

# Review

The journal of  
Blind Veterans UK

February 2021

## Inside:

A life in boxing  
- Derek Leney

National Creative  
Project update

Reunions update  
- what you need  
to know

## Facing the enemy

How we're  
helping you  
fight the  
pandemic



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

# The new broom

January is always an odd time in my eyes. It signifies so many things, not least the old chestnut of New Year's Resolutions, which in theory are supposed to bolster us, but in reality try our patience to hitherto untested limits. This year however, we have bigger things to distract us from the customary post-Christmas weight gain, the most important of which is the ongoing pandemic.

There's no escaping the fact that these are black days indeed, and for many of you the second lockdown we're currently enduring will continue to have a serious effect in that it fosters feelings of isolation and helplessness. For those with family out of reach or no family at all, it's even more of a trial.

Yet, to look on the other side of the coin things appear to be about to change. First and foremost is the advent of the new vaccine, which many of you will have already had. Our Brighton Centre residents have had theirs, and if you haven't received your dose, then please read our guide in this issue for more information on how to get your dose.

Secondly, though no less important,

is the fact that we're continuing to be here to support you as we have for the last 11 months. For nearly a year our staff have worked hard to do the best we can for you in these times, and that continues to be the case. No matter how dire things look, there really is always support available and as I'm sure you know, you can always call our Member Support Hub on **01273 391 500** when you need to.

Now, onto this issue. February's magazine has quite the archive flavour to it, with three Member stories inside. We continue with RAF pilot Harry Garthwaite's wartime memoirs, while former boxing commentator and broadcaster Derek Leney offers his story as well. To round things off former economics editor John Cockcroft recalls his time at President John F Kennedy's last press conference in November 1963.

As always, enjoy your magazine and stay safe. 🇬🇧

**Chris Gilson**  
Editor



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### On the cover

**Member Bill Bunn receives the coronavirus vaccine at our Brighton Centre. Read more about the vaccine in this issue**



# Preparing for the unexpected

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

Welcome to our first Review magazine of 2021, a year which I trust and hope is going to be rather better than 2020. Although recent history suggests that we must be prepared for the unexpected, at least there is light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccine programme and with it, the prospect



**Caption: Nick Caplin**

of emerging into the world beyond Covid-19. The Blind Veterans UK family remains strong and purposeful, and always looking for an opportunity to innovate and to change lives for the better. Over the last few months, we have been working closely with the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB), Guide Dogs for the Blind and other vision-impaired charities to identify joint themes and areas for collaboration. As part of this work, Blind Veterans UK has taken the lead across the vision sector in gathering the lessons of this pandemic for our community so that we can collectively ensure that we are best prepared for the future. One of the positive aspects of our experience last year was discovering new techniques, new ways to provide support and new ways to help each other.

But this is not new to us as an organisation. Throughout its long



**Caption: St Dunstaners outside our then eye clinic at Tiger Hall, Church Stretton**

history, Blind Veterans UK has been happy to collaborate with other organisations and this has sometimes led to innovations which have benefitted not only our blind veterans but those from outside the military community. Several of these have been in collaboration with the RNIB and one of the best-known of these, our development of talking books, benefitted not only a much wider blind audience, but eventually led to a fuller conception of audio books which are still enjoyed by all.

## **Our expertise**

Sometimes the expertise developed

by either the charity or its individual Members has been directly placed at the service of other organisations to discover solutions to issues affecting those with sight loss.

The best placed of our blind veterans to influence wider social policy were those who went into politics as a career. These included Fred Martin, who served as a Liberal MP from 1922-24, and also our former Chairman Lord Ian Fraser, who had spells as a Conservative MP in the 1920s and 1930s and then continuously from 1940-58, in which year he was elevated to the House of Lords. →

## “A particularly important link with the civilian world came with the advent of the Second World War“

Fraser was proud of having piloted a bill to enable all blind people to own a wireless radio without requiring a licence and also attempted to exert what influence he could on a wide range of other issues. One that perhaps resonates currently, with much attention being given to the probity of the voting procedures in the USA, is his concern over the method by which the blind in the UK were able to vote. In 1931, at which time the blind were required to tell polling station staff for whom they wanted to vote, Fraser wrote formally to *Review* about this and to appeal for assistance:

*“The method of voting at present in force is a constant irritation to some blind people. I have frequently heard the complaint that the blind man does not know to whom he is imparting the secret of his choice of candidate or who may be present in the voting room and overhear.*

“Many blind persons would I know be happier if the law was amended so as to enable them to take a relative or friend whom they trusted to the polling booth to mark the paper for them...

On two occasions in the last few years when Bills affecting the representation of the people have been before Parliament, I have endeavoured to get an amendment included.

“Various reasons were advanced against the proposed amendment, one of which was that there was no specific evidence of complaint by the blind persons themselves...The object of this letter is to ask all blind persons who are willing to help, to make a point of observing precisely what procedure is adopted by the officials in the polling booths when they go to vote in the forthcoming election, and to record this evidence and express their view about it.”

Evidence received and the pressure brought to bear by Fraser and others bore fruit - The Blind Voters Act 1933 included the right for a blind person to receive the assistance of a relative or friend in exercising the franchise, and further developments took place in the 1940s, when blind and other disabled people were permitted to vote by post - and from 1983 when a vote by proxy was allowed.

Other of our blind veterans took on significant roles with civilian blind organisations. Godfrey Robinson became Chairman of the RNIB in addition to other positions in public

life including serving as Sheriff of Hull. Robert Hyde-Thomson served for many years as Chairman of the Greater London Fund for the Blind (now Vision Foundation).

### An unusual link

A particularly important link with the civilian world came with the advent of the Second World War. Discussions with Government about our potential role preceded the war itself, with the possibility of conflict having loomed for some time before the actual declaration. We were happy to build on our knowledge from our First World War veterans and take on additional responsibilities for those who had suffered loss of sight as a result of the new conflict - we had begun to plan an eye hospital unit which would be based within our new centre at Ovingdean, Brighton.

This was to comprise an ophthalmic operating theatre and a small general operating theatre together with a sterilising room, an anaesthetic room and offices including for doctors and nurses. There was accommodation for 200 patients and it formally opened in March 1940. This meant that serious eye cases resulting from the war could come to us and some of those whose sight could not be saved would of course become eligible to join the charity and be provided with

the ongoing lifelong support we have always provided to our members. Happily, in some cases the medical treatment in the eye hospital meant that sight was not completely lost, and those individuals would not need to join us. But the situation with civilian casualties was complicated. Our remit had already been widened to some extent to include civilians volunteering for wartime service in roles such as Air Raid Precautions, but in July 1940 the Charity Commission approved a further extension of our objectives and from then the hospital would also be able to take cases such as civilians who had suffered eye damage as a result of air raids, although, in the event that →



**Caption: Lord Fraser and his daughter Jean**

they lost their sight, they would not be able to go on to become full Members of the charity.

The new hospital had only been up and running for a few months before it, together with the rest of our work at Brighton, moved to Church Stretton in Shropshire. The hospital remained there until July 1944 when it became part of Stoke Mandeville Hospital. Although sadly we don't have surviving records specifically of our eye hospital, it is clear from entries in the *Review* that, although the ongoing training and rehabilitation of civilian cases was formally the responsibility of



**Caption: A Member at Ovingdean**

charities such as the RNIB and of local authorities, some individuals were able to take advantage if only informally of the environment we provided for our Members. Doubtless, all parties benefitted from this.

### **Drawing the most benefit**

Lord Fraser's daughter Jean served as a voluntary nurse at our specialist hospital. Fraser himself writes interestingly about it in his memoir 'My Story of St Dunstan's' –

"Many civilians came to our hospital during the 1940-41 Blitz. ENT, facial injuries, and minor medical and surgical conditions were treated as well as eye injuries, but most of our cases were of the kind that could draw the most benefit from the special atmosphere and facilities of our hospital. Some of the air-raid casualties we saw saved us from becoming too self-centred and concerned about the inconveniences we had suffered ourselves."

Much as we have in the past, we are intent on learning from this beastly pandemic and the current challenges facing those with sight loss and using this knowledge to bring benefit in the future. It will ensure that we are as ready as we can be to tackle uncertainty. To paraphrase Arthur Pearson's great friend Baden-Powell, it is best to be prepared. 🍷



ADOBE STOCK / BLVDONE

**Caption: Like all other charities and businesses, we're planning for the post-Covid future**

# No hollow promises

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

For the first half of my RAF service, the production of plans and orders hadn't much changed from the processes in use at the end of the Second World War. Essentially, commanders were expected to conceive the big idea and the staff turned that into a set of orders, not just to direct the commander's immediate subordinates but also to provide direction for

the level immediately below him. Especially in the Army, this was known as "thinking two-down". I had it rammed into me when I attended the Infantry Company Commanders Course at Warminster in the winter of 1978-79 (and please don't ask what a RAF pilot was doing on that course - all I can tell you is that I made a terrible mistake). The



## “For Blind Veterans UK, as with almost all charities, 2020 has forced a Question four moment“

system had its advantages in that it tended to compensate for poor field communications, and it made absolutely clear to everyone what was to be done and how it was to be done. However, it also tended to stultify initiative, particularly when the circumstances changed.

By the latter half of my service, the doctrine changed. Commanders were encouraged to explore a wider range of planning options and test them with their staff and subordinates. In all events they were expected to “think two-up”: to analyse what their immediate boss and his boss were trying to achieve and derive from that a range of directed and implied tasks necessary to achieve the aim.

Tasks were then assessed against a range of possible factors, crucially including what the enemy was trying to achieve and how the enemy plans might thwart one’s own goals. Then, rather than issue orders in the old way, command was more usually exercised through directives which set out the commander’s aims, what was to be achieved, a scheme of manoeuvres

and which subordinates would have responsibility for which aspects of the scheme. Subordinates then went through the same evolution for their parts of the plan.

### Thinking and planning

To make things as straightforward as possible this was introduced under a doctrine that formalised the way in which commanders and staff were expected to conduct their thinking and planning, known over time as “the appreciation” or “the estimate process“. The purpose was not to ensure a predictable plan – far from it. Instead, it was designed to ensure a degree of discipline and consistency to the process, while giving greater freedom to subordinates to exercise their initiative – often called “mission command”.

To make matters even simpler, the doctrine provided a number of simple questions which every level should ask themselves as the plan was implemented. To my mind the most important was Question Four: “what has changed?”. It is a well-established fact that no plan survives contact with the enemy, and therefore Question Four provided the impetus to reassess continually the validity and viability of the plan as the unexpected unfolded.

And there, Ladies and Gentlemen, in

four paragraphs you can see just how little I managed to learn from command and staff training across a full career in the RAF... To be fair I am not alone. “Question Four” has been hi-jacked by the military lexicon for use in other ways. Once, when I was visiting one of my units on a field exercise, I was greeted by an agitated company sergeant major. “OC’s apologies for not meeting you, Sir, but he’s been held up. We’re having a bit of a Question Four moment”. On pressing him, it emerged that the plan wasn’t working. Actually, his language was slightly more colourfully peppered with Anglo-Saxon elucidation, but the essence was that



**Caption: Paul Luker**

for many a “Question Four moment“ had become synonymous with a cock-up – which was never the intent.

For Blind Veterans UK, as with almost all charities, 2020 has forced a Question Four moment, not in the cock-up context but very much in the ‘what has changed’ sense. The Covid-19 crisis is unquestionably serious. But a pandemic is not unprecedented (we have had them before and sadly we will have them again), so the probability of such ‘hundred-year-events’ needs to be acknowledged. In Blind Veterans UK, such a calamity had already generically been factored into our planning. That is why we hold strong financial reserves which we are prepared to use, both to provide a base from which we can invest in steady times and to ensure that we have the necessary liquidity to keep ourselves operational in crisis. I am delighted to report that throughout 2020 we did just that.

### Innovative and agile

But our Question Four moment has clearly emerged in several other ways. Happily, the charity has shown itself to be innovative and agile. Although we have been forced to suspend much of our traditional activity, we have been able to compensate in many others and I pay tribute to our many staff and volunteers who have responded so magnificently to manage this, →

often in the face of great personal sacrifice. So, at the tactical level I am more than reassured we can and do ask ourselves and answer Question Four effectively.

However, as some semblance of normality returns with the introduction of vaccines, what will remain changed? The financial impact of Covid-19 will likely be with us for years. Our ability to restore centre-based activity will be affected to some degree, even after the vaccine roll-out.

Most obviously, we know that the economy has taken a pounding and will therefore have a material downside on personal finances for some time. We must therefore plan for a reduced level of income, no matter that the British people have a strong tradition of benevolence, and for new ways of finding alternative income streams. Perhaps more importantly, we need to take a hard look at what we delivered to our Members over the last year and analyse why we have been so successful at it, despite suspending more traditional activity.

There is much to learn here. To my mind it probably exposes areas where we could and should have been doing more in the past for those members who, even without the constraints of the pandemic, were already

**“The challenge is always going to be between our resources and our appetite“**

experiencing an unacceptable level of isolation. We also need to look carefully at how and why our virtual support services have been so well received.

### **A strong base**

Fortunately, our strategy which had already embraced a need for more community-based services gave us a strong base from which to adapt. We need now to ask ourselves how next we adapt to not just temporary factors but also to permanently changed circumstances. I won't pretend that this is going to lead to any easy choices. The challenge is always going to be between our resources and our appetite. And since our income is likely to shrink, then the only way forward is to improve our diet.

To my delight, given the circumstances, our charity rode out 2020 brilliantly. We now must have a strategic Question Four moment to ensure that we grow stronger and more effective in 2021 and beyond. And in doing so we must never lose sight of the aim: the effective provision of needs-based, quality services for our Members. 🍷

# Reunion lunches in 2021

What you need to know about our Reunions programme for this year

The Covid pandemic and the latest lockdowns that have come with it has meant that, after consultation with regional staff and a panel of Members, it has been decided that the Reunion programme for 2021 should be suspended and that no formal Reunions will be planned this year.

Firstly, this is for everyone's health - even with the developments with the vaccines, the time lag in immunisation roll out will put many Reunion events in doubt. The panel also considered the long-term effects of pandemic-related restrictions on venues which usually hold Reunions. There is still uncertainty around gatherings, as well as risk of closure for many of these venues.

This, together with the expected limits on large groups meeting, and the restrictions this will place on finding suitable venues, were thought to be significant in the 2021 season. Leaving dates open as possibly happening leads to a greater cost to the charity by cancelling further down the line.

All members of the panel agreed that the reunion programme for 2021

should not go ahead. They also wanted to see some fairness across the country and suggested that all Reunions should be cancelled to achieve this.

In line with national and organisational Covid restrictions it is hoped that we can roll out some alternative social gatherings this year, but that these will be smaller, locally led and dependent on risk assessment.

If you have any questions about your Reunion, then please speak to your case worker or someone in your local community team. 🍷



**Caption: Sheffield reunion 2019**

# In the know

## Our Operations Team keeps you posted on how we are performing

Due to the ever-changing situation across the UK, we are having to operate differently in different areas due to the local lockdowns in place. But we can keep you informed about how we've been supporting our Members recently. We'll do this by providing you with a 'status update' every month about what's been happening in our communities and centres.

### Our communities

At the beginning of January, new national lockdowns came into place and it was decided we could safely provide the following services to our Members:

- Provide telephone support through the National Support Service including regular phone calls if wanted
- As an exception, one-to-one, face-to-face support for Members with a critical need
- Local support to Members for essentials, such as shopping and medication

In addition, we have provided many

Members with the opportunity to receive rehabilitation support remotely as part of our National Remote Rehab Service. This includes a range of services to help with independence and safety at home - for example, assistance with technology, low vision assessments and support with health and wellbeing. If you would like to access this service, please speak to your caseworker.

We are running a growing number of telephone and online social and 'special interest' groups so that Members can meet each other regularly, catch up and share experiences. If you are a passionate football fan, interested in IT, crafts or just fancy a chat, get in touch with your caseworker and they will let you know what's on. If you fancy starting a group yourself, let us know.

### Member Support Hub

Our Member Support Hub continues to run as usual. However, due to the new national lockdowns, we are currently only able to provide a recycling service to those in critical need. We are still

able to provide remote support with equipment and of course, Members can always get in touch with us on **01273 391 447**, Monday to Friday 9am-4pm

### Our Centres

'Christmas at the Centre' was a little different this year where the Llandudno Centre welcomed seven of our veterans for critical respite. Members and staff enjoyed spending time together. Gifts were exchanged, stories were shared, and we all appreciated being able to spend the festive period with each other.

In light of the new national lockdowns, the Centre has paused the arrival of new Members coming to stay for critical respite until restrictions change.

The permanent residents at the Brighton Centre are currently in good spirits with many of them taking it all in their stride. They enjoyed some entertainment over the Christmas break, as well as the bar, the Queen's Speech and lots of games with staff. A fellow Member also dressed up as Father Christmas handing out presents. 🎅



**Caption: Father Christmas makes an appearance at our Brighton Centre**



# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Vaccine FAQ Sheet

Our Operations team answers your questions on the vaccine

## How is the vaccine administered and when?

The vaccine is like most vaccines; an injection to the upper arm. It is given in two doses. After you have had the first dose you need to plan to attend your second appointment. You should be given record card at your first appointment and your next appointment will be between three and 12 weeks later.

■ **It should be noted that those fully vaccinated may have very low probability of becoming unwell due to COVID, yet fully vaccinated individuals may still carry the virus and infect others.**

## Is the vaccine effective? Do I still need to follow the restrictions and government guidance once I've had it?

The first dose can provide protection from the virus, but the second dose is required to get longer-lasting protection.

Yes, you must still follow restrictions

and government guidance. We're not yet sure whether having the vaccine prevents you from passing coronavirus onto others. So, it's very important that once you have either dose of the vaccine, that you continue to follow social distancing rules and any government guidance on restrictions (including social distancing, wearing a face covering and washing your hands).



**Caption: The permanent residents of our Brighton Centre have already been vaccinated**

## Who is eligible for the vaccines?

Currently, the vaccine is being offered to only those most at risk from the virus.

When it's your turn to have the coronavirus vaccine, you'll get a letter, phone call, email or text inviting you for an appointment. As long as you're registered with a GP and have up to date contact details you should receive an invitation in due course. You may be invited to have your vaccination at a hospital, your GP surgery, a vaccination centre or a pharmacy. The vaccine is free and administered through the NHS. You cannot buy the vaccine and the NHS will NEVER ask you to pay for the vaccine.

## The initial priority groups are set out below, starting with those considered high priority:

1. Older adults that are a resident in a care home and their care workers.
2. Everyone aged 80+ and all health and social care workers.
3. Everyone aged 75+.
4. Everyone aged 70+ and all those considered clinically extremely vulnerable and have been shielding.
5. Everyone aged 65+.
6. Everyone aged 16-64 with an underlying health condition which puts them at higher risk of becoming seriously unwell, and unpaid carers.
7. Everyone 60+.

8. Everyone 55+.

9. Everyone 50+.

## What happens on the day?

You'll need to bring a face covering (unless you cannot wear one for a health or disability reason) and your booking reference numbers if your appointment is at a vaccination centre. If you need a carer you can bring them with you on the day.

Your appointment should last for around 30-45 minutes. You'll be asked some questions about your medical history. It's important to tell staff there if you have ever had a severe allergic reaction or you are pregnant. You may be asked to wait for 15 minutes after having the vaccination. This is in the unlikely event you have a serious reaction to the vaccine; however, research has found it's very rare for this to happen. The team will be trained to deal with reactions and treat them immediately.

## Vaccine scams to be wary of

Please be aware and alert that there have been some reports of fraudulent calls and text messages offering the Covid-19 vaccination. In some cases, people are asked to press a number on their keypad or to send a text message to confirm that they wish to receive the vaccine. This is likely to result in a charge being applied to their phone bill. Alternatively, some callers are →

offering the vaccine for a fee or asking for bank details. Others have received a fake NHS link to apply for the vaccine, which when clicked takes the user to a page where they are asked for personal information and bank details. The NHS will NEVER ask you to press a button on your keypad or send a text to confirm you want the vaccine, and NEVER ask for payment or for your bank details. The Covid-19 vaccination is a free vaccination.

■ **Remember - the NHS will contact you directly if and when you are eligible for the vaccine.**

### **What if you do not wish to have the vaccine?**

Vaccines are not currently mandatory in the UK- they are voluntary. If you receive an invitation to book your appointment but you do not wish to attend, simply do not book the appointment.

### **What to do in the event of a missed appointment?**

You must contact your NHS healthcare provider which was offering you the vaccine as soon as possible. For example, the vaccination hub or the GP surgery which you were supposed to go to for vaccination.

### **How do you find out more about the vaccine?**

Please refer to the NHS website at [bit.ly/3p8YpIL](https://bit.ly/3p8YpIL) to find out more about coronavirus, Covid-19, the available vaccinations and how to book if you have been invited for a vaccine.

### **I've now had my first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine, can you come and visit me? Can I attend a social group or centre?**

The first dose can provide some protection from Covid-19, but the second dose is required to get longer-lasting protection. Even after receiving both doses, it is still possible to contract and spread the virus. So, it is important for us to be cautious and ensure the safety of our staff, volunteers and their families who have not yet received the vaccine. This and current government guidelines also mean we are not yet able to allow social gatherings in the community or a centre to happen.

Please be reassured that urgent and critical member need will not be ignored and members should speak to their caseworker if they require support. Staff will still practice social distancing and wear face coverings when assisting a member with a critical need.

Our priority is our members and we want to visit as soon as it is safe to do so (and within government guidelines). 🇬🇧

# A pioneering new approach to our Research

**Dr. Renata Gomes** our Chief Scientific Officer keeps you updated on the future of our research programmes

These are exciting times for research in Blind Veterans UK, and I want to update you all on some changes as to how research will be conducted in the future.

Research plays a crucial role now and in



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the future for you, and all our veterans. We have seen recent progress with the publication of peer reviewed papers, which can now begin to impact real life areas such as accessibility, use of artificial intelligence, creating improved devices for the blind, and even driverless cars.

Our Research Department is also looking at the impact of dementia and traumatic brain injury on blind veterans, as well as assessing our remote rehab service to make sure it is as good as it can be.

This research activity is gradually receiving greater publicity and is becoming well respected both nationally and internationally.

We want to continue this effort in the future and are now considering →

how to do this in a way that works best for Research and the charity as a whole.

### Separate research, sister charity

Blind Veterans UK's Trustees have agreed that the best way to do this is to set up a separate 'sister' charity that will sit alongside Blind Veterans UK but solely focus on research.

This means that the new research charity will become self-funding and, in time, hopefully generate income from its achievements.

This will help ensure the long-term sustainability of Blind Veterans UK itself and mean that we are in a stronger position to continue providing life-changing support for our current and future Members. This separation will also mean that research can spread its wings as its own organisation rather than as part of a charity whose primary focus will, rightly, always be providing the best service possible to all of you.

By separating, but remaining very close as a member of the Blind Veterans UK family, it will also unlock potential funding avenues that are currently closed to us. Blind Veterans UK will remain very close to the new sister charity, working together by informed research that leads to benefits for all blind veterans. The charity, and all of

you, will continue to have a big say in the future of our research efforts.

### Continue supporting

We are also very keen for our Members to continue supporting and volunteering to take part in our research activities once this exciting sister charity is set up.

The benefits that our research can deliver to you and future generations of visually impaired people and veterans depends on the active participation of our Members today. We will let you know how you can get involved in supporting Research in the future and hope that many of you will chose to do so.

The goal is to open the new research charity in April 2021, and you will hear more on this plan over the coming months.

If you have questions, or are interested in volunteering, you can still contact us using the same channels as before:

■ **Email us at [research@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:research@blindveterans.org.uk) or telephone our dedicated research enquiry line on 0207 616 8371.**

I look forward to continuing to work with many of you over the coming years as we strive towards our shared vision of 'Victory Over Blindness'. 🇬🇧



# Renaissance or limbo

Member and author Simon Mahoney shares his thoughts on losing his sight and how it is possible to adjust to a very different world

When catastrophe strikes in the form of disability, it is as if the world is ending. The old customary capacities and skills can no longer be trusted and certainly not taken for granted yet we still take those abilities, and the consequent self-image, as a given.

It is here that life turns from a reasonably tranquil stream to a titanic struggle with monstrous, yet unrecognised forces. As a person losing their sight, the transition from fully sighted to fully blind is a never ending battle. I had to learn to



function without my primary source of information. That however, and its consequent behaviours, was only what was visible to others. Not only that, it is also the only aspect of vision loss that is really recognised and subject to training and therapy. Other issues such as the redefining of yourself, your relationships with peers, significant others and the public at large, are generally ignored.

I have found after two years of total blindness that things have changed radically. No longer is life a never ending struggle. Having said that, there are the usual parade of distressed and distressing people who try to make life more difficult than really necessary. The application of humour and finely developed communication skills soon puts a stop to that kind of nonsense.

Instead of constant tension and preparedness to fight, I feel curiously calm, aware and content. It seems that I have come to an accommodation with my blindness. Perhaps, more to the point, I feel I have incorporated it into who I am. It is now part of me without fear or favour.

In many ways I believe that this is what acceptance is about. It is not just understanding and grimly putting up with what has happened. It is coming to a realisation that your disability or

**“If we accept the idea of renaissance being central to acceptance than this can change everything”**

impairment is a non-issue. This level of acceptance allows you to recreate yourself and be comfortable with how you are now.

### **When the dust has settled**

There is no avoiding the initial denial and anger or confusion and the general emotions associated with loss and change. This is what happens when the dust has settled and when the task before you is to get on with the rest of your life. This does not require any special wisdom or even mental fortitude. All it requires is a bloody-minded determination not to let circumstances overwhelm you.

The question is how do we recognise we have arrived at this sublime point? It is recognising what are apparently insignificant thoughts and feelings. For me, one of the signs was when I was thinking about my life as an artist. Without warning the feelings - without any noticeable process - changed from embittered resentment to pleasure. Suddenly I found myself remembering past achievements with warmth

and, perhaps even more importantly, glorying in what I can do now.

Another time I was sitting in my garden. I had the cat on my lap, the dogs round my feet and a cup of tea in my hand. The sun was shining, I could hear a blackbird singing its heart out nearby, skylarks high up and bees coming down to the pond to drink. The whole experience was counterpointed by the sound of the waterfall and the smell of the flowers. I sat there just quietly taking it all in when gradually it came to me that this was living the dream.

There was no need for life's fruitless search for something that none of us would recognise even if we found it. I realised that this was how to find and actually see true acceptance and your renaissance - in the little things. It does not have to be a 'Road to Damascus' moment.

### **Self-actualisation**

This ties in very closely with the idea of self-actualisation. This is hard to define and even harder to achieve - the nearest I can come to it is a sense of fulfilment when the outer world is at one with the inner, and vice-versa. By its nature this is transitory and a major part of it is actually recognising it when it occurs. Renaissance is dependent on recognising and accepting what has happened and just going along with

what is happening instead of struggling against events. I firmly believe it is wrestling over the wrong things that makes the effects of disability so wearing.

If we accept the idea of renaissance being central to acceptance than this can change everything. Instead of some poorly defined amorphous activity informed by an impenetrable tangle of unfillable expectations punctuated by struggle and pain, acceptance becomes a gentle transition with clear goals. The goal is to redefine ourselves and to be content with the outcome.

In stark contrast is the idea of grim acceptance and getting on with things in spite of everything that happens. Here lies the route to constant struggle, resentment, anger and bitterness. In short, acceptance with no attempt at accommodation or incorporation is a dead end resulting in a featureless limbo leading nowhere. The likelihood of a moment of happiness, let alone a happy outcome, are increasingly remote with the passage of time.

Renaissance is recreating yourself post disability and going with the flow. It is accepting the cards you have been dealt, and making the best of it. The alternative is eternal pointless struggle, pain and resentment. As always, the choice is yours. 🌈

# Among the clouds

## Harry's war - part two

We continue the story of former RAF wartime pilot and Member **Harry Garthwaite's** flying career

When we left Harry Garthwaite in the first part of our feature, he'd just been posted back to the unwelcome environs of RAF Church Fenton and an unforgiving former commanding officer. We pick up the story with Harry's arrival at the airfield and his meeting with the station adjutant.

"So, I showed him a copy of the signal, and he says 'Hmmm, well we haven't had a copy of that yet. It'll be interesting when you see the CO'.

The next morning, I went in to see him. I knocked on the door, and he just said "Come", so I knew he was in a mood. I walked in, stood to attention and saluted and he took no notice, then he looked up".

"What the B\*\*\*\*\* H\*\*\* are you doing here?" "I'm your new instructor."

"Over my dead body." he said. "So, I showed him a copy of the signal, and eventually he said, 'I know nothing about it. Go away and sit in the mess until I find out where I'm going to send you.'"

It was an inauspicious start for Harry, but as he turned to go, he was suddenly called back.

"Just as I was about to close the door, he said, 'Wait a minute, I've got an idea. You might be some use to a friend of mine on the other side of the airfield, the CO of an anti-aircraft co-operation unit. He's desperately short of pilots,



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

you can probably fill your time in there.' So, I went over and that's how I came to fly the Fairey Battle [target tug].

"After a fortnight the CO sent for me, and told me he'd arranged for a posting to RAF Bircham Newton. I said 'where's that', and he told me he thought it was in Norfolk. I asked him what they were flying, and he said he didn't know - just that it was called 1403 Flight."

After a relatively short stay at Church Fenton, Harry set off for the wilds of Norfolk, to discover on arrival at Bircham Newton that 1403 Flight was a meteorological flight. "It was flying [Bristol] Blenheim IVs, and the CO was a Flt Lt Peasgood at that time. He said, 'Thank goodness you are a Blenheim

pilot, as there's only me and another pilot to do the flights every other day. You can fly with me tomorrow morning and learn the ropes.'

There was also 1401 Flight flying Gloster Gladiators (a rather antiquated biplane fighter - Ed) at Bircham Newton at the same time, and eventually the flights were merged to become 521 Squadron. The Gladiators took off three times a day at dawn, noon and dusk flying as high as the type would go, which was around 24,000ft levelling off every 1,000 ft taking readings and continuing up. The Blenheims did the same thing over the North Sea, off the Norwegian Coast. We had to go down to 50ft above sea level and take a reading then head for home." →

Eventually I was told – when we merged – that I had to do to Gladiator flights as well – and I did 17 in total plus 130 or so on the Blenheim. It was quiet, apart from a couple of incidents when we sighted a Messerschmitt Me110 (twin-engined German fighter bomber – Ed) in the distance – although he wasn't very interested in us and we weren't very interested in him. We had instructions that if we met an enemy aircraft then we had to beat it, because the met' report was more important than anything else.

### Crash!

"This was proved when I crashed. Along with the ambulances which arrived was

a dispatch rider for the met report.

"The day I crashed, it was a horrible day and I'd been in cloud most of the time – it was freezing fog and Bircham Newton was closed so I was diverted to RAF Mildenhall, and they said the cloud base was 200ft while visibility was 500 yards.

"We found a break and went below the clouds, and I called base and asked if it was still 200ft, and they said 'yes'. Shortly after that an engine cut, and we crashed in a field. Two ambulances came out with a medical officer (MO) in each – they asked me if I wanted to go to Ely hospital with the other



**Caption: The spectacular crash of Harry's Bristol Blenheim IV while on 1403 Flight**

two members of the crew and then have a full medical or be stitched up in sick bay. I ended up in sick bay being stitched up by a Canadian and a Dutchman from the other units based at Bircham Newton."

Apart from the weather reports that Harry was gathering in his trusty Blenheims, there were a few other incidents to keep him on his toes.

"On my third or fourth trip we were coming back and it was a beautiful day – the North Sea was like a millpond and we sighted something in the sea – very like a submarine but as we got nearer it was a Vickers Wellington (bomber – Ed) floating on the water with a dinghy beside it. As we realised what it was, they fired a red Véry flare and we circled them so they could get a radar fix at base then after 20 mins we had to go because I was very short of fuel.

When I got back, they were very upset because the signals had been very poor and the air sea rescue launch had been unable to find the downed crew. So, our navigator said it was 'there' pointing at the map, and they went back out and found them. We received a signal from Bomber Command thanking us for our help in rescuing their airmen."

Another incident lifted the curtain on a very different kind of war.

"One morning I was waiting to take off, when I got a 'red' from the control tower and a Handley-Page Halifax (bomber used for a variety of duties – Ed) came floating past with the two inner engines cut and landed on the runway. As he taxied up, one of his outer engines stopped as well. It was one of the Special Operations Executive aircraft with a Polish crew who'd been to Poland to pick up five underground people who had been betrayed and were in danger of being caught by the Gestapo.

"While I was at the Met flight we also converted to [Lockheed] Hudsons, which were very comfortable, but not quite as good in bad weather."

For Harry though, his trips among the clouds were coming to an end.

"After 500 hours I went on rest, so they said 'Where do you want go? Do you want to be an instructor or flying controller?' and I said, 'I do not!' Well, a few days later they said you have a posting to an Army co-operation unit at Gosport. So, off I went and had a very interesting time there." 🇨🇦

**We continue with part three of Harry's career in our March issue**

# Family News

## Birthdays

**Terence Best**, who celebrates his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday on 10 February

**Mary Clouston**, who celebrates her 101<sup>st</sup> birthday on 13 February

**John McCowan**, who celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 6 February

**Frederick Richardson**, who celebrates his 102<sup>nd</sup> birthday on 28 February

**Willis Sadler**, who celebrates his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday on 22<sup>nd</sup> February

**Rebecca Urwin-Smith**, who celebrates her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 8 February

**George Winter**, who celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday on 28 February

*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**

**Patricia Barker** of Bideford who died on 26 November, 2020. She was the wife of Cecil Barker

**Anne Brand** of Kirkcaldy who died on 12 December, 2020. She was the wife of William Brand

**Joyce Buck** of Boston, who died on 4 December, 2020. She was the wife of Maurice Buck

**Joan Camfield** of Harlow who died on 31 December, 2020. She was the wife of Thomas Camfield

**Jean Campbell** of Bournemouth who died on 1 September, 2020. She was the wife of Francis Campbell

**Thelma Diver** of Sheffield who died on 1 May, 2020. She was the wife of David Diver

**William Garden** of Gainsborough who died on 14 January, 2021. He was the husband of Shirley Garden

**Millicent Howe** of King's Lynn who died on 25 December, 2020. She was the wife of Kenneth Howe

**Anne Huntingford** of Wellingborough who died on 22 November, 2020. She was the wife of Clive Huntingford

**Dorothy Knight** of Rotherham who died on 29 December, 2020. She was the wife of Terence Knight

**Marjorie Parr** of Ormskirk who died on 9 December, 2020. She was the wife of Alan Parr

**Dennis Payton** of St Austell who died on 14 December, 2020. He was the husband of Agnes Payton

**Ronald Savage** of Lincoln who died on 7 October, 2020. He was the husband of Mary Savage

**Ann Scott** of Tunbridge Wells who died on 3 January, 2021. She was the wife of David Scott

**Mildred Slack** of Warrington who died on 29 December, 2020. She was the wife of Robert Slack

**Jessie Stewart** of Nairn who died on 1 January, 2021. She was the wife of Robert Stewart



# 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

**John Abberley** of Stratford-Upon-Avon, Warwickshire died on 24 December 2020 aged 95. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

**Roger Adams** of Crowthorne, Berkshire died on 10 November 2020 aged 81. He served as an Officer in the Royal Artillery.

**Peter Michael Allcock** of Henley-In-Arden died on 4 January 2021 aged 83. He served as a Leading Writer in the Royal Navy.

**George Andrews** of Newtown, Powys died on 4 December 2020 aged 86. He served as a Private in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

**John Robert Applegate** of Skegness, Lincolnshire died on 19 December 2020 aged 95. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Navy.

**Victor Arthur Ashlee** of Sidcup, Kent died on 24 November 2020 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Allan Arthur Atkinson** of Hull, East Riding Of Yorkshire died on 10 December 2020 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

**Paul Nicholas Ayshford-Sanford** of Moreton-In-the-Marsh, Gloucestershire died on 8 December 2020 aged 89. He served as an Acting Major in the 9th Queen's Royal Lancers.

**Philip Baguley** of Altrincham, Cheshire died on 18 December 2020 aged 90. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Marjorie Bamford** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 7 January 2021 aged 86. She served in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

**Alan Banbury** of Thatcham, Berkshire died on 29 December 2020 aged 89. He served in the Army.

**Peter Bartholomew** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 4 January 2021 aged 81. He served as a Private in the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment.

**Arthur Beckett** of Reading died on 16 January 2021 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force.

**Frederick William James Bird** of Malton, North Yorkshire died on 23 November 2020 aged 90. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Adrian Bishop** of Chippenham, Wiltshire died on 1 December 2020 aged 93. He served as a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force.

**George Russell Blackborow** of Newport, Gwent died on 14 January 2021 aged 94. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

**Cyril Bond** of Nottingham died on 5 December 2020 aged 95. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

**Dennis Bower** of Workington, Cumbria died on 1 December 2020 aged 84. He served as a Corporal in the King's Own Royal Border Regiment (4th, 34th and 55th Foot).

**Thomas Walter Box** of Kidderminster, Worcestershire died on 1 January 2021 aged 89. He served as a Guardsman in the Coldstream Guards.

**Edward John Brading** of Bracknell, Berkshire died on 3 January 2021 aged 89. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

**Richard Brittain** of Paignton, Devon died on 29 November 2020 aged 87. He served as a Bandsman in the Royal Tank Regiment.

**Edwyn Charles Bunting** of Scarborough, North Yorkshire died on 11 January 2021 aged 80. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

**Geoffrey Burrows** of Lancaster died on 1 January 2021 aged 59. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Pay Corps. →



**Ernest George Burt** of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 10 September 2020 aged 90. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

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**John Calladine** of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 24 November 2020 aged 82. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Thomas Charles Camfield** of Harlow, Essex died on 26 November 2020 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Kenneth Carlisle** of Oldham died on 20 November 2020 aged 86. He served as a Sergeant in the Manchester Regiment.

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**Kenneth Carter** of Weybridge, Surrey died on 29 December 2020 aged 76. He served as a Private in the Cheshire Regiment.

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**John Chamberlain-Hill** of Tiverton, Devon died on 13 November 2020 aged 85. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Audrie Chaplin** of Filey, North Yorkshire died on 12 December 2020 aged 85. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Royal Air Force.

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**Roy Cheetham** of Colwyn Bay, Conwy died on 20 December 2020 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

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**Alan Chilvers** of Grimsby, Lincolnshire died on 21 December 2020 aged 89. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

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**Edmond Chuard** of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 7 December 2020 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Green Jackets (43rd, 52nd, 60th and 95th Foot).

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**John Cleobury** of Havant, Hampshire died on 12 January 2021 aged 86. He served as a Junior Technician in the Royal Air Force.

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**James Cockle** of Woodbridge, Suffolk died on 1 August 2020 aged 97. He served in the Royal Signals.

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**John Comley** of Southampton died on 1 December 2020 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Royal Sussex Regiment.

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**Thomas Edward Connor** of Stockport, Cheshire died on 13 December 2020 aged 89. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Fred Conway** of Maryport, Cumbria died on 1 June 2020 aged 87. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

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**Ronald Corfield** of Shrewsbury died on 8 January 2021 aged 91. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Norman Edward Coddell** of Leominster, Herefordshire died on 3 January 2021 aged 89. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Alis Coxon** of Derby died on 28 November 2020 aged 89. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Royal Air Force.

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**Dennis Albert Cushing** of Preston died on 21 November 2020 aged 95. He served as a Photographer in the Fleet Air Arm.

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**Garry Michael Daintry** of London died on 8 January 2021 aged 82. He served as a Captain in the Irish Guards.

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**Tom Daniel** of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 15 December 2020 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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**David William Davies** of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 14 December 2020 aged 87. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Albert Edward Davies** of Southport, Merseyside died on 1 November 2020 aged 91. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

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**John Frederick Charles Davis** of Heathfield, East Sussex died on 29 November 2020 aged 92. He served as a Rifleman in the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

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**Thomas Bernard Deakins** of Hamilton, Lanarkshire died on 25 November 2020 aged 82. He served as a Guardsman in the Scots Guards.

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**Catherine Annie Delaney** of Solihull, West Midlands died on 9 December 2020 aged 90. She served in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.

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**Reginald Dempster** of Prescott, Merseyside died on 1 December 2020 aged 94. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Signals.

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**Arthur Dodd** of Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland died on 8 December 2020 aged 94. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**Terence Donoghue** of Pudsey, West Yorkshire died on 22 November 2020 aged 95. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**William Edwards** of Sheffield died on 29 October 2020 aged 90. He served as an Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force. →

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**Malcolm Edwards** of Salisbury died on 28 October 2020 aged 75. He served as a Corporal in the Cheshire Regiment.

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**Brian Edwards** of Caerphilly, Mid Glamorgan died on 8 January 2021 aged 87. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

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**Brian Philip Edwards** of Brighton died on 1 December 2020 aged 86. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

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**Edward Stokoe Fawcett** of Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire died on 16 April 2020 aged 97. He served as a Wing Commander in the Royal Air Force.

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**Patrick Fleming** of Burnley, Lancashire died on 11 January 2021 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Home Guard.

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**Joy Lily Folkard** of Dorking, Surrey died on 24 November 2020 aged 94. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

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**Dorothy May Forrest** of Chesterfield, Derbyshire died on 9 August 2020 aged 96. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Eric Foster** of Clitheroe, Lancashire died on 21 December 2020 aged 104. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

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**Neil Fox** of Accrington, Lancashire died on 18 December 2020 aged 87. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**George Alan Fox** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 1 November 2020 aged 91. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Edwin Cecil Franklin** of Reading died on 27 November 2020 aged 101. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Jean May Freegard** of Romsey, Hampshire died on 1 January 2021 aged 88. She served as a Private in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

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**Barry Freeman** of Stourport-On-Severn, Worcestershire died on 3 January 2021 aged 96. He served as a Private in the Worcestershire Regiment.

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**Michael Edward Fuller** of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 17 December 2020 aged 87. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Paul Connell Gallagher** of Liverpool died on 2 August 2020 aged 80. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Ian Garvie** of Shaftesbury, Dorset died on 5 January 2021 aged 87. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers.

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**George Benjamin Blackhurst Gibb** of Largs, Ayrshire died on 14 January 2021 aged 98. He served as a Lieutenant in the Fleet Air Arm.

---

**Brian Gibson** of Ferryhill, County Durham died on 11 December 2020 aged 81. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

---

**Geoffrey Gidley** of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 27 November 2020 aged 89. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Robert Glover** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 14 January 2021 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Dental Corps.

---

**Michael Charles Golding** of York, North Yorkshire died on 1 January 2021 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Special Air Service Regiment.

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**Sheila Graham** of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire died on 10 November 2020 aged 93. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Allan Frank Gray** of Ashford, Kent died on 8 January 2021 aged 97. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Gene Ann Green** of Horncastle, Lincolnshire died on 16 December 2020 aged 97. She served as an Aircraftwoman in the Royal Air Force.

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**Eman Gurung** of Reading died on 8 January 2021 aged 84. He served in the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

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**Hans Frederick Haagensen** of Colchester died on 14 January 2021 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Stanley Paul Hammond-Reid** of Morecambe, Lancashire died on 29 December 2020 aged 82. He served as a Lance Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

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**Peter Hansen** of Staines, Middlesex died on 7 November 2020 aged 93. He served as an Aircraftman 1st Class in the Royal Air Force. →

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**George Gordon Hardwick** of Leighton Buzzard, Bedfordshire died on 11 December 2020 aged 95. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Doris May Hayes** of Radstock died on 16 December 2020 aged 97. She served as a Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

---

**Janet Hazel** of Maidstone, Kent died on 1 December 2020 aged 95. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

---

**David Charles Heale** of Cardiff, South Glamorgan died on 22 December 2020 aged 88. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

---

**Thomas Newton Hemsley** of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne And Wear died on 1 December 2020 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

---

**Gordon Francis Henry** of Wallasey, Merseyside died on 14 January 2021 aged 91. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

---

**Henry Henshall** of Bury, Lancashire died on 25 November 2020 aged 96. He served as a Wireman in the Royal Navy.

---

**Mary Greenhill Hillcoat** of Newcastle Upon Tyne died on 1 December 2020 aged 98. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Edward Hind** of Wokingham, Berkshire died on 30 November 2020 aged 88. He served as a Warrant Officer 1st Class in the R.A.O.C / R.E.M.E.

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**Peter Musgrove Hodgson** of Dalton-In-Furness, Cumbria died on 1 April 2020 aged 89. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Hilda Hooks** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 1 December 2020 aged 96. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

---

**Henry Hopkins** of Witney, Oxfordshire died on 10 December 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force.

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**Robert Spoor Hopper** of Newcastle Upon Tyne died on 6 December 2020 aged 78. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

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**John Horne** of Henley-In-Arden died on 18 November 2020 aged 87. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Signals.

---

**Arthur Horsfall** of Oldham died on 11 December 2020 aged 92. He served as a Private in the Lancashire Fusiliers.

---

**Peter Houston** of Bishopton, Renfrewshire died on 6 January 2021 aged 88. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Scots Guards.

---

**William Hughes** of Liverpool died on 3 December 2020 aged 94. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

---

**Arthur Samuel Hughes** of Llanfairfechan, Conwy died on 25 December 2020 aged 90. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

---

**Ronald Hughes** of Durham died on 9 December 2020 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Duke Of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

---

**John Henry Hutchinson** of Largs, Ayrshire died on 12 November 2020 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

---

**Alan Frederick Johnson** of Oswestry, Shropshire died on 1 January 2021 aged 87. He served as a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force.

---

**George William Jones** of Church Stretton, Shropshire died on 4 January 2021 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Bretha Mary Agnes Keeble** of Newquay, Cornwall died on 17 December 2020 aged 95. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

---

**Victor Knill** of Westcliff-On-Sea, Essex died on 1 October 2020 aged 101. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Army.

---

**Eric Henry Lake** of Maghull died on 10 November 2020 aged 97. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

---

**Ernest Charles Anthony Lane** of Gloucester died on 31 October 2020 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

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**Henry Ambrose William Lang** of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 3 November 2019 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Army Catering Corps.

---

**Jenny Leach** of Nottingham died on 25 December 2020 aged 99. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Charles Levens** of Bowing Park, Merseyside died on 1 January 2021 aged 92. He served as a Rifleman in the Royal Irish Fusiliers (87th and 89th Foot). →

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**Derek John Lockhart** of Wallington, Surrey died on 28 November 2020 aged 87. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Signals.

---

**Frank Lowe** of Norwich died on 1 July 2020 aged 95. He served as a Warrant Officer 1st Class in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

---

**Eric Wilfred Mitchell** of Shepton Mallet, Somerset died on 29 December 2020 aged 90. He served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps.

---

**Ronald Joseph Moore** of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 1 December 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Artillery.

---

**Robert John Morgan** of Porthcawl, South Glamorgan died on 18 December 2020 aged 85. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

---

**Clive Morgan** of Abertillery, Gwent died on 22 December 2020 aged 77. He served as a Warrant Officer 1st Class in the South Wales Borderers.

---

**Ronald George Morris** of Solihull, West Midlands died on 20 December 2020 aged 94. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Frederick Victor Moxon** of Keighley, West Yorkshire died on 28 December 2020 aged 90. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

---

**Graham Muirhead** of Shipston-On-Stour, Warwickshire died on 17 December 2020 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

---

**Thomas Mullen** of Cheadle, Cheshire died on 1 December 2020 aged 93. He served as a Staff Sergeant in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

---

**Donald Mulryan** of Wirral, Merseyside died on 7 December 2020 aged 87. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

---

**Daniel Wheelan Murphy** of Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire died on 12 December 2020 aged 84. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Malcolm Nickson** of Runcorn, Cheshire died on 27 December 2020 aged 77. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

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**John Anthony Nunney** of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 18 January 2021 aged 86. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Louis Mootookisnan Padayachy** of Corby, Northamptonshire died on 24 November 2020 aged 76. He served as a Private in the Royal Artillery.

---

**William Parr** of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 1 September 2020 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

---

**Terence Parsons** of Yeovil, Somerset died on 31 December 2020 aged 84. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Ronald Petherick** of Penarth, South Glamorgan died on 6 December 2020 aged 86. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

---

**Robert Percival Phillips** of Southport, Merseyside died on 27 December 2020 aged 90. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

---

**John Michael Pilgrim** of Saxmundham, Suffolk died on 1 December 2020 aged 87. He served as a Bandsman in the Home Counties Brigade.

---

**James Pirrie** of Dumfries died on 13 October 2020 aged 86. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

---

**Maurice Richard Porter** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 21 December 2020 aged 92. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

---

**Cyril Edward Frederick Pryor** of Swindon died on 1 November 2020 aged 92. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Joseph Keith Quigley** of Westcliff-On-Sea, Essex died on 24 December 2020 aged 82. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

---

**Albert Ramsay** of Chester Le Street, County Durham died on 4 December 2020 aged 85. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

---

**William Ransom** of Epping, Essex died on 6 January 2021 aged 100. He served as a Temporary Flight Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

---

**David Noah Raybould** of Tipton, West Midlands died on 12 January 2021 aged 88. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

---

**Gerald Tom Reardon** of Exeter died on 8 December 2020 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

---

**Vincent Richards** of Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan died on 28 December 2020 aged 83. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Pioneer Corps. →

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**William Robinson** of Lowestoft, Suffolk died on 30 October 2020 aged 88. He served as a Medical Technician 1st Class in the Royal Navy.

**Thomas Robson** of Bishop Auckland, County Durham died on 21 December 2020 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Reconnaissance Corps.

**Reville Arthur Rowland** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 22 November 2020 aged 90. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

**Derrick William Rushby** of Lincoln died on 17 December 2020 aged 90. He served as an A.C. 2 in the Royal Air Force.

**Albert Crisp Russell** of Ely, Cambridgeshire died on 6 May 2020 aged 93. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

**Rena Sackree** of Lincoln died on 19 December 2020 aged 75. She served as a Senior Aircraftswoman in the Royal Air Force.

**Percival Thomas Saunders** of Barnstaple, Devon died on 13 December 2020 aged 97. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Donald Ian Scott** of Warwick died on 26 October 2020 aged 88. He served as a Group Captain in the Royal Air Force.

**Colin Seaton** of Pocklington, East Riding Of Yorkshire died on 17 January 2021 aged 89. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Horse Artillery.

**Alec Lewis George Senior** of Clevedon, Avon died on 7 January 2021 aged 96. He served as a Gunner in the Anti-Tank Regiment.

**Frank Sharples** of Nelson, Lancashire died on 28 November 2020 aged 89. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Medical Corps.

**David Peter Smith** of Atherstone, Warwickshire died on 28 November 2020 aged 67. He served as a Private in the Royal Pioneer Corps.

**Brian Smith** of Hunstanton, Norfolk died on 19 November 2020 aged 86. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Gordon James Smith** of Slough died on 17 December 2020 aged 91. He served as a Private in the Highland Brigade.

**Raymond Snowling** of Dereham, Norfolk died on 1 September 2020 aged 93. He served as a Rifleman in the Rifle Brigade.

**Daphne Mary Somerfield** of Hayling Island, Hampshire died on 2 January 2021 aged 97. She served as a Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

**Gerald Joseph Spencer** of Rugby, Warwickshire died on 5 November 2020 aged 92. He served as a Leading Engineering Mechanic in the Royal Navy.

**John Spurgin** of Leigh-On-Sea, Essex died on 17 January 2021 aged 93. He served as an Aircraftman 2nd Class in the Royal Air Force.

**Leonard Stamp** of Spennymoor, County Durham died on 1 December 2020 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Military Police.

**Ronald Stapleford** of Skelmersdale, Lancashire died on 14 December 2020 aged 95. He served as a Corporal in the Army Catering Corps.

**Arthur John Stedman** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 1 December 2020 aged 94. He served as an Acting Leading Electrical Mechanic (B) in the Royal Navy.

**Roy Francis Stout** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 7 December 2020 aged 98. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Roy Symons** of Harrow, Middlesex died on 11 January 2021 aged 101. He served as a Battery Quartermaster Sergeant in the Royal Artillery.

**Christopher Robin Tanner** of Rugby, died on 18 January 2021 aged 94. He served as a Captain in the Queen's Royal Regiment.

**Neil Anthony Pomfret Teixeira** of Bolton, Greater Manchester died on 29 December 2020 aged 92. He served as a Guardsman in the Coldstream Guards.

**Alfred John Tennant** of Northampton died on 6 January 2021 aged 87. He served as a Private in the South Wales Borderers.

**Michael John Thomas** of Kettering, Northamptonshire died on 20 December 2020 aged 86. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

**Henry Elias Thomas** of Bristol died on 7 January 2021 aged 90. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

**Frederick Thompson** of Stourbridge, West Midlands died on 10 December 2020 aged 97. He served as a Petty Officer Radio Mechanic in the Royal Navy. →

**Ronald Thorpe** of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 29 November 2020 aged 97. He served as a Marine in the Royal Marines.

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**Richard Walter Thorpe** of Burnley, Lancashire died on 11 December 2020 aged 90. He served in the East Surrey Regiment.

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**Reginald James Thurman** of Worthing, West Sussex died on 27 November 2020 aged 92. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Evelyn Tilley** of Llandudno, Gwynedd died on 12 December 2020 aged 100. She served as an L.A.C.W. in the Women's Royal Air Force.

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**James Reginald Frank Timms** of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire died on 1 January 2021 aged 95. He served as a Private in the Duke Of Cornwall's Light Infantry.

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**Michael Kenneth Townell** of Llanelli, Dyfed died on 1 December 2020 aged 72. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Marine Commandos.

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**Edward Davis Vaughan** of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 17 December 2020 aged 93. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

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**Peter Vaughan** of Southport, Merseyside died on 12 December 2020 aged 89. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

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**John Henry Venn** of Wellington, Somerset died on 5 January 2021 aged 90. He served as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**Vincent James Waller** of East Boldon, Tyne And Wear died on 1 January 2021 aged 90. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

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**Joan Warr** of Redhill died on 19 December 2020 aged 97. She served as a Flying Officer in the Royal Air Force.

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**Kenneth Warren** of Retford, Nottinghamshire died on 15 December 2020 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**David Alan Warren** of St. Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 20 December 2020 aged 86. He served as a Bombardier in the Royal Artillery.

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**Joseph Alfred Waterman** of Christchurch, Dorset died on 31 December 2020 aged 96. He served as an Air Fitter in the Royal Navy.

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**Edward Waugh** of Bishop Auckland, County Durham died on 13 January 2021 aged 86. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Elwyn West** of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 16 January 2021 aged 91. He served as an Acting Corporal in the Royal Air Force.

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**Alan Wheatley** of Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland died on 11 December 2020 aged 87. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**George Ernest Whittlesea** of Llandrindod Wells, Powys died on 31 December 2020 aged 90. He served as a Captain in the Royal Electrical And Mechanical Engineers.

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**Maurice Wigmore** of Thatcham, Berkshire died on 31 December 2020 aged 84. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Hussars.

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**Dennis Eastlake Williams** of Tenby, Dyfed died on 18 December 2020 aged 94. He served as an Aircraft Artificer 1st Class in the Fleet Air Arm.

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**John William Willson** of Benfleet, Essex died on 28 November 2020 aged 91. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy.

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**Frank Wilson** of Chesterfield, Derbyshire died on 4 December 2020 aged 96. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

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**Ronald Wilson** of Derby died on 4 January 2021 aged 98. He served as a Trooper in the Royal Armoured Corps.

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**Arthur Wood** of Keighley, West Yorkshire died on 29 November 2020 aged 94. He served as a Private in the Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's).

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**Fred Wood** of Liverpool died on 1 September 2020 aged 87. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

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**Mary Ellen Louise Woods** of Ruthin, Denbighshire died on 23 November 2020 aged 94. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

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**Jack Derrick Wright** of Woodbridge, Suffolk died on 1 December 2020 aged 93. He served as a Leading Stores Assistant in the Royal Navy.

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**Thelma Linda Yarwood** of Chepstow, Gwent died on 1 January 2021 aged 87. She served as a Sergeant in the Women's Royal Army Corps.

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**Caption: President Kennedy's motorcade in Cork, Ireland, 1963**

# Jack Kennedy's Legacy to Joe Biden

In the wake of the recent US elections, Member **John Cockcroft** recalls when he attended the last press conference of President John F Kennedy in November 1963

Joe Biden's autobiographical book, 'Promises to Keep', is relevant to an earlier time in the Democrats' history.

I used to go to Washington frequently to cover World Bank and International

Monetary Fund meetings and happened to be staying with some good friends, called Avery, who were intellectual and prosperous. They were close to the Kennedy's and obviously contributed to Democrat Party funds.

On the Sunday before the assassination of President Kennedy in November 1963, I happened to be staying with the Averys. That day, George Avery went to the White House for a pre-lunch cocktail party. We waited a long time for him to come back before we started our lunch.

He said, then, that he had never seen Jack and Jackie so close to each other following the death of their little boy, Patrick, at the age of 11 days. He said that Bobby Kennedy, the Attorney General [and John F Kennedy's younger brother], had advised the President not to go to Dallas the following Friday, because there was a lot of animosity towards him amongst wealthy Texans, who were afraid they would be taxed more on their oil revenues.

Tricia Avery, George's sister said, "The trouble with the Kennedy's is, they fly, like Icarus, too close to the sun." and John Avery, George's brother said, "He reminds me of Calpurnia, inviting Caesar not to go to the Forum on the Ides of March."

## The last conference

The following day was Kennedy's last press conference and the Averys were able to get me into that event. Jack Kennedy bounced up to the lectern like a man much younger than his early forties, despite his physical ailments.

He was witty in a European sort of way (American humour tends to be rather obvious).

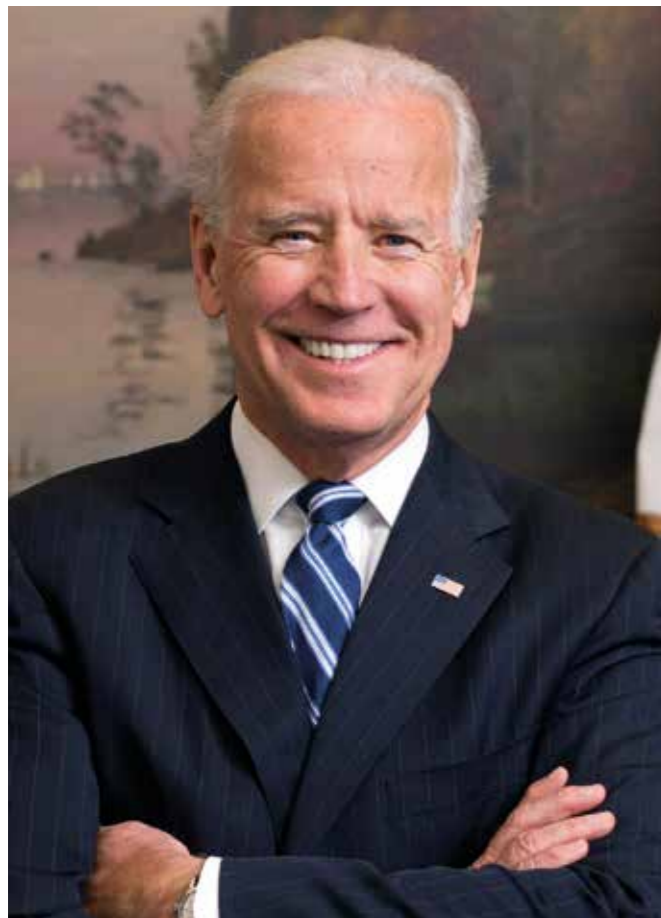
There were many questions, but I was particularly amused by one from an English journalist who said to the President, "There are rumours that you and Jackie preside over a round table", and the President replied, "Well, Jack and Jackie are great friends of King Arthur and, as you know, round tables come in all shapes and sizes and ours is large enough to accommodate most of the Court of King Arthur and I have to admit that we do preside over a second Camelot."

The last question was particularly poignant. The President was asked what were his plans for the next legislative session of Congress, starting in January. He seemed to be vague, but said, "I have an excellent Vice-President who gets on with the details. Vice-President [Lyndon] Johnson is of greatest support to me. And in this context, I can only quote from my favourite American poet, Robert Frost, 'I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep.'" I expect Joe Biden is familiar with that phrase.

The Kennedys, in those days, were enormously popular. Crowds of students used to mill around outside that balcony on the White House →

and shout, “We want Jack! We want Jackie! We want Camelot again!” And the President and his wife did duly appear. They were, of course, like rock stars and both very good looking.

I had become interested in the Kennedys long before President Kennedy’s assassination. I happened to be at the 1956 Democratic Convention, which selects a Presidential Candidate, as the people I was staying with were Democrats. I know it seems rather far-fetched to have witnessed two such events, but that’s life, it happened to me. Senator Kennedy, at the 1956



**Caption: President Joe Biden**

gathering made a very good keynote speech and of course later on, he was adopted in the 1960 convention.

### Modern history

Having read modern history, I was particularly interested in Joe Kennedy who had made a lot of money out of bootlegging, which was selling alcohol illicitly, during Prohibition. However, Joe Kennedy was a devoted supporter of President Roosevelt, during the 1930s, and he was duly sent to the Court of St James as American Ambassador before the Second World War. He was there with his wife and many children.

Jack Kennedy studied at the London School of Economics and wrote a book, which had quite a large readership. It was called, ‘Why England Sleeps: A Critique of Appeasement’. When I wrote my book on Economics in 1971, I plagiarised that title and called it, ‘Why England Sleeps’, with apologies, of course, to the President. I was very interested, in this context, to read about President Roosevelt’s antidote to the gloomy forecast of Joe Kennedy, about the imminent collapse of the British Government and military operation after Dunkerque.

The President sent a personal friend, Harry Hopkins, to spend a week with Prime Minister Churchill in a Downing Street bunker. Harry Hopkins was

very impressed and sent messages back to Washington to that effect. He would travel by train with Churchill to the Grand Hotel in Glasgow, where they had an alcoholic lunch and then went on to Scapa Flow, in order for the Prime Minister to see off Harry Hopkins.

Apparently, Churchill asked Hopkins, “What message do you have from the great American President?” and apparently Hopkins replied, “He has authorised me to quote from the Book of Ruth, ‘Ruth to her step-mother Naomi, “Where thou goest, I shall go. Where thou dwellest, I shall dwell. And your people shall be my people, even unto the end”’, at which time the Prime Minister broke down in tears, in the desperate aftermath of the events in France.

There is, of course, still a great interest in the Kennedys. Robert Kennedy was assassinated also, in 1968.

### Historic legislation

Kennedy’s legislative achievements were slight. He started taking the Civil Rights movement seriously and sent some so-called advisors to Vietnam, but after his assassination, it was President Lyndon B Johnson, a former speaker of the Senate and an important political figure in Texas, who made the historic legislation which

“He will be very good at ‘reaching out across the aisle’, as they call it on Congress Hill, to the Republicans”

helped to improve the lots of black Americans but, unfortunately, he got bogged down in Vietnam, as we know.

I was lucky to be able to follow the Kennedy story so personally and I have written about the White House drinks party and the last press conference in my pending memoirs.

I just hope that Joe Biden will live up to the expectations of his presidency. I have followed his career for 13 years, since he was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. He is extraordinarily qualified in foreign affairs, having been Vice President to President Obama and is seen as a very compassionate man, partly because of the tragedies in his own life.

He will be very good at ‘reaching out across the aisle’, as they call it on Congress Hill, to the Republicans, which is much needed in present conditions. It was relevant that recently a Republican Senator said that Joe Biden is the most honourable man he has ever met, so good luck to him. 🍀



# National Creative Project

## Creative Activities. Creative Book. Creative Hobby Circles

Welcome to the February programme of activities to get involved with from home.

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.

For more information about the projects and groups please visit our web page: [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](http://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)



**Caption: Sweet peas on a window ledge**

### Gardening

#### Windowsill sweet peas.

As the days begin to get longer, we can start beginning to think about spring around the corner. This quarter we will be planting miniature sweet peas, which can be grown on a windowsill.

Your kit will include everything you need. During the project there will also be the opportunity to join a group chat over the phone to discuss how your sweet peas are growing and all other things garden related.

### Art and crafts:

#### Birds tea towel design project.

'Put out a bird feeder and you will always have visitors' - 2020 lockdown quote

For many, the sound of bird song has helped them through the pandemic, and we'd like to celebrate this by spreading a sense of hope to others via your bird-inspired artwork. For those of you who took part in our first tea towel art project, you will know how nice it is to join other Members in creating something together.

Your pack will contain a bird template, simple instructions and all the materials to create a collaged image. You may also use what you have at home. Simply return your bird picture to us in the prepaid and pre-addressed

“The sound of bird song has helped them through the pandemic, and we'd like to celebrate this by spreading a sense of hope to others”

envelope. With your bird and those made by other Members, we'll create a tea towel design. Each participating Member will be sent a tea towel including their artwork at the end of the project. You will also have the opportunity to take part in a group telephone call with other veterans if you wish.

### Art:

#### Painting for beginners and improvers - January and February project.

Painting challenges with support, for you to learn to paint or improve your skills. Recent subjects include sunflowers, seascape, lighthouses, landscape, fruit and much more.

We will send a painting project kit if you need it (or you may use your own materials). With a new project every two months, you may sign up for just one or sign up each time. There will be the chance to meet other Members and our Art and Craft team for chat and tips by phone or video call if you would like. →

**Craft:****Woodwork project – ‘sandbox’**

We have two versions of this versatile woodwork project.

A small wooden box made up for you to finish. A project for casual woodwork enthusiasts with no need for tools or too much mess. The finish is as fine or as decorative as you would like to make it. We will send you two boxes, sandpaper, and suggestions and instructions of creative finishes you can try.

Alternatively, for the accomplished woodworker, we offer a constructive project where the object is to assemble and finish a small wooden box from components. This option is aimed at the

woodworkers amongst you who are more comfortable using the supplied wood glue and tape, and would like more of a technical challenge and possibly to use your own hand tools.

Sign up and we will get in touch to determine which kit would be the best fit. You'll also have the opportunity, should you wish, to join a group telephone chat to exchange support and ideas with fellow participants.

**Art & Craft:****Collaboration in colour**

Take part in a collaborative multimedia art piece inspired by patchwork quilt panels.

A project from now until midsummer

**Hi All,**

**We just wanted to share a little poem that Jennie, one of our Working Age Members who has been participating in some of the hobby circles has written. It certainly put a smile on our faces**

*It's hard sitting alone at home  
In varying shades of grey  
But raise your eyes  
Lift your hearts  
And join hobby circles today*

*Whether by zoom*

*Or by teams*

*Or good ol' telephony*

*Here you can have loads of fun*

*So as was said in "It Ain't Half Hot"*

*Meet the gang cos we're here*

*Here to entertain you*

*With music and laughter to help you  
along the way*

*With a heh heh heh*

*Join your group today*



ADOBE STOCK / SEVENTYFOUR

**Caption: Collaboration in colour**

to create a large art piece made by the Blind Veterans UK family. You will have the opportunity to decorate several squares of the 'quilt' with the choice of a wide variety of mediums. The piece will be a celebration of a new beginning, spring and summer and our colourful community. Once completed we plan to take this piece on tour to a variety of locations around the charity.

Your pack will include a cardboard square as a base for your art and craft work. We'll send some collage materials and glue and encourage you to use recycled materials and/or art materials from home too. You will have the opportunity to take part in a group

telephone chat with other members to exchange ideas and for support and encouragement if you would like.

**Blind Veterans UK CREATIVE BOOK – open for contributions.**

It has been two months since the launch of our Creative Book Project and contributions are being sent in by members, volunteers and staff.

The poems, pictures, photos and prose received give an insight into how we have all been affected in some way by the pandemic and consequential lockdowns. They are also giving an insight into the coping strategies and inner resolve people have drawn on during these difficult times. Perhaps unsurprisingly humour features greatly,

If you have access to the internet you can find more information about all of the projects above, stories and quotes from participating Members. You can also visit galleries of work from some of the projects at [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](https://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)

Wishing you all a very happy and creative 2021.

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

as does a fondness for appreciating the beauty around us, and this is evident from the photographs we have received.

We have also received comments of 'I wouldn't know what to write', or 'I am no good at...'. Our answer has always been the same; there are no expectations or standards to be reached. We are just looking for contributions that are representative of a snapshot in time and that convey a message from the heart.

During 2021 we will be sharing ideas of themes for contributions which may act as an inspiration to all and our



**Caption: Putting pen to paper**

first mini challenge to inspire is you is - **'What has kept you going?'**

If you would like to see contributions so far, please visit our web page: [blindveterans.org.uk/ncp](https://blindveterans.org.uk/ncp)

■ **For more information on how to submit a contribution please email [creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:creativebook@blindveterans.org.uk) or telephone our bookings team on 01273 391 500**

### **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 these subjects,

*Basketry. Model-making. Knitting. Gardening. Woodturning. Mosaic. Painting. Woodwork.*

### **Photography**

For our photographers we have a Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK photography) and a photography chat group. Everyone with an interest in taking photos is welcome, from pros with all the kit, to mobile phone photographers.

■ **For more information on the Photography Group please contact Mark Pile on 07584 056 459 or e-mail [mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk)**

# Getting green fingers in Llandudno

Volunteering can improve your mental health and wellbeing - **Joanna Tann** finds out more as she interviews one of our Llandudno Centre volunteers

The two-acre Centenary Woodland Garden within the grounds of the Llandudno Centre has long been recognised for its therapeutic offering to our Members in terms of reconnecting with nature and the outdoors. It provides opportunities to walk, sit, relax, reflect and be mindful while surrounded by trees, flower beds, wildlife and bird song. The existence of this garden is made possible by a small but very dedicated band of volunteers who work throughout the year to ensure safe access for our veterans, and seasonal interest for all who visit.

Our lead gardening volunteer at Llandudno is Susan Sayers. I asked Susan what benefits she gains from her volunteering.

"In 2014 I moved from Leeds and settled in Llandudno. I have been a keen gardener for many years and entered my home garden in the annual 'Leeds in Bloom' competition winning Silver and Bronze awards but never quite that elusive Gold! On relocating to a flat in Llandudno I really missed my garden. One Sunday while in church, I got talking to a blind veteran and his wife who were staying at the Llandudno Centre on holiday. They told me of a new woodland garden project that was happening at the Centre and the need for volunteers to help. It sounded perfect so I got in touch with the Volunteer Coordinator and the rest is history.

"I enjoy the hands-on aspect of →



**Caption: Our lovely garden volunteers at the Llandudno Centre**

gardening, and the woodland work is very physical, but I find that the gentle sounds of the woodland, being outdoors, nurturing the shrubs and plants greatly helps my general sense of wellbeing. I immerse myself in my work and the surroundings, focusing on the woodland, forgetting everything else, thinking of things that others might enjoy such as a well-placed plant beside the footpath, or creating a sculpture with logs and woodland materials. The benefits of volunteering in such an enchanting environment really hit home to me when we entered the first Covid-19 lockdown. I missed the woodlands so much, and not being there to see it change from Spring to Summer. It was wonderful to come back when the lockdown was lifted and see what had changed in our absence.”

Susan’s comments resonate. I can confirm that no two visits are ever the same, the woodland changes constantly and it is always interesting to venture down the path to see what’s new. It may be fresh blooms in Spring as the drifts of snowdrops, daffodils and bluebells appear; or a carpet of leaves and Autumn colours emerging or an icy sprinkling of frost which transforms the woodlands into a Winter wonderland.

### **Gentle sounds**

There is something magical about this woodland. It can feel warm and ‘dapply’ on a summer’s day with gentle sounds through the trees, or wild and moody when it’s blowing a Welsh ‘hoolie’. Members have mentioned to me that the woodland embraces them,

providing a haven to reflect and just be.

Susan goes on to describe to me the learning curve and the social contact her volunteering has brought over the past five years.

“Woodland gardening is quite different to domestic gardening and on such a larger scale too. I have learnt so much and extended my horticultural knowledge as a result. Learning what grows well under the woodland canopy, (the huge pine trees take much of the rainwater and light), making the most of sunlit areas, moving plants to achieve better results, composting, building hedgehog houses and bug

hotels and I never imagined I would be researching how to build a stumpery

“The social contact of meeting staff and other volunteers while chatting to Members as they stroll in the woodland garden has enabled me to make new friends and enjoy connecting with others as I made a new life for myself in Llandudno. My volunteering has also enabled me to indulge in my other love – that of dancing. I thoroughly enjoyed the tea dances at the Centre and accompanying Members for their dance trips to the Queen’s Hotel. I go home at the end of the day physically tired but mentally very well.” 🌟

## **Five elements**

What Susan is describing is a volunteering role that has incorporated all five elements of well-being. They are: **Giving, Learning, Being Active, Connecting and Mindfulness.**

**Giving** time, effort, skills and experience providing that sense of achievement, making a difference to others

**Learning** new skills, increasing knowledge and understanding

**Being Active**, the physical nature of the tasks involved, keeping fit.

**Connecting** with others whether chatting to Members, discussing new ideas with staff, supporting a young volunteer to help in the garden or socialising with Members while dancing

**Mindfulness**, everyday issues, especially the pandemic, recede into the background as the woodland surroundings embrace and work their magic encouraging one to simply stop and be in the moment

# Watching the ring

Derek Leney spent a fulfilling life in the world of boxing. **Chris Gilson** talked to him to find out more

“I suppose it started on 30 August, 1937” muses Derek Leney, as he travels back to where his interest in boxing took hold.

“I heard my father come downstairs past my bedroom and go into the kitchen at quarter to two. I couldn’t understand what he was doing – I was only six. So, I opened the kitchen door and saw a jug of beer and plate of sandwiches.

“My dad was there, and he said ‘What are you doing up? I’m listening to the fight’. It was a huge fight, Tommy Farr from Tonypany in Wales versus Joe Louis. He said, ‘Do you want to hear it?’. What kid would say no – yet all I could hear was a man shouting.”

Even at the tender age of six, something held the young Derek’s attention, and his attention was focused on the radio. “We had a ‘switchit’ relay, and there

were only two stations – regional and national – and the thing that impressed me when it was over was that it sounded so close, you couldn’t believe it. “My dad was so disappointed



**Caption: Tommy Farr, at the height of his career in the 1930s**

WIKIPEDIA COMMONS / YULIA FURMAN

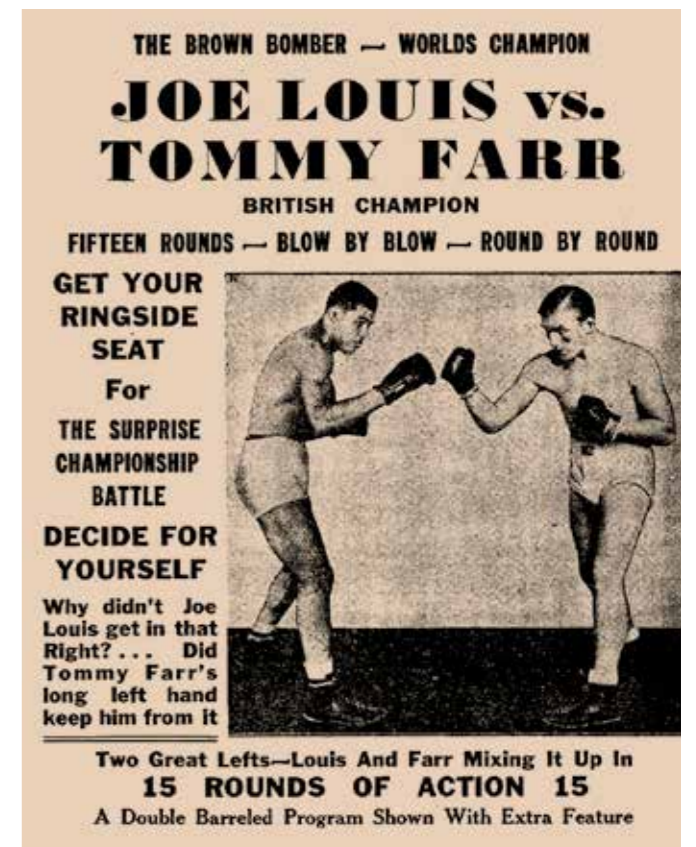
when Joe Louis got the decision and I thought, ‘If a box with sound can do that to my father, then there has to be something in it’. I was hooked from that moment.”

Derek’s interest in boxing continued to grow, leading to his first fight when he was just 12 years old. “Some years later when I was nine, I was running around with a ‘three street’ gang. We weren’t very nice and my father got to hear of it. He said ‘No more gangs and running the streets’. So, after I said ‘What do I do now’, he took me down to Brighton Boys Club and introduced me to the boxing trainer. “He said, ‘I want my boy to box if he’s any good’ – and the trainer said, He can’t box until he’s 12’. So, I trained, then had my first fight when I was 12 and won. My dad gave me half a crown that I spent on chocolate liqueurs, which I shared with mum and dad.”

## National Service

“When it came to National Service, I didn’t know which to join – Army, Navy or Air Force – well, my Dad said ‘You like cooking, why not join the Army Catering Corps (ACC)?’. I said, ‘What about boxing?’, and he said ‘You’ll find a way round it – do what you enjoy.’

“So, after my initial training at Aldershot I went to my first unit at the cookery instruction centre at Woolwich Arsenal.



**Caption: Advert for the 1937 Farr vs Louis fight**

I was approached by one of the heads there, who asked me if I liked sport. ‘Football?’ he said, and I said no, I box. The ACC didn’t have a boxing team, so it got round that by saying I was attached to The Royal Artillery, which did.”

After his demobbing, Derek continued on and off with boxing until he had an unusual request, “I was friends with [boxer] Ronnie Davies, who said ‘I know I should read about myself when I lose, but I’d like a bit more than that’. So I said, ‘Find a commentator...’. He came back a few days later and said, ‘I can’t find anybody’. I told him that →



**Caption: Clipping from the *Washington Star* covering the Farr vs Louis fight**

I couldn't do it, but he said 'You know who's losing and winning – you can do it'. At this time I was just an amateur boxing judge, but said I'd do what I could. So, I sat at the ringside with a tape recorder after having told him that I couldn't promise I'd be any good. He took the tapes away, and three or four days later I had a call from BBC Radio Brighton's station manager Bob Gunnell.

"He asked me to come down to the studio, and told me, 'Derek, I've heard your commentary – Ronnie Davies thought it was so good he gave it to me to listen to, and I'm very impressed'. He then said, 'I hate boxing and I think it ought to be banned' – I thought, what

chance have I got?, but then he asked me to join the station as their boxing commentator.

"So, for the next few years I did commentaries for all the big fights, and everyone got to know me – I didn't need a pass or anything. I commentated on some of Chris Eubank's European bouts and people enjoyed it – so much so that I ended up with the ex-boxers presenting me with a lifetime achievement award." 🍷

**In part two next month, Derek recalls the greatest moment... with the aid of a computer**

## 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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