

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

October 2020

## Screen time

How Virtual Intro Week helped us connect



### Inside:

The meaning of Remembrance  
Your Operations Team update  
National Creative Project



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

# Seasonal change

Hello, and a warm welcome – weather permitting – to your October edition of *Review* magazine. Well, the weather has finally changed and we've moved out of the sweltering heat of summer and into the somewhat cooler temperatures of autumn. For me this is welcome on two fronts at least, I'm not a 'hot' person, and so dislike heated weather, and also surely because autumn is the most beautiful of all the seasons.

Yet many people struggle with their mental wellbeing at this time of year more than any other. There are many possible reasons why - including a change in the light – and it can prove to be a severely challenging time. If you're one of the people who find this, then our newly-founded well-connected team has produced a guide for you in this issue of how to cope more effectively. Even if you think it doesn't apply to you, give it a read - it's full of handy hints and tips.

Autumn also means that we're moving into Remembrance season, with the National Memorial Service just weeks away. As many of you know there will be major changes this year because of the sadly ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, which will impact on our – and every

**“Autumn also means that we're moving into Remembrance season”**

Service and charity's – presence there. If you are not aware of how things will have changed for this year, then please look at the In Your Community section, which gives you the details on what's likely to take place, as well as details of a virtual service that you can attend.

To remind us why Remembrance is so important, our President Colin Williamson has produced a wonderful two-part feature, which makes for some thoughtful - and at times emotional - reading. Let's not lose heart at how the current situation will affect the way that many of us commemorate those who made the ultimate sacrifice, but focus instead on the ways we can remember.

With very best wishes as ever to you all, until next month. 🍁

**Chris Gilson**  
Editor



## Contents

- 3** Editorial welcome
- 4** Your welcome from our Chief Executive
- 10** Your welcome from our Chairman
- 14** The Festival of Remembrance
- 16** National Support Service
- 18** Amateur Radio Society
- 20** Virtual Introduction Week
- 25** In your community
- 30** National Creative Project
- 33** Archive: The life of Gerry Brereton
- 36** Streaming with Alexa
- 40** Well-connected - Autumn change
- 41** Well-connected - Seasonal eating
- 44** Well-connected - London Marathon
- 46** Family news
- 47** In memory
- 50** Qui Gong
- 51** Contacts

### On the cover

**Our staff get to grips with Microsoft Teams on the new virtual Introduction Week**



# International innovation

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

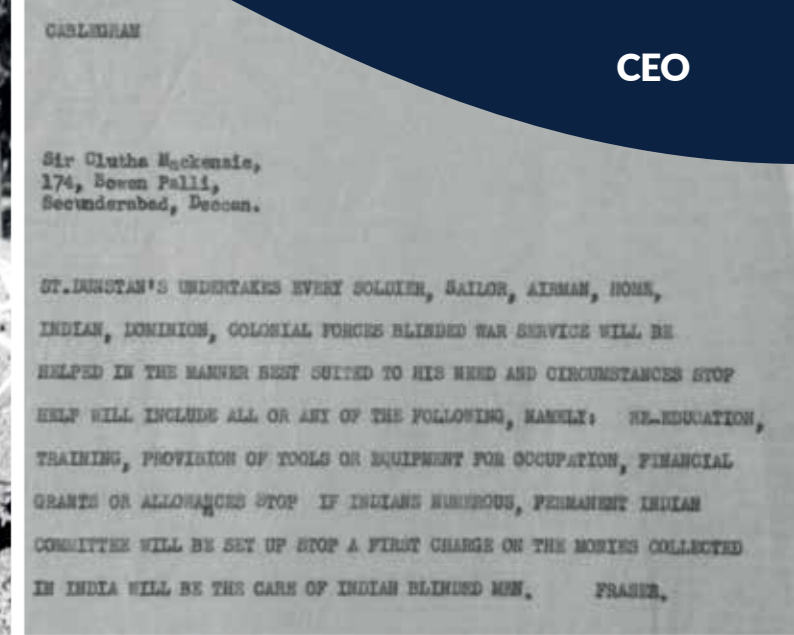
It seems as though Covid-19 is going to be with us for quite a while longer and that we will need to settle into our different ways of working through the winter months at least. The community teams are busier than ever with new ways and ideas of providing support and information for our Members, and the Blind Veterans UK family remains in remarkably good spirits despite all the challenges. My heartfelt thanks to you all for your understanding and encouragement during difficult times.

In my last *Review* column I talked about the nature of our charity, our history and heritage and what that might say about our future as we anticipate the world post Covid-19. I thought I might continue this theme and look to our international interests.

Blind Veterans UK has always had an international aspect to it. As a charity founded as a result of the

outbreak of a global conflict in 1915, this was perhaps inevitable to some extent. However, our founder Sir Arthur Pearson and his successor as Chairman Ian Fraser (later Lord Fraser) both adopted an internationalist approach, collaborating in distinctive and sometimes unusual ways with individuals and organisations from overseas.

It is hard to see how we could have come into being at all without the kindness of the German-born American philanthropist Otto Kahn, whose loan of his St Dunstan's property in Regent's Park to Sir Arthur enabled a visionary ideal to become a concrete reality. The very first man visited by Sir Arthur after being blinded in the early days of the war was a Belgian, Oscar Daumont, and we went on to receive a substantial number of overseas Members during the First World War, the majority from what are



**Caption: We have always maintained a strong international presence**

now Commonwealth countries. To give an indication as to the numbers, our annual report for 1921 states that, by this point, training had been completed for 70 Australians, 63 Canadians, 20 New Zealanders and 10 South Africans as well as a smattering from various other countries, notably Belgium.

**An internationalist approach**  
The internationalist approach adopted

by Pearson benefitted us in terms of funding. The BFB (British, French, Belgian) Permanent Blind Relief War Fund established by the American businessman George Kessler and his wife Cora Parsons in 1915 saw committees established in those three countries to raise and distribute funds for the war-blinded. Pearson was chosen to chair the British committee and we were the



major beneficiary. As mentioned last month, our blind veteran Robert Middlemiss visited the United States and Canada under the Fund's aegis on a long promotional speaking and fundraising tour. Otto Kahn also became involved with the Fund from 1916 while the famous deaf-blind author and activist Helen Keller was also involved, and indeed the organisation which later merged with another, now bears her name, as Helen Keller International, flourishing today with a rather different remit.

### Useful connections

Staff and volunteers occasionally provided other interesting and potentially useful overseas connections - for example one of our VAD voluntary nurses in Regent's Park was Esther Cleveland, daughter of the former American President Grover Cleveland. However Pearson's unique vision and ground breaking ideas were most powerfully carried overseas by the veterans themselves. Although some who came from other countries decided to settle in this country, many returned to their homelands and some of them proved highly influential there. In some cases they set up organisations modelled upon or influenced by us. These included Edwin Baker's key role as one of the founders of the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, and of the Sir Arthur Pearson

Association, the latter specifically for the country's war-blinded. New Zealander Clutha Mackenzie (later Sir Clutha) was elected to its House of Representatives and developed the small Jubilee Institute for the Blind into a comprehensive New Zealand Institute for the Blind. South Africa's Mike Bowen became a Member of Parliament and the first Chairman of the country's National Council for the Blind.

Other important international links after the First World War included Evergreen, the institution for the war-blinded set up in Baltimore, in the United States. Sir Arthur spoke there in 1919. It is striking to note also how we were happy to help those who had not long ago been enemy combatants. The December 1918 Review carries a report on the care of the German war-blinded, noting with concern the absence of a central organisation similar to our own. After the Second World War, Lord Fraser helped the post-war government approve a society for the war-blinded, initially called St Georg, which had 4,000 members in the British occupied zone and in Hesse.

Fraser travelled widely and collaborated with many overseas organisations during his time as our Chairman. He also adopted an open

approach to receiving veterans from overseas. Much as the charity had willingly looked after Belgian soldiers in the First World War, so we extended similar hospitality to soldiers from Poland, France, Holland, Belgium, Yugoslavia, and Estonia during the Second World War. That conflict also saw us take on two extraordinary major new initiatives. The first was in South Africa. The only realistic way that those blinded in the Middle East were to reach us was by travelling via the Cape of Good Hope, and we realised that a major staging post would be necessary. In addition to establishing a committee in Cairo to help make contact with the blinded and



**Caption: Nick Caplin**

arrange their travel, in 1942 we opened a major training and rehabilitation base, called Tembani, in South Africa. We used it until late 1945. After it closed, what is known today as St Dunstan's South Africa continued, with a new base in Cape Town, as a quasi-new permanent and formally independent organisation with responsibility for the ongoing welfare of the country's war-blinded.

The second major initiative was in India. We had provided some financial support to those from there blinded serving in the First World War, but in the Second asked Sir Clutha Mackenzie to help, and he effectively set up a smaller-scale version of us there, in Dehra Dun. Although not all the men who went there stayed for long-term training, it was used by at least 400 people.

We were also happy to use our expert knowledge to help develop services for the war-blinded in countries where our own blind veterans had not settled and our influence had not already been felt. In 1945, our Brighton Centre manager, or Commandant as the post was then termed, George Dacre, visited Nigeria, Sierra Leone and the Gold Coast (now Ghana) to study, assess requirements and advise; this eventually helped lead to the establishment of a new training centre in Lagos, →

which we also supported by supplying equipment.

### **Paying more attention**

After the Second World War, with no massive conflicts causing a sudden major influx of newly blinded veterans, we were able to pay more attention to new ideas and initiatives which would help improve the lives of our blind veterans, and indeed often the wider blind community, in this country and abroad. Much of this effort was international and research, and consultation on new technologies



**Caption: Middlemiss with Helen Keller**

was an important field for us. For example in 1965 we held a five-day International Conference on Sensory Devices for the Blind in London. There were representatives from Australia, Austria, France, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and the USA as well as the UK. This included research we had conducted ourselves at the National Physical Laboratory, which trialled twenty-five different ultrasonic aids with different groups of blind people. Other subjects discussed included synthetic speech devices and prototype mobility devices, including a fascinating-sounding design for ultrasonic spectacles by which echoes received from objects heard in the vicinity were heard in the ears, leaving both hands free.

Today our international work continues to build on our historical legacy. Our President Colin Williamson's inspiration led in 2011 to the creation of Project Gemini, established as a forum for bringing blind veterans together from the UK and US to share ideas, learning and comradeship. Gemini was the name of the first ever transatlantic communication cable linking the US with the UK and is also the star sign of those born in May-June, the time when we usually gather at one of our centres for Project Gemini. Project Gemini has developed into a highly successful

annual exchange programme that now includes St Dunstan's South Africa.

The programme excites interest wherever it goes, and the Gemini group are well known in Westminster and Washington and are frequently showcased as a fine example of international collaboration. Although the US Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) are larger in scale than ourselves, they follow our practices and procedures with great interest. It is clear to me that, much as was the case in the First World War, we continue to play an important leadership role in the development of rehabilitation for blinded veterans.

### **Leading in research**

This is also the case in research. Although our research department is relatively young, it is establishing a reputation internationally as being the leading research authority for the blind veteran community. BVA has embraced us as their research partner and we are developing a Memorandum of Understanding that will see us leading for them on research involving, and on behalf of, the beneficiaries of both charities. Coincidentally, our Joint Ocular Trauma Task Force, mentioned last month, will shortly be publishing its first guidelines for military and civilians on avoiding ocular trauma. Building on this success, we are



**Caption: Sheridan and Bowen from Blaxhall 'Blindness His Servant'**

developing relationships much further afield, including Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Israel, Australia, New Zealand, Ukraine and Brazil. Fortunately modern communications allows us to connect with different parts of the globe without climbing on an aircraft, although it does make for an interesting working day for our research team.

Sir Arthur Pearson's inspiration and example continue to inspire us to this day and going forward, to build and develop international relationships, to increase awareness of the challenges faced by blind veterans among international partners, to establish and promote best practice and to advance our thinking in rehabilitation and support. Together, we are greater than the sum of our parts. 🌍



SVEN BÖTTCHER / ADOBE STOCK

**Caption: The guitar - sadly not my forte, and more often than not found under the bed**

# Both full and fulfilling

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

I think I can reasonably claim to have led a pretty full and fulfilling life. It therefore puzzles me why I am so often troubled by a niggling concern that it

has also been peppered with missed opportunity. I am not talking here about my career – or indeed my family life – but more about those little things

“The wine cellar is looking very healthy and my skill at Gummy Drop is sky-rocketing”

that I might have done which might have broadened my interests.

All my life I have enjoyed music and, other than a short schoolboy flirtation with brass (more exactly as a pretty mediocre third trumpet in the school orchestra), I have always hankered after becoming more musically proficient. I particularly like jazz and blues and – in my dreams – I always saw myself giving Muddy Waters, Eric ‘slow-hand’ Clapton or BB King a run for their money. I made a start. I let it be known that I had ambition in this direction and – sure enough – one year a guitar appeared as a present.

And, after unwrapping it and feigning surprise (let’s face it, disguising the shape of a guitar is not an easy thing) that is as far as it went. Pricked by guilt, when I was sent to Afghanistan, I took the guitar with me with a vow to learn how to play it. I also probably imagined that the deputy commanding general arriving with a guitar slung over his shoulder would look pretty cool. In fact, when I parted company with my close protection team after their six-

month tour, the team leader confessed that their first shared thought was, “Oh Gawd - what a git!”. In the end it didn’t matter; the guitar only emerged from its case two or three times in the first week, and thereafter stayed under my bunk.

When I retired, I drew up a mental list of all those things I would use to fill my free time. Learn to paint with watercolours. Write that book that’s been on my mind for so many years. Transcribe my parents’ photo albums to digital format and share them with my siblings. Complete the family tree I’ve been sporadically researching for so long. The full list is considerably longer when you include the current Mrs Luker’s determination to keep me occupied as well. All done? No, barely started.

## Not cracking on

Lockdown should have removed any last reasons not to crack on but, as ever, I found every excuse to do other things. On the plus side the garden has never looked better, the wine cellar is looking very healthy and my skill at Gummy Drop is sky-rocketing. I have also walked my socks off, which gives ample time to not just soak up nature but also to let my mind wander. But the truth is, taking that first step to turn thoughts into real action has always been the hurdle. Writing this →

monthly note for the Review, serves as a good example. I do love writing but it takes a team of carthorses to drag me to the keyboard (as our editor will attest).

But what I have missed most over lock-down, which paradoxically often provides a strong excuse for my inactivity in some of these areas, is the breadth of social interaction that has been such a big part of my life.

All this contrasts markedly with what I have discovered in the charity since I



**Caption: Paul Luker**

have been involved. Before lockdown I used to visit Brighton frequently, and always made a point of showing off to my guests the activities on offer to our Members.

For some Members, the motivation to participate has been an unexpected opportunity to return to previous past-times and hobbies but now with the means to overcome some of the impediments of sight loss. More striking for me, though, has been those members who might otherwise have become couch potatoes but who have, through discovering the astonishing range of activity that we offer, opened new doors which enrich their lives and create new friendships.

### **Re-opening doors**

Not unnaturally, suspending these activities given the restrictions that Covid-19 has imposed upon us, has been a major concern to trustees and the Blind Veterans UK team. Which is why I am so delighted and relieved that it has come up with an innovative way to reopen some of these doors.

The initiative, known as the National Creative Project, aims to capitalise upon the real and virtual links that we have established within the Blind Veterans UK National Support Service in order to build opportunities to pursue Members' creative interests

which would hitherto have been largely confined to the charity's Centres. Not only does this unlock a much-valued storehouse of diverse activity, but it also potentially makes these activities far more widely available across the communities.

In this *Review* you can discover at leisure the range of activity that is becoming available. As an appetizer, I picked up about a dozen topics, all of which would spark my interest were I a Member (and would have set my mother on fire with enthusiasm were she still with us). I was particularly drawn to the Creative Book which allows all of us to capture a personal vignette about what the Covid-19 lock-down has meant to each of us. I especially like the idea that this is not about a single medium which would solely attract a would-be Pulitzer prize-winner. Far from it. It is about using any medium that can then be physically captured (prose, poetry, spoken word transcripts, artwork and so on) which majors on the real experiences of the writer not the quality of their written word. And if you are in any way doubtful about your personal skills, help will be on hand to assist with modest editing.

### **Something else on offer**

If the Creative Book doesn't float your boat, I am convinced that

**“For some Members, the motivation to participate has been an unexpected opportunity”**

there will something else on offer that does. And to be clear, as with much that happens in the world of Blind Veterans UK, the benefits are potentially much more than just dabbling with a new past-time. This initiative plays an important role in recovering human social interaction which remains so vital to our physical and mental well-being.

As you might have already determined from the opening to this piece, despite my failure to follow up on my own creative ambitions, I do have a number of well-honed skills. Close to the top of that list is that I have turned indolence into an art form. At the very top of the list though, is the creativity I put into finding excuses for my idle behaviour. Now, one of the important roles for any chairman is that of leadership. However, in this case I urge you most strongly not to follow my appalling example. Give the National Creativity Project a go; I know that you will find something there to absorb you. And, if you do, that might motivate me to make a small contribution to the Creative Book. Maybe. 🍷

# The meaning of Remembrance

As Remembrance Day approaches, our President **Colin Williamson** asks ‘What does the word Remembrance actually mean to a veteran?’

As a young boy growing up, I was always fascinated by the lead-up to Armistice Day and especially, the day itself. It was one of the few occasions in my young life that I spent time solely in the company of my father, without my twin sister and older brother tagging along. My dad, who had served during the Second World War with the 87th Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery and was part of the Eighth Army fighting in North Africa and Italy under the command of Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery, didn't speak much about his time in the military so to witness him catching up with old army mates at our local war memorial on Remembrance Sunday was for me a glimpse into his past.

I still remember to this day the sight of him sitting in the kitchen polishing his medals the day before Remembrance Sunday and making sure that his shoes

were spit-shined and ready to pass inspection. On the day itself, my father and I walked the twenty minutes or so to the local park where our memorial stands, usually meeting up with fellow veterans along the way where we made



**Caption: Remembrance Day last year**

our way to the spot where his army pals tended to gather. There followed a round of handshakes and some gentle leg-pulling, mainly as I recall centered around medals, and it was quite obvious to me even at such a young age that I was witnessing something special; the unique bond of camaraderie that only exists in the military and which, in those particular circumstances, was forged on the battlefields of El Alamein, Tobruk, Basra, Sidi Barrani and Sicily to name but a few.

## The supreme sacrifice

I suppose that I was more or less conditioned from a young age to see Remembrance Day as one of those very special occasions in life, providing us with an opportunity to remember friends and family we may have lost in conflict, to reflect on the price of war and a chance to honour and respect those who are no longer with us and who made the supreme sacrifice.

Another occasion that I remember vividly was when I was stationed in Germany with my regiment in the mid-seventies. We were to hold a Remembrance Sunday service at the local Church in Munsterlager, in Lower Saxony, close to the important British Army garrison in Bergan-Hohne. We marched, dressed in our Number Two uniforms complete with bulled boots and dress caps, from the barracks down

to the church and filtered inside. During the service, the padre read out the names of two members of the regiment that had lost their lives in the period of civil unrest in Northern Ireland a couple of years or so before I had joined.

I still remember to this day seeing tough men, hardened soldiers with lots of service and operational tours under their belts with their heads in their hands, trying to avoid eye contact with fellow soldiers, as their minds went back to those dark days in Belfast and Londonderry respectively when the lives of Gunner Cliff Loring, aged 18, and 21 year old Gunner Paul Jackson were snuffed out. That to me was a powerful reminder of what Remembrance means to a veteran.

One of the most overriding reasons why we as a nation should never forget the sacrifices made by so many is the fact that we now live in relative peace. This is down to the brave men and women who gave their lives so unselfishly for their country in conflicts around the world. On Remembrance Sunday we should acknowledge their bravery and never forget the heavy price that they paid, and continue to pay. Wear your poppy with pride, it is a symbol of remembrance and hope. 🇮🇷

■ **Next issue: The A-Z of Remembrance**



# A helping hand

This month, we spoke with our Director of Operations **Nicky Shaw** to learn more about the National Support Service, and what is currently on offer to you, our Members

## How have you supported our Members though the pandemic?

Since March, we've been working hard to keep in contact with our veterans and help in any way we can. By the end of April 2020, we contacted 99% of our membership and to date have

supported 3,003 Members with a range of things, from befriending telephone calls to practical tasks like shopping. Our volunteers have also made a total of 3,737 befriending calls to those we look after, which is an amazing contribution.

## Many Members tell us that they are keen to return to a Centre, when are you planning to reopen them?

At the moment, we've opened our Centres at a reduced capacity to those Members most emotionally affected by the pandemic. We currently have isolation and testing measures in place to make sure we adhere to Government guidelines.

Although isolation may not seem ideal, it doesn't mean Members will be alone. Our staff will visit regularly, and we'll offer activities prior to arrival based on their interests, hobbies or talents. To find out more about this service, Members should contact their caseworker.



**Caption: Staff continue to help our veterans**

## The pandemic has had an impact on the health and wellbeing of many, how are you offering support to these Members?

Over the past few months, we've been helping our Members around the country link up with each other by phone to talk about their interests, or simply have a chat over a cup of tea. We are also trialling some new 'live event' telephone groups, where members can listen to live cricket matches, ceremonial events or other events of interest. We will share more about this very soon.

Our newly launched National Creative Project allows Members to access a variety of creative, meaningful activities to support their well-being. Staff will help to access this fantastic opportunity and you can find out more in this edition of the Review Magazine.

## The pandemic has largely put a halt to face-to-face services. How can our veterans now access rehabilitation support?

In August 2020, we launched our new National Remote Rehabilitation Service, which provides Members with the opportunity to receive rehabilitation support remotely. This includes a range of services to help with independence and safety at home - for example assistance with technology, to low vision assessments

**“Our Member Support Hub continues to run as usual and we're working hard to restore our recycling service”**

and support with health and wellbeing. If you would like to access this service, please speak to your caseworker.

## If Members are in need of equipment or don't require a piece of equipment anymore, what can they do?

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

Nicky sends her best wishes to all of our Members at this time, and thanks them for their ongoing support of the Blind Veterans UK family.

# On your frequency

**John Houlihan**, the secretary of the Blind Veterans UK Amateur Radio Society explains that it's still alive and well and how you can get involved

The Blind Veterans UK Amateur Radio Society (BVUK ARS) members usually plan to meet three times a year, at our Brighton and Llandudno Centres, but the best laid plans are on hold this year.

However, should you tune across the amateur radio bands, you will hear that radio clubs and societies across the country and overseas are more active than ever.



**Caption: Ray Peart**

BVUK ARS meets on the air, 0930-1000 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday.

At that time the national radio societies of the RAF, Royal Navy, and Royal Signals are there, together with the National Radio Centre at Bletchley Park, beekeepers, horologists, historic military radios, local clubs and more - sometimes it is hard to find a clear



**Caption: Harry 'Doc' Docherty**

frequency. By using the internet, you can now listen in without a radio and aerial. It's quite a simple procedure to do, and here's how.

A network of web-connected radios already exists, and can be found at [hackgreensdr.org](http://hackgreensdr.org). There you will find a set of controls for you to use.

To find BVUK ARS operating its 'net' you need to:

- Select '80m'
- Set the bandwidth to LSB  
Set sound to JAVA or HTML5 to suit your browser
- Move the frequency scale slider to 3.715 or enter same in the frequency box



**Caption: James Nichol**

- Move the slider across the signal 'waterfall' until speech pitch is natural

**You should then hear,**

- G0FHK** Ray Peart - chairman
- G3TIX** Dick Hardy
- G4ZJO** Harry 'Doc' Docherty
- G0EUN** James Nichol
- G3ZFZ** Gordon Gibson
- M6ELA** Edna McGoff
- 2E0TGF** Alistair McGoff
- 2E0THP** Andy Thorpe
- M0JPA** John Wake
- G4BLJ** John Houlihan - secretary and scribe

The website may need a little perseverance, but our chairman Ray Peart, using a screen reader is able to work it.

The latest 'must have' is DV – Digital Voice, which is also on the web, Ray, 'Doc', and Dick lead the way. The Society has its own DV 'room', and Armed Forces veterans from both Canada and the USA have been introduced by 'Doc' - it is a busy meeting place.

There is also a web news page for the society, which can be found at [qrz.com](http://qrz.com). To access it, you need to enter 'MX0SBV' and to conclude, '73', which is a radio telegrapher's sign off, or as 'Doc' says - 'Toodle ooo the noo'. 🍌



**Caption: Our staff Members get started on the Virtual Intro Week**

# Screen time

The Covid-19 pandemic has meant we have to hold our Introduction Weeks differently. **Laura Weir** finds out how virtual technology is aiding us.

In March, I visited our Llandudno Centre for one of its introduction weeks, which are fundamental to the start of each Member's journey with the charity. They allow them to meet other blind veterans who are in a similar situation, as well as learn about the differing ways the charity can support them.

Sadly, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the closure of both of our Centres, these can no longer go ahead. The Rehabilitation teams in both Brighton and Llandudno know how important these weeks are in giving new Members training and advice, so they decided to design a course which

could be delivered remotely. Led by Mark Hollis, Llandudno Rehabilitation Support Team Leader, they have created a week long course which is delivered virtually via Microsoft Teams online software. There is one hourly session a day, with an optional afternoon period of mindfulness, IT training, emotional support or a quiz.

The sessions have been designed to be delivered by our various community staff, with the help of Rehabilitation support teams from Llandudno and Brighton. So far, there have been trial weeks in Communities 4 and 5, with the first introduction weeks taking place in Communities 1 and 19 on 14 September. The plan is for every community to provide these remotely for its new Members during the rest of this year.

"It has been really important to deliver something that is meaningful, social and informative to the Members during this time of uncertainty and disruption," says Mark Hollis. "It has also given the Centre and community staff the opportunity to work collaboratively together in the design and delivery of the course".

As I have already been lucky enough to be involved in an introduction week at the Centre in person, I was curious to see how a virtual week would be

delivered -especially as there wouldn't be the opportunity for Members to take part in physical activities as before. I was kindly invited by Community 1 to observe its first virtual introduction week and to see how it's been adapted.

## Practical and emotional support

Each session was led by Scott Cassidy, Community Team Leader, as well as Community Support Workers, Jan Alpin and Karen McKeown who provided each Member with practical and emotional support throughout the week. Kevin Alderton, Working Age Members Liaison Officer, was also on each call and was fantastic at relating with the Members and giving them advice based on his own experiences. Rehabilitation and Training Support Workers, Donna Tookey and Adam →



**Caption: John Fraser**

Roberts were also on hand during each session as they specialise in the introduction weeks.

Over the week, there was an hour-long session every morning which focused on a different topic, with the option of afternoon sessions such as IT training. On Monday morning, I observed the first Welcome session where Members Dave, Jim, John and Mark all met virtually for

the first time. Kev Alderton began the call by talking about the charity and his own experiences - both the challenges he's faced and about his time as a Member. Each veteran was then given the chance to introduce themselves and tell their story. It was apparent that Kev's story, as well as the support and positive encouragement from the team, made the new Members feel comfortable in sharing their personal stories.

The second session on Tuesday morning was called "support networks" and focused on the emotional and physical support that our Members have at home. I didn't observe this session, but when I joined Wednesday's call it was already obvious how much more confident each member was in opening up to the group and offering their own advice to their fellow Member's issues. It's difficult to talk

in large groups over a phone call, but everyone was given a chance to speak and there were lots of friendly jokes throughout the session.

Wednesday's call was called "home and community", and discussed the challenges that our veterans face in both these settings. Julie Bewley from Region 1, led the session which encouraged the group to discuss →



We talked with Jim Irvine – one of the Members who took part in the virtual introduction week. Here are his thoughts.

**When did you become a Member and how did you hear about Blind Veterans UK?**

I joined us in November last year. I first heard about the charity when I was given some leaflets by an eye specialist. I served in the Royal Navy for eight and a half years, so I decided to have a look into it.

**How did you lose your sight?**

About 12 or 13 years ago I went to the opticians and they said that I have bad scarring in both eyes. When I left the Navy, I did a steel industry apprenticeship in South Africa. Specialists think that I got the scarring from a virus which I caught either in the Navy or in South Africa. I only have about 30% of vision now, and I have no depth perception.

**How have you found the government restrictions with your sight loss e.g. social distancing?**

I don't really go out very often

anymore, but my daughter takes me shopping every week and has been a fantastic support to me. I sadly lost my wife in 2005, and it was tough bringing up a teenage daughter on my own, but we are very close. Her and my grandchildren pull me through.

**Were you disappointed when your introduction week at the centre was cancelled?**

I was, because I was really looking forward to meeting some other Members, the staff and getting to know the charity a bit more.

**How have you found the virtual introduction week so far?**

It's been great! Very informative, and it's been helpful to talk to other Members who are in a similar situation to you. The team has been really supportive, and Kev has been great.

**What do you hope to gain from being a Member of Blind Veterans UK?**

My confidence. I used to be a very confident person and I'd like to gain that back. I'm very open minded with everything the charity has to offer and I'm willing to try new things and learn new skills.

**How has the charity supported you so far?**

They have given me an Alexa which is great for listening to music, and a computer which I love because I can now contact all my Navy friends on Facebook. I've missed the banter and jokes and the computer has helped me reconnect with them. I've also really enjoyed the banter on the call this week as well - hopefully we can all meet safely at the Centre one day.

the skills they have and about the ways that they can build on these. Different types of equipment and courses, such as sighted guided training, were spoken about as ways that we help support them. Cooking was a challenge mentioned by most Members, including Kev, and it was great to hear them giving each other tips such as having a contrast in colour between food and chopping board. A very powerful statement was made by Kev during this session when he said: "It's unavoidable to get frustrated but once you accept your sight loss, you'll have the motivation to move forward".

### A sense of belonging

The fourth morning session focused on "health and wellbeing" and the group Members discussed their physical and emotional health. Community Support Worker Karen McKeown, led the call and did a great job at sensitively addressing the issues that were raised. Again, it was obvious that the four new veterans had bonded over the week through the openness and support they showed for each other. The fifth and final call about "purposeful activity" took place the following day.

Reflecting on the week, Scott Cassidy mused, "These weeks foster an incredible sense of belonging and give our Members a real taste of how we can help meet their needs. Coronavirus



**Caption: New Member Dave Nickisson**

put a stop to these, yet Mark and his team have done an amazing job to ensure we have the resources to deliver these sessions remotely".

Before this virtual introduction week, I wasn't too sure how it could be delivered with all the restrictions in place. However, after observing the process in action and hearing the Members develop as a team, I think the virtual introduction week will still have the same impact as the Centre-based one. The veterans taking part might not be able to do the physical activities as before, or meet each other face-to-face, but they can still be given the support that they need and can form those important bonds with each other - bonds that one hopes will last the rest of their lives. 🍷

# In your community

## Hampshire Member grabs all three at annual photography competition

Member Will Phillips, from Fareham in Hampshire has placed first, second and third in the 'Open Print' category of the Disabled Photographers Society 2020 Annual Exhibition, as well as placing second in the 'Nature Projected' category.

Will originally learned photography from his father who was a professional photographer, and later mastered his craft at art college. He has suffered from an eye condition since birth and as the condition worsened, had to make adaptations to carry on his passion.

He says: "There weren't many adaptations available in the '80s so I had to make do, but these days I use a magnifier which makes it easier to read the menus. The cameras I use have to be black, as white on black stands out more and a tactile camera with different shaped buttons really helps too."

Will entered the competition as he wanted to do something with the photos that he was taking. He says: I joined the Disabled Photographer's Society as they have portfolios you can put your images in and competitions you can enter.

"I was amazed when I found out that I'd received four awards, including →



**Caption: Will Phillips**



**Caption: Will's Three Crows in a Row prize-winning image**

the top three prizes in 'Open Print'. I didn't expect it and I was over the moon to be honest.

"I like to photograph architecture and abstract concepts that others may not think to take. It's quite an eclectic mix as you can see in my entries to the exhibition."

Will served in the Territorial Army for four years between 1975-79 as part of the Army Catering Corps in Portsmouth. Suffering from Cone Dystrophy since birth, Will's condition worsened over time until the retina in his right eye detached in 2011, leaving him with very limited vision.

In the 'Open Print' category Will placed first for 'Column BM', second for 'Stripes' and third for 'Fan'. In the 'Nature Projected' category Will placed second for 'Three Crows in a Row'.

The photographs will be exhibited at The Hub in Lichfield between 2-30 October.

## Thyme for planting

For those Members that received your seeds of Thyme to grow, we are planning to send out a Christmas Bulbs pack over the coming months.

We would love to hear about your thoughts and experiences during your time of watching your bulbs growing. You will be invited to our monthly 'Time for Gardening' group calls where you can share your thoughts, and enjoy discussion, talks and fun quizzes with a green fingered theme.

■ **Please contact our Bookings line on 01273 391 434 if you would like to take part or know more.**

## Lincolnshire man takes on 200 mile Lakes to Louth challenge

Stacey Whitworth from Louth, Lincolnshire has completed a 200-mile walking challenge from the Lake District to his home in Louth and raised a total of £554.20 for Blind Veterans UK.

He decided to set himself the challenge after all the other charity events he had planned to do this year were cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. He says: "I've supported the charity since 2013 and I have done many fundraising events for Blind Veterans UK such as the London to Brighton 100k. I missed doing something to test myself and charities need the support more than ever at the moment, so I came up with something which I could do safely at a distance and that would raise some much needed funds".



**Caption: Stacey Whitworth**

Stacey completed the challenge last month and has so far raised a total of £2,771, which was divided between five charities; Blind Veterans UK, Guide Dogs UK, Alzheimer's Society, MIND, and Papyrus. Stacey says: "I did the challenge over six days and it was a very tough week! I did 40 miles a day and 20 miles on the first and last day. I was chased by cows and I got really lost at one point because it was very misty and I couldn't read my map properly! I really did enjoy it though and friends came to meet me along with way with tea and sandwiches. I had lots of messages of support from people from all over the UK. During the week, Chris Butler from Blind Veterans UK travelled 400 miles to come and thank me for doing the challenge – I was overwhelmed by people's kindness".

Stacey has been raising funds for Blind Veterans UK after he temporarily lost his sight when he was in an accident in 2013. He says: "I was lucky to regain my sight. When I did, I started to read other people's stories about living with sight loss and Blind Veterans UK was mentioned a lot. I learnt about the vital support that they give to those that were in a similar position to me. A few months later, I did my first challenge for them, met so many people from the charity and have been raising money for them ever since". →

## National Service of Remembrance - important news

I am writing to inform you of the latest news from the Royal British Legion (RBL) concerning Remembrance. On Sunday, 8 November 2020, the National Service of Remembrance is planned to be held at the Cenotaph on Whitehall in London. Due to



**Caption: The National Memorial Arboretum**

the Covid-19 pandemic, the RBL is continually reviewing the event, and to ensure better clarity on the situation in November, the Legion will communicate its full plans for this year's Cenotaph in early autumn.

We have received information and understand that the number of participants will be reduced from 10,000 to a maximum of 2,500 to ensure that government guidelines are followed and that social distancing is adhered to. As a result we have been allocated 10 spaces for Members who are able to march independently as we will only have two guides to accompany the group. This year white canes are permitted. Due to these restrictions we are unable to accommodate Escorts or Guides, offer transport to or from the event, or provide any accommodation or catering for Members.

Sadly these restrictions mean that the ballot for this year will now be void and our Operations team will identify which Members will march.

We know that this will be disappointing news for many of you, but the safety of our Members is always paramount in our planning and we hope you understand the reasons for these decisions based on the restrictions placed on this year's events.

## Telephone Groups

Do you have an interest or hobby or is there something you would like to talk to others with or about?

If so then one of our telephone groups might be for you. We would love to hear from anyone interested in joining a regular telephone group or perhaps even starting a new group.

■ **If interested contact your Community Support Worker to discuss.**

## A virtual Remembrance

The National Memorial Arboretum hosts our annual Remembrance Service for those who have donated to Blind Veterans UK in memory of a loved one.

Unfortunately this year, the event is unable to go ahead as normal due to Covid-19. Therefore we are taking our service online. You are invited to the premiere of our Virtual Remembrance Service at 2pm on 2 November. You can join our virtual service led by Reverend Clare Callanan on our Facebook page.

If you don't have a Facebook account

or are unable to access it on the day, don't worry - we will add the video to our webpage after the premiere so you can still view it.

■ **It will be found at [blindveterans.org.uk/nmaservice](https://blindveterans.org.uk/nmaservice)**

## Our virtual exhibition fundraiser 2020 - update

Thank you to every Member who created and donated a piece of artwork on the theme of Landscape for this year's exhibition fundraiser. It is clear so much time and effort has gone into creating these pieces of artwork and thanks to you, our Blind Veterans UK artists, we now have a diverse and eye-catching collection of artwork to exhibit and sell to benefit our Charity.

The virtual exhibition runs from 12-30 October, and you can find it online at [blindveterans.org.uk/artexhibition](https://blindveterans.org.uk/artexhibition). Artwork will be auctioned on eBay via the exhibition page.

■ **Please share the virtual exhibition fundraiser information with your friends, family and contacts and for all enquiries call Supporter Services on 0300 111 22 33.** 🇬🇧

# National Creative Project October Programme

## Creative Activities. Creative Book. Creative Circles.

Welcome to the October programme of activities to get involved with from home. Please call our Bookings team on **01273 391 500** for more information or to request an activity pack for the **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES** below – kits and instructions will be posted out to you with the chance to take part in telephone or video chat with other Members if you would like.

### Letter writing:

**'Key Letters' - a project to re-connect, with typed or hand-written letters, using the postal service.** 'E-mail is all very well but the thrill of having a letter arrive on your doorstep is, indeed, a rare gift in these days of technology and fast paced living.'

### "But who will I write to?"

We can make suggestions for correspondents and assist with contacts.

### "But what will I say?"

We can make suggestions for content and help with spelling, grammar and punctuation if required.

### "But I've forgotten how to use my technology!"

Our IT Instructors can give you a call and talk you through the basics again,

(and maybe share some new tips and tricks).

Your helpful kit will include paper, a writing guide, envelopes, pens and organisers.

### Art & Craft:

**'Where there's tea there's hope' - tea cup art project.** As an antidote to the worries of the pandemic, this art project explores the symbolism of a cup of tea. Tea represents comfort, hope and people coming together as a community.

Members are invited to design a tea cup. The designs will form part of a group image to be printed on tea towels, alongside an uplifting phrase referencing tea, such as "life is like a cup of tea, the flavour is all in how you make it" and "with a cup of tea in your hand everything is possible".

This is an open invitation to all of our veterans to have a go, have fun being creative and help us spread a little joy and hope.

### Art:

**Painting for beginners and improvers October project.** A painting challenge with support, for you to learn to paint or improve your skills. We will send a painting project kit if you need it (or you may use your own painting materials). With a new project each month you can sign up for just one or sign up every month. There will be the



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**Caption: Join the National Creative Project**

chance to meet other members and our Art & Craft team for chat and tips by phone or video call if you'd like.

### Gardening:

**Time for Thyme.** Take some time for yourself and grow an aromatic herb garden on your window sill. We will send a simple kit with thyme seeds and all you need to get started. As your herb grows we would love to keep in touch and hear all about how you are getting on.

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

### Blind Veterans UK CREATIVE BOOK - Now open for contributions

One of the many pleasures of working for Blind Veterans UK is hearing stories of resolve, camaraderie and endurance demonstrated by many. This year has been no exception, and the COVID-19 pandemic has again brought forwards stories of challenges and situations that we could not have foreseen ourselves being in.

Blind Veterans UK wish to capture these real life stories of its Members, members of staff and volunteers, and has launched the "Creative Book" →



Project” as a way of doing so. The “Creative Book” is so called as it will showcase these real life challenges, our thoughts and feelings and our solutions to them through a range of mediums from written word, spoken word, text, artwork and photographs.

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

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

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

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

**We are now open for contributions**

**under the theme of ‘Reflection’**  
If you wish to submit a contribution please let us know in the following way:

**Members:** Please contact your community support worker

**Volunteers:** Please contact your volunteer coordinator

**Blind Veterans UK Staff:** Please contact David Light or Kath Jones-Romain via: [creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk) and we will get back to you with further information of how to submit your contribution.

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

## Creative Hobby Circles

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

**Woodturning, mosaic, painting, woodwork, knitting or gardening.**

For our photographers we have a Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK Photography) and a Photography chat group. For more information on the Photography group please contact:

Mark Pile on **07584 056 459**, or e-mail him at [mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk)



**Caption: Gerry Brereton (centre), with other St Dunstan's Members**

# By Royal Command: the life of blind veteran Gerry Brereton

**Rob Baker** our Information and Archives Executive looks at the life of former Member and singer Gerry Brereton

Over the course of our long history our blind veterans who were of working age when losing their sight have gone on to a very wide range of occupations. A few have done so in roles which

placed them in the public eye, one of these being the actor Esmond Knight, who we featured recently in the *Review*. Another was Gerry Brereton who became well-known as a singer. →

Gerry was born in 1921 and before the Second World War had worked as a plasterer and a dance band musician. Our records give only limited information about his military career but according to these he served in the Pioneer Corps and was injured on manoeuvres: other accounts have details of him serving as a Commando in Italy. He was married, to Kathleen (known as Kay), in 1944 and came to us in 1945. His training with us included learning telephony, and he was one of a number of our telephonists who went on to work for Barclays Bank.



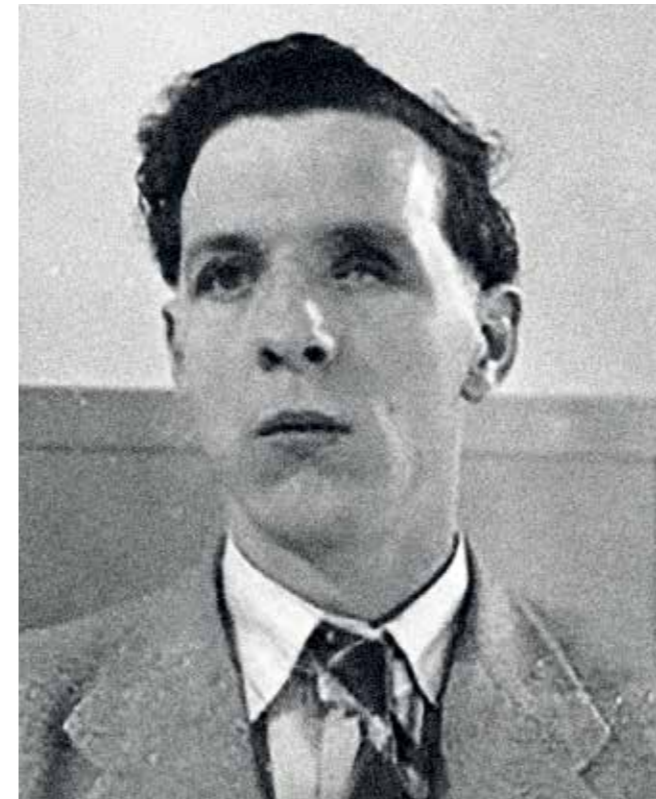
**Caption: On stage - doing what he loved**

**“In 1992 he appeared at a charity event with the comedian Jim Davidson, who himself was recently interviewed by the *Review*”**

### **Keen to resume work**

Gerry, who was a baritone, was however keen to resume work within the music industry. In 1949 he sang on 'Opportunity Knocks', a then popular radio programme which later transferred to TV. However his big break came in 1952 when he was selected to perform at the Royal Command Performance at the London Palladium alongside stars such as Tony Hancock and Vera Lynn, who herself became a great friend to us. Gerry sang 'Here In My Heart' and was very well-received at the event and positively reviewed by the press. That year he also recorded a single, 'Wyoming Lullaby', for the Parlophone record company.

This was the first of 15 singles that Gerry recorded for Parlophone. The biggest hit was 'Hold Me, Thrill Me, Kiss Me' which reached the top ten. Gerry worked with a number of famous performers including trumpeter Eddie Calvert and actress and singer Lind



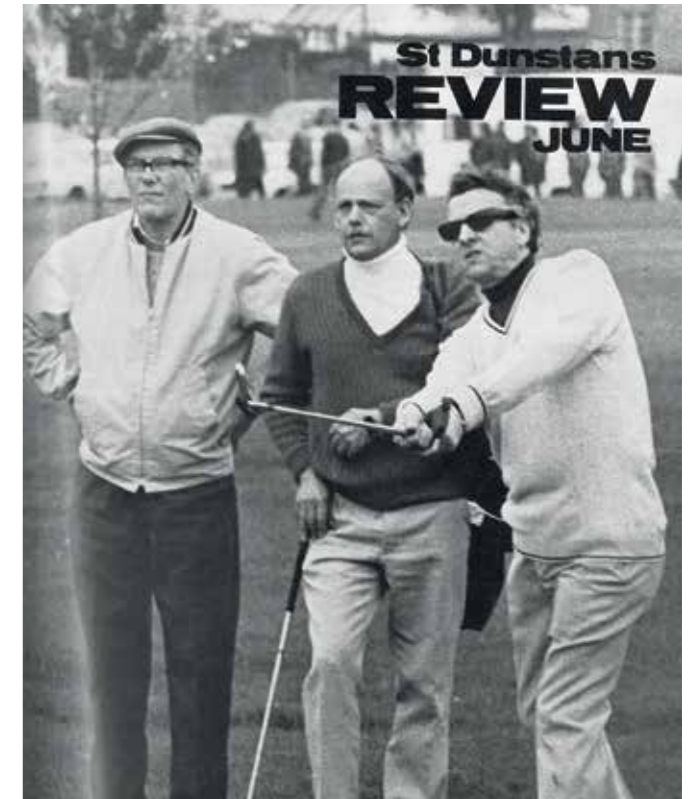
**Caption: Gerry Brereton**

Joyce. Gerry went on to make many appearances on radio and TV and also sang for US forces in Germany in 1969.

Gerry retired from professional singing in 1983 but he was happy to still perform for charity. In 1992 he appeared at a charity event with the comedian Jim Davidson, who himself was recently interviewed by the *Review*. Gerry also enjoyed appearing with his fellow blind veterans, and sang at some of our Christmas revue shows at the Brighton centre.

### **A busy family life**

In addition to his career Gerry had a busy family life with Kay and their



**Caption: Gerry on the links**

four daughters. In his spare time he particularly enjoyed playing golf. Although a few of our blind veterans have golfed, this relatively unusual case of a visually-impaired celebrity playing the sport sometimes brought media attention, with Gerry competing alongside famous names in Pro-Am golf tournaments and also as a member of the Vaudeville Golfing Society. There were also press appearances in 1984 when he scored a hole in one!

Gerry sadly died in 2005. His grandson Tim has kindly supported us by raising funds for us whilst running the Brighton Marathon in 2011 in memory of his grandfather. 🇬🇧



**Caption: Are you getting to grips with your Alexa? Let us know**

# Streaming on with Alexa

Your guide to using your Alexa to stream the music you love

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of our feature on helping you to get the most out of your Amazon Alexa smart speaker. As always we are keen to hear from our Members, about their experiences and the many ways of using your Alexa, in our

“Alexa Backchat” section. So please do contact the team if you have any questions or suggestions for future articles.

**Playing music with Alexa**  
Everyone has a favourite piece

“MP3 was a revelation and people quickly realised that they could share and copy music”

of music, a piece that evokes old memories or that band that you used to dance to. In the past the chances are that you wouldn't have that music to hand or be able to buy it on vinyl or even on CD. Nowadays the majority of all the music ever produced is available to stream over the Internet, at less than a quarter of the cost of purchasing one CD every month.

There are several streaming services that will allow you to do this with your Alexa device, the most popular ones being Amazon music, Spotify, Apple music and Deeza. Of these, Amazon music is the easiest to set-up on your Alexa device, not surprising as Alexa is an Amazon product. We will concentrate on Amazon music, as it also works out the cheapest to use if you are listening exclusively on an Amazon Alexa and not through another device, such as Android or Apple. Having said this, if your family are using another service and they can include you in their family plan, then it is also relatively easy to link this to your Alexa.

## What is Music Streaming?

Traditionally we have listened to audio recordings on physical mediums, from the very first wax cylinders, through 78, 16, 33 and 45 vinyl records, then compact cassettes and finally CD's, which emerged in the early 1980's. We started to hear about and use a more convenient format called MP3, in the late 1990's, which allowed audio to be saved and shared on other mediums, such as memory hard drives and recordable CD's. This format allowed more tracks to be stored on a given medium, because it used a format that compressed the audio file and took up less storage space. Until the introduction of MP3 digital audio files in their original format took up too much room and took ages to download on the internet connections at the time.

Clearly MP3 was a revelation and people quickly realised that they could share and copy music in relatively high quality, far easier than previously, which could only realistically be done on a cassette, which then introduced “hiss”, which tended to spoil the listening experience, particularly for those who demanded much higher quality music.

The main issue with MP3 music files was that as it made sharing and copying music in high quality far →

easier than it ever been, the music industry quickly realised that they were losing millions through the illegal practice of “copying”, or as it is known, “bootlegging” music and were almost powerless to stop it. Following various lawsuits and court rulings, this was eventually shut down, but the genie was out of the bottle and quickly companies like Spotify and Deezer, made deals with the music industry to make their content available to



ADOBESTOCK / JUANCI STUDIO

**Caption: Alexa is always changing - we'll keep you abreast of the latest news and features**

download or stream, for a relatively low fee, in a convenient “one stop shop.”

### **What music can I get and how much will it cost me?**

The music streaming services mentioned above all claim to have over 50 million tracks available, basically the majority of the worlds commercial music ever recorded and that can be accessed potentially free with a limited service or from as little as £3.99 per month for the unlimited service on a single Alexa device. This means that if you only have one Alexa device in the house, you can access the Amazon Unlimited music library for this monthly subscription. However, should you wish to listen on more than one device, for instance, on separate devices in the lounge, bedroom or kitchen, then that would go up to £7.99 per month. The other services above start at around £9.99 per month, but this does give you access on any number of Alexa devices or other smart speakers.

You can however stream music for free on Alexa, simply ask Alexa to play music by a particular artist, e.g. “Alexa, play music by Frank Sinatra”. After informing you that you cannot play specific artists or tracks with the free service and asking if you would like to subscribe to the paid

### **“Streaming downloads plays the music as it reaches the device, but doesn’t store it”**

service, Alexa will play music similar to Frank Sinatra, but will also play an advertisement every so often. In order to get streaming music without adverts and a choice of any artist or track, you need to subscribe to any of the above services and then link that service through the Alexa app that your device was set-up on.

Amazon naturally makes it easier to subscribe to their service. Provided that you have a debit or credit card linked to your Amazon account, simply ask Alexa to play a particular artist or track e.g. “Alexa, play Edelweiss, by Vince Hill” . This will then invoke the voice prompt process of confirming that you wish to sign-up to Amazon Music Unlimited for £3.99 per month, with the first month free. There is no time bounded contract and you can cancel at any time.

### **Listening to Review on your Alexa**

We are always looking at ways in which we can better communicate and stay in-touch with our Members. Recently, we have made it possible to listen to *Review* on your Alexa device. To do this and control the bits you want to listen

to, try the following phrases.

“Alexa, ask TuneIn to play Blind Veterans Review”

To fast forward or rewind through the current episode; “Alexa, fast-forward five minutes”

Simply change the number of minutes that you wish to fast forward or rewind.

To skip between episodes, say; “Alexa, Previous episode”

### **Or**

“Alexa, Next episode”

You will be taken back or forward one episode at a time. So if you want June’s episode, you would have to say “Alexa, previous episode” three times.

Happy listening and as always, if you have any questions or suggestions yourself or would like to know more about using your Alexa device, please call the Members Support Hub on **01273 391 447** - they will be happy to help with any questions you may have. 🎧

■ **We hope you enjoy exploring the world of Alexa and we’ll look forward to bringing you more ideas, tips and tricks in our next issue.**

# Mindful living - Autumn change

Our Well-connected team looks at how Autumnal change can affect your mood, and how you can work against that

Autumn marks the change between Summer and Winter, warmth and cold, light and dark. Many people dislike this change, and cling on to the very last of the Summer, wishing it wouldn't end. This longing for things to last and dreading the change that comes doesn't make for a happy existence. It sets us up for months of discontent and grumbling while we wait for Spring. Do we feel good when we're grumbling? Not usually.

A more mindful approach, acknowledging the changes and why they may be difficult, can help us to accept, and even enjoy this Autumn change. All seasons bring change and we cannot live without it. Change is a part of life. We may as well accept it and embrace it.

Instead of focussing on why you hate the cold, could you look forward to snuggly warm blankets and hot chocolate? Instead of feeling lethargic and hiding from the weather, could you



spend a moment outside in the wind, feeling it wake up your skin? Instead of feeling melancholic that the garden is losing colour, could you notice the changing colours of the leaves?

Autumn is a great time to practice Mindfulness. Wrap up warm and go out for a walk. Feel the leaves crisp and hear them crackle under your feet. Scrunch them up in your hands and watch them fall as you throw them in the air. Notice the earthy smells. Feel the breeze on your face and in your hair. Notice your warm layers giving you a hug, protecting you from the elements.

Learn to notice the changes and embrace them as they are. You may even find yourself enjoying them. 🍂

ADOBESTOCK / K2PHOTOSTUDIO



## Reasons to eat by the seasons - and what food is seasonal

Do you know what produce is in season during October? Your well-connected team explains more

Today it's so easy to transport food long distances that we take it for granted that we can eat fresh berries in January or have avocado on toast every day. Yet many of us have no idea when fruits and vegetables are actually

in season where we live.

A century ago, most people knew the best time to pick blueberries or which vegetables would grow best in their area and when. Now our modern →

## In season in October

**Aubergine, Apples, Beetroot, Blackberries, Broccoli, Brussels Sprouts, Butternut Squash, Carrots, Cauliflower, Celeriac, Celery, Chestnuts, Chicory, Chillies, Courgette, Cucumber, Elderberries, Kale, Leeks, Lettuce, Marrow, Onions, Parsnips, Pears, Peas, Potatoes, Pumpkin, Radishes, Rocket, Runner Beans, Spinach, Spring Onions, Swede, Sweetcorn, Swiss Chard, Tomatoes, Turnips, Watercress, Wild Mushrooms, Winter Squash.**



ADOBESTOCK / TALYA AL



“Shopping for local produce is a great way of telling what is in season in your area”

lifestyle of convenience has caused us to lose touch with these basic ideas.

Even if you aren't growing a garden, knowing what is in season, and eating to match that, is still important. Here are some of the best reasons to eat by the seasons and some benefits that come with it.

### It tastes better

Have you noticed your neighbour's home grown tomatoes taste much sweeter than shop bought tomatoes?

Mass-produced produce intended to meet global consumer demand tends to suffer from a lack of flavour. The goal of large commercial farming is to produce a volume of product to meet high demand. Unfortunately, quantity and appearance override taste. Selective breeding favours uniform ripening and shelf life over flavour.

Naturally ripened fruits and vegetables grown and picked in season are typically full of flavour and nutrients.

### Better for your health

Foods that are grown and consumed during their appropriate seasons are more nutritionally dense. In a study monitoring the vitamin C content of broccoli, it was found that broccoli grown during its peak season had a higher vitamin C content than broccoli grown out of season.

In order for certain fruits and vegetables to be available year-round, post-harvest treatments, known as ripening agents, are used. These include chemicals, gases, and heat processes. Some produce is also coated with an edible film to protect it. These processes allow foods to be mass produced they also help protect the produce from bacteria and other pathogens during transportation. This process ensures farmers can meet the consumer demand year round.

### Better for the environment

Shopping for local produce is a great way of telling what is in season in your area. Think about it - how far did the pear you bought at your local grocery shop travel before it was on the shelves? Did it come from your local farmer, did it drive across the country, or did it arrive by airplane?



ADOBESTOCK / INGO BARTUSSEK

**Caption: Eating in-season food is better for your health and for the environment**

Consider buying locally grown produce. This is a great way to eat with the seasons. Plus, these foods don't have to travel nearly as far, so the associated fuel emissions and transportation costs are minimal. Added bonus: Buying local helps support your local farmers.

### Save money

When a fruit or vegetable is in season, it's abundant and it's available at a lower price. For example, summer is berry season, so that's why strawberries and other berries are so cheap during the summer. 🍓



# Foot to the floor

A history of the 26.2 mile-long London Marathon, as told by your Well-connected team



The London Marathon was not the first long-distance running event held in the city, which has a long history of

marathon events, but the current London Marathon was founded in 1981 by Olympic champion and journalist Chris Brasher and athlete John Disley. Shortly after completing the New York City Marathon in 1979, Brasher wrote an article for The Observer newspaper where he was inspired by the people of New York coming together for this occasion and

asked “whether London could stage such a festival?”

The following year Brasher and Disley made trips to America to study the organisation and finance of big city marathons, with Brasher signing a contract with Gillette for £50,000 and established charitable status. The London Marathon was born.

The first London Marathon was held on 29 March, 1981 and after more than 20,000 applied, 6,747 were accepted and 6,255 crossed the finish line. The first wheelchair marathon was held in 1983, and the event was credited with reducing the stigma surrounding disabled athletes. In the 2019 marathon 59,398 applied, 42,906 started and 42,549 finished.

## The current fastest times for the London Marathon are:

**Men:** Eliud Kipchoge, Kenya, 2hrs 2mins 37secs, 2019

**Women:** Paula Radcliffe, GB, 2hrs 15mins 25secs, 2003

## The 2020 Virgin Money London Marathon

The 2020 London Marathon will take place on Sunday 4 October, however there will be no mass-participation event or spectators. The elite races for men, women and wheelchair athletes will take place on an enclosed

looped course in St James’s Park in a secure biosphere (a contained safe environment like that of Formula 1 and England cricket). This can happen as all participants and support teams will go through multiple rounds of Covid-19 testing before taking part. The mass-participation event could not take place due to issues such as: managing spectators, ensuring emergency services had access across London, increased likelihood of a second wave of Covid-19 and the pressure even a reduced-size mass-participation marathon might put on the NHS. BBC Sport plans to broadcast the event during the day.

## Virtual event 2020 Virgin Money London Marathon

The Virtual London Marathon offers the opportunity for the mass-participants to be part of The 40th Race by completing the marathon on Sunday 4 October from a course of their choice. Everyone who completes the virtual event on Sunday 4 October and uploads proof of completion will be sent a 40th Race finisher medal and t-shirt. Entries opened on Wednesday 12 August, exclusively for runners who had a place in The 40th Race, and general entries sold out on 30 August. The Marathon will still be a massive event enjoyed by thousands of participants but in a very unusual format. 🏃

# Family news

## Birthdays

**Harold Bird**, who celebrates his 101st birthday on 24 October

**Douglas Bull**, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 23 October

**Helen Crosby**, who celebrates her 101st birthday on 27 October

**Monica Edwards**, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 27 October

**Grace Elliott**, who celebrates her 101st birthday on 17 October

**Elizabeth Forster**, who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 24 October

**Daphne Hinton**, who celebrates her 102nd birthday on 31 October

**Leonard Meredith**, who celebrates his 101st birthday on 24 October

**George Portland**, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 24 October

**Elizabeth Sharpe-Nelson**, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 23 October

**Charles Smith**, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 7 October

**Charles Warman**, who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 8 October

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

## Condolences

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

**June Burrige** of Borehamwood, who died on 28 August. She was the wife of the late Gerald Burrige

**Dorothy Jones** of Ivybridge, who died on 12 September. She was the wife of the late Henry Jones

**Sheila Rimmer** of East Grinstead, who died on 1 September. She was the wife of the late Arnold Rimmer

**Irene Sturgess** of Cambridge, who died on 1 September. She was the wife of the late Alfred Sturgess

# 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

**Constance Mildred Apletree** of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 4 September 2020 aged 96. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

**Robert David Atkinson** of Lincoln died on 14 September 2020 aged 91. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Phineas Frederick Bull** of Banbury, Oxfordshire died on 30 August 2020 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**Gerald Stanley Burrige** of Borehamwood, Hertfordshire died on 4 September 2020 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Pay Corps.

**John William Bye** of Saxmundham, Suffolk died on 23 August 2020 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Suffolk Regiment.

**Alan Clark** of Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire died on 2 September 2020 aged 96. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

**Raymond Alfred Cowley** of Bristol died on 21 August 2020 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Oxfordshire And Buckinghamshire Light Infantry.

**Nora Drake** of Holsworthy, Devon died on 1 September 2020 aged 97. She served as a Petty Officer Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service. →



**Joan Margaret Evans** of Colwyn Bay, Conwy died on 28 August 2020 aged 100. She served as a Corporal in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**Ronald Stanley Fullarton** of Worthing, West Sussex died on 17 September 2020 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

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**Gregory Marcar William Gregory** of Manningtree, Essex died on 26 August 2020 aged 97. He served as a Major in the Royal Engineers.

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**Ralph Grundy** of Swansea died on 4 September 2020 aged 97. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Brian Harris** of Bracknell, Berkshire died on 21 August 2020 aged 88. He served as a substantive Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**John Arthur Bernard Hicks** of Rochester, Kent died on 7 September 2020 aged 98. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

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**Daniel Illidge** of Halesowen, West Midlands died on 3 September 2020 aged 91. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Harold Jackson** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 10 September 2020 aged 89. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Peter William Geoffrey Johns** of Waltham Cross, Hertfordshire died on 11 September 2020 aged 96. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Dennis Lockwood** of Carnforth, Cumbria died on 26 August 2020 aged 92. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Gordon Mason** of Liverpool died on 8 September 2020 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

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**James Mungin** of Manchester died on 9 September 2020 aged 82. He served as a Guardsman in the Scots Guards.

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**David John Norton** of Marlow, Buckinghamshire died on 16 September 2020 aged 93. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**Harry Nuttall** of Colne, Lancashire died on 31 August 2020 aged 89. He served as a Senior Aircraftsman in the Royal Air Force.

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**James Alexander Overton** of Harrogate, North Yorkshire died on 20 August 2020 aged 85. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Gerald Wallace Parkes** of Lichfield, Staffordshire died on 21 August 2020 aged 83. He served as a Guardsman in the Coldstream Guards.

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**Peter Harry Phipps** of Kidlington, Oxfordshire died on 3 September 2020 aged 91. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Marjorie Edith Price** of Brighton died on 8 September 2020 aged 99. She served as a Private in the Army Technical School.

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**John Robinson** of Tadworth, Surrey died on 3 September 2020 aged 88. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

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**Margaret Elizabeth Sawyer** of Brighton died on 7 September 2020 aged 98. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**John Stanner** of Prestatyn, Clwyd died on 20 August 2020 aged 81. He served as a Leading Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Margaret Lucy Rose Stayt** of Aldershot, Hampshire died on 16 September 2020 aged 97. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

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**Henry Szmydt** of Derby died on 26 August 2020 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Polish Air Force.

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**James Thomas** of Sudbury, Suffolk died on 31 August 2020 aged 96. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**John Michael Charles Thompson** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 16 September 2020 aged 99. He served as a Chief Technician in the Royal Air Force.

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**Walter Holt Thornley** of Newport, Shropshire died on 25 August 2020 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

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**Leonard Turner** of Wolverhampton died on 11 September 2020 aged 92. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Sidney Walker** of Blyth, Northumberland died on 1 September 2020 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Green Howards.

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**John Matthew Williams** of Cardiff died on 30 August 2020 aged 85. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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# Qi Gong

In our latest instalment, **Jinpa Thubten** demonstrates more Qi Gong techniques for health and wellbeing

Gathering Qi from the Cosmos is a wonderful exercise to end your qigong exercise routine, it will settle your energy and help bring you to a state of relaxation. Again this exercise can be done seated or standing and as with all of these exercises keep it gentle.

## Standing stance

- Feet are about hip width apart.
- Knees relaxed (slightly bent).
- Coccyx (tail bone) pulled forward.
- Back elongated as if pulled gently from the crown of the head.



**Caption: Gathering Qi - hands descending**

- Weight evenly spread over the feet.
- Chest open yet soft.

## Seated stance

**(Use a dining chair if possible).**

- Feet are about hip width apart.
- Support your own back (don't lean on chair).
- Back elongated as if gently pulled from the crown of the head.
- Feet gently pushing in to floor.
- Chest open yet soft.

## Gathering Qi from the cosmos

1. Start with your arms hanging by your sides and gently turn your palms so they face forward.
2. As you breathe in lift your hands out to the sides all the way up, while turning your palms to face heaven so you end in a Y shape.
3. As you breathe out, let your hands come down the front of your body with the palms facing the earth and the finger tips facing each other.
4. Keep your hands close to your body as they sink all the way down.

If you are in the standing stance you can let your knees bend slightly (just an inch or two) as your hands descend, raising again as your hands go out to the sides. Mix and match your exercises and aim to get a daily practice in of at least two minutes building slowly to 10 minutes a session. Remember take your time and move to your breath. 🌿

## Contact details

**Contact address** Blind Veterans UK,  
12-14 Harcourt Street, London,  
W1H 4HD, **0300 111 22 33**

**Member Support Hub: 01273 391 447**

**New Members:** If you know someone who could be eligible to join Blind Veterans UK, they can phone our Membership Department on freephone **0800 389 7979**.

**The Brighton Centre 01273 307 811.**

**The Llandudno Centre 01492 868 700.**

**The Booking Office for the Brighton Centre:** To book accommodation at the Brighton Centre please telephone **01273 391 500**. If you have care needs please first contact your Team Leader or Community Support Worker (CSW).

**The Booking Office for the Llandudno Centre:** To book accommodation at the Llandudno Centre please telephone **01492 868 700** for bookings and ask for the Booking office. If you have care needs please first contact your Team Leader or CSW.

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



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We value your feedback and use it to improve and develop the services we provide. If you would like to provide feedback on the magazine or any aspect of our services then please email us at [feedback@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:feedback@blindveterans.org.uk) or call **0300 111 22 33**

## A different format?

**If you would like your copy of Review in a different format, then please contact your Community Support Worker or ROVI for more information.**



**£7.50**  
for a pack  
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## Order your 2020 Christmas Cards and Support Blind Veterans UK

We are delighted to announce that we will be selling Christmas cards again this year.

We will also be selling blank cards that are for all year round use. The cards depict the charity's Victory Over Blindness sculpture at Manchester Piccadilly Station.

You can place an order by calling our Supporter Services team on 0300 111 22 33 or visiting [blindveterans.org.uk/memorabilia](https://blindveterans.org.uk/memorabilia)

The cards come in packs of 10 and we are asking for a suggested donation of £7.50 for each pack, including P&P.



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss



Blank cards featuring a sketch of the Victory Over Blindness statue are also available in packs of 10.