

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

May 2022

Walking taller and prouder

Clare's remarkable
journey to the
Invictus Games

Inside:

Remembering Paul Palmer

John's Desert Rats memoir

Our Founder's Day heroes



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

Stories of hope

Welcome to your May Review. If, like me, you're finding the TV news almost too unbearable to watch these days, I hope the positive stories in this issue will go some way towards restoring your faith in humanity.

First up, our cover star, Clare Keating, shares her delight at making it to the Invictus Games 2022 – the only vision-impaired competitor from the UK who was selected this year. Clare's decision to embark on gruelling training for the Games is inspiring, particularly as, after losing her sight in her 20s, she remembers feeling so low she "no longer felt part of society". You can read Clare's story on page 12.

And then we have John McOwan who, despite his grand age of 101, launched an amazing writing project in the lockdown. John served in the revered 7th Armoured Division, Desert Rats, during the war and has penned his memoir about the experience. He was supported in his project by a dedicated team of helpers, and you can read the first extract on page 21.

We also celebrate this year's Founder's Day heroes on page 16 – those spirited souls who go above and beyond

“Our health consultant, Chris Cardwell, has useful advice on support for mental health issues”

to support their fellow Members. Founder's Day marks the anniversary of the opening of our first major centre in 1915, and serves as a great reminder to each of us that we can make a valuable contribution just as we are, in our own unique way.

And if the situation in Ukraine is really getting you down, or you're finding it difficult to cope for any other reason, we've included a couple of articles that I hope will help. On page 14, our health consultant, Chris Cardwell, has useful advice on support for mental health issues and, on page 40, we share practical tips for coping in the new post-lockdown world.

Take good care. 🇬🇧

Liz Millar
Editor



Contents

- 03** Editorial welcome
- 04** Your welcome from our Chief Executive
- 06** Your welcome from our Chairman
- 08** Remembering Paul Palmer
- 09** News
- 12** Clare's journey to the Invictus Games
- 14** Only the brave
- 16** Our Founder's Day heroes
- 18** No man is an island
- 21** John McOwan's memoir part 1
- 27** Our bowling trip to Israel
- 30** Cooking economically
- 34** Gallery
- 36** Baking with Alexa
- 37** App of the month: NaviLens
- 38** The battle no one won
- 40** How to cope with the new normal
- 42** Carers Review
- 43** Centre news
- 45** National Creative Project
- 48** Family news
- 49** In Memory
- 54** The great escape by Ken Grimward
- 58** Quiz time

Quiz answers - from page 58

1. (b) police 2. (a) Venus 3. (b) Britain 4. (c) dog 5. (b) fishing tackle 6. (b) three years 7. (a) elephant 8. (b) Aberdeen 9. (c) six 10. (a) Atropa Belladonna

On the cover

Member Clare Keating at the Invictus Games 2022 at The Hague where she competed in the power lifting and indoor rowing events.



Shared goals

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

It has been many weeks since the dreadful news of the Russian aggression against Ukraine began to break. Every day since has brought alarming headlines. And yet every day we've also heard stories of remarkable work being done by remarkable people to help in the process of rebuilding lives.

Our charity was built on the principle



Caption: Nick Caplin

of helping people damaged by war to rebuild their lives. In addition to supporting British service personnel, St Dunstan's was instrumental in helping to build vision rehabilitation capability in other countries, most notably South Africa, India, Canada and Australia.

In the past, we've had close relationships with the war blind organisations in both France and Germany, and have continuing close relationships with both St Dunstan's South Africa and the US Blinded Veterans Association. We have reflected on this experience as we've considered how we might be able to assist those blinded in Ukraine.

First and foremost, we would need a change to our Articles of Association to give us the necessary room for manoeuvre. Then, we would need to raise new money for this new purpose. We have started this process with an approach to the Charity Commission, seeking an amendment that would allow us to provide support to those damaged by war in places such as

Ukraine. If our request is granted, we will begin working out the detail.

As Barry says in his message, there are more questions than answers at this stage, but it doesn't feel right to sit inactive. Tom Zampieri of the Blind Veterans Association recently noted that we are world leaders in the area of vision rehabilitation for the war blind. There will be ways our work can benefit the Ukrainians, and other victims of war into the future, without detriment to the support that we give to our own blind veterans, which will always be our priority. I will report back as our thinking develops.

Any response to the Ukraine crisis must be built on a principle of working in partnership with others, as together we will be greater than the sum of our parts. This principle has become increasingly important to us, so much so that we have embraced partnership working as a strategic objective.

During the early days of the pandemic, after the vision partnership group closed, we worked closely with RNIB, Guide Dogs, the Macular Society and others to form a new Vision Impairment Partnership, or VIP for short. This was an informal grouping, bound together by a Memorandum of Understanding and has provided an invaluable mechanism through which the vision

charities can work to address any crisis that faces the sector. Last year, we provided the lead for Crisis Response - major work conducted by VIP in response to Covid - and the VIP has also proved valuable in the response to extreme weather.

As the VIP seeks new priorities, a key theme we've promoted is to mend the broken national system for vision rehabilitation. Whilst there are plenty of outstanding examples of local sight loss charities across the country, it is a bit of a curate's egg. There are, sadly, parts of the country that are not well served in terms of vision rehabilitation.

Furthermore, the provision of rehabilitation specialists is under pressure: too few chasing too many posts, and provision from local authorities is a serious postcode lottery. It seems to be a ripe opportunity for the sector to work collectively to improve this situation. I will keep you posted on further developments.

In closing, I wanted to say how very saddened I am about the passing of our Vice President and former trustee, Paul Palmer. Paul made an enormous contribution to the charity and was very well liked by his fellow Members. I know he will be greatly missed and I send my sincere condolences to his whole family. 🌹

Thinking big

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

I was Governor of my old school for many years before I took on this Chairmanship and, about 20 years ago, launched a careers fair at the school for Lower Sixth Form students. The fair is still going strong and I continue to chair the Properties Professions Group, which means I get the chance to speak to students who are hoping to become architects one day, or make their millions as property developers.



Caption: Barry Coupe

Over the years, I've built up an ongoing relationship with some of these students – like an unofficial mentor, I suppose. Even some of those I met years ago still get in touch from time to time to let me know what they're up to. I love it because, even though I'm the one in the so-called advisory role, I personally gain so much from our conversations. These young people have such inspiring aspirations and never fail to remind me to think big about my own life.

One thing this has taught me is that helping others is rarely one-sided and can often bring a whole host of unexpected benefits. Here, at Blind Veterans UK, we're thinking about how we can increase our support to be even more of a 'force for good' in the world.

A few weeks ago, Nick Caplin and I met with the charity's patron, the Countess of Wessex, who I've been fortunate enough to work with before. She was very excited to hear about our new centre at Rustington. She knows exactly where it is and thinks the location will be perfect for us.

My hope is that the centre becomes a haven, not only for you, but for your families too. You may remember how, in the last couple of issues of *Review*, I described the struggles my father went through because of his sight loss and how my mother supported him 24/7. She worked so hard and, even though she wanted to do it, I'm sure it was very difficult. I also felt responsible for helping him and I'm sure the experience made me more sensitive to others' needs. I think, as a charity, we do understand how much of a responsibility visual impairment can be for everyone.

The location of the new centre is just amazing - a mere stone's throw from the sea. I've no doubt that being able to sit there and listen to the waves crashing on the beach will be hugely restorative for the whole family.

Like our other centres, Rustington will be a fitting home for our raison d'être: rehabilitation. This is an area we have developed over the years and no other charity does it better than us. I'm due to meet with two of our fellow vision charities in the next couple of weeks and I'll be looking to explore how we can get better at sharing our knowledge and skills with one another, while retaining our own separate remits. After all, it's very difficult to get good rehabilitation as a blind person



Caption: Our Rustington Centre will be a haven for the whole family

outside of the veteran community.

I'm also keenly aware, as the situation in Ukraine rages on, that our expertise may be needed overseas soon too. In fact, in our meeting with the Countess, Nick and I shared our initial thoughts about the possibility of helping war-blinded soldiers coming off the battlefields in Ukraine. Although the idea is currently throwing up many more questions than answers, we are hoping to find a way to be able to give these Servicemen and women, along with their families, the opportunity to benefit from our work.

Chances are they may not need us but, sadly, it's more likely that – as many of you will know only too well – they will need all the help they can get. 🇺🇰

A positive force who was great fun to be around

Our President, **Colin Williamson**, remembers Vice President and former trustee Paul Palmer, who sadly passed away on 12 March at the age of 70

It is with great sadness that I say a final farewell to my comrade, Paul, and convey my heartfelt condolences to his family.

A former Army Major, Paul joined the Royal Corps of Transport in the early 70s and served in Northern Ireland, Germany and in the first Gulf War in the 90s. His expertise in logistics took him all over the world, including Africa and Afghanistan, and he went on to work for a global logistics company before retiring in 2010.

Around this time, Paul started to lose his sight due to diabetic retinopathy and yet his attitude was inspiring. He was always pragmatic and maintained an amazingly positive attitude to life.

Paul was such a dynamic player within the membership and his love

of sport, particularly archery, brought him into contact with lots of like-minded fellow Members who soon forged firm friendships with him, which have stood the test of time.

Paul was always well liked and respected. He was a larger-than-life character who possessed a great sense of humour and a razor-sharp wit which made him great fun to be around.

Blind Veterans UK has lost a great servant and a fine ambassador. Paul's enthusiasm was boundless and his love for the charity was evident in everything he was involved in. His time as a trustee and as Vice President stand testament to his unselfish commitment and unwavering loyalty.

He will be greatly missed by all who knew him. 🇬🇧



Caption: Paul Palmer

News

Wreaths to be made available for Remembrance

As you may remember, many of you were pleased to be able to honour the Fallen by laying a poppy wreath at your local Cenotaph.

We are now looking ahead to this year's commemorations and would like to give even more of you the opportunity to take part in this way.

For this reason, we will be making 100 wreaths especially for Remembrance Day. The wreaths will be posted out to Members who would like one on a first-come, first-served, basis to lay at your local Cenotaph on the day.

As our president, Colin Williamson, says, "As a veteran myself I know how important it is to be part of Remembrance commemorations. Many of our Members are unable to make the journey to the London Cenotaph, or would like to spend this important time surrounded by others in their own community. I hope that by making these wreaths available, more of our Members will be able to take an active part in Remembrance while



Caption: Members Andy and Lesley laying a wreath on Remembrance Day last year in Newcastle

also highlighting the presence of Blind Veterans UK in their own community."

■ **If you would like to lay a wreath, please contact your Community Support Worker by no later than Friday, 27 May 2022.**

In support of this event, our Community Partnerships Team will be reaching out to local organisations to pledge a donation of £250 to sponsor a wreath.

■ **If you know of any organisations in your local area you think might like to get involved, email the team on fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk or you can give us a call on 0300 111 2233.** →

Also, it may be that one of our sponsors wishes to attend a service, so it would be helpful for us to know if you'd like to meet their representative on the day. If so, please do let your Community Support Worker know.

New activities planned for your wellbeing

The Brighton Sports and Wellbeing team will be running the following activities this year...

Walking Week, 11-15 July

Dig out your walking boots to explore the White Cliffs of Dover with your fellow Members. We'll be staying in a self-catering cottage in Kent for the week, so you must be able to travel independently to and from Wye Train Station and have a good level of physical fitness and stamina. We'll be walking about 10 miles a day across undulating terrain, learning about the history of the countryside and shoreline of the local area.

■ **For more information or to book, please call the Brighton Sports and Wellbeing team on 01273 391481.**

Activities Week, 3-7 October

If fun outdoor pursuits are your thing, come and join us for a week in Skern Lodge, North Devon, for exciting land

and water-based outdoor adventure. This is your chance to challenge your limits and work as a team, enjoying lots of laughs along the way.

Members will need a good level of physical fitness to participate and be able to travel independently to Devon and home again afterwards.

■ **For more information or to book, please call the Brighton Sports and Wellbeing team on 01273 391481.**

Health and Wellbeing talks

The Sports and Wellbeing team is looking to trial a series of telephone discussions on a range of wellbeing topics. The first will be on gut health and how the food we eat affects not only our body but also our brain – and



Caption: Join our walking week

how certain foods can improve our mood. You can attend the session on Wednesday, 25 May at 3pm, or Thursday, 26 May at 11am.

■ **Please contact our Brighton Sports and Wellbeing team on 01273 391481 to register your interest.**

Blind Veterans UK needs YOU!

Our President, Colin Williamson, explains how you can support our new campaign...

It's been estimated that there are tens of thousands of former servicemen and women across the UK who would benefit from the support of our life-changing charity. This is why, now that the UK is emerging from its Covid hibernation, we're embarking on a campaign to increase our membership.

Nothing in the civilian workforce can match the bonding that occurs in the uniformed services. All our Members share this common experience and we have our own language and culture.

Also, through our Diana Gubbay Trust, we support emergency 'blue light' services personnel – police, fire and ambulance – who have lost their sight in the course of their duties for many

years. We hope to increase these numbers too.

What can you do?

Each of us has a responsibility to ensure that anyone who has served their country doesn't have to suffer sight loss alone. If someone you know is struggling with sight loss and served in the Armed Forces (including National Service) or the emergency services, then now is the time to tell us.

Please let them know that, as well as excellent rehabilitation, care and equipment, our offer includes:

- training and technical support for working age Members who'd like to get back into employment
- financial assistance, in the form of grants, for those who need it
- the chance to join a range of fantastic sporting and recreational clubs, associations and activities
- holidays and respite stays at our centres
- a presence in most major towns and cities throughout the UK where Members can get together for training and socialising. 🇬🇧

■ **If you know someone who served in the Armed Forces or the emergency services and is struggling with sight loss, call us today on 0800 389 7979 or visit blindveterans.org.uk**

Walking taller and prouder

Member **Clare Keating** shares her remarkable journey to the Invictus Games

For those of you who tuned in to last month's Invictus Games at The Hague, you may well have spotted a fellow Member.

Our very own Clare Keating, 41, from Dorset, was thrilled to be given the



Caption: With her Invictus tracksuit

chance to compete in power lifting and indoor rowing, especially as she was the only vision-impaired competitor from the UK taking part this year.

The former senior aircraftsman became a Member after losing her sight in 2007 to punctuate inner choroidopathy, a degenerative condition. Clare has no vision in her left eye and limited central vision in her right eye, which she describes as being distorted as though looking through washing up liquid.

She says, "When I was discharged from the RAF because of my sight, I lost my friends, my home and my career. I found myself having to start again and I didn't think anyone would want to employ me. I no longer felt part of society."

Fortunately, Clare soon became involved in our activities and she also joined the Military Wives Choir. She

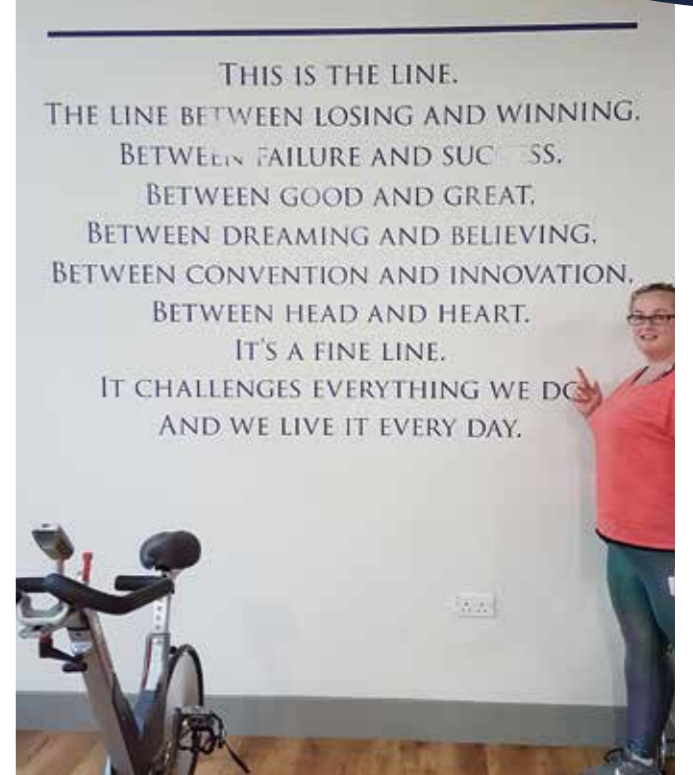


Caption: At the Games

says, "Blind Veterans UK has always been there when I've needed it and helped me to regain confidence in the activities I love."

Then a friend was selected for the 2017 Invictus Games in Toronto and Clare was able to join her at the training camp. She met a fellow Member there and found the experience so inspiring that she made it a personal goal to compete herself one day.

Clare says, "Meeting a fellow blind veteran at the Games made me realise that I still had a lot to give, so I decided I would train for a future Invictus Games. The training has helped me to believe in myself more and I've come



Caption: Her training inspiration

on so far, both physically and mentally. I've trained hard and I'm feeling more confident. My children see that I'm walking taller and prouder and they love it!"

Clare had a brilliant time at the Games. She came 4th in the endurance rowing and 4th in the power lifting, and she also achieved two personal bests. She was even invited to join special sitting volleyball team, Unconquered, for which she scored points even though she'd never played the sport before.

She now says of the whole experience, "It's been amazing. I've loved it. It's kickstarted a positive change in my life that I'm determined to continue." 🇬🇧

Only the brave

Our Member Healthcare Consultant, **Chris Cardwell**, says it's time to talk about mental health

We are now in the third year of the Covid pandemic and, just as things start to ease a little, the dreadful situation in Ukraine emerges. We are also about to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Falklands War.

Such events might act as triggers and cause us to remember and reflect. This is perfectly normal, but sometimes these reflections and thoughts can be so strong they can cause distress, anxiety, flashbacks, anger or trauma and we end up feeling overwhelmed.

The first thing to say is that these kinds of feelings are not a sign of weakness, and it's not unusual for these reactions to emerge in a powerful and disturbing form years after related events.

As Blind Veteran UK Members, we invariably share two things: our service, which is in the past, and our visual impairment, which is very much part of the present.

But we also share something else - the culture of the armed forces,

which is a complex mix of deeply attractive aspects and less appealing elements, some of which are only now beginning to be properly understood and addressed. This culture has often perpetuated a lack of tolerance towards those who are perceived to be different or unable to cope. I'm sure we can all think of groups or individuals we served with who were not treated well.

An acceptance of adversity and challenging circumstances was surely common to all of us, as was the expectation held by others that we should just 'brace up and get on with it.' This can work when you're trained, fit and well and part of a cohesive team, but it can unravel when the team has long gone, you have less support and there's the additional burden of visual impairment to deal with.

“All the staff who work for Op COURAGE are ex-military, so they understand our culture”

Getting expert advice and seeking help is an obvious first step to managing illness, but sometimes that's easier said than done – and this can particularly be the case when it comes to our mental health.

The NHS is large and complex, so navigating your way through it can be hard. However, the good news is that, last year, the NHS recognised this and launched Op COURAGE, a mental health service especially for those transitioning from active service, reservists, veterans and our family members.

So, what does Op COURAGE do?

All the staff who work for Op COURAGE are ex-military, or have experience of working with the armed forces, so they understand our culture and our worries.

They can help you access emergency support and care if you are in a mental health crisis, and they can assist you to recognise and find treatment for longer term care. They can also offer wider support to your family, and they link up with other organisations and charities.

How to get in touch

You can get in touch with Op COURAGE yourself, through a family member or friend, via your GP or through Blind Veterans UK. The

BUMBLEDEE / ADOBE STOCK



Caption: Any of us might suffer with mental health issues

service is divided into geographical areas so, rather than give you a long list of phone numbers and email contacts, the simplest way forward is probably to talk to your GP in the first instance, or your Blind Veterans UK Community Support Worker.

As this service only covers England, they will also be aware of the other services dedicated to supporting veterans in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Help is out there wherever you live in the UK. 🇬🇧

Our Founder's Day 2022 heroes

In 1915, Sir Arthur Pearson opened the door of our charity to blinded soldiers and sailors for the very first time. Every year, we mark this special anniversary by recognising some of our Members who share his boundless spirit

Bill Ridgewell



Despite sight loss and health problems, 96-year-old Bill embraces everything life has to offer. An artist at heart, he's loved taking part in our National Creative

Project during the pandemic, so much so that his painting has progressed as he's learnt how to adapt around his deteriorating sight. He also bakes regularly and enjoys sharing his treats with others.

Bill was awarded the Legion D'Honneur in 2019 and is a valued member of our monthly Second World War telephone social group where he shares his experiences and generally inspires everyone he meets.

Barrie Hathaway



When Barrie lost his sight, due to macular degeneration and retinitis pigmentosa, it only spurred him on. The photographer has gone on to win

several awards for his photos and is always more than happy to pass on his knowledge to other veterans. He's an avid model maker too, and is currently building the battleship Bismarck.

During the pandemic, Barrie also started volunteering for us as a telephone befriender and still speaks to several veterans on a regular basis. He has a lovely way with new Members and does what he can to help them feel a part of the charity.

Andrew Leitch



Despite losing his sight to retinitis pigmentosa in his 30s, Andrew has made his fitness a priority in his life and become a keen runner. He's completed a number of events while raising money for Blind Veterans UK - just this year taking on the Farnborough Half Marathon and the Brighton Half Marathon.

He's also run the London Marathon, the Great South Run and Wellesley 10K and continues to challenge himself every day, while helping others through his fundraising efforts.

Sam Harries MBE



Since becoming a Member in 2016, Sam has thrown himself into supporting the charity. The 89-year-old radio presenter and sea fishing expert has organised a country and western night, put on a sponsored sea swim, talked about us endlessly on his radio shows and even entertained our Members with his fantastic talks.

Sam received an MBE from Prince Charles for services to sea fishing and marine conservation in 2015 and has unlimited enthusiasm for life. He's always full of fabulous ideas and loves to do things that benefit his fellow veterans.

Yvonne Carter



Although not a Member herself, Yvonne is the wife and full-time carer of one of our Members, Dudley, who is, sadly, living with cancer. This means she's there

for him round the clock to help him with all aspects of daily life.

While Yvonne admits there can be very low days, she's shown enormous resilience in the face of the most challenging circumstances. She says she is simply doing her best and is thankful for all the time they spend together.

We all know that, as rewarding as caring can be, it can also be exhausting and is often unappreciated by wider society. Yvonne's story is just one example of the strength and perseverance shown by all our Members' carers and we thank and applaud each one of them. 🇬🇧

No man is an island

Our Community Support Worker, **Jan Alpin**, on the joys of connecting Members with one another

There are many quotes on friendship - most of them really cheesy and used in greeting cards. Nevertheless, it remains true that we all need friends and without them the world can be a very cold place.

This is why our community support teams across the UK work hard to foster friendships among our Members through quiz groups, lunch clubs, special activities and holidays at our centres.

Four of our Scottish Members - Dave Nickisson, Jim Irvine, John Fraser and

“After a brilliant lunch they decided to book a holiday together at our Llandudno Centre”

Stuart Gordon - would agree that these activities can make all the difference. Thanks to a remote intro week in September 2020 and our quiz group, the four have become firm friends, despite their different backgrounds.

Even their military experience isn't quite the same - Dave served in the Royal Marines and Jim in the Royal Navy, while John was in the Royal Scots and Stuart was in the Royal Signals. Still, the four of them got on so well that they've become known as the East Coast Boys, one of eight groups that take part in our fortnightly quiz held in Community 1 for Members from all over Scotland and Northern Ireland.

After getting to know one another online, the four met up for lunch a year later, last October, together with their Community Support Workers. After



Caption: Stuart, John and Jim

having a brilliant lunch they decided to book a holiday together at our Llandudno Centre.

Unfortunately, Dave couldn't make the trip, but the others decided to go for it, even though it was a huge deal for them. There were Covid tests to arrange; some of the group hadn't left the house for two years; some had medical needs; John's wife, Sian, would need to drive all the way from Scotland to Wales...

But, in the end, they made it, and enjoyed every minute. Everyone at

the centre bent over backwards to welcome them, from the drivers and the catering team, to the rehab staff and the booking staff. The guys said the care they received more than exceeded their expectations.

Over the week, they had a go at archery, went on the distillery trip, saw a model railway and went to a specialist food store. In the evenings, they chatted in the bar - and took part in the quiz, of course.

Jim hadn't known any other blind people before this experience and

admitted that beforehand he was so nervous about the trip he nearly cancelled. He said that losing his sight had felt like falling off a cliff, so meeting other blind veterans who are further along the path inspired him and gave him the confidence to try new things.

They all found the holiday really helpful. Jim says he was able to learn from other Members and “bounce ideas around”. He also reconnected with family he hadn’t seen for ten years.

Asked to sum up their week, John quipped, “It was fandabliatico!”; Jim said, “Great place, great staff, great

“Jim admitted he was so nervous about the trip, he nearly cancelled”

people,” and Stuart responded, “I’d like to book again.... right now!”

It seems that building friendships works. We might even get cheesy about it. 🍷

■ **If you’d like to book a holiday at our Llandudno Centre, please get in touch with your Community Support Worker or phone the centre on 01492 868700.**



Caption: John meets ‘the Lads’ at our Llandudno Centre

The making of John’s memoir

Our Community Support Worker, **Gemma Rome**, shares the inspiring tale of a 101-year-old’s pandemic project

During the lockdown, one of our oldest Members was embarking on a memoir writing project, detailing his experiences of the Second World War.

John McOwan, from Peebles, celebrated his 101st birthday in February and says the writing project has been ‘therapeutic’ and given him something to focus on.

As John has macular degeneration, we worked with him to explore different ways to record his memoirs. In the end, he wrote his story on extra-large lined paper, helped by good lighting and a trusty iPad for research. We also matched him with one of our volunteers, Frances Nixon, who with John’s son-in-law, Jim, and the family, helped type and edit his work.

John’s stories detail his time in the revered 7th Armoured Division, Desert Rats. Like many of his young friends,

he’d enlisted in the TA at 18 and admits he was “naively not giving much thought to the imminence of another war.” Due to his experience in repairing clocks in his father’s jewellery shop, he was directed to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Corp.

John served throughout the war and attained the rank of Sergeant. He received several campaign medals, including the 1939-1945 Star and, in 2019, joined the Royal British Legion trip to Dunkirk and Normandy to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the D-Day landings.

John was also supported in his writing project by The Desert Rats Association and the REME Museum. He plans to print his memoirs for family and friends so they can learn from his experiences.

Turn the page to read the first of three extracts from John’s memoir. →



Caption: John in 2019 with French President, Emmanuel Macron, during the 75th anniversary commemorations of the D-Day landings

Mobile Troops Workshop

Member **John McOwan**, 101, shares the first of three instalments from his memoir about life in the 7th Armoured Division, Desert Rats, during the Second World War



Caption: In the Western desert... a Scammell Recovery Vehicle and John's workshop (published with kind permission from the REME Museum)

I arrived in Cairo in early 1940 and my first task was to become proficient at my job. To do so I was moved into Abbassia Barracks, where I spent several weeks receiving training.

During this time, I helped to repair specialised military instruments as well as being a 'fix it' for any other item considered in need of attention. In fact, binoculars seemed to be the most common item. Every tank commander and officer found them indispensable



for scanning the desert for signs of the enemy. The influx of sand was the main culprit for their recurring presence on my work bench.

Of almost equal importance was the need to ensure that the liquid compasses were free of sand and in good working order, without which navigation through the vast wilderness would have been well-nigh impossible. There was no GPS linked to orbiting satellites in the 1940s! →



Caption: John at 18 when he joined the army in 1939, and the magnificent commemorative medal he received at the Bayeux Memorial Service, 2019

The most sophisticated items sent in for repair were the Ack-Ack predictors which were the tracking devices attached to anti-aircraft guns to help target enemy aircraft accurately. The track predictors were approximately a metric cube in size attached to a tripod and the interior of which was a nightmare maze of cogs and wheels.

During reassembly, if one of us dropped a screw inside the cube the air would turn blue with expletives as the repairman attempted to retrieve the screw using a magnet attached

to the end of a piece of string. A very painstaking task!

Typewriters needed to be stripped then cleaned and oiled. They may seem unimportant, but every orderly room office was equipped with one as reports, orders etc. were distributed in this manner, which helped the army function properly. Army issue pocket watches had to be serviced by watchmakers trained in civilian life.

Every device mentioned above, although seemingly mundane in



Caption: Meeting military personnel, and actress Sheridan Smith, at the D-Day landings 75th anniversary commemorations

their everyday use, was absolutely essential to the soldiers at the front line. Over such vast distances identifying the enemy, navigating to the correct location, distributing orders, and running to a strict timetable, all demanded all these items were functioning properly. Without this, attack or defence couldn't be coordinated and the general staff wouldn't know accurately where their or enemy troops were positioned.

Our title was the 7th Armoured Division's Mobile Troops Workshop.



We comprised a section of fitters who serviced the engines; armourers to service the guns; wireless and instrument mechanics; and, of course, administration personnel housed in an orderly room, plus clerks, cooks etc.

The whole unit had to be mobile so we could pack up and go at very short notice. We had to follow the front line closely during engagements in order to return damaged tanks to service as quickly as possible so they could engage the enemy. Very often the recovery unit, riding in a Scammell →

Pioneer recovery vehicle, would quickly load up a repairable tank and hurry back to the repair site. The goal at all times was to keep the tank numbers up to operational strength.

My instrument section was comprised of four vehicles. We had a modern Leyland machinery truck equipped with a lathe, power drill and a polishing motor. We also had a second Guy, similarly equipped, though it must have dated from the First World War - it was breaking down continually and ended up being towed everywhere over hundreds of miles. It was definitely no fun trying to dig out two, several hundredweight trucks from the soft sand when the going was bad!

Then we had a 30 hundredweight Ford vehicle, equipped with benches along each side which served as worktops and sometimes doubled up as our sleeping accommodation. And the fourth vehicle was a 15 hundredweight Morris Pick-Up used as a run about.

There were nine personnel in the section consisting of Quartermaster, Sergeant Blackmore, Sergeant Fellow, myself as the corporal and six other ranks. Bob Young was a trained watchmaker from Bexhill in Sussex; Ron Myers was a 'Brummie' who worked in a car factory in civvy life; Johnnie Saltens had been, at one

time, a professional footballer with Southampton; and Geordie Keys was a fellow Scot who had worked as an instrument maker with Barr and Stroud in Glasgow.

We had two drivers who also serviced our vehicles and carried out general duties. We named Ginger our 'odd job man' who would make the brew. At times the water was brackish, having come from a desert well, or it had been stewed too long and laced with tinned Carnation Milk. It tasted vile. Ginger would be livid if we spat out his brew in disgust.

Whenever we halted for a break, it was time for a 'brew up'. We always carried an empty petrol tin cut down to size for the job. These were made of flimsy metal and constantly leaked and, later on, captured 'Jerry cans' were coveted as they were of a far better quality. The Brew-up tin was half filled with sand and saturated with petrol, a match thrown in from a safe distance, then we sat our brew cans of water on top and waited for the water to boil. The tea would put new life into our grit parched throats.

At a later date, when we were fighting alongside American units, they could never understand why, every time the 'Tommys' stopped, out would come the Brew-up cans. 🍵

Our bowling trip to Israel

The Scottish Visually Impaired Bowling Team Manager, **Ian Graham**, describes a recent international match

The Scottish Visually Impaired Bowling Team were delighted to be invited to Israel to compete in an international test match in March.

Having had very little competitive bowling due to the pandemic, it was a great feeling, mixed with some trepidation because of all the tests, →



Caption: Team Scotland enjoying their first post-pandemic trip



Caption: Ian accepting his award

legalities and, of course, the virus. Thankfully, the entire Scotland team was able to arrive in Israel ready to be the first visiting nation to compete there in over three years.

The Scotland team consisted of six bowlers covering the impairment categories B2 (the ability to recognise hand movements up to a visual acuity of 2/60), B3 (up to a visual acuity of 6/60) and B4 (up to a visual acuity of worse than 6/24 and/or a significantly reduced visual field of 20 degrees or less).

Israel then loaned us two B1 (total blind) bowlers, Itzak and Sharon. So, eight bowlers, plus our directors, all



Caption: A jubilant Ian

got together for the opening ceremony with the Israel team, plus dignitaries.

The opening ceremony was very respectful and recognised the importance of the Scotland team visiting Israel. Then, over that day and the next, we enjoyed a pre-international triples-friendly competition, allowing Israel Club Bowlers to gain experience against international position. This was played out with an Israel team being victorious.

The next two days were the International Test Match, which was played in singles and mixed pairs games. The weather was warm with glorious sunshine, which suited Team

Scotland as we'd had very little outdoor experience over the last two and a half years.

At the end of the first days' play, both countries were tied on 18 points before we headed away for the night after yet another lovely meal at the Ra'anana Bowling Club. We returned in the morning to play a disappointing session for team Scotland as Israel took a 30-points to 24-points lead.

But, after a lunch and an exercise session, the Scotland team returned to the green and in true Scottish fashion dug deep and came out on top with 37-points to 34-points!

The closing ceremony was attended by Israel dignitaries and, as the Scotland manager, I made a speech praising and thanking Israel for the occasion and the friendship. The Scotland National Anthem was heartily sung by our team, as well as our new bowlers, Itzak and Sharon. Then all the dignitaries and spectators joined in the Israel National Anthem.

The awards began with individual gold medals for each category. Itzak won the B1 award, I was delighted to win the B2, Israel won the B3 award and one of our team, Willie Cauldfield, won the B4 category. The Team Award went to Scotland.

Everyone shared the final meal in the spirit of praise and friendship.

A very special part of the week was the ceremony of the blessing of the meal for the Israel traditional day of rest, Shabbat. Rabbi Julius carried out the blessing and the entire Scotland team felt deeply honoured to be allowed to share this.

The international visit was not just about bowling it was about reinvigorating our growing friendships. 🇨🇪

How to get involved in visual impaired bowling where you live

For Members in Scotland, contact Ian on 07308 666232 or email iangraham25@outlook.com

For Members in England, please call David Stott on 07769 568680 or email stottvibe@gmail.com

For Members in Ireland, please contact Stephen Royle on 02890 657156 or s.royle@qub.ac.uk

For Members in Wales, please call Julie Thomas on 07874 203534 or email sgtmgf@icloud.com

Cooking economically

Member **Simon Mahoney** shares his tips for saving money in the kitchen

As our energy prices continue to soar, there are many people who find themselves having to choose between eating and heating these days. As most people seem to focus on heating when they talk about saving money, I'd like to look at how we can save on eating.

The expenditure on eating falls into two areas - the cost of cooking and the cost of food - and there are steps you can take to reduce your expenditure on both. For now, I wish to look at how we can reduce the cost of cooking. As we are essentially buying power to make our food edible, the goal is to increase the proportion of the energy taken to cook and reduce the amount of energy we waste.

But before I focus on cooking specifically, there are some other basic power saving tips across your home you may want to consider.

1. A major unnecessary expense comes from leaving devices on standby. This can cost up to £80 a year per device with the new energy prices.
2. Use airers to dry clothes, rather than tumble driers.
3. Reduce the temperature on your washing machine. With modern detergent, 30 or 40 degrees is just as good as 60.
4. Change light bulbs to low energy bulbs. They last longer and use less power.

So back to cooking...

The equipment you use to cook your food can make a big difference to how much you save.

The oven

- The oven is an extremely economic way of cooking - and is not just an additional cupboard, for those who



DEVENORR/ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Keeping your oven clean is more energy efficient

- weren't sure.
- If your oven is clean, it will be more efficient. A dirty oven can waste up to a fifth of the energy used for cooking.
- Make sure the seal on the oven door fits properly. A poorly fitting seal can cost you up to half the energy you use for cooking.
- If the oven has a glass panel, keep it clean. A clean panel will mean you don't need to open the oven to see how your meal is progressing, which is not only a poor idea as far

as cooking is concerned, but also can waste up to a fifth of the energy used for cooking.

The electric hob

- Keep the hob clean - you can lose up to a fifth of the energy used if you're heating grime as well as the hob.

Your saucepans

- The smaller the saucepan, the less the energy needed to bring water to the boil. →

- Only use the minimum of water in saucepans so it takes less energy to bring to the boil.
- If the saucepan is warped, you can lose up to two fifths of the energy used.
- Ensure the bottoms of your pans are clean and shiny. Dirty pan bottoms can waste up to one fifth of the energy used.
- Do not use bigger saucepans than are needed.
- Keep pans covered to keep the heat in.

How to save money while using your oven

The trick here is to use as much of the energy as possible on cooking.

Turn it off: If you're cooking something like a pasta bake, which requires 40 minutes cooking time, turn the oven off after 30 minutes. If your oven is clean and the seal fits properly it will keep its heat for ten minutes and you'll save 25% of the power for that meal.

Insulate: If you really want to save money, put a spare quilt in a cupboard next to the oven. Bring the meal up to heat in the oven then turn off the power and leave in the oven for 15 minutes. Then put the dish into the middle of the quilt and, providing the dish is well covered, it will keep its heat for a good 40 minutes, if not more.



GREENTELLECT / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Don't use bigger saucepans than needed

If you leave the dish in there for an hour it will come out perfectly cooked and ready to eat, saving up to 75% of the fuel for a single meal. This works even better if you wrap the dish in foil or a space blanket before you put it into the quilt. Obviously you will need to check that any meat is fully cooked.

Freeze it: If you have a freezer, always cook more than you need and freeze the leftovers. It takes less energy to allow something to defrost and then re-heat than to cook it from scratch.

How to save on the hob

The trick with hobs is to use them as little as possible.

Use the same pan: If you are cooking three vegetables, use the same pan. And if they need different cooking times – like carrots, leeks and peas – then do the following:

1. Cut carrots up, batons or rounds, and put them in in a chip basket.
2. Put boiling water into saucepan from kettle.
3. Put the chip basket in the water with the hob on simmer.
4. Dice leeks and after five minutes put in the basket with the carrots.
5. Turn off hob then after two more minutes add peas.
6. Cover saucepan.
7. After seven to ten minutes remove basket.
8. All vegetables perfectly cooked for seven minutes' electricity.

Always use the heat of the water to continue the cooking after turning off the hob. This can save more than half the power used for cooking.

Use a flask

This idea is pretty inventive...

1. Put new potatoes into a vacuum flask and add boiling water from the kettle.

2. Replace water after ten minutes.
3. Reseal the flask.
4. Leave for half an hour.
5. Enjoy your spuds.

Use a slow cooker

These cost the same to run as a light bulb and they're brilliant for stews, curries, risottos, chicken and rice.

Leave to defrost

This one may require some forward planning, but allowing food to defrost in its own time is better for the food and costs nothing.

Be organised

If you plan your meals in advance, you not only waste less food you also save power. Unfortunately, for most of us this means being willing and ready to try and change the habits of a lifetime.

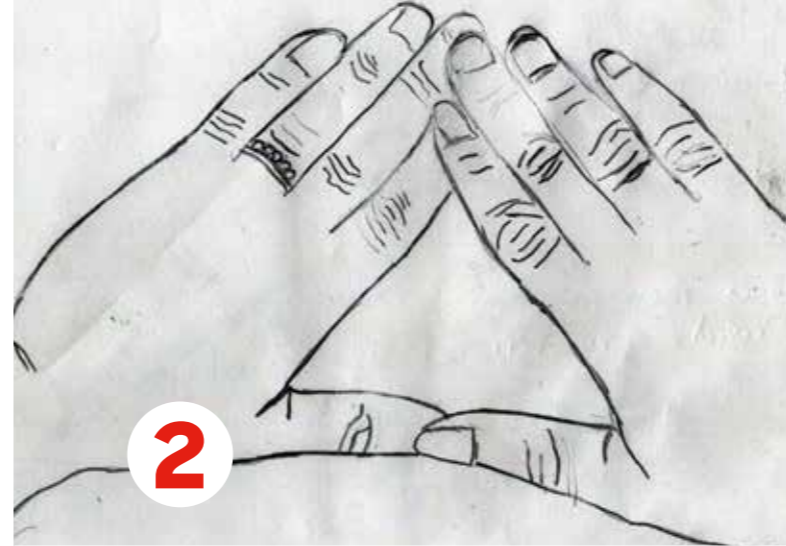
Most of these tips are common sense when you think about it. With a little thought, the cost of cooking can be more than halved. Better the money in your pocket than with the gas or electric companies! 🍷

This article was taken from Simon's book, *Winging it blind or change what you think is possible*, which you can purchase at www.wingingitblind.com

Artistic Flair

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

Captions: 1. William Elliot - Flowers 2. Peter O'Malley - Kanku Dai 3. Eddie Edrich - Landscape 4. Rita Scarratt - Oyster Catchers 5. Phillip Driscoll - Landscape 6. Vince Hill - Old Mariner Chapel



Baking with Alexa

Our Rehabilitation Support Worker, **Angharad Hughes**, reveals how AI can help with everyday tasks

In recent weeks, we've been running weekly baking sessions at our Llandudno Centre with the help of Alexa, showing how virtual assistant technology can help you to cook up tasty treats. In our first session, some of our Members made Welsh cakes. Here's how they did it:

The device

We used an Amazon Echo Show device for the session. This is designed around Alexa and features a 7-in touchscreen visual display to accompany its responses. It also plays video and conducts video calls with other Echo Show users.

Step 1

We started by asking Alexa: "SHOW me a recipe for Welsh Cakes."

Step 2

Alexa then ran through the ingredients needed and went through the recipe step by step, giving us the option to repeat a step, go back a step or move onto the next step. This meant we could progress at our own pace.



Caption: Members Jack, Molly, Ian and Mabel make Welsh cakes

Step 3

Once the cakes were made, we finished off by asking Alexa to play music by Daniel O'Donnell in the background as we enjoyed a well-deserved cuppa with our freshly baked treats.

Sum up

These sessions perfectly demonstrate how helpful Alexa can be. You can ask it to find and store recipes, create and add ingredients to a shopping list, and even set a timer when cooking on the griddle.

Next time you come for a holiday at Llandudno, I hope you can join one of our sessions. As well as making new memories, you'll learn new skills which will come in handy once you get home. 🍪

App of the month: NaviLens

Our Rehabilitation Officer for Visual Impairment (ROVI), **Bryan Kilburn**, introduces this navigation and labelling app which he says is brilliant for people with sight loss

NaviLens is a great free smartphone app offering features to help improve accessibility for people with sight loss, as well as many others.

The app, 'Navigation Lens', is a navigation and labelling tool, which helps users with sight loss find their way around cities and other places. It's also used by retailers to label products, allowing users to quickly access information, all by simply scanning a 'tag' with the app.

How it works

Scanning the 'tag' with a smart phone camera works in a similar way to a QR code, but with more capacity for information. It also has the benefit of being able to scan things up to 50 feet away and can even direct the user to where they need to scan.



So, when you point your phone's camera in the direction of a 'tag', the app checks the NaviLens database and reads aloud the relevant information, and where that tag is in relation to you. For example, if the tag is on a bus stop, the app could tell you that 'Bus Stop 12' is in view, situated slightly to your left, by about 40 feet. It could also tell you when the next bus is due.

The NaviLens tags are already in use around the world - even on the subway in New York. In the UK, breakfast cereal company, Kellogg's, has recently embraced the app and plans to feature its tags on all their packaging. It's hoped many more companies and services will get on board.

After all, if NaviLens is used more widely, it has the potential to improve access to all sorts of documents, packaging, and publications. Watch this space. 🍪

■ **For more information about this app, speak to your friendly MeSH team on 01273 391447 or mesh@blindveterans.org.uk**



Caption: The Burning of the Royal James at the Battle of Sole Bay, 28 May 1672

The battle no one won

Our Member Healthcare Consultant **Chris Cardwell** reflects on the historic Battle of Sole Bay of 1672

It's a pretty safe assumption that everyone's heard of Lord Nelson and the Battle of Trafalgar. But how many of you have heard of Dutch Admiral Michiel de Ruyter (1607-1676) who was, some think, just as highly gifted as Nelson in tactical matters?

De Ruyter commanded Dutch naval forces in a number of significant battles, including the Battle of Sole Bay which took place off the Suffolk coastline in May 1672. A total of three Dutch wars were fought against the Protestant United Provinces between 1652 and 1674 and this is the only

battle of the third war that bears an English name.

These conflicts were not about governance or religious issues but about economic dominance. At that time Sole Bay was a very prominent coastal feature, but is now much diminished as a result of coastal erosion.

The Allies were formed into three squadrons: Red under James, Duke of York; Blue under Edward Montague, 1st Earl of Sandwich; and White (French) under Jean, Comte d'Estrees. They had encountered the Dutch near the Gunfleet estuary in Essex on 19 May and then sailed north to Southwold in order to rest and replenish supplies.

The Duke of York and the Earl headquartered in Sutherland House, which still stands on the high street in Southwold.

De Ruyter led a surprise spoiling attack from the east-northeast in the early morning of Tuesday, 28 May 1672. Reports indicate he had 36 fireships and over 4,000 guns, and 20,738 men assembled upon 98 warships. Meanwhile, the Allies had 30 fireships and 82 warships (or 98 according to an alternative report), with 6,018 guns and 34,496 men.

The precise figures vary between the reports, but survivors of the battle stated, "never were so many guns fired in one day before." According to *Cassell's Battlefields of Britain & Ireland*, bombardments shook houses and ships up to 40 miles away and were audible in London some 100 miles distant.

As to the outcome, each side lost in the region of 2,000 men, including the Earl of Sandwich who was recognised only by the badge of the Order of the Garter still present on his clothing. Some 800 injured sailors were cared for by Southwold residents and bodies continued to be washed up on the beach in the following weeks.

The outcome of the battle was inconclusive and, at the time, both sides claimed victory. The Allies' plan to enforce a blockade failed and historians have credited the Dutch with winning. The fleets engaged again the following year at the Battles of Schooneveld, off the Dutch coast, and the Netherlands claimed victory in both exchanges.

The Dutch rightly hold de Ruyter in high regard, as we esteem Lord Nelson. In the absence of agreement, perhaps we should finish on that point. 🇳🇱

(Adapted from Cardwell, Chris (2017) *Southwold Lighthouse, History and Context*, ISBN 978-1-5272-0752-3)

WILLEM VAN DE VELDE THE YOUNGER / WIKIPEDIA

How to cope with the new normal

As challenging as lockdown was, the easing of restrictions may also be tricky for some. Our People Officer, **Emily Edwards**, shares the NHS guidance for coping with the change

As we've come out of lockdown it's been great to get back to the people and things we love, but the adjustment has brought its challenges for some too.

If you're worried about the pace of the changes or what the future may bring, it's important to be patient with yourself and with your feelings. It can take time to readjust and get used to our new normal, especially if you've been shielding.

According to the NHS, there are things you can do to take care to manage any feelings of anxiety at this time. Here are some of the top tips:

1. Go at your own pace

While it might be tempting to feel you need to make lots of plans now restrictions have lifted, there's no need to rush. Take it one step at a time and only do what feels comfortable and safe for you.

2. Don't avoid things entirely

Start with activities that are important to you and feel achievable, like meeting close friends and family for a coffee or snack outside, and gradually build up from there. It can help to confide in a friend or family member so they can support you to overcome your anxieties.

3. Get your information from the right sources

Lots of conflicting and confusing information about Covid can make it hard to know what to believe. Stick to trusted sources like GOV.UK and the NHS COVID-19 pages for the most up-to-date information.

4. Discuss any changes

Before socialising with others, talk about the situation with them to make sure everybody is on the same page about what feels comfortable. If you live with other people, it's a good idea to talk to them about changes to restrictions as well. Being aware of everybody's fears and expectations can help to avoid conflict.

5. Challenge unhelpful thoughts

It's natural to feel worried every now and again, but anxious thoughts can be unhelpful. If you can learn to identify and separate unhelpful thoughts from helpful ones, you can find a different way to look at the situation.

6. Plan social occasions

Preparing for any challenges ahead of time can help us to feel more comfortable and confident in what we're doing. Small things can help, like knowing what time an event will start and finish and how many people are likely to be there.

7. Write down your thoughts

If you're feeling worried or upset, it can be helpful to explore your feelings by keeping a diary or journal. This can also be a great way to track your mood over time and remind yourself of the progress you have made. As your confidence begins to grow, you can look back over your entries to see how far you have come.

8. Focus on the present

When there's lots of change happening, we can get caught up in worrying about the past or the future. Instead, try to shift your focus to the present – make plans but try not to dwell on the “what ifs” or what was “supposed” to happen. Relaxation, mindfulness or getting outside and enjoying nature are all good ways to help you focus on the present.

Further support and advice

If you're feeling anxious, the NHS pages on common mental health issues and Covid-19 have lots more tips and advice. You can also speak to your Community Support Worker. 🗣️



Carers Review

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

Our Carers & Families Engagement Panel

Blind Veterans UK aims to develop and deliver services that meet the needs and wishes of our Members and their families. We know the best way to achieve this is to include the views of those who use our services when we're planning them.

This is why we set up our Carers & Families Engagement Panel last year, which more than ten carers across the country are currently involved in. We meet monthly to discuss all kinds of relevant topics, including:

- access to information
- inclusion in Member Services
- new services for carers

Some of the views and suggestions from our discussions are then taken to our National Panel for consideration.

Give us your views

We are currently preparing for National Carers Week, 6-12 June, an annual campaign to recognise the contribution carers make. As this year's theme is

'Making caring visible, valued and supported', we'd like to understand from our Members' carers:

1. What would make you feel more valued and supported by Blind Veterans UK?
2. What are some of the things we already do that make you feel supported?

Please email our Member Experience Coordinator, Stacey, with your responses at the email address at the end of this page or write to:

Stacey Barham
Blind Veterans UK
Greenways, Ovingdean
Brighton, East Sussex
BN2 7BS

We'll take your responses to our Carers & Families Engagement Panel and share some of the outcomes in the *Review*. 🌍

- **What would you like to see on our Carers page? Why not let Stacey know on 01273 391483 or at stacey.barham@blindveterans.org.uk.**



Caption: Independent Members can enjoy a summer stay at Llandudno

Centre news

All you need to know if you'd like to book a stay at our Llandudno and Brighton Centres

Llandudno Centre

Until the end of September, we are offering holiday/respice stays for fully independent Members/escorts who don't need care support at Llandudno.

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. Extra bookings may be made at the centre's discretion.

We continue to monitor changes in guidelines with regards to bookings →

for Residential/Nursing Members and will advise of changes via the *Review*.

In line with Government guidelines for hospitality, the centre is no longer asking Members to take a precautionary LFT Covid test prior to their visit.

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

Leader Buildings

Looking for somewhere accessible to enjoy a family break? Our Leader Buildings at the Llandudno Centre are now available for Members and their families for fully independent holidays.

Think Airbnb but with facilities designed especially for you in a beautiful part of North Wales. A stay comes at the reduced rate of £39 per person, per night.

We are currently unable to offer catering or transport. However, due to the current withdrawal of Covid testing, we are now able to extend our holiday offer to include access to the main centre to participate in the daily entertainment programme.

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



Caption: Flying the flag for Ukraine at our Brighton Centre

Brighton Centre

Our holiday bookings at Brighton are dependent on the latest guidelines for care homes. We are hopeful that the easing of some of the restrictions will mean we can offer holidays soon and will let you know.

■ **As always, we'll keep you updated in *Review*. You can also call the Brighton booking office for up-to-date information on 01273 391500.**

This information was correct at the time of going to press. 🇺🇸

National Creative Project Programme

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

GARDENING

Summer Succulents

We will send you three plants to start your very own small indoor succulent garden. These beautiful small plants are easy to care for and very popular in the gardening world right now. There will also be the opportunity to join

one of our monthly Gardening Hobby Circles to chat with other Members and receive support with this project.

CRAFT

A Card for Every Occasion

Make 10 unique handmade greetings cards with our selection of materials →



MAKSIM SHEBEKO / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Make your own small indoor garden

and ideas. Once made, we hope you will enjoy writing and posting them out as an extra special way to say 'happy birthday', 'thank you' or simply 'hello' to 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.

CRAFT

NCP Titanic wooden model project

We'll send you everything you need to complete this spectacular model of the Titanic, including our VI friendly instructions. This is a fun and challenging kit with pre-cut wooden pieces which you can sand, slot together and glue. The assembled ship is over 2ft long and sits on its own base for you to display.

The project comes with the opportunity to join one of our monthly Woodwork Hobby Circles to chat with other Members and receive support with this project if you would like to.

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 and interesting subjects presented



YAKOBCHUK OLENA / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Get into painting

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.

The 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 on the Blind Veterans UK website.

There will be an opportunity to join a group call by phone or video to discuss your progress.

Collaboration in Colour update:

The Collaboration in Colour art piece is now on display at our Llandudno Centre until the autumn. We hope some of you who took part will get the opportunity to see it there.

■ **For more information about the projects and groups, or to request an activity pack, please call our bookings team on 01273 391455 or visit our website at blindveterans.org.uk/ncp**

CREATIVE BOOK

The Creative Book Project is now in 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 would love to hear from you on **01273 391455** if you're interested in joining a monthly telephone or video call chat group in one of the following subjects:

Gardening, knitting, woodturning, mosaic, painting, woodwork and creative writing.

Our groups have up to six fellow Members with a shared interest, plus two of our staff.

Photography

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

■ **You can see more information about the projects at blindveterans.org.uk/ncp**

The NCP programme is open to all Members, whatever your experience. If you'd like to try one of the projects or groups, please give us a call on **01273 391455** or speak to your CSW.

Team NCP are very much looking forward to celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June and we can't wait to see the beautiful bunting designed by our Jubilee 'Bunting on a Bag' participants, bringing colourful cheer to our centres.

Best wishes,

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

Family news

Birthdays

Agnes Kelly who celebrates her 101st birthday on 27 May

Beatrice Simpson who celebrates her 101st birthday on 30 May

Donald English who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 30 May

Enid Morgan who celebrates her 101st birthday on 27 May

Haydn Evans who celebrates his 100th birthday on 12 May

Henry Hogg who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 17 May

Joseph Weaver who celebrates his 100th birthday on 16 May

Kenneth Simpson who celebrates his 101st birthday on 8 May

Leslie Hutt who celebrates his 101st birthday on 28 May

Peter King who celebrates his 100th birthday on 12 May

Phyllis Davies who celebrates her 100th birthday on 26 May

Russell Garrod who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 10 May

Walter Stead who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 3 June

Elsie Hayes who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 14 May

Condolences

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

Gladys Penstone who died on 25 March 2022. She was the wife of Alec Penstone.

Angeles Clark who died on 25 March 2022. She was the wife of Gordon Clark.

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

In Memory

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

Donald Anderson of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire died on 1 March 2022 aged 95. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Royal Army Educational Corps.

Robert Baldwin of Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside died on 10 March 2022 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Air Force.

George Banner of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 16 March 2022 aged 92. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Leslie Barton of Liverpool died on 1 March 2022 aged 99. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Cyril Harry Beacock of Staines-Upon-Thames, Middlesex died on 13 March 2022 aged 98. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Stanley Booth of Thetford, Norfolk died on 24 March 2022 aged 92. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

George Brooksbank of Weymouth, Dorset died on 15 March 2022 aged 98. He served as an Acting Engine Room Artificer 4th Class in the Fleet Air Arm.

David Brown of Wigan, Lancashire died on 1 March 2022 aged 81. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Marines.



Surja Bajadur Budhathoki of Uxbridge, Middlesex died on 22 March 2022 aged 73. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Brigade of Gurkhas.

Douglas George Bull of Bromley, Kent died on 10 March 2022 aged 101. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Thomas Bullen of Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 5 April 2022 aged 97. He served as an Acting Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

Anthony Burrows of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 13 March 2022 aged 76. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

William Corns of Mossblown, Ayrshire died on 1 April 2022 aged 96. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Edward Culshaw of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 9 March 2022 aged 85. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Albert Daisley of Woodbridge, Suffolk died on 1 March 2022 aged 86. He served as a Rifleman in the Rifle Brigade.

Raymond Dand of Skegness, Lincolnshire died on 26 March 2022 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

John Edward Daniels of Sheerness, Kent died on 1 April 2022 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Ronald Charles Davis of Chichester, West Sussex died on 9 March 2022 aged 100. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Eric John Dickinson of Narberth, Dyfed died on 3 April 2022 aged 92. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Bernard Dunne of Clara, County Offaly died on 27 February 2022 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Miles Patrick Evedon of Thornton-Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 5 April 2022 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

Peter Farmer of Warwick died on 11 March 2022 aged 99. He served as a Private in the Home Guard.

Brian George Fisher of March, Cambridgeshire died on 3 April 2022 aged 87. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Derek Patrick Fountain of Banbury, Oxfordshire died on 6 April 2022 aged 84. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Green Jackets (43rd, 52nd, 60th and 95th Foot).

Arthur Frederick Freathy of Bristol died on 1 August 2021 aged 98. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Frederick Thomas Goodier of Liskeard, Cornwall died on 15 March 2022 aged 99. He served as a Leading Telegraphist in the Royal Navy.

Vincent Gorman of Prescot, Merseyside died on 1 March 2022 aged 89. He served as a Technical Officer in the Royal Air Force.

Terence Hemmings of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 1 March 2022 aged 80. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Artillery.

Ronald Hill of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 18 March 2022 aged 87. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Norman Jaques of Reading died on 1 April 2022 aged 100. He served in the Royal Air Force.

Robert Martin Jones of Liverpool died on 9 March 2022 aged 77. He served as a Lance Corporal in the King's Regiment

Peter Anthony King of Bedford died on 2 April 2022 aged 99. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

James Alan Mannering of Cromer, Norfolk died on 1 March 2022 aged 96. He served as an Acting Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

Robert Nelson of Swaffham, Norfolk died on 7 April 2022 aged 87. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

William North of Slough died on 1 March 2022 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's).

Sydney Page of Ellesmere, Shropshire died on 21 August 2021 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.



Paul Palmer of Chippenham, Wiltshire died on 12 March 2022 aged 70. He served as a Major in the Royal Corps of Transport.

George Alan Palmer of Scunthorpe, South Humberside died on 28 March 2022 aged 88. He served as a Driver in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment.

Derek Thomas Parris of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 24 March 2022 aged 92. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

Arthur Phillips of Maidenhead, Berkshire died on 20 December 2020 aged 98. He served as a Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Lilian Pye of Norwich died on 1 January 2022 aged 100. She served as a Private in the Territorial Army Auxillary Territorial Service.

Peter Rawson of Dronfield, Derbyshire died on 11 February 2022 aged 86. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

George Phillip Smith of Dorchester, Dorset died on 18 March 2022 aged 96. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

Alfonso Solarie of Cleator Moor, Cumbria died on 1 November 2021 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Border Regiment.

Arnold Spencer of Bolton died on 18 June 2021 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

Stanley George Robert Stead of Brecon, Powys died on 30 March 2022 aged 86. He served in the Royal Air Force.

Norman Stott of Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear died on 5 March 2022 aged 97. He served as a Private in the Durham Light Infantry.

Leslie John Tanner of Walton on the Naze, Essex died on 21 February 2022 aged 87. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

David Thomlinson of Chorleywood, Hertfordshire died on 7 March 2022 aged 85. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

Charles Garrett Turnbull of Bristol died on 21 March 2022 aged 97. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

Frederick Osborne Vaughan of Coventry died on 2 December 2021 aged 97. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Graham Wain of Chesterfield, Derbyshire died on 29 March 2022 aged 85. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Raymond Walker of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire died on 1 April 2022 aged 89. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Fred Warhurst of Manchester died on 20 February 2022 aged 99. He served as a Craftsman in the Lancashire Fusiliers.

Alan David Wearn of Milton Keynes died on 3 April 2022 aged 101. He served as a Leading Sick Berth Attendant in the Royal Navy.

David Weir of Bathgate, West Lothian died on 11 March 2022 aged 88. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

William Edmund Wharmby of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 27 March 2022 aged 87. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Raymond Williams of Welshpool, Powys died on 7 April 2022 aged 87. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Dorothy Wilson of the Isle of Man died on 1 March 2022 aged 100. She served in the Women's Royal Air Force.

George Walter Winter of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 1 April 2022 aged 101. He served as a 2nd Officer in the Merchant Navy.

Keith Wood of Towcester, Northamptonshire died on 8 March 2022 aged 78. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Keith Woodhall of Hartlepool, Cleveland died on 1 April 2022 aged 85. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

James Vernon Wyeth of Bournemouth died on 24 March 2022 aged 90. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Richard Frank Dennis Young of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 29 March 2022 aged 99. He served as a Temporary Sergeant in the Royal Air Force Police.

The great escape

Member **Ken Grimward**, 88, shares his memories of the Blitz and his (brief) evacuation to Cornwall

In 1933, the year I was born, Adolf Hitler was elected to the German government as Reich Chancellor, giving him overall power. This was clearly evident by the massive re-arming programme he had built up for the expansion of the German nation and the domination of Europe. He then marched his forces into Poland.

The war started in September 1939. I was six years old and my brother, Terry, was eighteen months younger. My eldest brother Jack was some 11 years older than me and one year later saw him in the Gordon Highlanders 51st Division who served with distinction on the beaches of Normandy and throughout France and the crossing of the Rhine in Germany.

The year 1940 was a very dangerous time for our country, with a serious

threat of invasion and occupation by the German forces. Our Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, and Lord Halifax, were aware that Hitler wanted to talk terms with them, but Churchill would have none of it and, in his famous speech in the House of Commons, he told the British people, "We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender."

On 7 September 1940 until the 11 May 1941 there were some eight months and five days of continuous bombing of London at night. Some 40,000 casualties were recorded and two million homes destroyed.

I remember the sound of the sirens warning us that a bombing raid was imminent. We were dragged out of

bed, half dressed and rushed to the air raid shelters across the road which were already nearly full of people, mostly women and children. It was standing room only and soon the air became quite thick, and the smell of the ever-growing number of people squashed together and half asleep became difficult for everyone.

But we were at war, unwashed and tired, all hoping that tonight the bombs would not be touching north west London.

This became the normal type of sleep we got each night. But still the men in the factories were at their machines at 7am and the children at school for 9am. The lucky ones, like me - because my dad was a baker - would have bread and milk for breakfast. My best mate never had anything. He had to wait until school dinners at 12 noon.

When the anti-aircraft guns based at Wormwood Scrubs began to open up on those aircraft caught in the search lights, we would hear the fall of →

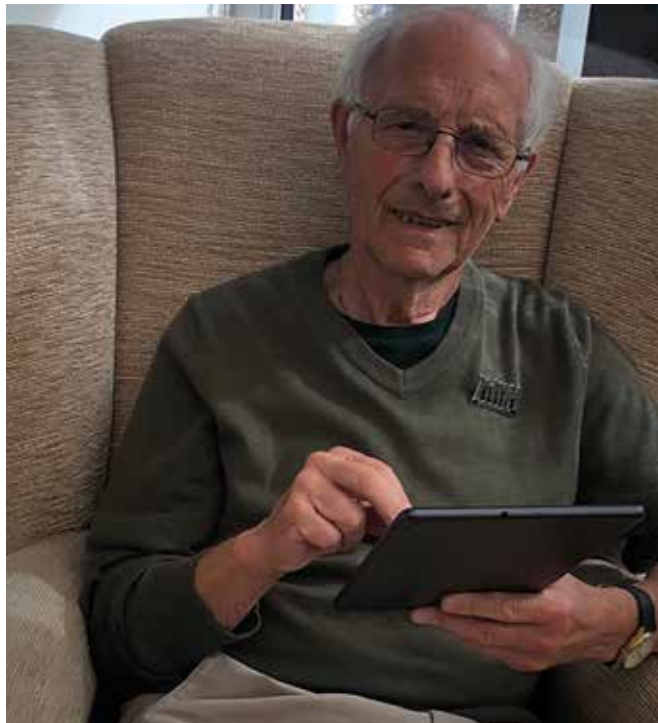


Caption: Ken (front right) with his family during the war

shrapnel from the burst shells. The ARP wardens were still out on patrol with their steel helmets firmly strapped to their heads, looking for chinks of light escaping from offending windows. We could sniff the cordite in the air from exploding shells in the night sky.

Eventually, when the last of the surviving enemy aircraft were gone, we would all get the sound of the all clear from the wailing siren and go back to our beds around 3am. But it was up at 7am ready for school, if it was still standing.

It's hard to imagine the depth of feeling our parents had after being bombed out at the very start of the Blitz. I



Caption: Ken was just six years old when war broke out

remember the night it happened and our house was destroyed. Luckily, we survived, as that night we were all crammed into the Anderson shelter in the garden.

As a seven year old, my memory serves me well. The bomb fell in the rear garden and blew most of the back wall out and also the adjoining house. Gwen, my eldest sister, had an injury to her back and was kept in hospital until the morning. It was not long before the house was pulled down, as was next door. We went into lodgings for a period until Dad found a large flat with three bedrooms and a small garden.

It was during this time that an evacuation scheme for children had come into force. Before long, both my and my brother's names came up, with hundreds of others, and we duly assembled at Paddington Station to be transported to an unknown destination.

At first it was a tearful and sad goodbye to our parents. My father's face was pale. But it was exciting and great fun on the train, though, on reflection, not knowing where we were going caused a lot of unnecessary worry for all of us.

We ended up in Penzance in Cornwall and all went together to a large building where we stayed for the first night.

In the morning, the officials came and my and my brother's names were called and we were told that there were farming people who would take us. An official took us to the farm and we were introduced to the farmer's wife. It was very difficult to understand what was being said as the people had such strong Cornish accents. They also had difficulty understanding our strong London speech.

On the first night, the farmer's son came in holding a lovely bunch of flowers. He was all dressed up and ready to meet his girlfriend. I said to him how much I liked the flowers. He said, "I'll give you a bunch of flowers when you go back to London."

We were terribly homesick but didn't want to show it. After a couple of nights I said to my brother, "We're gonna do a bunk." We just wanted to go home.

On the second morning, quite early, we got dressed and headed off down the country lane to a bigger road looking for signs to Penzance Station where we could get a train home. After about an hour a car came along and the driver took us to a police station. We were told off and taken back to the farm.

A couple of days later we did the same thing. We got a lift to Penzance and



Caption: Ken and Terry

were turned in to a copper and taken back to the farm, after receiving a stern telling off by the officials. It was decided that our behaviour was so shocking that we would be sent back to London.

We were taken back on the long return journey, escorted by a lady in a green uniform who didn't say one word during the entire ten hour journey.

We got the underground from Paddington Station to Willesden Junction and turned up at the front door. Mum opened the door and nearly fainted. She knew nothing about it. The escort told mum that we had been sent home in disgrace, refused a cup of tea and went off to get the train back to Cornwall. 🇬🇧

Quiz time

Our quizmaster, **Ron Russell**, tests your general knowledge

- In 1749, which organisation nicknamed 'the peelers' was founded in London?
(a) NHS
(b) Police
(c) Life boats
- Which is the hottest planet?
(a) Venus (b) Saturn (c) Mercury
- Which country did America first declare war on in 1812?
(a) Spain (b) Britain (c) Mexico
- According to a recent survey, which is the UK's favourite pet?
(a) cat (b) goldfish (c) dog
- What does an angler keep in a creel?
(a) cash (b) fishing tackle (c) keys
- Law dictates that Scottish whisky must be matured for a minimum of how many years to become an official whisky?
(a) Ten years
(b) Three years
(c) One year
- Which one of the following animals is a pachyderm?
(a) elephant (b) camel (c) tiger
- Which city in Scotland is nicknamed the Granite City?
(a) Glasgow (b) Aberdeen (c) Ayr
- How many legs does a bumble bee have?
(a) two (b) four (c) six
- What is the Latin name for the plant Deadly Nightshade?
(a) Atropa Belladonna
(b) Taraxacum
(c) Rosa



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Contact details

Main office: Blind Veterans UK,
12-14 Harcourt Street, London,
W1H 4HD, **0300 111 22 33**

Member Support Hub (MeSH):
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The Brighton Centre: 01273 307 811

The Llandudno Centre: 01492 868 700

Review Editor: 020 7616 8367 or
revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Feedback: To give us feedback on any of our services, please email supporter.services@blindveterans.org.uk or call **0300 111 22 33**.

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Alexa: To listen to *Review* on Alexa, the command is: "Alexa, ask TuneIn to play **Blind Veterans UK Review**." If you have any problems, please contact the MeSH helpline on **01273 391 447**.



When Falklands veteran Steve lost his sight, we were there.

Blind Veterans UK estimates there are up to 50,000 veterans like Steve who could be entitled to our support.



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

If you, or someone you know, served in the Armed Forces, including National Service, and are now struggling with sight loss then please visit blindveterans.org.uk/support