

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

**October 2022**



## **Our beloved Queen**

1926-2022



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss



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### On the cover

Our former Patron, Queen Elizabeth II, at a reception in 1965.



DAN RACE / ADOBE STOCK

# Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

1926-2022

**We wish to express our deepest condolences to King Charles III, the Royal Family, the people of the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth, and all those who feel the loss of our inspirational sovereign.**

As Patron of this charity from 1952 to 2016, the Queen will always hold a special place in our hearts and the history of Blind Veterans UK.

Her Majesty visited our centre in Brighton in 1965 and 1985 and one of her final acts as Patron was to allow the charity to mark our centenary with a garden party at Buckingham Palace in 2015.

Her tireless service to this charity, this country, and the world will never be forgotten and we thank her today.

Our thoughts go particularly to Her Majesty's children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, as well as to our Royal Patron, Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex.



# A remarkable example to us all

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

It is with great sadness that I write this piece, which marks the loss of our sovereign, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

I suspect that we will all remember where we were and what we were doing when we heard the news of her death. Whilst I was, of course, aware



**Caption: Nick Caplin**

that her health had been deteriorating, and also that there were heightened health concerns that day, still the news came as a real shock.

For a while I was lost for words. I was given the news whilst holding a meeting with a staff colleague in our Headquarters in Queen Square. Later that evening, whilst walking through the centre of London with an American colleague, I tried rather inadequately to explain to him just how significant an event this was, and how deeply she would be missed by the nation.

As if proving my point, we arrived at Piccadilly Circus to see a large picture tribute to the Queen that dominated the scene. Crowds stood silently around the streets taking in the image in front of them, beginning their process of digesting the news and reflecting on a most remarkable life and example.

Walking back through Piccadilly Circus early the following morning, still people stood silently, deep in their own thoughts. Whatever the following days, weeks, years would bring, life would never be quite the same.

Many of our Members were alive at the time of her accession in 1952 and her Coronation the following year. For most of our staff, Queen Elizabeth has been the only sovereign that they have known. For all of us she has provided constancy in support; always there, always dedicated to the service of others no matter class, creed or colour.

From a young age, she dedicated her life to the oath that she made to her people. She has been our rock, our reassurance, our inspiration, fulfilling this role for over 70 years through remarkable change.

For those who have served in the Armed Forces, she's had additional significance. She has been our Commander in Chief, to whom we swore our support through the Oath of Allegiance:

*"I swear by almighty God that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors and that I will as in duty bound honestly and faithfully defend Her Majesty, her heirs and successors in*



**Caption: An image of Her Majesty lights up Piccadilly Circus in London**

*person, crown and dignity against all enemies and will observe and obey all orders of Her Majesty, her heirs and successors and of the officers set over me."*

More than a collection of words spoken or recorded on paper, this oath establishes the bond between the military and their sovereign, requiring a degree of self-sacrifice from us all. Ultimately it may require the military to lay down their lives. It has provided the driving purpose and strength for us when deploying on military operations to win, establish and maintain peace. Queen Elizabeth has been that →

purpose and strength, helping us all through difficult days.

Imagine the delight across our charity when, in 1952, Her Majesty became Patron of St Dunstan's, after the death of our previous Patron, her father, King George VI. With her patronage and support, we will have been emboldened in our vital work supporting blind veterans from the two world wars and beyond. She will have been the constant touchstone for us in a relationship that evolved and developed over the decades to come.

Our archives reveal the laughter and joy that surrounded her visits to the charity and receptions at royal palaces. As we approached our Centenary in 2015, it was the decision of Her Majesty that HRH The Countess of Wessex should host our Royal Garden Party, thus starting the relationship that was formalised the following year when our royal patronage was formally transferred.

Many of us will also have our own personal memories of Queen Elizabeth, whether just a view from afar at the Cenotaph or part of a crowd at a state or civic event. Some will have met her at charity events where she will have paid tribute to the work of others and where her presence will have made lifelong memories for all present.

I only met her once, whilst commanding the Regiment in Suffolk. I'd been advised that the aircraft carrying her and Prince Phillip would be landing at Wattisham Airfield and I was required to ensure they were able to safely and quickly proceed on their journey by car.

Thus I found myself on a grey and wet morning waiting for the RAF HS145 to land and taxi to the aircraft dispersal. It halted in front of me, the door opened and the aircraft steps were deployed. First out of the door was an RAF steward, next came the royal umbrella, and then I saw The Queen.

All of the nerves (What to say? How to act?) disappeared when I saw her beaming smile. We had a delightful chat about the weather (well, it was raining!), the joys of Suffolk and the work of the regiment. There then followed an interesting discussion between her and Prince Philip about who should sit in the front seat of the Range Rover. Decision made, they mounted up and drove away. A brief encounter, yet I was left with a smile on my face and a delightful insight into a very human and remarkable woman.

May she rest in peace with our heartfelt and grateful thanks for all that she has given and done for us over 70 years of public service. 🍷

# A life of unwavering service and commitment

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

Following the very sad news of the death of Her Majesty The Queen, I wish to extend my sincere condolences to the Royal Family, and also offer a shoulder of support to all of you, the Members of Blind Veterans UK.

I know how rocked many of you will be by this tragic news. After a remarkable 70 years on the throne, her death has sparked an outpouring of grief across the nation. Watching the television footage of her long reign and seeing so many people from all walks of life queue for hours to see her lying in state is testament to her legacy.



**Caption: Barry Coupe**

She was an extraordinary leader and an inspiration to millions. Her unwavering service and commitment to the country and Commonwealth was second to none. She was also a dedicated and caring Patron of this charity from 1952 to 2016 when our current Patron, Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex GVCO took over. We are extremely fortunate to hold in our archives precious anecdotes and photographs from her visits, many of which appear in this issue of *Review*.

I have written, on your behalf, to both His Majesty The King and our Patron, The Countess of Wessex, to offer our condolences and thanks to the Queen for her service to our charity.

I also wanted to let you know that I have been invited, on behalf of Blind Veterans UK, to attend Her Majesty's state funeral in Westminster Abbey. By the time you read this, the funeral will have already taken place, so I will keep my message short to make more space for the lovely archive material and tell you all about it next time. 🍷



**Caption: Dave Atkinson (centre) with the Queen and Prince Philip**

# Remembering our beloved Queen

Our Members from around the UK share their treasured memories of heart-warming encounters with Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II...

## Life on the Royal Yacht Dave Atkinson spent nine years on board the Britannia.

“After serving in the Falklands, I worked for the Royal Family for nine years on the HM Yacht Britannia. I lived onboard from 1982 and was responsible for the shop, duty frees and stocks. It was a super job. We went all over the world, and I met all the Royal Family – the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Anne, William and Harry when they were very small, Diana and Prince Charles – now King Charles III, of course.

“The Queen was marvellous to work for. She made everyone feel at ease. If you were going about your normal duties onboard and she and Prince Philip walked by, they’d always stop to talk to you. She was always very interested in people. Whenever they left at the end of a tour, they’d go around to the messes onboard to personally thank the staff. Along with the other Falklands veterans, I was even presented with my South Atlantic Medal on the yacht by Prince Philip.

“My eyesight started to deteriorate in 1985 due to macular degeneration but, as I knew my way round the yacht like the back of my hand, they kept me on regardless. I eventually left in 1991 and, during my final trip with them, was invited to a half hour meeting with

“If you were going about your duties onboard and she and Prince Philip walked by, they’d always stop to talk to you”

the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh. They asked me about my plans and said that if I ever needed work, they’d always find something for me. They then gave me a signed photograph of the two of them together as a gift.

“I felt very upset when I heard the news that she’d died. I think she spent her whole life doing exactly what she promised to do when she was just 21 – serving the people. She put the country and the Commonwealth first.

“I still get invited to Buckingham Palace every few years with my wife. It’s amazing – they really don’t forget you. Apart from my family, my Falklands medal and the signed photograph are the two most treasured things in my life. I feel very grateful to have worked for her. She was a remarkable woman.”

**A smile at the races  
Edward Francis got a surprise when his passing comment was overheard.**

“I was lucky enough to meet our late monarch on several occasions, but →

the time that most sticks in my mind occurred in the paddock area of Ascot racecourse back in the 1980s.

"I was standing in my top hat and tails talking to a friend about the upcoming race and I happened to say, 'I don't think the Queen's filly has much chance in this race.' Suddenly, a voice came from behind me saying, 'I do hope you are wrong.'

"I turned around and, to my surprise, found I was standing next to the Queen. Without thinking, I blurted out, 'Your Majesty - now I certainly hope I'm wrong!'



**Caption: Her Majesty in Queensland, Australia, 1970**

"With a smile, she said, 'So do I.'

"Unfortunately, I wasn't wrong, but I never dared to bring up the subject at any subsequent meeting!

"On behalf of my whole family, I would like to pass on my grateful thanks to our late Queen for her outstanding reign.

### **A compassionate Queen** **A fleeting encounter left Steve Moseley impressed by her knowledge.**

"I had the honour of meeting the Queen during a visit to Buckingham Palace to celebrate St Dunstan's 85th anniversary. My white stick was folded and she said to me, "As your stick is folded, I take it you can see a bit." I was impressed at how knowledgeable and observant she was."

### **A life-changing letter** **Wilson Taylor asked a favour and received more than he hoped for.**

"I passed my Wings Test on 20 August 1945 at the age of 20 and made my last solo flight the following day. By then the war had ended on all fronts and flying training was stopped. Within a week we were back in the UK with only memories of our flying to sustain us during the frustrating period before demob. The last thing my instructor, Flying Officer Underwood, said to

me was: 'Well Wilson, at least you've qualified for your Wings. You'll receive them in due course.'

"However, I never did receive my Wings and felt very sad about it. So, a few years ago, in desperation, I decided to write to Her Majesty the Queen, asking if she could assist.

"By this time, my loss of sight made it difficult for me to type and I asked a friend to help me. I began to dictate and started with 'Your Majesty'. My friend stopped typing, looked at me and said, 'Are you joking?'

"I thought perhaps I was being too cheeky, but just ten days later I received a reply from Her Majesty saying she would forward my letter to the Ministry of Defence.

"I was incredibly touched. Thanks to her intervention, in August 2014, at the age of 90, I was invited to Linton on Ouse where an Air Vice Marshal placed on the chest of the proudest man in the country his RAF Pilot's Wings.

"I wrote to the Queen once more to let her know that I had received my Wings, and included a photograph of the Wings being placed on my chest. Once again, I received a reply from Her Majesty and within the envelope was my photograph. She said she had

returned it as it was such a precious memory for me. I was absolutely thrilled to receive these two letters. I had served in the RAF under her father and to have her assistance in finally getting my Wings was incredibly special. I'll always be very grateful."

### **Royal bodyguard for a day** **John Poyner was responsible for Her Majesty's personal safety for a day.**

"When I served in the Argyle & Southern Highlanders in the 40s, Princess Elizabeth was Colonel of my battalion. In 1948, a few months after we arrived home from Palestine, I was told she was coming to inspect the battalion and that I had been chosen to be her right hand marker and personal bodyguard for the day. I felt so proud.

"When she came for the inspection, she walked all the way down the battalion until she got to me. Then she stopped and we had a lovely chat. The battalion had been out to Palestine, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and many other countries, and she asked me about my experiences and what I enjoyed most about my service.

"The day still stands as a treasured memory and I certainly shed a few tears when I heard she'd died. She was truly wonderful." 🇬🇧

# Queen Elizabeth II

## 1926-2022

### A history with Blind Veterans UK

As Patron of our charity from 1952 to 2016, Her Majesty The Queen played a crucial role in the charity's history. Here, we look back on her extraordinary dedication to our cause

#### 1948: A generous donation

The Queen was always passionate about supporting war-blinded veterans. In 1948, a few years before becoming our patron, Princess Elizabeth, as she was then, donated the princely sum of £36 to the charity, which she had received as a wedding gift from citizens of Grahamstown, South Africa.

In addition to this, she gave an unspecified sum to be used for the purchase of a guide dog. The Alsatian dog, Nell, was bought for Member Dan Pretorius, formerly of the South

“The Queen attending a reception at St James’s Palace with 300 of our Members who had been selected by ballot”

African Training Corps. Dan trained as a physiotherapist at St Dunstan’s, as we were then known, and then returned to South Africa with his wife, and Nell.

#### 1952: Patron of St Dunstan’s

Her Majesty The Queen became Patron of St Dunstan’s in 1952, after the death of our previous Patron, her father, King George VI. This was announced in the June 1952 issue of the *Review*, and she remained the charity’s patron until December 2016.

#### 1962: Visit to our centre

Ten years later, Queen Elizabeth II made her first visit to our centre in Ovingdean, Brighton, accompanied by her husband, The Duke of Edinburgh. The report in the *Review* the following month described the visit and said this of the speech she made: “To loud applause, Her Majesty rose

to speak. She said: ‘Thank you for your kind welcome. As Patron of St Dunstan’s I am very pleased to have this opportunity of coming here with my husband and seeing this home at Ovingdean where, every year, many St Dunstaners come for holidays and convalescence, while others stay here to learn a trade or craft.

“One wishes the best of good luck to you all and to your families, and to all St Dunstaners of the United Kingdom and overseas.”

#### 1965: St James’s Palace

We celebrated our 50th anniversary in 1965 and, on 26 March, exactly 50 years from when the organisation moved into St Dunstan’s Lodge in Regent’s Park, the Queen attended a reception at St James’s Palace with 300 of our Members who had been selected by ballot.

The *Review* at the time noted: “Her Majesty spent an hour with us, talking in a most interested and friendly way to many St Dunstaners,



**Caption: At our Brighton Centre in 1985 with then President, Sir Mike Ansell**

representing every aspect of our life, who were presented to her. Her Majesty the Queen is, of course, our Patron, and we were greatly honoured by her visit. Those of us who were lucky enough to be there felt that the visit was not only for us, but for all St Dunstaners everywhere.”

### 1985: A second visit

Twenty years later, in July 1985, Her Majesty visited our centre in Ovingdean again, by now called Ian Fraser House. She came with the Duke of Edinburgh to formally open the new refurbished South Wing.

### 2001: Buckingham Palace

In May 2001, the charity marked its 85th anniversary with a special reception held at Buckingham Palace. In attendance were 250 Members, 150 widows and widowers, and guests and escorts. They met the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Alexandra and Sir Angus Ogilvy.

### 2002: Golden Jubilee

The following year, Queen Elizabeth II celebrated an important anniversary of her own – her Golden Jubilee. The St Dunstan's Standard was amongst those carried in a parade of 22,000 people through London. All there represented some aspect of her reign, and this included her relationship with our charity.

### 2015: Our centenary

As Blind Veterans UK turned 100 in 2015, one of Her Majesty's final acts as Patron was to allow the charity to mark the occasion with a garden party at Buckingham Palace. It was her wish for the garden party to be hosted by HRH The Countess of Wessex who was to become our future patron.

### 2016: 90th Birthday Parade

In 2016, the formal announcement came that Her Majesty would be stepping down as Patron of Blind Veterans UK, as well as 24 other patronages, as she approached her 90th birthday. The charity was invited to take part in the Patron's Lunch and many Members attended on our behalf. Our Blind Veterans UK Pace Sticking Team also led the veterans' contingent in The Queen's 90th Birthday Parade.

### A shining example to all

Throughout her time as Patron of our charity, The Queen enriched the lives of our Members and was a shining example to all. Her remarkable dedication will never be forgotten and we thank her from the bottom of our hearts for her tireless efforts for our cause. May she rest in peace. 🇬🇧

**Turn to page 16 to read touching stories and personal anecdotes from some of these events.**

# The golden thread that ran through our lives

Our President, **Colin Williamson**, shares his reflections on the life of “one of the greatest monarchs to have ever lived”

As I sit down to write this, I am torn between two contrasting emotions. One is pride that I had the privilege to serve my country under the watchful eye of one of the greatest monarchs to have ever lived, and the other is utter grief in the knowledge that our most cherished sovereign no longer reigns over us.

As veterans, we are intimately attached to the monarchy. Our beloved Queen had a long and close relationship, not only with the Armed Forces, but with

the Commonwealth at large, and she held the respect of every soldier, sailor, marine and airman around the globe who proudly wore the uniform.

Patron of our charity for many years, the Queen's reign was the golden thread that ran through our lives. She was held in deep affection by countless millions of people throughout the world who admired her for her values, her kind-heartedness, her sense of duty, her wisdom, and the fact that she was a steadying influence when the nation needed it the most.

In April 1972, I proudly took the oath and pledged my allegiance to “Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, her heirs and successors and of the Generals and Officers set over me”. My oath has no expiry date.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II lived a life of extraordinary public service. As blind veterans, we are proud to have called her our patron and our sovereign. My Queen, your Queen, our Queen; she will be greatly missed. 🇬🇧



**Caption: Colin Williamson**





**Caption: The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh at our centre in 1962**

# A genuinely caring Patron

To mark the sad passing of Her Majesty, we've delved into past *Reviews* to share touching stories from the special events she attended with our Members

## The Reception at Buckingham Palace, 2001

On 16 May 2001, many Members, guests and escorts were received at Buckingham Palace by our then Patron, Her Majesty The Queen, to celebrate the 85th anniversary of the founding of our organisation.

According to a wonderful report written by our then President, Ray Hazan OBE, in the July 2001 *Review*, the event lasted almost three hours which was, an "all-time record for functions of this kind."

### Here's an extract of Ray's report:

No doubt everyone who visited Buckingham Palace on May 16th will have a story to tell. One widow may only reluctantly relate how the time was spent in Accident and Emergency at a London hospital, having experienced a bad fall that afternoon.

Others may tell you how husband and wife ended up in separate hotels, one clutching the washbag but no clothes, the other the clothes, but no washbag! But almost everyone made it in the end and were delighted and impressed with all that happened.

The sound of smashing glass was

rarely heard and Palace staff were quick to reassure that it wasn't a priceless antique. The hubbub of conversation was, thankfully, not overwhelming as a result of the spacious distribution of people amongst the rooms. The waiters were polite and helpful, the drinks constantly flowed and the canapés were tasty!

Her Majesty must have talked to a vast number of people. You will have your own conversations in mind. But it appears to be her interest in those with whom she was conversing, her understanding in being more tactile with St Dunstaners and her relaxed attitude, which impressed many.

Her responses were those of a true veteran of such encounters:

*"Thank you, Ma'am for being here."*

*"Well, it is my party!"*

*"Who is it?" asked a slightly deaf St Dunstaner.*

*"I'm the one giving the party!"*

I'm so very sad to hear of the passing of our Queen. May Her Majesty's soul rest in peace.

**Tirtha Ghale**



**Caption: The Queen Mother, The Queen and Lord Fraser, 1956**

Others will have talked to the Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Alexandra and Angus Ogilvy, and they too will have many treasured memories. Many letters of thanks have been received – here are a few extracts:

**“I never expected the Queen to shake hands with us, nor to meet Princess Alexandra. The Queen was so informal and happy.”**

**“It certainly will leave a firm imprint of great happiness on everyone’s memory.”**



**Caption: Her Majesty is shown around by a Member in 1962**

**“Duffy and I loved every minute of the very special celebration of St Dunstan’s 85 years’ work. The visit to Buckingham Palace is one we shall always remember.”**

**Joan Osborne was at the reception with her husband Bob, a Member, and said:**

“There had been thunderstorms that morning and as Bob and I were standing in line to meet the Queen it was overcast with the threat of more rain. As the Queen walked along speaking with everyone, she spotted



**Caption: The Queen (right) meets wives and children of our Members during her first visit to our Ovingdean Centre in Brighton in 1962**

Bob’s badge and said, ‘You’re a St Dunstaner’ and asked how long he had been a Member.

“She walked on to meet other people, then turned back to us and said: ‘I’m so sorry, I can’t do anything about the weather’. Bob and I both laughed with her and were thrilled that she’d turned back to speak with us.”

**John and Daphne Gilbert also attended and told the Review:**

“We somehow managed to lose our party and decided to sit in

## **Au revoir fair Queen**

**Elizabeth, English Queen  
Left all her subjects bereft  
In a nation’s joyful grief.  
Zero tolerance, not so!  
And never her like again  
Best thoughts now,  
are made of this  
Everyone’s well for her life  
Thoroughly improved are we  
Heaven has such dignity.**

**Peter O’Malley**



**Caption: Her Majesty holding flowers at our centre in 1962**

a very long hallway in the Palace to take time to collect ourselves before heading off in search of our group. While we were sitting there, a member of the Palace staff came to tell us that the Queen would shortly walk through the hallway from our left.

“As soon as we were told the Queen was coming, Daphne and I stood up. Afterwards Daphne told me that the Queen spotted my white cane and crossed the hallway to speak with us. She asked if I had trained at St



**Caption: The Queen at a St Dunstan’s exhibition, possibly taken in 1962**

Dunstan’s, and I told her I had. She then placed her hand on my shoulder and said that she thought St Dunstan’s was a wonderful place.”

**To our Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II, thank you for your service and for looking after us, especially at Blind Veterans UK. God bless all of your family at this difficult time.**

**Lou White**



**Caption: The Review covershot from 1965 of Her Majesty with a Member**

## The Queen’s visit to our Brighton Centre, 1985

On 19 July 1985, Her Majesty visited our centre at Ovingdean with Prince Philip to open the new South Wing. Ray Hazan was involved in organising the visit.

### This was Ray’s report in the following month’s Review:

“My role was to sit in the escort office behind the reception desk in the lounge and, over the PA system, give



**Elizabeth II**

**Caption: Meeting our then Chairman, Neville Williams (centre) in 1965**

a running commentary as to what the Royal party was being shown at any time and who was being presented.

“Quite coincidentally, John Hosken, a reporter on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme and radio commentator, telephoned me the day before. He gave me some useful tips: speak slowly, lower the pitch of the voice and take breaths after each full-stop.

“The Royal party arrived at Brighton station by train, and it became a matter of monitoring Radio Sussex to →



**Caption: The Queen chats to a group of Members during her visit in 1985**

relay their commentary as to what Her Majesty was wearing and the progress of the party as it made its way to Ovingdean. It then became a matter of someone on each floor telephoning down to the escort office as the Royal tour progressed.

“Using Braille notes, I was able to describe when people were being presented to our Patron and the activity they were representing... A plaque outside the escort office records the day. A Braille plaque beneath has been read by so many



**Caption: Our Review cover in June 2002 celebrating the Golden Jubilee**

fingers, that the raised dots are no longer legible!

“Only the natural elements conspired to try and spoil the day. A marquee had been set up on the lawn at the front

**I am truly saddened by the Queen's passing. Life will not be the same without her. I'm thinking of her whole family.**

**Angela**



**Caption: The Review in January 2013 to mark the Diamond Jubilee**

of the building, as one of the several dining rooms. A stiff breeze that day blew it down just before it was about to be occupied. Somehow, all were found alternative places and no one went hungry! Truly, a day to remember.”

**Bob and Joan Osborne also attended this visit. Joan told the Review:**

“We took up indoor bowling in the 1970s. Bob didn't think he would be able to do it, but he proved to be a very good bowler and went on to become Chairman of the Bowling Club



**Elizabeth II**

**Caption: The Queen meeting Member Ted Brown in 1985**

for many years. When the Queen and Prince Philip visited the centre in 1985 we arranged a match in their honour. I had to stand beside each bowler and tell them the distance to the jack. I stood beside Bob, he bowled and he got so close to the jack I couldn't have done better.

“I tapped Bob on the shoulder to tell him he'd done well. We were both thrilled and, when I looked up, the Queen smiled at me to say, 'Well done'. That was a very special day – one of many special days.” 🎳

# Winter breaks at our centres

We are delighted to let you know that things are getting back to normal in our centres as we open them up to all Members once again. Here, we have all the details...



SUBBOTINA ANNA / ADOBE STOCK

## Brighton Centre

### Independent holiday bookings

From 4 October 2022, we will be offering holiday stays for fully independent Members and escorts once again. This means Members and escorts who do not require assistance or intervention from our care team. We also offer the following activities...

### Military Week, 8-14 November

This is a great opportunity to meet up with other Members and enjoy a week full of military history and tradition.

The week will include historical talks, tactile sessions, military documentaries (using our in-house cinema) and themed trips to local military venues along the south coast. We will also host a formal military-style dinner, followed by live entertainment.

The week will come to a fitting end with a Remembrance Service at our Brighton Centre service, or you can join the parade at the larger RBL Brighton & Hove City service a short distance away. This will be followed by a lunch, activities and entertainment.

### Turkey and Tinsel Weeks, 6-19 December

The Brighton Centre invites you to join us for a Turkey and Tinsel pre-Christmas holiday. This will be a wonderful week full of festive cheer and activities, trips out, in-house entertainers, a carol service, plenty of mince pies, a Christmas lunch... and a few surprises! You'll also get to enjoy entertainment and events in the local community where possible. Please do get in contact to book your stay.

### Christmas and New Year breaks

We look forward to welcoming you to our Brighton Centre over the festive period. As in previous years, bookings should be made via your Community Support Worker before the end of October 2022.

Once all spaces have been allocated, Members who have been successful will be notified as soon as possible. Please note, our Centre Booking Team will not be able to take your request for these dates.

### Booking Information

All Members and escorts will be required to undertake a Covid 19 test prior to arrival. We will contact you with further details after your booking is confirmed.

■ For all booking enquiries, except for Christmas and New Year breaks, please contact: Brighton Booking Office, 8.30am-4.30pm, Monday to Friday, on 01273 391500.

## Llandudno Centre

### Independent holiday bookings

From 3 October, we are delighted to be able to offer holiday stays for Members with care needs (both residential and nursing), as well as fully independent Members and escorts. This means we can accommodate those who need assistance or intervention from our care team, as well as those who don't.

### Military Week, 6 November

Please join us for a week full of military-themed activities, including visits to local units, getting up close to modern military hardware; listening to guest speakers – including a Zulu era re-enactment group – and a trip to the U Boat Museum in Birkenhead.

We've also been invited by the Royal British Legion to attend →



**Caption: Our Llandudno Centre looking magnificent at night**

a Remembrance Parade on the 13 November, along with other associations, at our local Cenotaph. This will be followed by a military-style dinner, so bring along your formal lounge wear and medals.

### **Turkey and Tinsel Weeks, 4-17 December**

The Llandudno Centre will be offering Turkey and Tinsel Weeks in the run up to Christmas for those who like to start celebrating early.

The local town fully embraces the festive season and the week will look very much like our Christmas and New Year weeks as you enjoy lots of community events and activities, plus carol singing, dancing,

local entertainers – and a delicious Christmas dinner with your fellow Members.

The Llandudno Centre is a very special place at Christmas and we very much look forward to welcoming you.

### **Christmas and New Year breaks**

You're also welcome to stay with us over the Christmas and New Year period. As in previous years, bookings should be made via your Community Support Worker before the end of October 2022.

Once spaces have been allocated, Members who have been successful will be notified as soon as possible. Please note, our Centre Booking team will not be able to take your request for these dates.

### **Booking Information**

All Members and escorts will be required to undertake a Covid 19 lateral flow test prior to entering our vehicles. Our drivers will be able to supply and assist in administering these tests.

■ **For all booking enquiries, except for Christmas and New Year breaks, please contact: Llandudno Booking Office on 01492 867800. Lines are open 8.30am-4.30pm, Monday-Friday.**

# Chris steps into Vice President role

After the tragic passing of our former Vice President, Paul Palmer, in March, we share news of his successor

Due to the sad death of Vice President, Paul Palmer, Blind Veterans UK has agreed on the appointment of our Member Healthcare Consultant, Chris Cardwell, as his successor.

The committee entrusted with making this important decision, which includes the charity's President, Vice President, Member Trustees and Chairman, agreed that Chris's character, experience and commitment to the charity make him a good choice.

We are pleased to let you know that Chris has accepted. He said: "As Members, we share two attributes – past service and vision impairment. That said, we are a diverse group, and our needs differ. For me, one of the most rewarding aspects of being a Vice President is trying to capture those differences and ensure they are considered when decisions are made.

"My service in (212) Field Hospital, Royal Army Medical Corps ended

many years ago, but my decades of experience with the NHS since then has left me with a passionate interest in healthcare.

I currently represent Blind Veterans UK on the Armed Forces PPV, which advises NHS England on commissioning care for those who are currently serving, transitioning to civilian life, their families, and veterans. After a three-year term serving as a Trustee →



**Caption: Chris Cardwell**

on our Council, I also work part-time as the Member Healthcare Consultant.

Meanwhile, my spare time is spent perusing an interest in archaeology and history, plus volunteering as a guide at Southwold Lighthouse.”

### Would you like to be considered for a future Vice President role?

In its Articles of Association, Blind Veterans UK reserves the right to appoint a number of vice-presidents at its discretion. With this in mind, a small committee has been set up at the suggestion of our President, Colin Williamson, to select future VPs to represent the membership.

We are currently creating a database to capture the names of Members interested in taking on this varied, rewarding and, sometimes, challenging role. As with any other role, we are looking for specific characteristics, including the following:

- Approachable
- Reasonably well-known to the majority of the Membership
- Passionate about Blind Veterans UK
- Committed to our values; leading by example in upholding the values
- Able to build relationships and engage with people at all levels
- Good communication skills (both oral and written)

- A good team worker
- A willingness to devote the necessary time and effort and to participate in training
- A willingness to travel with potential overnight stays
- A non-judgemental approach
- The ability to deal with delicate information in a confidential manner

If you are interested in applying, please write a brief statement of up to 250 words explaining why you think you would be suitable. Please note, all applicants must have been Members for a minimum of two years to ensure they understand the charity’s work, as well as its history, values and ethos.

We are totally committed to diversity and inclusion, and welcome applications from all backgrounds. Should you need us to make any reasonable adjustments during the application stage then do let us know. Please bear in mind that this is an invitation for any *future* Vice President roles that arise. As such, it’s likely there will be a delay between acceptance and taking up office. 🇬🇧

- **Please send your covering letter and statement to [colin.williamson@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:colin.williamson@blindveterans.org.uk) or post them to: Colin Williamson, Blind Veterans UK, 3 Queen Square, London, WC1N 3AR.**

# A glorious week

With uninterrupted sunshine, Golf Week 2022 at Llandudno was one to remember, writes **Paula Sartain**

All of us at Llandudno were thrilled to welcome Ros, our first ever female, to Golf Week 2022 in August.

Ros joined three other Members – Steven, Billy and our low handicapper, Nick – for a week of uninterrupted sunshine, a first for the centre. Here are just some of the highlights:

## Monday

We kicked off the week by getting to know the Members and their golfing ability. Ranging from a handicap of 4 to never having played on an actual golf course before, there was quite a gap!

## Tuesday

Off to Maesdu Golf Club to spend a day with a pro golfer. In the morning we practised the long game with hits down the fairway then, in the afternoon, concentrated on putting on the greens. Steven won EVERYTHING!

## Wednesday

We met with another pro at the range where we learnt never to stand near Karl, our ROVI, as he is the fastest golf swing at 116mph!

## Thursday and Friday

We played nine holes where everyone took at least one amazing shot and at least one not-so-good shot. Ouch.

By the end of the week everyone was on a high. Billy said it was his “best week at the centre ever,” while Steven, who had completely lost his mojo when he arrived, felt so reinvigorated that he’d even contacted a local course before he left.

Meanwhile, Nick has since agreed to be our Member Lead on golf! With his handicap of 4 and his wonderful insight and understanding, he really is an amazing golfer. Well, most of the time... 🇬🇧



**Caption: Golf Week 2022**

# Add a string to your bow

Our archery group, the Blind Veterans UK Bowmen, is looking for new recruits, writes **Carol Davies**



**Caption: Carol taking a shot**

In May, blind veterans from all over the country took part in their first archery session together at the Brighton Centre in over three years.

It was great to be back on the field, though some of us were wishing we'd made the effort to practise during our forced exile! Before we commenced, we paid our respects to fellow archers who sadly passed on during lockdown, including Graham Walker, Dennis Cook, Dennis Murphy, John Bower, Colin Dickinson and Paul Palmer.

The archery club, called the Blind Veterans UK Bowmen, was officially formed in June 1977. Over the years, many Members joined the 'have-a-

go' sessions at our centres, run by Sue and David Habgood, and some went on to join the British Blind Sport Archery Section, or even to shoot internationally, including Member Peter Price who won Silver in the 2015 Para World Championships in Germany.

However, our numbers have declined over recent years, so we are currently looking for more Members to join up. 🏹

■ **To get involved, please contact our chairman, Jo Long, on 07703 517936 or [j.long3@btinternet.com](mailto:j.long3@btinternet.com) or find out more at [bbsarchery.org.uk/](http://bbsarchery.org.uk/)**

## Get your box of badges

**We are inviting our Members to place a box of Victory Over Blindness badges in their community this Autumn such as a corner shop, café, church, pub or veterans club. Boxes contain 50 'Lads' pin badges with 'how to donate' information. To order your box, just give us a call on 0300 111 22 33.**

# Carers Review

Upcoming activities for family members and friends who care for our Members and help them with day-to-day tasks

## Carers and Families Engagement Panel

Are you a carer to a Blind Veterans UK Member? Then why not get involved in shaping the support you receive from the charity by joining our Carers and Families Engagement Panel?

The panel meets once a month to discuss the needs and experiences of our carers. Anyone who is a family member, partner or friend caring for a Member, or assisting them with day-to-day activities, is welcome to join. Simply get in contact with Stacey Barham via the details at the end of this page.

## Monthly exercise sessions

Our virtual exercise session for carers will take place this month on Wednesday, 19 October, at 11am. The session is open to all carers and tailored to all abilities.

We know caring for someone can be incredibly challenging at times so the aim of these sessions is to help you find time for physical activity, connect with others and give you an all-round boost. There will be a mixture of seated

and standing exercises which can all be taken at your own pace.

■ **To find out more, just contact our Sports and Recreation Instructor, Theresa Farley, on 01273 307 811, or you can send her an email at [theresa.farley@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:theresa.farley@blindveterans.org.uk)**

Before your first session, she will be in touch to go through a few medical questions. We hope to see you there!



**Caption: Join our exercise sessions**

■ **Contact Stacey on 01273 391483 or [stacey.barham@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:stacey.barham@blindveterans.org.uk) to share your ideas about useful information for carers.**



# The art of quilling

Want to try a new craft? The NCP team introduce their latest stunning project – just in time for Christmas...

Quilling is a way of making beautiful art from coiled strips of paper, which are then bent into different shapes.

Like many forms of craft, paper quilling can trace its origins back hundreds of years to at least the 15th century. It's believed to have been created by French and Italian nuns and used to decorate religious objects in an effort to save money.

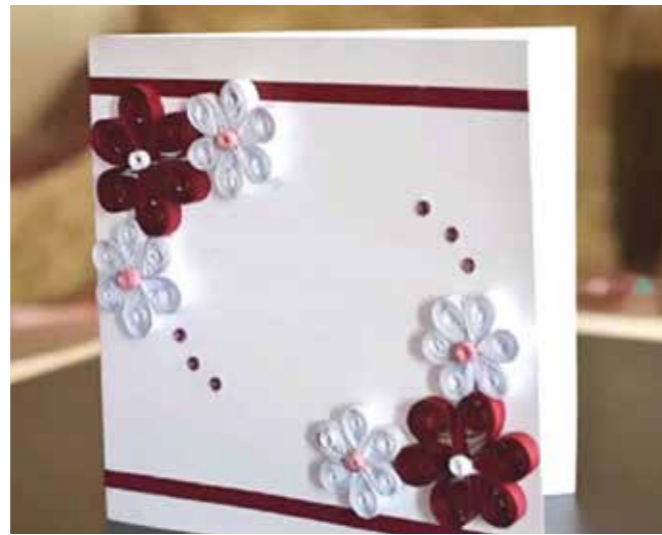
The craft is usually done using a tiny, slotted quilling tool and can be quite small and fiddly. However, for this month's new NCP project, we've adapted the technique to make it easier

for you, by wrapping 1cm wide quilling paper around chop sticks or your fingers to create the shapes. With this technique, you can make anything from beautiful Christmas cards to colourful framed art. As you become more confident, you might want to try using thinner strips of paper and smaller tools, but staying big is completely fine too.

If you fancy having a go at our NCP quilling project, take a look over the page to see how to get involved. And if you want to carry on with this creative hobby after the project ends, it's easy to buy all the materials online. 🛒



**Caption: Create stunning shapes**



**Caption: Make beautiful artwork**

# 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

## CRAFT

### Festive Quilled Cards

This month we introduce quilling, which is the craft of creating a design from coiled strips of paper. We'll send you all the materials you need, along with our VI-friendly instructions, to create beautiful handmade festive cards and gift tags.

Traditionally, quilling can be quite a fiddly craft but, as we explain on the previous page, we have adapted the technique to make it easier for those with sight loss so you can work on a larger scale.

This project comes with the chance to join a group call so you can chat to other Members about it if you wish.

## GARDENING

### Hyacinths

Have a blooming good festive season with our hyacinth growing project. We'll send you all you need to grow



MALKOVKOSTA / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: Grow your own hyacinths**

these fragrant favourites including three bulbs, compost, and a ceramic bowl. You will just need to add some TLC for a colourful display.

The project comes with the opportunity to join one of our monthly gardening hobby circles to chat with other Members and receive support with this project if you'd like to. →

## CRAFT

### Poppy Mosaic

Make your own decorative mosaic in the shape of a poppy to mark Remembrance Day next month. This is an easy, fun, and colourful design with a wooden base measuring roughly 10 inches x 7 inches, or 25cm x 18cm, and no need for any tile cutting as all pieces are ready to use. The project comes with the opportunity to join a monthly mosaic hobby circle to chat with other Members and receive support with this project if you would like.

### Battle of Britain Planes – wooden models project

We'll send you everything you need to complete models of a Lancaster and a Spitfire, plus our VI-friendly instructions. These are fun and challenging kits with pre-cut wooden pieces which you can sand, slot together and glue. Paint is also included in the kits for those of you who would like to paint your planes. The Lancaster has a wingspan of 19 inches, or 49cm, and the Spitfire is 13 inches, or 33cm. The project comes with the opportunity to join a monthly woodwork hobby circle.

## ART

### Drawing for Beginners and Improvers – September, October, November

Inspired by The Big Draw, a national initiative and festival taking place

throughout October, we invite you to 'Come Back to Colour', as we think about colour, pattern and world cultures.

We'll send you a pack that introduces materials and ideas that may challenge your idea of what drawing is, and urge you to put the notion of perfection to one side, make some interesting marks and see what you can do.

Members interested in discussing their work with other participants, as well as specialists, are welcome to sign up for our painting hobby circle.

■ **For more information about these projects and groups, or to request an activity pack, please call our bookings team on 01273 391455.**

## 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 on any of the following topics...

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

Chat groups consist of up to six fellow Members with a shared interest, plus two members of staff from our National Creative Project team.

IRISSCA / ADOBE STOCK



**Caption: As the days get shorter, why not join our creative writing circle?**

## Photography

We also have a photography Facebook page (at Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a fortnightly chat group with regular guest speakers. Anyone with an interest in photography is welcome.

We are in the process of redesigning our website and so there is currently a holding page in place rather than our NCP content. We plan to be back with our new and improved NCP pages soon at [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](https://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)

■ **If you would like to try one of the projects or groups, please give us a call on 01273 391455 or speak to your Community Support Worker.**

As we head into Autumn, what better time to start your creative project from the comfort and warmth of your own home? We really hope you enjoy making your quilled cards in time for Christmas – please do let us know how you get on – and we can't wait to see your photos of your mosaics, drawings, models and hyacinths.

Please note, there are currently a few changes going on within the NCP team, so it may take us a little longer than usual to post out your packs. Please be patient with us!

We wish you a wonderful month. 🍁

**Lou Kirk-Partridge and the National Creative Project team**

# Family news

## Birthdays

**Anthony Shingles** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 18 October

**Doreen Scott** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 20 October

**Elizabeth Allan** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 22 October

**Florence Mahoney** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 10 October

**Freda Whittaker** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 16 October

**George Crookes** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 7 October

**Harold Bird** who celebrates his 103rd birthday on 24 October

**James Finnegan** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 4 October

**Joan Hilton** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 16 October

**Joseph Covell** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 16 October

**Kenneth Guest** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 28 October

**Majorie Bennett** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 2 November

**Olwen Cantlay** who celebrates her 100th birthday on 31 October

**Peter Horn** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 14 October

**Richard Northam** who celebrates his 100th birthday on 24 October

**Ronald Roberts** who celebrates his 101st birthday on 30 October

**Alice Lloyd** who celebrates her 101st birthday on 6 October

**Monica Edwards** who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 27 October

## Condolences

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

**Ann Robson** who died on 1 September 2022. She was the wife of Fred Robson

*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

**Stuart Albright** of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands died on 8 September 2022 aged 95. He served as a Captain in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Walter Alexander John Ainer** of Jersey died on 1 August 2022 aged 90. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

**Donald Mcbeth Andrews** of Birkenhead, Merseyside died on 4 September 2022 aged 91. He served as a Naval Airman in the Fleet Air Arm.

**George Thomas Bailey** of Daventry, Northamptonshire died on 1 August 2022 aged 89. He served as a Private in the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

**Simon Claud Michael Bland** of Edenbridge, Kent died on 11 August 2022 aged 98. He served as a Lieutenant Colonel in the Scots Guards.

**Anthony Ronald Bowers** of Carterton, Oxfordshire died on 19 August 2022 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Fleet Air Arm.

**John Joseph Boyle** of Wirral, Merseyside died on 1 September 2022 aged 94. He served as an Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

**Ronald Peter Bridgman** of Farnham, Surrey died on 5 September 2022 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Megan Violet Britten** of Sleaford, Lincolnshire died on 19 July 2022 aged 90. She served as a Senior Aircraftswoman in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Edwin Maurice Bryant** of Worthing, West Sussex died on 30 August 2022 aged 80. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Dragoon Guards. →

**Stuart Mellow Buchanan** of Nelson, Lancashire died on 1 September 2022 aged 90. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Michael Coleman** of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire died on 30 June 2022 aged 97. He served as a Captain in the Royal Engineers.

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**William Douglas Coltman** of Bo'Ness, West Lothian died on 1 July 2022 aged 97. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

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**Lawrence Corker** of Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire died on 1 September 2022 aged 94. He served as a Stoker in the Royal Navy.

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**Charles Gordon Crocker** of Exmouth, Devon died on 1 August 2022 aged 94. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Frederick Curtis** of New Milton, Hampshire died on 31 August 2022 aged 94. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

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**Donald Stanley Darby** of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire died on 1 September 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

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**Arthur Cecil Duggan** of Chichester, West Sussex died on 8 August 2022 aged 100. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Kenneth Hugh Farmer** of Ellesmere Port, Cheshire died on 6 September 2022 aged 101. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**George Ferguson** of Coventry, West Midlands died on 1 August 2022 aged 87. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Douglas Forester** of Cleethorpes, Lincolnshire died on 20 August 2022 aged 102. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Harry Gardiner** of Oldham died on 1 August 2022 aged 97. He served as a Cook in the Merchant Navy.

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**Ronald Gardner** of Coventry, West Midlands died on 15 August 2022 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Frederick Charles Gardner** of Brixham, Devon died on 19 August 2022 aged 97. He served as a Fusilier in the Royal Welch Fusiliers.

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**Robert Goddard** of Redcar, Cleveland died on 8 August 2022 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Green Howards.

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**Douglas Raymond Goldsmith** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 9 August 2022 aged 97. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Gilbert Terence Hague BEM** of Halifax, West Yorkshire died on 6 August 2022 aged 86. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

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**Arthur Hastie** of Kelso, Roxburghshire died on 23 August 2022 aged 87. He served in the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

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**Raymond Heritage** of Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire died on 19 June 2022 aged 93. He served as a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force.

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**Kenneth Ernest Howe** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 1 June 2022 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

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**George Chaplin Hutchison** of Kirkcaldy, Fife died on 1 August 2022 aged 92. He served as an Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Desmond Harrold Hutson** of Colwyn Bay, Conwy died on 2 July 2022 aged 96. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

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**Robert Oliver Irons** of Wirral, Merseyside died on 1 August 2022 aged 96. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**William James King** of Staines, Middlesex died on 9 September 2022 aged 89. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

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**Edward Kelly** of Wigan, Lancashire died on 9 August 2022 aged 88. He served as a Driver in the Royal Signals.

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**Dennis Kerby** of Abingdon, Oxfordshire died on 9 August 2022 aged 91. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

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**Norman Knox** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 16 August 2022 aged 97. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Field Artillery.

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**Rosemary Elfrida Lang** of Swansea died on 1 September 2022 aged 103. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

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**Derek Lodge** of Blackpool, Lancashire died on 1 September 2022 aged 86. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Brian Stephen Douglas Martin** of Leek, Staffordshire died on 2 September 2022 aged 88. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**John Matthews** of Cleethorpes, South Humberside died on 11 August 2022 aged 98. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Yvonne McLean** of Preston, Lancashire died on 1 August 2022 aged 97. She served as an Aircraftwoman in the Women's Royal Air Force.

**Alistair McCotter** of Bristol died on 11 September 2022 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

**Donald George Mollison** of Broadstone, Dorset died on 3 September 2022 aged 93. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**Joan Mullany** of Lewes, East Sussex died on 25 August 2022 aged 99. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**James Murdo** of Bridgnorth, Shropshire died on 15 August 2022 aged 87. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

**Colin Valentine Murkin** of London, died on 14 August 2022 aged 81. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

**Paul Antony Richardson** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 10 August 2022 aged 84. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Peter Rolfe** of Daventry, Northamptonshire died on 1 August 2022 aged 80. He served as a Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

**Michael John Ryan** of Marlborough, Wiltshire died on 25 August 2022 aged 87. He served as a Lieutenant in the Royal Navy.

**Fred Schofield** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 31 August 2022 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Brian Francis Scott** of Walsall, West Midlands died on 25 August 2022 aged 91. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Margaret Scott** of Solihull, West Midlands died on 21 August 2022 aged 96. She served as a Sergeant in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Edward Shepherd** of Glasgow died on 7 August 2022 aged 91. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Walter Smith** of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 19 August 2022 aged 86. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

**Doris Annie Tanner** of London died on 4 September 2022 aged 98. She served as a Wren Radar Mechanic in the Women's Royal Naval Reserve.

**Jeffrey Tydeman** of New Romney, Kent died on 29 July 2022 aged 78. He served as a Sergeant in the Queen's Regiment.

**Ronald Alfred Tyler** of Whitstable, Kent died on 4 September 2022 aged 100. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**Ivor Voysey** of Exmouth, Devon died on 7 September 2022 aged 86. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Alan Walker** of Haywards Heath, West Sussex died on 28 July 2022 aged 74. He served as a Senior Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Raymond Whitehouse** of Halesowen, West Midlands died on 25 August 2022 aged 87.

**David Bowen Williams** of Barnet, Hertfordshire died on 25 July 2022 aged 101. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Geoffrey Michael Worstenholme** of Hope Valley, Derbyshire died on 8 September 2022 aged 91. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Kenneth Wright** of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 10 August 2022 aged 92. He served as a Private in the East Surrey Regiment.

**Robert John Wyeth** of Northolt, Middlesex died on 26 August 2022 aged 91. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

**John Yeames** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 12 August 2022 aged 89. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Middlesex Regiment.

**John Young** of Coventry, West Midlands died on 1 September 2022 aged 84. He served in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

# A solemn promise

On 25 September 1939, Butlin's in Skegness became HMS Royal Arthur. Member **Ron Frost**, 88, tells the extraordinary tale of how he came to devote his life to the town's history

During the war, thousands of recruits passed through HMS Royal Arthur, which was on the Butlin's site in Skegness. I want people there to know their town's history and be proud.



**Caption: Member Ron Frost**

I joined the Royal Navy in 1955 for two years. As I had served an Engineering Apprenticeship at the Royal Aeronautical Establishment in Farnborough, I was able to join as Acting Radio Electrical Artificer. After part one of the training, I reported to HMS Royal Arthur in Corsham in Wiltshire for the PO's Management and Leadership school. I loved my six weeks there.

Thirty years later, in 1988, I wrote to the CO of Royal Arthur to ask if I could visit. He granted this and, on the day, I was shown around by a warrant officer. Not much had changed.

On the way back, the officer told me of someone who wanted to form an HMS Royal Arthur Association. I soon wrote to offer my support and was given the role of Press and Publicity Officer. I advertised for anyone who had served at HMS Royal Arthur in Skegness during the war and received over 1,000 replies. Altogether 250,000 joined.



**Caption: The HMS Royal Arthur Association parade in Skegness**

We planned a reunion for the coming May and 734 veterans enrolled, some with their wives. We also let the local papers and Butlin's know that the veterans would be arriving. On the day, we all met in the large ballroom in the Embassy Hotel. Many volunteered to help prepare food, plus there was a good bar and a Royal Marine dance band played. It was a great success.

It was felt we must have a parade and, since I was the youngest there at 55 and had done the PO's course at Corsham, I was asked to marshal the

troops. About 450 of us met in the car park. It would be a long parade and I would have to shout loudly if all were to hear.

I marched them to the main road and ran ahead to stop the traffic while they crossed. Onward down the High Street. The route was lined with thousands – yes, *thousands* – of people. Our volunteers with buckets collected £16,000 from the public.

Towards the end of the town, I turned them left along a road that led →

to a park with a bandstand on which were waiting the Lord Lieutenant of Lincolnshire, an admiral, the Vicar of Ingoldmells Church and the Mayor of Skegness. The Mayor gave a speech and the RM Band played our anthem.

I marched them on down to the promenade, giving an 'eyes left' and saluting the admiral. A little further on, I dismissed them and most went into the Service Club.

As soon as I entered the club, I was mobbed by men pushing large amounts of money into my hands, saying "Get them all a drink!" Everyone had all the drink they wanted. Then, on the Sunday, we boarded coaches to take us to Ingoldmells Church for the service.

This reunion was held every year in a similar fashion and, after four years, in 1992, the Ingoldmells Church became known as The Royal Arthur Church and the stained-glass window replaced with the Royal Navy ships badge. Worth a visit to admire.

In 1991, while on stage giving my yearly report, I said that I had walked around Butlin's and had not seen anything alluding to how the site had been used during WWII. A member asked me, "Well, why don't you put something there?" I said I would try.

**"As soon as I entered the club, I was mobbed by men pushing large amounts of money into my hands"**

Before the next reunion, I came to Skegness a few days early to go to the banks and businesses to ask for funding. I was generally told to try again later. The trouble was that I lived 220 miles away!

It took 11 years but, finally, I had the funds. I designed an obelisk and took my drawings to a monumental masons company to have it made and erected on site at Butlin's. I was very pleased with it and in the remaining years, we held our meetings there. In 2001, we were even honoured by having the First Sea Lord, Sir Nigel Essenhigh, come to spend the reunion with us and personally meet and talk with the members. I got to know him well - a very nice man.

In 2006, the committee decided that, as the members attending reunions had decreased, it would be better to end the parade and reunions. I didn't agree but was outvoted.

When we had our closing meeting, I made them a solemn promise that

while I lived, those who fought in WWII would be remembered. I am an ex-Scoutmaster and a man of my word. I had made a promise to the WWII sailors, and I would do my very best to keep it.

In 2019, 13 years later, I told the Association's General Secretary that I wanted to march again with the remaining WWII veterans, plus serving



NIGEL COATES / WIKIPEDIA

**Caption: The obelisk, designed by Ron, at Butlin's in Skegness**

Navy servicemen and women. He advised me to contact the Royal Navy Commodore. I tried but, unfortunately, he was unobtainable. I then tried the director of Butlin's to ask if we could use the site. He was abroad somewhere. I was getting nowhere and losing time!

I had no luck contacting anyone over Christmas so it was February before I had an offer from Butlin's to house and feed the parade members for free. But there were more problems - the Royal Navy could not let me have 50 sailors. Then in 2020, the pandemic hit.

Eventually, on 9 May of this year, we held a much smaller Remembrance event around the obelisk. I was pleased with this, though disappointed that it would not achieve my aim of informing the younger public of the history attached to their town during WWII. I couldn't be there due to ill health, but the National President, Admiral Duncan Potts, attended. I had kept my promise in the best way I could.

I'm very pleased to have put heart and soul into preserving the memory of those who lived through those terrible years of war. I have since received a personal letter from the Admiral thanking me for my work. I can honestly say that it has been my honour. 🇬🇧



AGENTURFOTOGRAFIN / ADOBE STOCK



## Contact details

**Contact address** Blind Veterans UK,  
3 Queen Square, London,  
W1N 3AR, **0300 111 22 33**

**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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