind. Once you've accepted it, you can find ways to adapt and go on to achieve the things you want in life.

So, it's a massive thing to accept it. Just to get my head around the fact that I couldn't drive anymore was hard enough. I lost my business and, of course, my role as a dad changed because I'd been taxi driver to my kids too, taking them to school and parties and wherever.

I was encouraged to attend the National College for the Blind in Hereford for six months. Although

I was struggling with a deep sadness about losing my sight, I found that mixing with other blind people helped me to deal with the negative emotions and start thinking about what I could do with the rest of my life.

I went on to complete a degree in English Literature at Warwick University, which I really enjoyed.

I've no periphery vision in my working eye, so it's like looking through a Smartie tube. Over the years I've learnt to move around slowly and scan the immediate area to see what's around me. You need to experiment to find →

out what works for you. You're forced to be humble because you need to ask for help. You can't do it on your own.

Being blind can be depressing because it's very isolating. It's as if you're on a ship in a storm getting bashed around. You're looking for a safe haven; for stability. I found that stability with Blind Veterans UK, and with NAB. These organisations really became my anchor.

I remember when I first lost my sight, I attended a weekly local computer group for blind people organised by NAB. It saved me. When you hang out with others who are visually-impaired, you naturally want to help each other.

Since I joined Blind Veterans UK just over 10 years ago, I've received massive support from the charity, from IT training to sports activities, and arts and crafts opportunities. I even did a triathlon at one point, which was great fun. And I've made good friendships here too. There's a lot of good-hearted banter, which I love.

Nowadays, I work part-time for the charity, checking information for new Members. I married again and we have 14 grandchildren between us. I'm also an active member of the Church. After I left the army at 24, I felt lost and went off the rails. This forced me to



**Caption: Peter, centre, enjoying a trip with fellow Members**

start reading books on philosophy and religion. To this day, my faith help to give me a sense of purpose.

What would I say to Members who are feeling low? Talk about it. Talk to someone you can trust. And mix with others. You're not on your own. The Blind Veterans UK promise is that you've got others on this journey with you.

Throughout the pandemic, I've participated in the online fitness classes for Working Age Members twice a week. I also joined the remote mosaic, art and photography classes. When you join in with activities like these, you develop friendships. It can really help. It's massive, actually. It really does make all the difference. 🍷

## Peter's top tip for wellbeing

**I've been logging in for the online exercise classes for Working Age Members throughout the pandemic. I use my laptop and do the exercises in my back garden, although I realise that most sensible people exercise INSIDE their homes!**

**A typical exercise session might include four sets of different exercises, such as squats, cross body crunches, frog jumps and press ups. The staff at Brighton who run the sessions have been truly excellent.**

**I think if you keep up your general fitness then it helps with everything else. Regular exercise can help prevent health problems like heart trouble, diabetes and even cancer. It's also good for your mental health. And the camaraderie and friendship that comes from exercising together is really fun.**

**The classes are still going strong if you'd like to join in. Just ask your Community Support Worker for more information.**



**Caption: Taking part in an online exercise class... from his garden!**





**Caption: The group were given a tour of the new centre**



**Caption: Part of the ground floor**



**Caption: Our Member Design Group**

# The first recce at Rustington

As work gets underway on the new centre, our Member Design Group report back on their visit

At the end of February, our newly-formed Rustington Centre Member Design Group made their very first visit to the site to consult on the planning and build.

The group has been tasked with letting us know about any specific needs they think should be considered to make the centre the best it can possibly be. They were given a tour of the main building,

the outbuildings, and also the seafront that sits just behind.

One Member of the group, Alan Walker, is a regular user of the Brighton Centre in normal times, and lives locally. He's also the Working Age Member Representative for Sussex.

Alan said: "As someone who was against the move to the new centre, my view has changed. It's in a prime location and the outbuildings are an added bonus, although the focus will be on getting the main building ready first.

**"It's on the doorstep of a thriving and busy little town with amazing amenities, all within walking distance"**

"I think the new centre is in a good place, right next to the beach. The building itself is a lot more compact and all on one level, which is also a bonus."

One issue Alan did raise was how Members would travel to and from the centre. This is something that will →



**Caption: The Rustington Centre**

need to be addressed before we move in, ideally through working with the local community.

Another Member of the group, Sue Eyles, is a guide dog owner, and is therefore particularly concerned with ensuring the centre is set up for assistance dogs.

She came away from the visit saying: “The moment that struck me most was when a dog walker on the beach spotted us and came over to say how great he and the local community think

it is that we are moving to Rustington.

“I think the fact that we are taking over the building from the RAF Benevolent Fund is great for us - and clearly the local community agree. We spoke about how we can become part of the local community. That can only be a good thing.”

Member Terry Bullingham, who lives in Sussex, was asked to join the group as he has an engineering background. He said, “There’s a lot more space than I thought there was going to be, and the

good thing about the space is that it’s very adaptable. It’s going to be a big job, but there’s huge potential.

“I’ll be trying to input on practical elements that will make it easier for Members using the centre, like symmetry, which is very important for those of us with a vision impairment. I’ll also chip in on other areas in the broader design. For example, I’ve suggested we look into ground source heat pumps that could heat the whole building.”

Another Member, Billy Baxter, was involved in making sure our Llandudno Centre was fit for purpose when we bought it over 10 years ago. Billy joined the group so he can relay lessons learnt from that experience, and he came away from the visit feeling positive.

He said: “It was with some trepidation that I made my first visit to our new centre, but I was pleased to see it’s on the doorstep of Rustington, a thriving and busy little town with amazing amenities, all within walking distance.”

“The centre is similar in size to the frontage of our Llandudno Centre, with the reception and entrance in the middle and automatic sliding doors. Like Llandudno, there are two wings; left being the east wing with wide corridors, and the dining room and

**“There’s a lot more space than I thought there was going to be. It’s a big job, but there’s huge potential”**

lounge being one room, much the same as ‘Hogwarts’ in Llandudno.

“I was surprised at the size and depth of this area, which leads to a nice-sized conservatory with doors leading to the rear grounds and outside areas. The grounds are compact with outbuildings, all in good condition, and grassed areas and pathways.”

He added, “The new site has a lovely feeling and its own unique character. My overall impression is that it will serve us blind veterans well and we’ll be well received in the local community. I look forward to visiting again once the building works in the main building take shape. I think we have something very special in the Rustington Centre.”

We will continue to update you on how the design and build of our new centre is progressing. For further information and to share your views, please speak to your Community Support Worker about joining your local Member Engagement Panel. 🗣️

# You'll never walk alone

Community support worker, **Jenny Gaywood**, reports on Community 7's brilliant virtual step challenge

Last year, four groups of Members from across West Somerset, Devon and Cornwall joined 'virtual' walking challenges during the lockdown period.

Each team chose a route and Members were issued with a talking pedometer to log their steps every day. They then joined a weekly online social chat group with their Community Support Worker to talk about how many steps they had taken during the week. This was converted into miles and put onto a map to show the team's progress along the route.

Two groups chose to (virtually) walk the entire length of the historic South West Coastal Path, which is 630 miles and runs from Minehead in Somerset, along the coasts of Devon and Cornwall to Poole Harbour in Dorset. Overall, the groups walked a whopping combined total of 1,260 miles!

During the group chats, Members enjoyed interesting conversations about the place they had (virtually) reached each week, and great friendships were formed. Thanks to a bit of healthy competition between those taking part, they managed to clock over 3.5 million steps overall, over a 15-week period.

They reported lots of fantastic benefits from taking part in the challenge, from increased fitness and mobility, to feeling more active and engaged. One group even met up afterwards and received medals in celebration of their achievement.

**“They managed to clock up over 3.5 million steps overall, over a 15-week period”**



**Caption: From left, Members Ray Collings, Ray Doughty, Bob Tricker and Don Gooch show off their medals**

## **This is what some of our Members said:**

**Bob T:** “I found the step challenge a huge incentive to walk much further than I would normally, particularly with the pedometer and the weekly group call to report in my steps. It helped me lose weight and get out and interact with others on my route to Brixham Breakwater and back.”

**Ray C:** “I find life can be a bit boring

when you can't see, particularly during the lockdown. The challenge made life more interesting. It broke the monotony and gave me something to aim for.”

**Ray D:** “This challenge has shown that we can still achieve things despite our sight loss. It got us out and gave us a way to compete against ourselves to try and increase our steps. It's a great way to get out and about.” →



**Caption: From left, Brian Heather, Maureen Chambers, Rowena Taylor and Graham Bullock**

**Don G:** “It was an excellent idea. It encouraged us to walk more!”

**Brian H:** “It’s really encouraged me to walk more. Some Members actually doubled their weekly steps from the first week to the last.”

### **Onwards and upwards**

After a short break, three groups took on more virtual step challenges. Group One (virtually) walked from Cornwall to Harcourt Street, via the Brighton Centre, criss-crossing the country to each Member’s house along the way. They also headed past Brown Willy, the highest Tor in Cornwall, and traversed Dartmoor with the Baskerville Hounds on their heels. The walking was challenging, but they

marched on to the south coast and then up to London.

Group Two virtually walked from John O’Groats to a Member’s home in Brixham, which was 980 miles in total. After battling the Scottish terrain, they were in Manchester for Christmas, home of the Bury Black Pudding. They’ve now (virtually) arrived in Brixham and plan to meet up again to celebrate their achievement.

Meanwhile, Group Three virtually walked 175 miles from Penzance, Cornwall’s most westerly major town to Land’s End, which is the most westerly point of mainland Cornwall and England. Land’s End was the starting point of the 2012 Summer Olympics torch relay and their route went via The Eden Project, described as the ‘Eighth Wonder of the World’.

These challenges have been incredibly friendly and fun, and Group One was able to meet up in person for the first time during their walk. Now, as we head into Spring, they are about to embark on their next steps challenge.

Wish them luck!

**Feeling inspired? Why not take on a steps challenge of your own or speak to your Community Support Worker about activities to get you moving. 🇬🇧**



## **Did you know you can get free Will writing support?**

As part of your lifelong support from Blind Veterans UK, you can access a free Wills service to help write or amend your Will.

This comes with no obligation to leave us a gift in your Will, though should you choose to do so we would be extremely grateful. Gifts in Wills provide more than **60%** of our fundraised income and are vital in helping us offer lifelong support to future blind veterans.



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

For more information, please contact [giftsinwills@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:giftsinwills@blindveterans.org.uk), call Abigail on **07810 504632** or visit [blindveterans.org.uk/freewills](http://blindveterans.org.uk/freewills)

# Artistic Flair

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

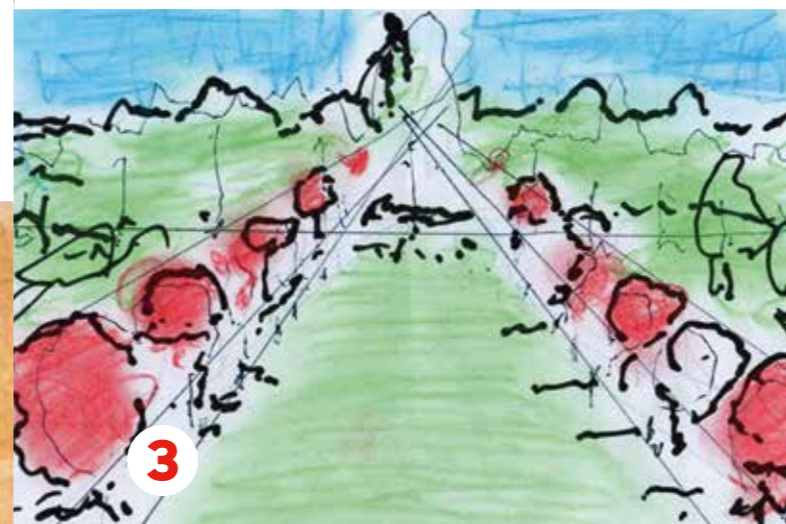
**Captions:** 1. Alan Warren - Fruit Still Life 2. Matthew McGowan - Pattern 3. Bill Ridgewell - Perspective Study 4. Donald Edwards - Spring Landscape 5. Patricia Mason - Seascape With Yacht 6. Michael Hammerton - Spring Time



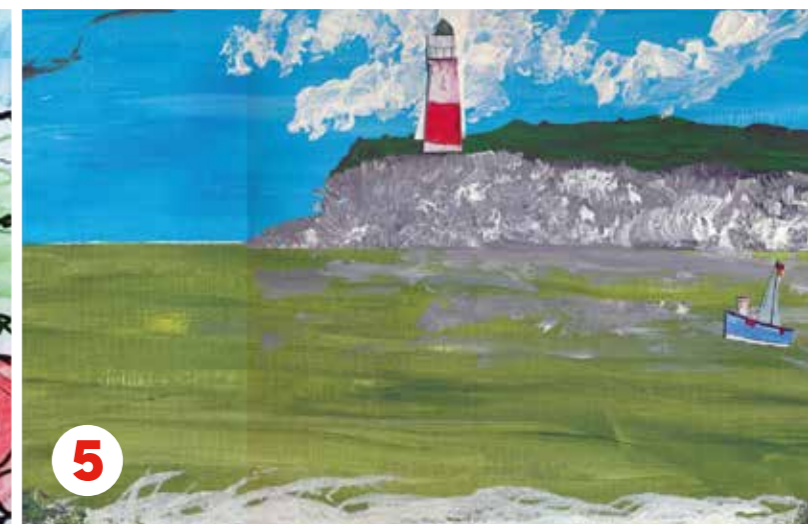
2



4



3



5



1



6

# Dust off the karaoke machine...

Our People Officer, **Emily Edwards** shares the many health benefits of singing

It's official: belting out a tune is good for you - no matter what your neighbours say.

Studies suggest that singing not only enhances your mood, but can actually benefit your immune system and your blood pressure, and also reduce feelings of chronic pain.

In fact, a good warble can be so good for your health that some GPs in England have even started prescribing it for certain medical conditions.

TV health expert, Dr Michael Mosley, explores the benefits of singing in his podcast, asking how a good croon can

help your body and mind. Here are the highlights...

## Up where we belong

One of the most notable impacts of singing is the immediate boost in your mood. In his podcast, Mosley reveals how singing is thought to release 'happy hormones', such as dopamine and endorphins, which give us a natural high.

But that's not all. He also says that research suggests singing may have similar effects on the body to cannabis. Apparently, we have chemical compounds in our bodies called endocannabinoids, which are

EMUEMU / ADOBESTOCK



**Caption: Everyone enjoys a good sing-song**

similar to the active component of the cannabis plant. One study involving a group of women over 50, found that singing in a choir increased levels of endocannabinoids in their blood by a whopping 42%!

Many people living with chronic pain report that regular singing lessens their need for painkillers to control their pain. It's also been found to increase levels of oxytocin, a social bonding hormone, which may help explain why singing is such a good icebreaker.

## Stayin' alive

However, one of the most surprising findings from recent research is that

singing in a group for as little as one hour may boost your immune system.

One study compared the impact of singing with the effects of listening to music and found that those who sang produced higher levels of immunoglobulin A. This is an antibody which acts as an important first line of defence for the immune system.

In his podcast, Mosley speaks to a doctor who has led several studies and says just single sessions of singing in a choir has been found to achieve reductions in chronic inflammation. She goes on to explain that this improves our immune system's



capacity to respond to infections, adding, “This is really important because we know that inflammation is linked in with our mental health, for example, our depressive symptoms.”

### Don't worry be happy

In fact, singing has been found to positively affect mental health in many ways. On the podcast, they discuss a study involving women with postnatal depression. The women participating in singing programmes reduced their symptoms by 40% in just a few weeks.

We also learn that singing has been found to have a myriad of profound psychological and biological effects, so much so that it can help build our self-confidence, reduce loneliness, and impact levels of anxiety.

Mosley's guest says, “These all occur alongside things like decreases in blood pressure, decreases in muscle tension, decreases in heart rate, and the activation of reward pathways in the brain.”

Other possible benefits of singing have been found to include improvements in lung function in people with lung disease, and improvements in posture.

### I will survive

Perhaps it makes sense, then, that some GPs in England are beginning

to refer patients to join a choir for a range of mental health issues, as well as chronic conditions, as part of social prescribing schemes.

On the podcast, the doctor says, “There are already clinical commissioning groups around England who've got choirs and other kinds of arts programmes set up in the community, where they're directly referring people with chronic pain, and the results coming back are fantastic.”

### Your song

So, how much time should you spend singing? Well, studies have shown that just a five-minute burst is enough to bring positive affects. You might find that joining a live or virtual choir is a great way to cement this into your routine, or you may feel that simply singing at home on your own with all windows closed is best for everyone.

Whatever you decide, don't hold back. No matter how good or bad you are, singing is one of the few things in life which is truly rewarding, fun and free. As legendary jazz singer, Ella Fitzgerald, once famously said, “The only thing better than singing? More singing.”

■ **To learn more, listen to Just One Thing - with Michael Mosley: Sing**  
[www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00107bq](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m00107bq)

# Do you use Google Gmail? Then read on...

Our IT expert, **Craig Vaughton**, shares an update on changes to the way you will be able to gain access to your account - and what you should do about it



ASCANNIO / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: Gmail access is changing**

Some of you may have had an email from Google about access to Gmail and just deleted it or ignored it but, fortunately, one Member emailed us to ask what it actually means.

In a nutshell, Google have (finally) decided to make access to Gmail more secure for everyone. To do this, they're going to remove the “Allow less secure app access” option from the security settings configuration options for all Google accounts.

What this primarily means is that, for those of you who use Gmail, there's a change in the way you access your account. This is the case if you use any of the following devices or software to access it: →

## Guide, Synapptic, Office 2010 or Office 2013

It doesn't matter if it's a Synapptic phone or tablet, nor which version of Windows is in use, this change is made at the Google end of the email system and to continue to access Gmail, we have to play by their rules.

The change will stop Gmail working using any of the above until a new "App Specific Password" is created from within the Google account in question. It sounds onerous, but it's not too difficult (relatively speaking) and it also makes your Gmail account more secure, which is never a bad thing.

Google will implement this change from 1 May, so you have some time to make the relevant adjustments to allow continuation of access to Gmail.

Please note, this change is ONLY to keep Gmail working and does not change the actual Google account password. Therefore, whatever you do, please remember to keep a note of the current password you use for Gmail as you won't need to change this.

■ **For Synapptic users with a Gmail address, contact Synapptic on 0191 909 7 909. For those using Dolphin Guide:Connect, contact Dolphin on 01905 754 765.**

For those of you who are able to, or have a techie assistant on standby, you can use the following guidance:

### Generating an app password

I'd recommend dropping out of Synapptic if you're on a tablet or phone. Guide users will have to close Guide and use Windows instead as the Guide browser will not work.

In all cases, open an internet browser, such as Chrome, Edge or Firefox.

1. You will need your Google password for the next steps. Luckily, if you use Synapptic or Guide, your password can be found in your email settings.
2. Next, sign in to your Google account by going to Google.com and inputting your gmail address and the password you've just written down in step 1.
3. Select 'Security' from the menu on the left of the screen.
4. Scroll down until you get to 'Signing in to Google'.
5. First, you'll need to enable 2-Step Verification (also called 2 factor authentication or 2FA for short).
6. Here is the first hurdle where trouble may occur as this step is generally reliant upon a mobile phone number. This should have been set when the account was

originally created and updated over time if the number in question was changed, often if the phone was replaced or the provider swapped.

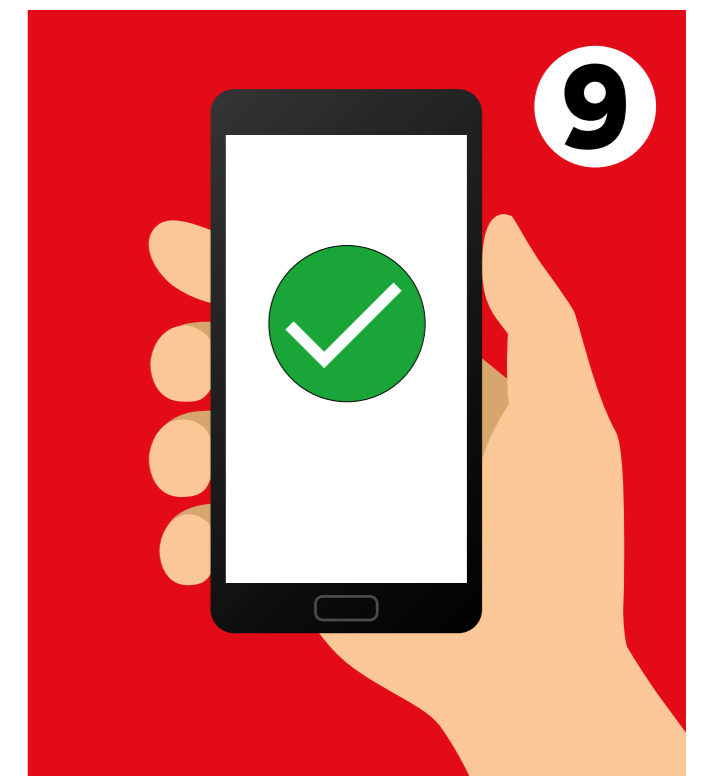
7. Assuming access to the mobile phone number indicated on the screen is still available (it doesn't work with a landline!) then follow the instructions on the screen and Google will send a text message. This will just be a few words, along with **G- xxxxxx** (the x's are a six digit code number).
8. This code number (without the G-) is entered onto the screen, as in the first image below.
9. All being well, the next screen will look like the second image below.
10. Select 'Google Account' in the

top left corner and return to the 'Signing In to Google' part of the Security screen.

11. Now you will find 'App Passwords'. You may need to sign in again using the same password that you just used.
12. At the bottom, choose 'Select' app and choose 'Mail' in this case.
13. For 'Device' choose 'Other' and type in 'Synapptic' or 'Guide' where applicable.
14. Now press 'Generate'. This will give you a 16-character password. Make a note of this password. You DO NOT need any spaces when you use it.
15. To enter this password in Synapptic or Guide, start →



**Caption: Enter the code number**



**... and if it's correct you'll see a tick**



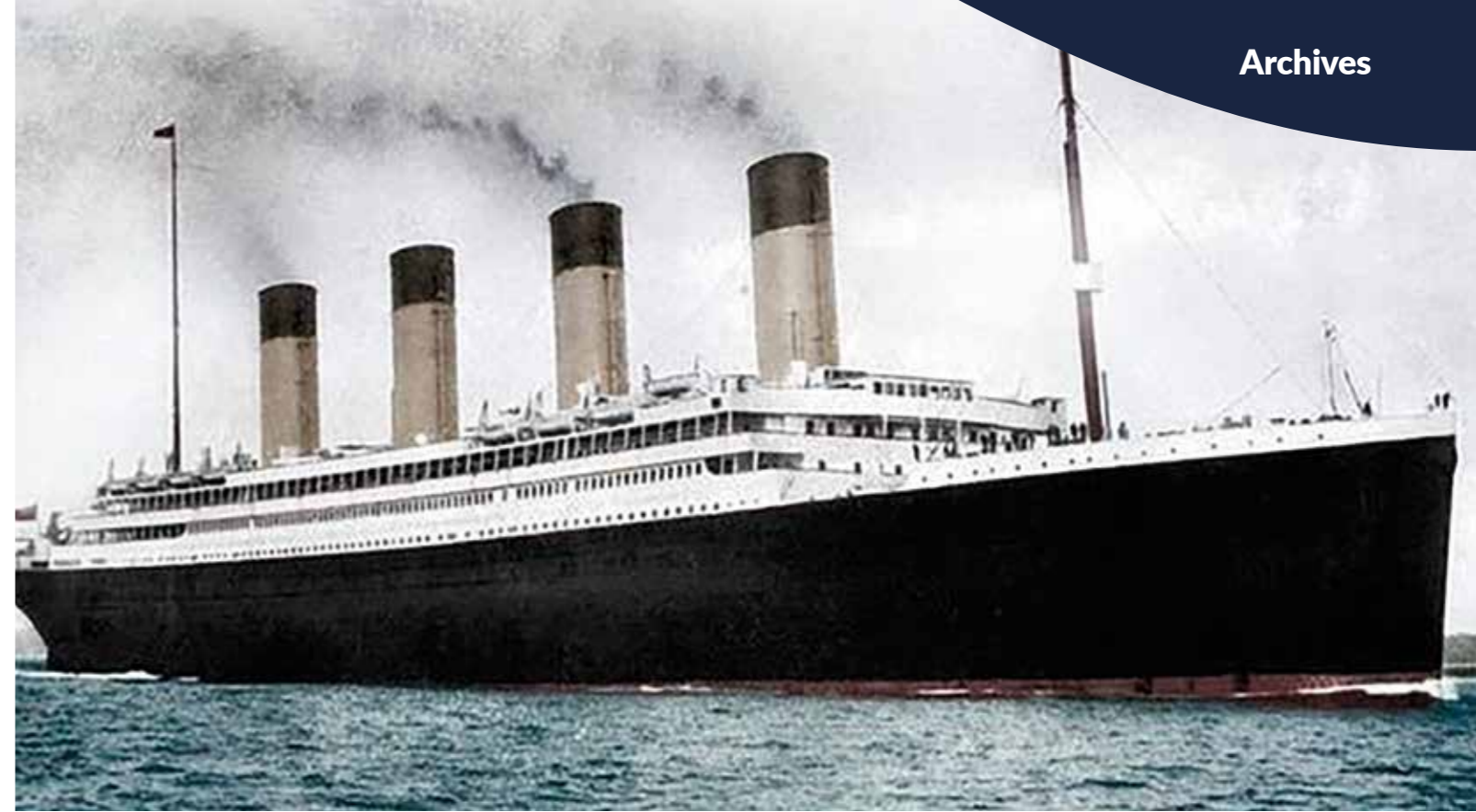
by going to 'Email', then down to 'Settings'.

16. For Synapptic, on the following screen, select 'Basic Settings' and then select the third option down called 'Password'.
17. Delete the existing password, then enter the 16-character password that was created previously.
18. Now press 'Save' in the bottom left.
19. Return to your Google account and tap 'Done'.
20. Guide users use the 'Emails Settings Wizard' and all that needs changing is the password used when prompted for it.

### Office 2010 and 2013

For Outlook users, you'll know once Google have implemented this change because you'll get a pop-up appearing asking for your password when you open Outlook. Creation of a new password is exactly the same as above, but you drop the new password, minus the spaces, into the dialog box and click 'OK'.

■ **Remember, this password only applies to the application you are currently using. To change it on other applications, you'll need to log into Google and repeat the process again.** 🌐



**Caption: RMS Titanic was the largest ship afloat**

# A titanic tale

Review volunteer, **Lynette Denzey**, tells the story of blind veteran Reg Bell and his marvellous model

The story of the sinking of RMS Titanic is well known, not least because of the popular 1997 film starring Kate Winslet and Leonardo DiCaprio, which won 11 Oscars.

Titanic was the largest ship afloat at the time she entered service. She sank in the North Atlantic on 15 April 1912 after striking an iceberg during her maiden voyage from Southampton to New York. The wreck was discovered in 1985, lying at a depth of 2.37 miles

(3.8 km) and thousands of artefacts have since been recovered.

### The story of Reg Bell

Last year, our Archivist, Rob Baker, was approached by the daughter of former blind veteran, Reg Bell. While clearing out her parent's house following their deaths, Chris Bootle, and her husband, Paul, came across this amazing four-foot-long wooden model of RMS Titanic made by Reg, and wondered whether we would like to keep it. →



**Caption: Reg Bell in his RAF uniform**

Blind veteran Reg Bell was born in 1923 and joined the RAF in 1940. He suffered from age-related macular degeneration in later life and became a Member in 2007. Through the charity, he learnt to touch type and went on to type his own books about his travels, family life and wartime experiences.

In his autobiography, *My Life in a Nutshell*, Reg said that he boarded SS Nea Hellas in Glasgow on Friday, 13 February, 1941. The Nea Hellas (known fondly as the Nelly Wallace and, less fondly, as the Near Hell) was on her way to Singapore with reinforcements for the garrison there. However, by the time they arrived the city had already

fallen to the Japanese and the ship was redirected to Egypt.

The German advance was halted, and the Battle of El Alamein saw the turning point in the war, but Reg remained in Egypt for two years until he answered an advert in daily orders, "Volunteers wanted to return to England. Single men only. Married men will not be considered". Arriving back, he realised what he had volunteered for - frontline squadrons preparing for the invasion of Europe.

Fortunately, the squadron was over-staffed, so Reg found himself back in Scotland, working on flying boats and then high-speed motor launches.

After the war in Europe came to an end, Reg was moved to 233 Squadron which was when he met Lottie, the girl who would become his wife in 1947. They celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 2007.



**Caption: Reg's exquisite model**



**Caption: Chris, Lottie and Paul at Buckingham Palace**

### The model of Titanic

So back to this wonderful model in wood of RMS Titanic. It was made by Reg around 2011 and took him two years to complete. It is extraordinary in its detail and beautifully made.

Chris and Paul were happy to bring the model from their home in Buckinghamshire to Marylebone Station in London and I was despatched to collect the ship. It arrived in a smart made-to-measure box constructed by Paul.

It was clear how much the family appreciated the help Reg received from the charity, enabling him to continue

with his hobbies. They said that he and Lottie really enjoyed their visits to our Brighton Centre.

Although Reg died in 2014, Lottie, along with Chris and Paul, were invited to join us at Buckingham Palace in 2015 for our centenary garden party and their photo was one of those featured in Review's Centenary edition. They had not seen the photograph so were delighted to be given a copy of it.

The model of RMS Titanic safely negotiated the tricky Marylebone Road in windy conditions and is now safely stored in our archives at Harcourt Street. 🍷

# Carers Review

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

## Forget me not

**Sharman Collins, a social worker at our Brighton Centre, gives an update on our current support for carers**

At one of our recent Family and Carers Engagement Group meetings, I was struck by the mention of a phrase that, sadly, so aptly describes the role of unpaid carers: 'The forgotten army'.

How this group can be so forgotten I simply don't understand. The latest figures show that 1 in 8 adults (6.5 million people) in the UK are carers to their spouse, family member or friend. Meanwhile, 6,000 more people join these numbers every single day.

Despite this, carer's allowance of £67.25 per week is the lowest benefit of its kind, and if you claim carer's allowance when you are over 65, it will be knocked off your pension.

Unpaid carers save the UK £132 billion a year in public resources. If this isn't a good reason to look after them, I don't know what is!

Fortunately, there are charities and organisations that fight for carers', such as Carers UK who are currently lobbying for more support for this group when it comes to soaring energy prices. Let's hope the government listens.

Here, at Blind Veterans UK, we are also taking steps to support our Members' carers as we've learnt that coping with sight loss can be very hard for the whole family.

## So, what support do we currently offer?

- We run the aforementioned Family and Carers Engagement Group, a dedicated, supportive group which meets regularly and is open to all carers and family of our Members. Any suggestions and feedback that come from this group are passed on to the National Engagement Group, so it really does have a voice within the charity.
- Our Community Support Workers have received training to signpost carers for Local Authority support,



**Caption: Staff and carers enjoy a trip to a vineyard in 2019**

- and also hold local carers community groups and encourage local networking between carers.
- At the Brighton Centre, we offer breaks for carers (mainly virtual at the moment due to Covid restrictions). These provide much-needed emotional support and a place for carers to share their ideas and coping strategies – as well as lots of laughter.
- We also offer Member respite breaks at our Brighton Centre, giving carers a precious break and some time to recharge their batteries.

- And, finally, we have a dedicated page on our website for our carers full of information and guidance, as well as this regular feature in the Review.

If you're a carer or a family member of one of our Members, do get in touch. We won't let you feel forgotten. 🍷

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

# Centre news

An update on centre holiday bookings with details of who can apply and when, and how much it costs

## Llandudno Centre

Up until the end of September, the Llandudno Centre is offering holiday/ respite stays for fully independent Members/escorts who don't need care support only. We continue to monitor changes in guidelines with regards to bookings for residential/nursing Members.

Bookings for one to two weeks are available and there is no limit on the number of bookings you make, although we do recommend a gap of three

months in between stays. Members' individual circumstances will be taken into consideration and extra bookings may be made at the centre's discretion.

## Testing requirements

You are required to provide evidence of a negative Lateral Flow Test (LFT) on the day of arrival to the Llandudno Centre. Anyone who does not have symptoms can pick up free lateral flow tests in most pharmacies or from a local collection point, or you can order online via 119.

In case you're not able to pick up a test, our drivers will hold a stock. However, they are unable to administer the test and you will need to wait for 30 minutes for your results prior to boarding the vehicle.

■ **To make a booking, please call the Llandudno Centre on 01492 868700, Monday-Friday, 8.30am-4.30pm.**

## Brighton Centre

As we have permanent residents at Brighton, any bookings will be dependent on the latest guidelines for care homes.

We are hopeful that the current easing of restrictions will mean we can offer a number of holidays and themed weeks over the summer period.



**Caption: Our centre in Llandudno**

We are in consultation with NHS England about this and hope to have a clearer picture after Easter. As always, we will keep you updated in the *Review*. For all enquiries, please call the Brighton booking office for the most up-to-date information. 🌐

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

## Centre accommodation charges

Independent Stay in main building		
Guest type	Weekly (7 nights)	Daily
War blinded Members	£266.00	£38.00
Non war blinded Members	£343.00	£49.00
Aged 3-16	£133.00	£19.00

Llandudno Leader Buildings Self catering and no transport		
Guest type	Weekly (7 nights)	Daily
Members	£273.00	£39.00
Aged 5-16	£112.00	£16.00

Brighton Centre Port Hall holiday only		
Guest type	Weekly (7 Nights)	Daily
Members	£231.00	£33.00
Aged 5-16	£133.00	£19.00

Centre Club Weeks with no transport		
Guest type	Weekly (7 Nights)	Daily
War blinded Members	£245.00	£35.00
Non war blinded Members	£322.00	£46.00

# National Creative Project Programme

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

The following activities are available to all Members, whatever your experience or creative ability.



**Caption: Milton, 93, with his finished mantelpiece clock**

## CRAFT

### A Card for Every Occasion

For this project, you'll make 10 unique handmade greetings cards with the selection of materials and ideas we send you. Once finished, we hope you'll enjoy posting them out as an extra special way to say 'happy birthday', 'thank you' or simply 'hello' to your friends or family.

There will be an opportunity to join a group call by phone or video where you can chat to other Members about the project and share ideas.

### Air Drying Clay

This project is an opportunity to experiment with air-drying clay (no kiln required!). We will send you everything you need to get started, including a set of tools for shaping clay, key guidance and, of course, a pack of clay.

The project comes with the option of joining a group call with up to five other Members and two craft instructors to chat about how your creations are developing and to share any tips and advice you may have for working with air drying clay.

### Mantlepiece Clock wooden model project

We'll send you everything you need to complete this working wooden clock, including our VI-friendly instructions. These are very simple kits with pre-cut wooden pieces which are sanded, slot together and then glued. The assembled model is 6 inches by 9 inches by 4 inches (15cm x 22cm x 10cm).

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

One Member, Milton, recently sent us a photo (left) of his finished clock. He told us, "It took some doing! I'm 93 years young and registered blind so I feel quite proud of my accomplishment." We love it!

## ART

### Painting for Beginners and Improvers - March, April, May

If you're new to painting, this is a great way to ease into it with popular



SYDA PRODUCTIONS / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: Join our painting project**

and interesting subjects presented on VI-friendly worksheets and audio description, if required. If you've painted with us before, we hope to broaden your existing skill set and equip you with some great new materials to use.

Themes for spring are 'Trees in Landscape', 'Night scenes', 'Dogs', 'Collage', and one special bonus theme of 'Celebration' in honour of The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. You can attempt one after the other or combine them all, then send us your best works for a chance to feature in the *Review's* gallery page, or the online gallery at the Blind Veterans UK website.

There will be an opportunity to join a group call by phone or video to discuss your progress with your peers and our Art and Craft instructors. →



**Caption: Creative writing can be fun**

### GARDENING

We'll have a new gardening project for you to sign up to in our May issue.

#### Jubilee Bunting on a Bag

Thank you to all of you who took part in this project. We are now assembling the artwork ready to send you a beautiful Jubilee shopping bag, which will include your design, in time for the celebrations in June. Your bunting designs will also be used to decorate the Brighton and Llandudno Centres.

- **For more information about the projects and groups, or to request an activity pack, please call our bookings team on 01273 391455 or you can visit our website at [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)**

### CREATIVE BOOK

The Creative Book Project is now

in the assembly stage. Thank you to everyone who took part. Once the book and online resource are completed, we will share them with you in *Review* magazine.

### CREATIVE HOBBY CIRCLES

We would love to hear from you on **01273 391455** if you are interested in joining a monthly telephone or video call chat group. Chat groups have up to six fellow Members with a shared interest, plus two of our staff.

**We're currently offering: Gardening, knitting, woodturning, mosaic, painting, woodwork and creative writing.**

We also have a Facebook page for photographers (Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a weekly photography chat group. Anyone with an interest in photography is welcome.

- **You can find out more information about all our projects at [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)**
- **If you'd like to give any a go, call us on 01273 391455 or speak to your Community Support Worker.**

Wishing you all a Happy Easter!

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

# Family news

### Birthdays

**Kenneth Brooks** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 11 April

**Norah Day** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 12 April

**Douglas Forester** who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 16 April

**Owen Hillier** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 5 April

**Cynthia Holden** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 22 April

**Arthur Lawson** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 19 April

**Pamela Mortimer** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 26 April

**Joyce Poolman** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 30 April

### Condolences

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

**Deidre Mary Croyman** who died on 7 January 2022. She was the wife of Robert Croyman

**Jill Dunn** who died on 1 March 2022. She was the wife of Dennis Dunn

**Lesley Faulkner** who died on 2 March 2022. She was the wife of Maurice Faulkner

**Jennifer Mary Goodman** who died on 9 February 2022. She was the wife of Martin Goodman

**Brenda Olive Hardie** who died on 12 February 2022. She was the wife of Albert Hardie



**Cynthia O'Sullivan** who died on 1 February 2022. She was the wife of Michael O'Sullivan

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**Margaret Ivy Price** who died on 1 January 2022. She was the wife of Percy Price

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**Margaret Rose** who died on 26 February 2022. She was the wife of Trevor Rose

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**Margaret Ann Willoughby Stevens** who died on 11 February 2022. She was the wife of Julian Stevens

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**Dorothy Urquhart** who died on 1 February 2022. She was the wife of Don Urquhart

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**Fred Warhurst** who died on 20 February 2022. He was the husband of Ida Warhurst

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**Christine Margaret Wilson** who died on 14 February 2022. She was the wife of Clarence Stalham

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



ADOBE STOCK / ALICE\_LD

# 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

**Matthew Avery** of Washington, Tyne and Wear died on 4 March 2022 aged 99. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Engineers.

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**James Brooks** of Bolton died on 3 March 2022 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Dennis Collins** of Ely, Cambridgeshire died on 20 February 2022 aged 95. He served in the Queen's Regiment.

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**Brian Davies** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 1 March 2022 aged 91. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Elizabeth Diacon** of Warminster, Wiltshire died on 20 February 2022 aged 99. She served as a Section Officer in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**Alice Jennifer Dove** of Tunbridge Wells, Kent died on 14 February 2022 aged 99. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**Keith Drury** of Bristol died on 1 February 2022 aged 83. He served as a Private in the Royal Navy.

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**Harry Mitchell Furness** of Clevedon, North Somerset died on 1 March 2022 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment.

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**Allen Thomas Frederick Goddard** of Cinderford, Gloucestershire died on 15 December 2021 age 83. He served as a Private in the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment.

**George Goucher** of Lichfield, Staffordshire died on 17 February 2022 aged 91. He served as an A.C.2 in the Royal Air Force.

**Jack Edric Hall** of Huddersfield, Yorkshire died on 15 February 2022 aged 92. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Barry Harper** of Gloucester died on 15 February 2022 aged 87. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

**Geoffrey Harradine** of Bournemouth, Hampshire died on 7 March 2022 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the 25th Dragoons.

**Frank Harrison** of Sheffield, Yorkshire died on 14 February 2022 aged 102. He served as a Lieutenant in the Indian Army Service Corps.

**John Michael Heath** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 12 February 2022 aged 93. He served as an A.C.2 in the Royal Air Force.

**Thomas George Harold Hillesley** of the Isle of Man died on 1 December 2021 aged 99. He served as an L.A.C in the Royal Air Force.

**Douglas Jubilee Giles Hobbs** of Rushden, Northamptonshire died on 9 January 2022 aged 86. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Beryl Hudson** of Newcastle, Staffordshire died on 1 January 2022 aged 99. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Rita Jeremiah** of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire died on 1 February 2022 aged 97. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

**Denis Kay** of Pontefract, West Yorkshire died on 20 February 2022 aged 87. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**William Wood Kenyon** of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire died on 31 December 2021 aged 99. He served as Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**John Frederick Jason Lisle** of Oswestry, Shropshire died on 1 February 2022 aged 92. He served as an A.C.1 in the Royal Air Force.

**Alan Lithgow** of Bishop Auckland, County Durham died on 28 February 2022 aged 82. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

**Robert Kenneth McKernan** of Liverpool died on 24 February 2022 aged 97. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Scots Fusiliers.

**Arthur Miles** of Coventry died on 28 February 2022 aged 93. He served as an A.C.2 in the Royal Air Force.

**Dennis Murphy** of Sunderland died on 1 February 2022 aged 71. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Logistic Corps.

**Albert Roy Newell** of Reading, Berkshire died on 1 February 2022 aged 89. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Peter Niland** of Liss, Hampshire died on 2 March 2022 aged 79. He served as a Petty Officer Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**William Henry Nutman** of Dorchester, Dorset died on 13 February 2022 aged 100. He served as an A.C.1 in the Royal Air Force.

**Peter Francis Pascoe** of Grays, Essex died on 1 February 2022 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Michael Pattison** of Chester Le Street, County Durham died on 24 February 2022 aged 86. He served as a Chief Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

**Peter Edward Pavey** of Hassocks, West Sussex died on 11 February 2022 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

**Martin Harley Pribyl** of Wroughton, Swindon died on 6 February 2022 aged 85. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**David Brian Price** of Pontypool, Gwent died on 4 February 2022 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Monmouthshire Regiment.

**Violet Rees** of Hinckley, Leicestershire died on 1 February 2022 aged 102. She served as a Sergeant in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Grace Mabel Sidey** of Woodbridge, Suffolk died on 15 February 2022 aged 97. She served as an A.C.W 2 in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Ronald Patrick Skidmore** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 12 February 2022 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.







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**Charles John Smith** of Hoddesdon, Hertfordshire died on 16 February 2022 aged 101. He served as a Driver in the Royal Air Force.

**Vincent Standish** of St Helens, Merseyside died on 1 February 2022 aged 98. He served as a Stoker 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

**Dorothy Thompson** of Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 10 February 2022 aged 95. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Leslie Michael Uzzell** of Kenilworth, Warwickshire died on 8 March 2022 aged 87. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Roy Valentine** of Lytham St Annes, Lancashire died on 5 March 2022 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Derrick Neil Vicary** of Maldon, Essex died on 5 March 2022 aged 85. He served as a Trooper in the Cheshire Regiment.

**Ida Warhurst** of Manchester died on 29 November 2021. She served as a Sergeant in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

**Frank Edwin Dennis Walden** of Clacton-on-Sea, Essex died on 22 February 2022 aged 95. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

**Barbara Mary Whitehouse** of Plymouth, Devon died on 9 February 2022 aged 91. She served as an Acting Corporal in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Ian Keith Yule** of Chichester, West Sussex died on 1 March 2022 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.



**Caption: John during his trip across Australia's Nullarbor Plain**

# Memories of a globetrotter

Member **John Chapman**, 90, shares snippets from his past travels around the world

## Growing up in Japan

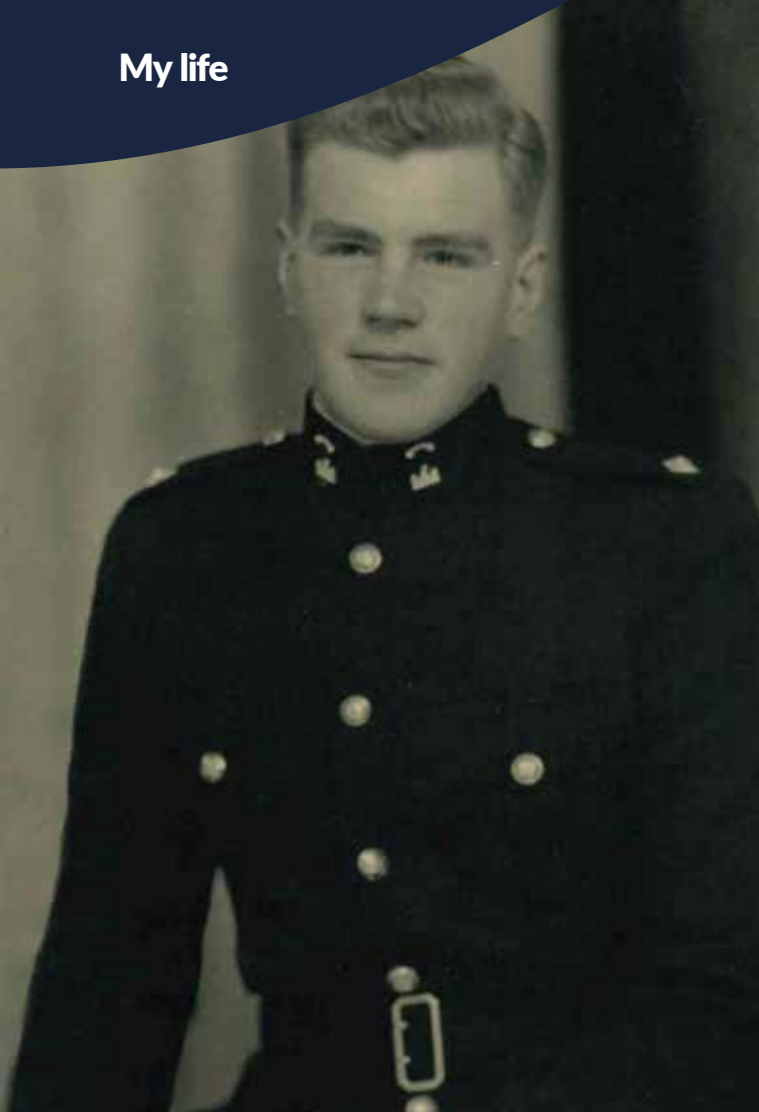
My father travelled around a lot for his job as a banker, so I was born in Yokohama, Japan, in 1931, and lived there for the first nine years of my life.

We had servants and amahs (live-in housemaids) who were all very kind

and helpful, particularly our chauffeur, Eyo-San. I remember my father was very proud of his new car, a classic Lea Francis 1929, which he had shipped over from Liverpool.

Fortunately, he got us out of the country well before the war





**Caption: John in the Irish Guards, serving in Kenya and with his sons**

started. Leaving was sad, but had to be done. We were lucky because my father knew what was going on before anyone else there and even had all our furniture, carpets and ornaments shipped out, although he did have to leave his favourite car behind...

### **Schooldays in Canada**

In late 1940, we arrived at Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, Canada, where my cousins lived. My father stayed in Tokyo until almost the last ship out and was so lucky to leave just in time before war broke out.

I went to a school on the island for a year before we left for Montreal. I remember the trip by train took four days and was super as we travelled through Banff, Winnipeg and Toronto. I thought we were going to stay in Montreal as my father got a job there and we had a nice large apartment. I remember my school had canvas chutes to climb down in the event of a fire drill. What fun it was!

However, he was soon transferred to New York and also given an apartment in Boston. As I needed to continue

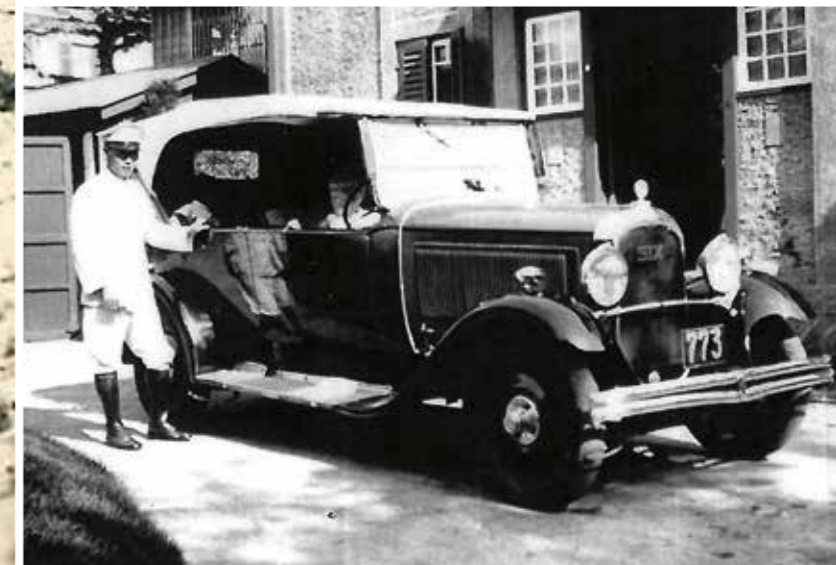


**Caption: Surfing in Malindi and enjoying life as a young boy in Japan**

my schooling in Canada, I went to a boarding school close to Niagara Falls - ideal as I could travel by train overnight to see my parents in New York.

### **After the war in England**

When the war was over, I came to England with my sister who had worked at the British Embassy in New York. We were able to go on the Queen Elizabeth, which was still used as a troopship and I remember seeing all the carved initials by the soldiers on the ship's rails. So sad to think that many must have died on D-Day and afterwards.



### **Fixing fuses in Spain**

I left my British school at 19 and, the following year, decided to work on my Spanish by staying with a family in Madrid. On my arrival, the light fuses collapsed in their home and I surprised my hosts by offering to fix them. I always used to travel with my trusty screwdriver!

Before long, I was offered a job teaching English to students, which was great fun. I made lots of friends, particularly as the students were practically the same age as me.

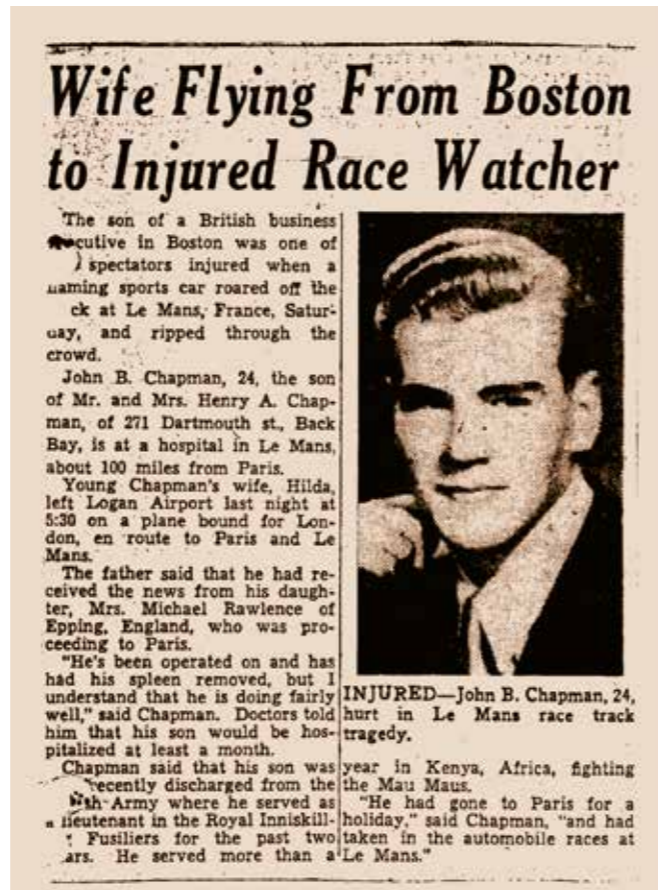
## National Service in Kenya

When I was 22, I joined the Irish Guards Brigade Squad and, after a year, transferred to the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and was sent to Kenya. This was during what was known as the Mau Mau uprising, an armed rebellion launched by the Kikuyu. Our regiment, along with others, was to secure the safety of the British settlers.

We were stationed along the slopes of Mount Kenya and one of my duties was to help to supply platoons with their provisions. The Kenya Air Police Service provided a small piper aircraft and when the pilot told me to 'drop', I dropped the provisions. I remember feeling the airsickness.

My platoon travelled everywhere by truck and quite often met thick clouds of locusts, which could be quite frightening. One of our 'successes' was to find a Mau Mau clearing in the forest and deal with them. I wasn't at all happy about this but, unfortunately, this is what we were there to do.

At one point, I had a ten-day break and went to Mombasa with a friend to stay at a well-known hotel. We hired a car and drove to Malindi on the coast to do some surfing. One interesting memory was travelling on a small ferry, over two rivers, hauled across by local tribes chanting.



**Caption: The Boston Globe newspaper story**

My story in Kenya came to an end when I was demobbed. I came back by aircraft and remember seeing a perfect morning sun-filled sky over northern Ethiopia from the plane.

## Disaster at 'Le Mans'

I was grateful to find a job with an American finance company in Paris, and a few weekends later decided to go with friends to see the famous 'Le Mans' 24-hour sports car race. Well, what a mistake that was - I was nearly killed by a somersaulting Mercedes which exploded right in front of me!

The Daily Mail newspaper blamed the crash on the British Jaguar driver, Mike Hawthorn, who they say drove recklessly to beat the Mercedes. Sadly, 84 people were killed and countless injured, including me - I lost my spleen and suffered a fractured pelvis.

A story in the USA Boston Globe newspaper claimed that my wife travelled over to be by my hospital bedside, whereas in fact it was my mother!

Later, my mother told me about the sad pile of lost shoes at the hospital following the accident. She said she managed to find my lost shoe as it was the only really shiny one. That's thanks to my time with the Irish Guards.

## Driving across Australia

As time went on, there was less need for US personnel at the company I worked for in Paris so, thanks to a £10 offer to emigrate, I left in 1959 for Melbourne. I was 28.

The tyre company, BF Goodrich, had started manufacturing the new tubeless tyres there and I applied for a job. I was given the task of inspecting the tyres, which soon got a bit boring so I resigned and offered to test some tyres by driving across to Perth. In those days, the road across Australia, called the Nullarbor Plain, was just a

wide dirt road, full of holes. I had a companion with me, which was a relief because we sometimes got a bit stuck in drifts. One essential item I forgot to bring was a shovel, but we just about managed by using our metal food plates instead.

We met a few passing cars along the way and always enjoyed the stops and cups of tea. We also helped carry mail to nearby outlying farms and received a few home-cooked meals as thanks.

The whole trip took 19 days, but we were not in a hurry. And at least the tyres survived.

## Family life in Hertfordshire

I came back to England when I was 30 and met my wife, Rachel, through a friend. We were married in London in 1971 and moved to Hertfordshire where we had our two sons, Steven and Christopher. We now have four grandchildren.

I began to lose my sight when I was in my 80s and was fortunate enough to hear about Blind Veterans UK through my county council. I've received lots of support from the charity and still dial in for the talks for Members.

My Community Support Worker is very helpful and I'm very grateful for all the staff do for me. 🇬🇧

# Quiz time

Our quiz master, **Ron Russell**, who celebrates his 81st birthday this month, tests your knowledge of everything Easter

1. **What was the name of the Roman governor who presided over the trial of Jesus and gave the order of his crucifixion?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. **The Easter bunny was originally a hare. True or False?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. **According to the Bible, what is the name of the garden in which Jesus was arrested?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. **... and what did Jesus famously pray for those who crucified him?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. **Which chocolate company produced the first ever chocolate egg in the UK?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. **True or false - Easter is named after the pagan goddess Eostre?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. **According to the Bible, what was the name of the man forced to carry Jesus' cross?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. **... and on the day Jesus rose from the dead, who was the first person to discover the empty tomb?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. **What meat is traditionally eaten on Easter Sunday?**  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. **When it comes to eating chocolate bunnies, what do 76% of people eat first?**  
\_\_\_\_\_

Turn to page 2 for the answers.



## Contact details

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**Member Support Hub (MeSH):**  
**01273 391 447**

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

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Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss