

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

August 2020

Stringing along

Making your own ukelele



Inside:

Is chocolate
bad for you?

Creating Vera's
portrait



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

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On the cover

Member Haydn Callow in his garden with his beautiful hand-made ukeleles



Cooking up a storm

Cooking. A subject that I've miraculously managed to avoid in my tenure at Blind Veterans UK despite being surrounded by everything related to it in one way or another. This is not because I'm a slouch in the kitchen – far from it and my chicken with orange and black olives is nothing to be laughed at – but there have always been bigger subjects to fry for editorials, pun entirely intended there. So why now?

Well, following a good day's editing I'm happy to admit that one of my guilty pleasures is Masterchef on the TV. Whether it's the joys of listening to chef John Torode sounding like he's re-enacting Gielgud's Seven Ages of Man with his voice as he berates another hapless contestant, or Greg Wallace pontificating over puddings, it's all good stuff. This time round however, I was pleasantly surprised to see there was a blind contestant in the competition.

This is Amar Latif, a travel presenter and writer, who – with the aid of sighted guiding – has gone from strength to strength, even in the pressurised atmosphere of a professional kitchen. Amar, like many of you out there, had little experience of cooking when he started his culinary

journey but has taken to it with a good sense of humour and a modicum of skill. He has demonstrated, albeit in front of millions of armchair critics that those with visual impairment can take on a kitchen and win. I have no doubt he will be in the competition for a while yet, so keep your fingers crossed for him, and let's hope he goes far.

With all the recipes, hints and wrinkles we've been firing at you for the past 18 months in Review you have no excuse not to have a go yourself. Face the fear and give it a whirl – I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how much fun it really is. And, why not send in some pictures of your results... just a thought.

And finally, eagle eyed readers may have noticed that in last month's issue the word 'aircraftman' came out as 'aircraftsman' instead after the spellchecker inserted an 's'.

Until next month, enjoy your magazine.

Chris Gilson
Editor



A note of caution

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

As I write, we continue to be cautious in our response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with our priority being to provide care through our National Support Service to Members in their homes determined by need. With so much uncertainty regarding how this virus is being managed across the country, safety remains our watchword for Members, staff and volunteers. Our permanent residents in Brighton are in good spirits under the care of the wonderful Brighton team, although current Government restrictions on care facilities means that it is still not possible for us to fully re-open the Centres - I provide more information in my letter on pages 16-17 in this issue.

Coronavirus is forcing us all to adapt and adjust, to reassess priorities and to focus on those things that we can do and that add value amid so much uncertainty. Our personal worlds have become smaller, and things we have taken for granted have become more difficult - if they are possible at all. This must be very familiar territory for our veterans who have faced similar

challenges many times over with their sight loss. There is much that we can learn from the ability of the blind veteran to accept the situation that we find ourselves in, to adapt to the new reality and to achieve.

Our philosophy

Since our very beginnings in 1915, this has been the philosophy of our charity. Our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson identified the imperative of helping the war blind of the First World War to find their way, and in encouraging and cajoling others to recognise this imperative and to provide support, he was driven by the importance of needing to accept, adapt and achieve. Achieving financial independence was fundamental to achievement for the young St Dunstaners rather than relying on charity, which made abundant sense given that they had long lives ahead. And so the early work of St Dunstan's was focused on helping the veterans to 'learn' how to be blind and to find a trade. Sir Arthur's philosophy was both pioneering and successful, and subsequently shaped

the approach taken by Lord Fraser as he developed St Dunstan's.

One of the spin-offs of this pandemic is the greater use of the internet and social media for sharing ideas and experiences, and I was fascinated recently to watch part of a conference of the Social History Society on YouTube. Our wonderful Matt Holland from Brighton alerted me to one of the papers being delivered at the Conference which was titled "Social Enterprise as Self Help - The Blind

Shopkeepers of St Dunstan's". The talk is about 15 minutes long and starts 14 minutes into the programme at this link bit.ly/3h2XCEE. In his talk, Dr George Gosling talks about the innovative approach that St Dunstan's adapted in setting blind veterans up with their own shops. The most prominent of these was in Regent Street and was opened by Mr Selfridge himself in 1922. This was followed by shops across the country and, by 1951, there were over 140 shops set up and run by blind veterans. Some



Caption: The Regent Street based St Dunstan's shop set up by William Selfridge in 1922

were used to sell goods made by St Dunstaners, many were newsagents, tobacconists or confectioners, and all displayed proudly that the proprietor had been trained at St Dunstan's. Innovation was a key theme, and we were early pioneers in areas such as mail order and coin management. I often wonder, if he was here today, how Sir Arthur would respond to the challenges of our times? Where would he focus that pioneering spirit, how might he achieve real impact and move the dial? I'm certain that he would want us to find opportunities to remain pioneering, innovative and impactful for blind veterans and broader society.



Caption: Nick Caplin

Taking the lead

Finally, remembering that an Army marches on its stomach, it's been fabulous to see blind veterans taking the lead in sharing their cooking prowess and experience. Penny Melville-Brown has been a trail blazer for blind cooking following her Baking Blind across six continents initiative that won her the Holman prize in 2017.

As well as her regular column in Review, you can follow Penny's culinary ideas on her blog at bit.ly/30gCAvp. Simon Mahoney is stepping forward to provide gastronomic ideas, encouragement and inspiration for the vision impaired through his cookbook which goes by the intriguing title 'First catch your rabbit'! Simon's book will be ready in good time for Christmas, and will also be available as an e-book for ease of access.

Returning to the social media theme, blind veterans are flying their culinary flag through our Veterans Kitchens videos at bit.ly/3h2IM22. Launched by the incomparable Nancy with her boiled egg, blind veterans are picking up the challenge to share their particular delicacies. This is a fabulous initiative by Members that shares ideas, builds awareness and raises funds for the charity. Food for thought. Now, where's my apron...? 🍷



Caption: Civilians and service personnel in London celebrating V-J Day on August 15, 1945

A fitting memorial

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

For many servicemen and women, our interest in a particular battle or campaign often stems from a family connection with it. As far as I know, with the exception of my father-in-law who I only recently discovered served in Coastal Command, I don't have any direct family connection with a Second

World War campaign. My family fell into that age group that was either too young or too old to be required, or able to serve.

My interest in the war in South East Asia is therefore a little tenuous. As a Service brat I had lived





Caption: Paul Luker

in Singapore in the '50s. Although memories of the Japanese invasion and occupation were presumably still fairly raw for many, most ex-pats there were much more engaged by the last embers of colonial life and/or the operation being undertaken against the Communist terrorists in the then Malaya. My dad was routinely leading convoys "up country" to supply the RAF's forward operating bases and very occasionally I caught a flavour of what was going on but it didn't mean that much to an 8-year-old. Leslie Thomas's "Virgin Soldiers", which I first read some 15 years later, gives a hilarious and rather poignant picture of the times.

A decade later I was a cadet at Cranwell. During our summer breaks, cadets were encouraged to find a suitable placement out in the real RAF. In my second summer, a chum and I arranged a course at the Jungle Survival School – not because I had any great interest in jungle survival but because it meant three weeks in Singapore. The only price to pay was a three-night spell in the jungle. Real jungle fighters will rightly scoff at that as a challenge but in the end, the experience was far more exacting than I had expected. Consequently, when a few years later I spent some time flying Whirlwinds and Wessex in support of the Army in Malaysia, I had a much better understanding of what the troops were going through and a stiffened resolve to support them properly. The experience also back-fired on me when, a couple of years later I was identified by my boss as the only pilot on the squadron sufficiently qualified to attend the far more gruelling Jungle Warfare Course, (hence my strongly held views about the folly of ever volunteering for anything!).

A closer look

Later in the mid-70s I served alongside a fantastic father figure, a Master Pilot who had spent his formative years in the wartime RAF, trying desperately to get into the war. His problem was that he was too good. Every time he

undertook a new training course he was identified as an outstanding pilot, and instead of being posted to the front line he found himself held back as an instructor. He had missed the Battle of Britain, retrained as a bomber pilot but missed the bombing campaign, and retrained as a glider pilot but missed D-Day and Arnhem. In exasperation, he had volunteered to fly gliders in the run up to the planned invasion of Japan. With hindsight, he later confided, it was the nearest he came to real combat but the one campaign he was most grateful to have been spared.

Over the years I have been fortunate in being required to return occasionally to South East Asia and, piqued by my interest in military history, I have frequently found myself looking much more closely at the conduct of operations there during the Second World War. Perhaps most tellingly, two visits to Commonwealth and US war graves, when I was conducting official visits as a MOD Director, have led me to research the topic much more.

The first was to Kranji cemetery, a former prisoner of war camp in Singapore. There, in addition to the graves of over 4,600 Commonwealth casualties, the Singapore Memorial records the names of over 24,000 servicemen who have no known resting place. The second was a visit

to the enormous US cemetery just outside Manila in the Philippines. With some 17,184 graves of their military personnel killed during the conflict, and stone tablets recording the names of 36,286 missing in action, it is the largest such site of all US memorials. And, to provide context for this dreadful toll, the site is punctuated with mosaic maps which record the progress of the campaign in the Pacific, China, India and Burma.

Without question the war in South East Asia and the Pacific was brutal, unrelenting and harrowing. It started with the Allies being caught napping before being characterised by the Japanese then doggedly pushing the Allies back until even northern Australia was at risk of invasion, had Port Moresby fallen. It was then followed by some two years in which the Allies fought tooth and claw to recover inch-by-inch, foot by foot, every last piece of lost ground. It culminated horrifically, as we all know, with the first - and hopefully only ever - use of atomic weapons.

Tested to the limits

The Commonwealth's Army, Navy and Air Forces played a full part in most of these campaigns. Yet we know far less about this theatre of operations than we do about the conflict at home. For those in authority in London at





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Caption: Memorial with the Kohima Epitaph

the time, the Pacific was generally less important than the war in Europe. Field Marshal Alanbrooke, Churchill's chief military adviser, saw Commonwealth involvement in it principally as the price we had to pay in order to keep the US engaged in the European campaign to defeat Hitler (his first priority). Consequently, by the end of the war, the then General Bill Slim, commander of the Fourteenth Army, found himself surviving on a knife edge and playing second fiddle for resources. At the

personal level, fighting tested moral and physical fortitude to the limits. As Slim said, "The strength of the Japanese Army lay, not in its higher leadership which once its career of success had been checked became confused, nor in its special aptitude for jungle warfare, but in the spirit of the individual Japanese soldier. He fought and marched till he died." It wasn't just the enemy that was formidable; the environment created major challenges too. And this was true at sea and in the air as well.

For all these reasons, I have long felt that those who fought in South East Asia have been given short shrift in the commemoration of the end of the war. Specifically, while I understand the importance of VE-Day to those on the Home Front, our forces in South-East Asia fought on for over two months more until the Japanese surrender on 15 August 1945. This month VJ-Day marks its 75th anniversary. Overlooked or not, 'The Forgotten Army' did leave one legacy which has now been appropriated to commemorate all our fallen and which is recited every Remembrance Day. It is carved on the memorial to the British 2nd Division at Kohima:

***When You Go Home, Tell Them Of Us
And Say, For Your Tomorrow, We Gave
Our Today*** 🇬🇧

In Your Community

Getting square in the garden

Northampton-based Member Peter O'Malley has been keeping busy during lockdown by creating and painting large mosaic tiles for his garden. He was first introduced to mosaics at his introduction week, and was surprised

by how much he enjoyed it. He says: "I was delighted to find something creative which I can do despite my sight loss. I now have a little workshop at home and it's become a great hobby of mine".

Over the lockdown period, Peter has created seven mosaic tiles



Caption: Some of Peter's mosaics

including a yin and yang sign. He is currently working on his first large project; a 6ft x 3ft soldier which he is going to place on his garage wall.

Speaking about this new idea he added, "I wanted to do a large project as I enjoy the process of making the tiles. As I served in the Army, I've always had an interest in the military so I wanted to do something to reflect that".

Peter has also reproduced our Victory over Blindness sculpture in miniature for his garden, where it occupies pride of place among his ornamental Remembrance Day poppies.



Caption: Peter, white T-shirt, and his interpretation of Victory Over Blindness

Calling all artists

Do you have time on your hands at home? Be part of our 2020 fifth annual Exhibition Fundraiser. Beginners, hobby artists, experts and have a go artists all welcome. Members are invited to participate in a fundraising exhibition on the theme of 'Landscape', to be held at the Brighton Centre, from 12-30 October. Landscapes, seascapes, cityscapes, the view from your window at home, the world is your oyster...

Members may enter one piece of



2D artwork which must have been created especially for the exhibition. It could be a painting, collage, drawing, textiles – anything that is a flat piece of ready to hang artwork. The artwork will be exhibited online and offered for sale by online auction with funds raised benefitting the Charity.

If you would like more info or to request the terms and conditions and an entry form please contact Lou Kirk-Partridge, Rehab Lead Art & Craft, by e-mail or phone with your e-mail address or postal address at louise.kirk-partridge@blindveterans.org.uk or **07824 552 828**

Please arrange delivery of your artwork on or before 1 September 2020 to,

**Dave Bryant
Art & Craft Workshop,
Blind Veterans UK,
Greenways,
Ovingdean,
Brighton,
East Sussex,
BN2 7BS.**

Entries must be accompanied by a fully completed, signed and dated entry form to comply with GDPR rules. 🇬🇧



TMSPHOTO / ADOBE STOCK

Caption: Get brush to canvas and enter our 2020 Exhibition Fundraiser

A portrait of Vera

After hearing that wartime heroine, entertainer and our supporter Vera Lynn had died our Brighton Centre decided to pay tribute. **Jack Durling** tells you more

Few people in life can be said to be a true legend, but Dame Vera Lynn CH DBE OStJ was one such person. Her crystal clear voice provided the overture for many of the wartime generation – both those who fought in it, and lived through it – coming through the speakers of countless radios across the globe. The songs she sang have become classics in themselves, with ‘We’ll Meet Again’ and ‘White Cliffs of Dover’ guaranteed a place, like Vera, in musical history for time immemorial.

With her strong military connections, and reputation as a forces sweetheart, Vera Lynn was also a strong supporter of our charity, living close to our Brighton Centre and visiting our veterans on several occasions. When she died on 18 June this year aged 103 our Arts and Crafts staff at the Centre and some of our Members decided to pay a fitting tribute to a much-loved friend in the form of a beautiful portrait collage of Vera, which we used as the cover for our July edition of *Review*.

In my role as an Art and Craft Instructor at the Centre I got to work with our creative veterans and staff members. On the team were Members Joan Gravestock, Roslie Randall, Nancy Bowstead, Ian Mitchell, James Paul, Jim Fowley, while from the staff side came April Watkins, Linda Jury, Debbie Rawlings, India Adams, Kath Romain-Jones, Kath Butler, Christine York, Claire Power and Anna Funnel.

An eclectic mix

The portrait comprises of an eclectic mix of creative techniques all using paper. Our Members made handprinted stencilled patterns that were created in preparation to be reimaged in collaged form. Added to the mix were old book pages and newspaper scans, bought in by Kath Butler and Debbie Rawlings,

Vera’s portrait has boldly defined silhouettes and lines upon more delicate areas and has a modern art feel that is reminiscent of work by the ‘pop artists’ Andy Warhol and Roy



Caption: Creating Vera - our Members have made a beautiful image of a much-loved lady

Lichtenstein. In order to create the art work clear lines were drawn onto a base, after which raised tack sticks were placed to help locate different sections in the artwork.

The piece was a real team effort, with everyone having worked very hard to make a fitting tribute to a great lady. The finished portrait was unveiled at

our Brighton Centre on Armed Forces Day, after which a toast was raised to Vera.

The work was such a success that three more portraits are in now being planned of people who helped towards the war effort at that time, such as Alan Turing who was based at the then-top secret Bletchley Park. 🇬🇧 →

Moving forward

Dear Members

I trust that you have felt the care of Blind Veterans UK during this difficult time. Even though we have been unable to see you in person, in our Centres or your homes, we have strived to ensure your safety and wellbeing.

Over the past couple of months, we have been planning how we can deliver our services safely and within the guidance outlined by the UK Government. We have carefully considered what each of the UK

Government's five alert levels mean for Blind Veterans UK and developed a set of five plans for what we can deliver safely in each alert level.

On 19 June, the UK Government reduced the alert level from 4 to 3. This means the pandemic is in general circulation but transmission is no longer 'high or rising exponentially'.

Alert Level 3 in the community

In Alert Level 3, Blind Veterans UK can provide the following services to Members in the community:

- Remote telephone support through the National Support Service
- Maintenance and delivery of equipment to urgent Member cases
- 1:1 face to face support for Members with an assessed and urgent need
- Local staff helping Members find support to get basic essentials, such as shopping and medication

Alert Level 3 in the Centres

Due to the recent changes in regulations, our Brighton and Llandudno Centres are now in a position to help the small numbers of those hardest affected by COVID-19. This offer will be dependent on a conversation between you and your case worker and will be offered to those of you that have been most affected by isolation.

The Llandudno Centre is able to offer the self-contained Leader Building flats for self-catering holidays for completely independent Members. Unfortunately, there will be no services in place from the main building and we are unable to offer transport. The flats can accommodate couples and small families. For further information, please contact the Llandudno Centre Team on **01492 868 700**.

We hope that we will soon be able to make the offer from the centres available to more of you and we will

make sure to keep you updated.

Regular review of services

We are mindful that we must continue to be flexible with our approach, as this is an unprecedented time and anticipating changing government guidance can be challenging. Therefore, we will continue to review UK Government guidance on a monthly basis to see what additional services we may be able to offer, or alternatively areas we need to scale back.

We also recognise localised measures, such as 'local lockdowns', may be implemented by the UK Government should there be a surge in COVID-19 cases in a particular area. Our community structure allows local teams to recommend changes to services in their local area if a high level of cases is causing concern or government guidance alters for their particular locality.

Your well-being and that of our staff and volunteers is our priority. What is offered at the various alert levels, is designed to provide the support that you need while protecting you, our staff and volunteers.

Yours Sincerely,

Nick Caplin
Chief Executive



Caption: The Llandudno Centre

Wheaten bread

Our resident chef and Member **Penny Melville-Brown** shows you a great recipe for a Irish-themed loaf

This recipe is perfect for anyone learning how to make bread, and is authentically Irish. It was taught to me by my friend Wendy in Virginia Beach. You can watch us make it together on my YouTube channel at bit.ly/2ZJS77Z.

Ingredients

1lb whole wheat flour – this is finer than wholemeal

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon baking powder

1 pint buttermilk

Method -

- Aerate the flour either by sieving or by sifting through fingers
- Add the salt and baking powder
- Gradually stir in the buttermilk to form a firm and sticky dough – it feels like wet sand
- Tip on to a floured surface and lightly knead to form a ball
- Slash the top in the form of a cross – an “Irish blessing” according to Wendy
- Place on a floured baking stone or tray and cook for about 45 minutes Gas 7 🔥

My tips:

If you don't have buttermilk then Wendy suggests you use nearly a pint of full fat milk and add about one teaspoonful of vinegar and the juice of half a lemon. Mix thoroughly and leave at room temperature for about half an hour before using.



ADOBESTOCK / JIRI HERA

Life on two wheels

Member **Mark Noble** explains how he managed to ensure his wife wasn't missing out on his biking fun

My wife Liz and I have been riding a tandem bicycle for some 20 years now. She did not so much volunteer to take up the role, but let's say she was volunteered by default. I had always ridden with other male friends and at

that time we took part in a 26-mile time trial for blind and partially sighted people.

It was the Tulip Tandem Marathon held at the end of April in Spalding Lincolnshire. On the entry form I would always put Liz down as my reserve rider, just to make her feel a part of the event - I know, I'm all heart. Although I should say at this stage, that she did not cycle and had certainly never been on the front of a tandem. Well I'm sure you know what happened next... My front rider for the race that year decided he would pilot for another blind friend who did not have anyone to cycle with him, he pointed out I had a reserve pilot...

Well, with three weeks to go, we had to get in shape and more to the point try to cobble together a tandem that Liz - at 5ft 1 - could manage to fit on the front of. I am 6ft, so this made for a difficult mix. With a lot of swopping of handle bars and saddles, a steed was lead →



Caption: A bicycle made for two...

out on the day. Things did however not run well, we very nearly overcooked the left-hand bend by the canal, making the marshal think we were going for an early dip! Two punctures later we rolled in near the end of the pack.

A tandem made to measure

The race that year showed us two things, firstly that Liz could pilot a tandem and secondly that Liz was not easily put off. So, we decided to have a bike made to measure. Since that time we have never looked back and done thousands of miles together and been to lots of countries and even ridden in Australia.

We are now members of the Tandem Club and attend most of their rallies,



Caption: Tandem time with the Nobles

“We are now members of the Tandem Club and attend most of their rallies”

either in the UK or Europe. There is a great sense of fun and camaraderie at these events. It is normal for there to be in the region of 200 people at these events, staying in tents, caravans, campervans or B&B's. Each evening after the rides there is some sort of entertainment - a barn dance, quiz, tandem games, BBQ and always a marquee with a bar.

With the covid-19 lockdown and all that came with it, all my normal clubs were cancelled, including swimming, bowls, active blind group and general socialising. Liz still had to work through the whole time as her work is considered essential. But of course as we were still allowed to go out to exercise, we have found ourselves on the bike more than ever. We have already done over 2,000 miles this year. At the beginning of lockdown we were amazed just how empty the roads were, we could use main roads without a care. I would say it was bliss, but the other side of the coin meant there was no riding with company nor could you stop at a café or pub. Fingers crossed for next year and in the meantime peddle on. 🇬🇧



Caption: Some of Haydn's beautiful ukelele's

Craftsmanship on four strings

When lockdown struck, Somerset-based Member **Haydn Callow** decided to turn his hand to making ukuleles – with amazing results

Late last year, about October, I decided (as I live next door to the parish rooms where they practice every Thursday afternoon) I would join the U3A Ukulele

group in my home town of Somerton.

So, I went online and bought myself a fairly basic instrument and booked →

“You can only spend so much time ‘twanging’ away on a ukulele so I decided to see if I could make one”

some lessons with Joshua Horsey who teaches Guitar and Ukulele nearby, and after a few lessons I felt ready to join the neighbouring group.

I was made very welcome - I’ve always dreamed of playing a musical instrument but no matter how hard I try I can never get the hang of it. I guess I’m just not musical in that way. That was fine - then along came covid-19 and lockdown. This meant self-isolating, as being 75 and registered blind it was felt the safest place was to stay indoors.



Caption: Inside the body showing the bracing



Caption: a near-completed body

You can only spend so much time ‘twanging’ away on a ukulele so I decided to see if I could make one. However, warning... building ukuleles can be addictive, I have just finished my tenth instrument, the first couple were rubbish but a great learning curve, after half a dozen I was getting quite good results and now I think I’ve got the hang of it. My skill level is improving with each one. My ukulele teacher decided to buy one so they can’t be too bad. I have a luthier friend in Derbyshire who supplies me with all the exotic woods to make nice looking instruments.

These include American Walnut, Ovangkol, Sycamore and Cedar. Their neck is made using Mahogany because of its strength, and the fretboards use Ebony or Pink Ivory. 🍷

Hedley in the kitchen

When Member and reluctant cook **Hedley Smith** was coaxed into the kitchen, the results were memorable – as his humorous account relates

I was being nagged. Nagged by my friends Sue and Fran - who was helping with my shopping. Helping is too mild a word, she was actually doing the

shopping while dragging me around holding the handle of the trolley. The nagging was about my use of tinned food, with her saying I should buy →



ROGISTOK / ADOBE STOCK

fresh stuff and cook it. I was told that for a start it would be cheaper.

My resistance being eventually overcome, I finished up with a pack of minced beef and a bag of onions - start things simple was the intention, and move on from there. These purchases went straight into the fridge, or was it the freezer. It's amazing how the brain blocks out horrific events. I was then bombarded with the question "have you done that cooking yet?" Again, I was forced to submit but fearing total disaster I phoned fellow Blind Veterans Member Jackie Oliver and explained my dilemma. She agreed to assist and, having gone to bed early and fairly sober the night before, I got Jackie on the phone and we started by assembling the ingredients.

A marked lack of herbs

She was appalled by my lack of things like herbs and other cooking essentials. I recalled (again) that I was told this would be cheaper. Agreeing we would do our best with what we had, I was directed to chop the onions into tiny pieces and stick them into my cook pot. This is a very old type of slow cooker which can be used on the gas ring or on an electric pad. I was then told to brown them which involved a process very much like frying. Having accomplished that alchemy, I was told to put in the minced beef and add a

"I set to with the wooden spoon (also ex ex-wife). I fear I may have missed some of the processes so far"

drop of water. I didn't like the sound of that, so used red wine instead together with two stock cubes which probably were given to me by my ex-wife when we went our separate ways 20 odd years ago.

As instructed by Jackie who was still guiding me by phone, I set to with the wooden spoon (also ex ex-wife). I fear I may have missed some of the processes so far. As mentioned the brain does a good job of deleting unwanted memories, especially when you are 85. Eventually I switched on the electric pad and put the cookpot on it, said thanks to Jackie and totally exhausted, sat down with what was left of the red wine.

I would like to report the results were delicious, but they weren't. They were quite edible however, so nothing was lost - but I'm afraid if you look into my cupboard now you will still find tinned mince, stewed steak, steak and kidney supplied by the veritable Marks and Spencer's. Isn't there a saying about old dogs and new tricks? 🐕

Making more scrubs

After our body scrub article last month several of you have written in asking for some more handy recipes – **Kate Pierce** from our Llandudno Centre is pleased to help

Thank you for the positive responses you sent in to last month's article about body scrubs and I'm glad to hear that many of you have been successful

in making your own. They're great for keeping skin feeling and looking healthy and are simple to produce too. Here are a few more recipes for you – good luck.

Vanilla and sugar body scrub for glowing skin

You will need:

- 1 1/2 Cup brown sugar
- 1 Cup white sugar
- 1 Cup olive oil
- 1 tbsp pure vanilla extract.

Preparation time: 2 minutes.

Treatment Time: 10-15 minutes.

Method:

- Combine all the ingredients until you get a coarse paste. →



JULIASUDNITSKAYA / ADOBE STOCK

- Cleanse your skin and apply this paste onto it.
- Use your fingers to gently massage and exfoliate in circular motions on your skin spending 1-2 minutes on each part.
- Wash the mixture off your body using a hydrating lukewarm water.

How it Works:

This body scrub moisturises your skin and keeps it looking young and healthy. It efficiently nourishes your skin and keeps it from getting damaged.

Organic turmeric body scrub for glowing skin

You will need:

- 1 cup sugar
- 2 tsp turmeric powder
- 1 1/2 cup coconut oil

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Treatment time: 10-15 minutes.

Method:

- Combine all the ingredients until you get a coarse paste.
- Cleanse your skin and apply this paste onto it.
- Use your fingers to gently massage and exfoliate in circular motions on your skin spending 1-2 minutes on each part.

- Wash the mixture off your body using lukewarm water.

How it works:

Turmeric is one of the most popular natural beauty ingredient used in India. It has strong antiseptic and antibacterial properties which help maintain your skin at its youngest.

Lemon and sugar body scrub

You will need:

- 2 tbsp sugar
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 Whole lemon

Prep Time: 5 minutes.

Treatment time: 10-15 minutes.

Method:

- Combine all the ingredients until you get a coarse paste.
- Cleanse your skin and apply this paste onto it.
- Use your fingers to gently massage and exfoliate in circular motions on your skin spending 1-2 minutes on each part.
- Wash the mixture off your body using lukewarm water.

How it works:

Lemon is extremely rich in vitamin C and helps give your skin a nourishment

boost while also exfoliating it. It helps restore your skins slightly acidic pH level while ensuring that your skin remains smooth soft and supple.

Honey sugar body scrub

- Warm a jar of honey in the microwave for a few seconds until it becomes runny but not too hot to the touch.
- Pour about 1/4 cup of the honey into a small bowl.
- Stir in 2 tablespoons of your favorite oil. You can use coconut oil, sweet almond oil, or even baby oil. In a pinch, you could even use olive oil, which is also great for the skin.
- Add about a 1/2 cup of sugar. Brown sugar is great, but a basic white sugar works as well.
- Mix well.

Lemon and mint with coconut oil

- In a bowl, put in a 1/2 cup of sea salt.
- Mix in 1/4 cup of coconut oil. If it's not in liquid form, run hot water over the glass bottle first or microwave it for 10 seconds.
- Place 5-10 mint leaves in a food processor and add the zest of one lemon.

- Mix the mint and lemon together.
- Stir mint and lemon mixture into the oil and sea salt.

Lavender vanilla sugar scrub

Ingredients

- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup oil (almond, olive or coconut work best)
- 1/2 teaspoon vitamin E oil
- 1/2 teaspoon real vanilla extract
- 15 drops lavender essential oil

Instructions

- Place all ingredients in a bowl and mix together thoroughly.
- You can add more or less oil to your liking.
- Store in an air tight container. Since this recipe doesn't contain any preservatives, it's best if it's used within a month or two.

How to Use Your DIY sugar scrub

- Scoop a small amount of the sugar scrub into your hands with a spoon.
- Scrub all over your hands or feet – or wherever you'd like extra soft skin.
- Allow to soak into your skin for a few minutes. Enjoy this time to relax!
- Rinse well and then pat dry with a soft towel. 🌸

Thank you for letting us help you make your Will

With Blind Veterans UK here to help, making your will has never been easier

“If you’re even contemplating making a will, then it’s definitely time to make one. All it means is that you’ve got important people in your life that you want to make sure are taken care of”. Simon Brown – Blind Veterans UK Member

The Legacy Team at Harcourt Street would like to thank all of our Members and Community Support Workers, who have continued to get touch with us to find out more about our Free Wills Service during lockdown.

We would also like to thank our partners at the National Free Wills Network, who have worked diligently throughout the pandemic to ensure that Members’ referrals have continued to be dealt with in a timely manner.

Don’t forget that Blind Veterans UK will cover the costs of a simple will for any Member who needs one. If you want the peace of mind and legal security that a Will provides, just a reminder that to get started all you’ll need to do is provide us with your name and address.

Our offer also extends to Members’ friends and family who are aged 55 or above; and it covers all simple Wills, including mirror Wills.

With the Free Wills Network, achieving peace of mind couldn’t be easier. To start the process, please talk to your Community Support Worker or contact the Legacy Team directly. You can also do it online via our website.

To get in touch with the Legacy Team, just call 020 7616 7953 or email legacies@blindveterans.org.uk

A good thing - is all chocolate bad for you?

In the first of a new series of articles by our Wellbeing Team we look at the benefits of choosing your chocolate carefully

ADOBESTOCK / OZMEN



Well connected

A wellbeing space for Blind Veterans UK members

Rebuilding lives after sight loss

We all love chocolate, but most of the time we are told not to eat it due to the high content of sugar. But what if you choose to eat the less favourable dark chocolate over your milk or white chocolate? Here’s some positive scientific facts to consider,

- Cocoa, which is used to make chocolate, provides phytochemicals – chemical compounds produced by plants. These can improve health by acting as antioxidants. The darker the chocolate, the higher the phytochemical content such as polyphenols, flavanols and →

catechins, among others

- Eating any chocolate can trigger a release of serotonin within the brain, which contributes to the pleasurable experience. So, it can make you feel happier for a short time
- Dark chocolate may also improve the function of your brain. One study of healthy volunteers showed that eating high-flavanol cocoa for five days improved blood flow to the brain. Cocoa may also significantly improve cognitive function in elderly people with mental impairment. It may improve verbal fluency and several risk factors for disease, as well.
- Dark chocolate provides some vitamins and minerals, like magnesium, zinc and iron that the body needs to function well.
- Dark chocolate can improve your cholesterol by raising your “good cholesterol”

You can find out more at any of these links...

Dark chocolate and your vision:
bit.ly/32F8OmM

Health benefits of dark chocolate:

bit.ly/39dWZFw
bit.ly/2CWaBJj
bit.ly/2CQZYHR

- Dark chocolate may improve blood flow and lower blood pressure, the flavanols in dark chocolate can stimulate the endothelium, the lining of arteries, to produce nitric oxide (NO). One of the functions of NO is to send signals to the arteries to relax, which lowers the resistance to blood flow and therefore reduces blood pressure.

Three other beneficial claims of dark chocolate are:

- Insulin resistance
- Anti-inflammatory effects
- Good for your eyesight

For now maybe have a square or two after dinner and try to really savour them. If you want the benefits of cocoa without the calories in chocolate, consider making a hot cocoa without any cream or sugar.

Also be aware that a lot of the chocolate on the market is not healthy. Choose good quality stuff – dark chocolate with 70% or higher cocoa content. Dark chocolates typically contain some sugar, but the amounts are usually small and the darker the chocolate, the less sugar it will contain.

Chocolate is one of the few foods that taste awesome while providing significant health benefits. 🍫

Type 2 diabetes – what you need to know

Type 2 diabetes is a dangerous medical condition that can prove fatal if unchecked. Our Wellbeing team explains what it is, and what you can do to prevent it

More people than ever have diabetes, with 3.9 million listed in 2019. Sadly, more people than ever are at risk of contracting it, and if nothing changes, more than five million people will have diabetes in the UK by 2025.

Around 90% of people with diabetes have type 2 diabetes, which you may find quite shocking. We’ve put together an article outlining what you need to know about it.

What is type 2 diabetes?

Type 2 diabetes is a condition characterised by high blood glucose levels caused by either a lack of insulin or the body's inability to use insulin efficiently.

Insulin is a naturally occurring hormone. Your pancreas produces it and releases

it when you eat. Insulin helps transport glucose from your bloodstream to cells throughout your body, where it’s used for energy.

So, if you have type 2 diabetes, your body becomes resistant to insulin. Your body is no longer using the hormone efficiently. This forces your pancreas to work harder to make more insulin.

Over time, this can damage cells in your pancreas. Eventually, your pancreas may not be able to produce any insulin.

If you don’t produce enough insulin or if your body doesn’t use it efficiently, glucose builds up in your bloodstream. This leaves your body’s cells starved for energy.

Doctors don’t know exactly



what triggers this series of events. It may have to do with cell dysfunction in the pancreas or with cell signalling and regulation. In some people, the liver produces too much glucose. There may be a genetic predisposition to developing type 2 diabetes.

There's definitely a genetic predisposition to obesity, which increases the risk of insulin resistance and diabetes. There could also be an environmental trigger.

Most likely, it's a combination of factors that increases the risk of type 2 diabetes.

Signs and Symptoms of Diabetes

Here are some indicators that may suggest you have type 2 diabetes:

- Excessive thirst
- Increased hunger
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue
- Weight loss

If you have two or more of these, then please do go to your GP.

How do you control Type 2 diabetes?

There are two main ways of controlling type 2 diabetes:

1. Some people can control their blood sugar levels with healthy eating and



ADOBESTOCK / MONTRI

exercise - those who manage this are usually said to be in diabetes remission.

2. Others will need medication in the form of oral tablets or lastly insulin injections to manage it.

What makes you more at risk to get Type 2 diabetes?

A number of factors can increase the risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

These include:

- Being overweight or obese
- Eating an unhealthy diet
- Physical inactivity
- Having a first-degree relative with type 2 diabetes

- Having high blood pressure or raised cholesterol levels
- Being of South Asian and African-Caribbean descent
- Smoking

There's a genetic mutation involved in type 2 diabetes, although researchers haven't been able to pinpoint the exact mutation. You must have a genetic mutation in order to develop type 2 - not everyone can get it. If you have a family history, you are at higher risk.

So how can I better control my diabetes, and or prevent getting it?

1. Be active! It is an important part of a healthy lifestyle and helps:

- Control blood glucose by helping your insulin to work more effectively
- Reduce heart and circulation related risk e.g. heart attacks and strokes
- Manage weight.

Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five days a week. 'Moderate' means breathing more deeply and feeling warmer. Focus on spending less time sitting still!

2. Eat a healthy balanced diet. Variety is the spice of life and colour is your friend when choosing foods to eat. So go for fruit, veg, fish, low fat meat, whole grains and pulses rather than boring white and beige food. Reduce

your refined sugar intake and if need be reduce the quantity of food you consume to suit your now daily activity level.

A lower carbohydrate diet could be an option for you if diabetic but talk to a healthcare professional first, preferably your doctor, dietician or diabetic specialist, as it may not be suitable or your medication may need adjusting.

3. Drink plenty of fluid – water is the best, it helps to suppress hunger and keeps you alert with zero calories, but don't forget your teas.

4. Stay away from Diabetic food! It's high in calories and may leave you running to the toilet.

5. Weight loss. If you are overweight, weight loss is the most important thing you can do to help control your blood glucose levels by allowing the insulin to work more effectively and reducing insulin resistance. Weight loss can also help reduce your cholesterol and blood pressure. There is evidence emerging that weight loss of 15% (using meal replacements) can even bring diabetes into remission. If you are trying to lose weight you may need support adjusting your medication if you are making significant changes to your diet and physical activity levels, so speak to your healthcare team. 🍎

Go Star, Go

After Member Paul Bickerstaff lost his fight against Multiple Sclerosis in June this year, his daughter **Star** wanted to help our charity as a thank you for the support he received from us. In her own words she explains why.

In 2015 my Dad became a Member of Blind Veterans UK. He had lost his sight and mobility since being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis (MS) 20 years prior. Before that he was an avid runner, and would tell me how

great he would feel every time he went out and pushed himself, so about five years ago I decided to give it a try.

It started with a 10k [run] and escalated fairly quickly, resulting in

a passion for Ultra Running with my most recent run being the Great British Ultra 215-mile race where I finished first female and third overall. I crossed the finish line exactly three weeks after my courageous father passed away.

I started running in the hope we could raise enough money for a life changing stem cell treatment that would hopefully save my Dad. Unfortunately we didn't raise enough in time, and I know he would want the money that we did manage to raise to go to Blind Veterans UK.

Whenever my parents would travel down to Llandudno, they would be treated with more respect and kindness than you can imagine. Nothing was ever too much trouble and the staff would go above and beyond for the ex-servicemen and women that stayed there.

From now on all of my future Ultras will be to raise money for you and in memory of my father. My family have seen the amazing work they do and I know with confidence that they genuinely care and help the brave men and women who need it. 🇬🇧



Caption: Star and her father, Paul Bickerstaff

Star completed the Ultra Great Britain virtual race on 14 July, exactly three weeks after Paul had passed away. The 215 mile race was originally due to take participants across the width of Scotland before being made virtual because of Covid-19. Star completed the race on a treadmill in her conservatory, using a Garmin tracking device to alert race organisers of her progress.

She says: "The hardest moment was on the final night. I hadn't slept in three days and I couldn't get any food down me. Then I realised that when I finished it would be the three week anniversary of dad's passing.

I got very emotional but I just did what I always do and think of the end goal and that got me through."

Star begun her extreme running challenges after missing out on a spot in the 2016 London Marathon and consequently signing up for the Jurassic Coast Challenge – three marathons in three days. She plans to level up her challenges in the future while still raising money for Blind Veterans UK. Next up is an 885-mile race called Joggle. She has so far raised £3,000 of her £40,000 target. To help her hit her target please visit her Go Fund Me page here: gofundme.com/f/2gg8zd8

A royal brain teaser

A regal quiz for July from Member Ron Russell

- 1 What relation is Prince Charles to Zara Philips?
- 2 How old was Victoria when she ascended to the throne?
- 3 Which monarch was born and died in Buckingham Palace?
- 4 Who was the first monarch to live in Buckingham palace?
- 5 Which monarch preceded Queen Victoria?
- 6 Is our present Prince Edward an earl or a duke?
- 7 Who is the Queen's youngest grandchild?
- 8 What relation to the Queen is Savannah Philips?
- 9 Who is the Queen's oldest grandchild?
- 10 What relation to Queen Victoria was Lord Louis Mountbatten?
- 11 Who is the longest living male in the royal family?
- 12 How long has our present Queen been on the throne?
- 13 Will the Queen ever abdicate?
- 14 Which company installed a cash machine in the palace?
- 15 Which of these is not found in Buckingham Palace - swimming pool, cinema, tennis court or football pitch?
- 16 How old was Queen Elizabeth II when she ascended to the throne?
- 17 What was Princess Diana's maiden name?

Answers

1. Niece 2. 22 3. Edward VII 4. Queen Victoria 5. William IV 6. An earl 7. Lady Louise Windsor - she is the daughter of Prince Edward our Patron, Sophie Countess of Wessex 8. She is the oldest of the great-grandchildren 9. Peter Phillips, the son of Prince Anne 10. Second cousin once removed 11. Prince Phillip, Duke of Edinburgh born 1921 12. 67 years up to 2020 13. No, when she became Queen in 1952 she promised to rule for life 14. Coutts & Co 15. Football pitch 16. She was 25 17. Spencer

From St Dunstan's to the silver screen: the life of Ian Hay

Rob Baker looks back at a St Dunstaner who made an impact in front of the microphone



Caption: Ian Hay

Over the 105 years of our existence Blind Veterans UK has been helped by a wide variety of people but with the support of Ian Hay we acquired a touch of film industry glamour. Indeed, Hay helped us with one of our own ventures into the world of cinema.

Ian Hay was the pen name of John Hay Beith, also known as Ian Hay Beith. Born in 1876 he was a graduate of Cambridge University and became a schoolmaster. During this time he wrote what became a very popular novel, 'Pip' and this success enabled him to give up teaching and become a full time writer. Hay also served as an officer in the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in the First World War. His account of army life, 'The First Hundred Thousand', is one of his best-remembered works. →

After the war ended Hay became an active supporter of charities which were aiding those who had suffered as a result of the war. He was the announcer for a BBC appeal in 1923 which raised funds for the Winter Distress League, a charity which aided homeless veterans. His support for Blind Veterans UK, then known as St Dunstan's, included serving on our Council from 1931 until other duties resulted in his having to retire from the role during the Second World War. He also contributed significantly through his writing. His 1928 novel 'The Poor Gentleman' was an engaging thriller

with a (fictional) St Dunstaner as its hero. The positive-minded approach of the character illustrates the values that we held, as reflected in this dialogue: 'We blind used to be herded together in an asylum: now, as soon as we can fend for ourselves, we are turned loose and allowed to find our own way about. It's a wonderful adventure.'

Second sight

Hay also wrote for us a treatment for a film, to be entitled 'Second Sight'. We are fortunate to have this preserved in our archives, together with a letter from him of 22 May 1928 to our then

Chairman Ian Fraser, explaining that: 'I enclose my suggested outline for a St Dunstan's film. I have not elaborated it very much, but I think I have written it sufficiently fully to indicate the kind of film that I mean.' The treatment includes a prologue in which a young couple, the Newmans, drive over to the home of a St Dunstaner poultry farmer, Harvey, and his wife. Harvey tells the Newmans how St Dunstan's is 'The place where they give a blind man his Second Sight.'

The main part of the film flashes back to 1914, starting just before the outbreak of the war, and deals with Harvey's work, his enlistment and return having lost his sight. There is then his time at St Dunstan's, followed by a dramatic story culminating in Harvey getting the better of a bad guy with a revolver after he turns the lights out on him, rendering him effectively as blind as Harvey but less well-equipped to deal with it. As Harvey puts it: '...in the kingdom of darkness the St Dunstan's man is King.'

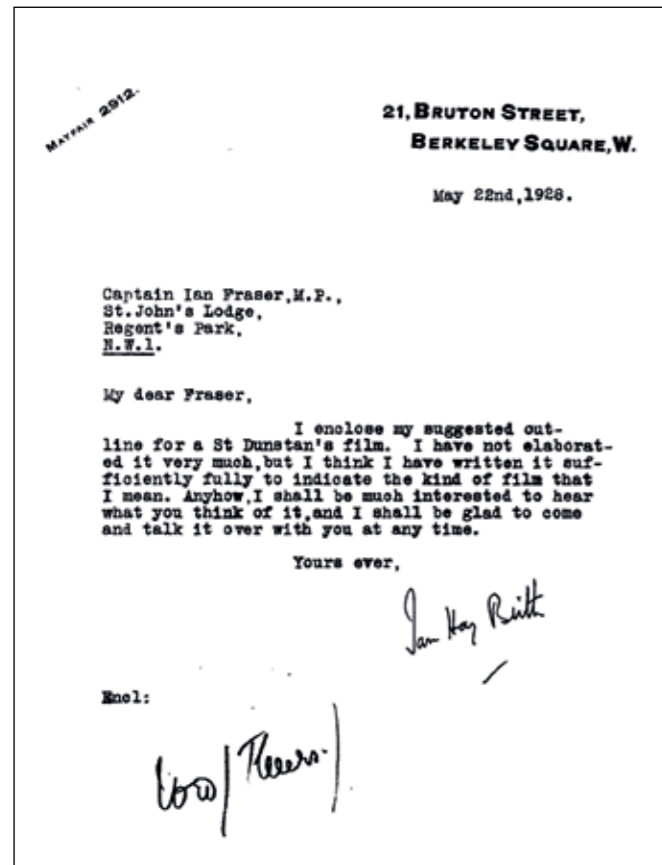
This treatment did result in a film, a silent, with a new title, 'Zero Hour'. Puzzlingly we have nothing about this in our archives and no copy of the film ourselves, but it materialised recently on the BFI Player website of the British Film Institute, and remains there available for all to view, free of

“His support for Blind Veterans UK, then known as St Dunstan's, including serving on our Council from 1931”

charge. It has a story credit to Ian Hay and retains elements of the original treatment, but perhaps unsurprisingly, given that it would be difficult to convey darkness with no sound, loses the original dramatic ending. It does however include fascinating footage shot at St Dunstan's Lodge in Regent's Park.

Ian Hay enjoyed other and considerable success in his writing career, especially as a playwright and screenwriter. For the theatre he collaborated with a number of other writers, most famously P.G.Wodehouse. His cinema career saw him work with significant directors, including Cecil B. DeMille in the United States and on three screenplays for Alfred Hitchcock films, 'The 39 Steps', 'Secret Agent' and 'Sabotage'.

During the Second World War Hay worked as Director of Public Relations at the War Office until his retirement. He also continued to write war histories. He died in 1952. 🍷



Caption: A letter outlining the script for Second Sight



Caption: How St. Dunstan's Report announced the 'Talking Book' library

More about Alexa

Our latest instalment from our Alexa Team about how to get the most out of your device

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of our feature on helping you to get the most out of your Amazon Alexa smart speaker.

As always we are keen to hear from our members, about their experiences and the many ways of using your Alexa, in our “Alexa Backchat” section.

This month, in response to your feedback, we are going to focus on fact finding and interactive games.

Alexa Backchat

Gordon Chapman, from Chiseldon, in Wiltshire writes;

I have found the command “Alexa Wikipedia... and then the subject you’re looking for” provides an in-depth knowledge of the subject you are researching. I also enjoy the “Magic Door” skill for some entertainment, this takes you on an interactive adventure Trail.

I would also like some more tips about using this game. In addition could you please provide some more information

on Alexa apps and how to download them? Keep up the good work.

Alexa Team responds;

Thank you Gordon for highlighting this great feature, which we will go into detail below and hopefully answer your questions on using the “Magic Door” skill and enabling Alexa skills.

Wikipedia

For those unfamiliar, Wikipedia is the largest independent “Encyclopaedia”



UNSPLASH / FIND - EXPERTS - AT - KILTA - COM FOLLO

available on the internet. You can literally find anything from the history of human evolution, to sliced bread!

All content is generated and edited by organisations and individuals, which can lead to errors of fact, but there is a fairly robust criteria for reference cross checking, meaning that the majority of the content is considered accurate.

As such, it offers a good “first stop” shop to finding initial relatively reliable information on just about any subject you can imagine. From figures in history, inventions, historical events or places, Wikipedia is literally a wealth of knowledge.

The great news is, that it is incredibly easy to access with your Alexa device. Just precede anything you are looking for information on, with “Wikipedia” and the relevant article will start to be read. At each heading or break in the article, you will be asked if you wish Alexa to keep reading, simply say yes or no. A few examples below.

*Alexa, Wikipedia human evolution.
Alexa, Wikipedia Blind Veterans UK
Alexa, Wikipedia the Battle of Britain.
Alexa, Wikipedia HMS Queen Elizabeth.*

Hopefully you will find this a useful resource and potentially head off any family arguments!

Interactive Stories

You may have come across books in the past which offered alternative endings, depending on which options you chose earlier in the story.

For instance, you may be presented with a choice of entering a house or taking a path through the woods. As the story progresses, you are given further choices, eventually leading to alternative endings. One such interactive story is “The Magic Door”.

To enable this skill, say “Alexa, play The Magic Door” and follow the instructions.

Other interactive stories include;

■ The Inspection Chamber.

This is an interactive science fiction comedy story from the BBC, where you play the part of an unidentified Being that is being studied by scientists to identify and add to their database.

To enable it, just say “Alexa, open the Inspection Chamber”.

■ Yes, Sire

This is a mix of an interactive story and a game. The objective is to keep your subjects happy, you’re presented with a number of different questions that require a Yes or No answer. The big catch is that each answer changes the amount of wealth and influence →

you possess. And if one of those gets too high or low, you're in for some drastic consequences. For example, you might want to be benevolent to your subjects. But if your influence score goes too high, the king will begin to get jealous and have you executed, ending the game.

Just say "Alexa, play Yes Sire".

What Skills are available on Alexa and how do I get them?

Alexa has a wide range of skills that are native or in-built and instantly available when you have set-up your device. These include things like the time, the weather, calendar and reminders, timers and alarms, world time, information on local business and so much more. However, like smart phones, you can download or enable, as it is termed, literally tens of thousands of "skills" that enhance what you can do with your Alexa, from reminding you when to put which bin out on which week, to skills to control smart lights and other smart appliances in your home.

It is impossible to list all of them here and the list of available skills changes daily.

To find skills, just say "Alexa, what skills do you have" or "Alexa, what trivia games can I play". You will be given a

short list of currently popular skills. The majority are free, but do be aware if a subscription is mentioned.

For most skills, just saying "Alexa open, then the name of the skill" should work, but you may have to say "Alexa, enable, then the name of the skill", if you're using it for the first time.

Blind Veterans UK on Alexa

Here at Blind Veterans UK, we have been working to make information available on Alexa. Our first job has been to streamline the several skills that were already available on Alexa and concentrate on providing information that was important and updated regularly.

We are happy to announce that the monthly Review, is now available as a podcast and can be accessed as follows;

Just say "Alexa, play Blind Veterans Podcast".

Once it is playing, you can use the commands, "Alexa" and then any of the following, Pause, resume, fast forward or rewind any amount of minutes. You can also say previous or next episode.

Hopefully this will allow everyone to instantly access the Review, regardless of your preferred format. 🎧

Family News

Birthdays

Christopher Brantingham, who celebrates his 101st birthday on 23rd August

Leonard Burritt, who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 28th August

Gladys Hodgson, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 29th August

Peggy Johnson, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 4th August

John Morton, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 30th August

William Ransom, who celebrates his 100th birthday on 17th August

Nora Reynolds, who celebrates her 100th birthday on 31st August

Walter Sharp, who celebrates his 106th birthday on 7th August

Marjorie Wakeford, who celebrates her 104th birthday on 4th August

Condolences

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

Alice Briddon of Dumfries who died on 14th July. She was the wife of the late William Briddon

Mary Hughes of Bideford who died on 15th July. She was the wife of the late Walter Hughes

Gladys Kramer of Stroud who died on 1st July. She was the wife of the late James Kramer

Betty Page of Morecambe who died on 6th July. She was the wife of the late Thomas Page



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

George Adam of Carluke, Lanarkshire died on 18 April 2020 aged 99. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Harry Allen of Manchester, died on 15 July 2020 aged 89. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Frank Barnard of Bolton, died on 29 June 2020 aged 90. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force.

Arthur Bates of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 26 June 2020 aged 94. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Benson of Pocklington, East Riding of Yorkshire died on 12 July 2020 aged 97. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Arthur Brown of Manchester, Greater Manchester died on 13 July 2020 aged 93. He served as a Driver in the General Service Corps.

Gilbert Brown of Uxbridge, Middlesex died on 11 July 2020 aged 95. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Thomas Clark of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk died on 23 June 2020 aged 88. He served as a Private in the Royal Signals.

Henry Aidan Courtney of Manchester, Greater Manchester died on 25 June 2020 aged 96. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals.

James Daniel of Aberdeen, died on 15 April 2020 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Army Service Corps.

William Davidson of Aberdeen, died on 12 July 2020 aged 94. He served as a Captain in the Merchant Navy.

John Beasley Gillard of Watford, died on 23 June 2020 aged 98. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

William Fredrick Noel Goldstone of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 12 July 2020 aged 97. He served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery.

Frederick William Harold Griffiths of Preston, died on 1 July 2020 aged 97. He served as a Sergeant in the Cheshire Regiment.

Joseph Hardy of Pitlochry, Perthshire died on 7 March 2020 aged 96. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Corps of Military Police.

Denis Howard Harrold of Malvern, Worcestershire died on 5 July 2020 aged 94. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Army Air Corps.

Robert Harvey of Galashiels, Selkirkshire died on 18 April 2020 aged 84. He served as a Junior Technician in the Royal Air Force.

David Holgate of Glasgow, died on 7 April 2020 aged 91. He served as a Private in the General Service Corps.

Kenneth Huckerby of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 20 June 2020 aged 93. He served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers.

Frances Jennings of Romford, died on 3 July 2020 aged 99. She served as a Driver in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Nancy Gladys Johns of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 30 June 2020 aged 95. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Edith Kerrison of Hove, East Sussex died on 24 June 2020 aged 94. She served as an Aircraftwoman 2nd Class in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.

George William Kimber of Egham, Surrey died on 13 July 2020 aged 101. He served as a Station Officer in the Merchant Navy.

Peter Lamb of Kirkcaldy, Fife died on 6 April 2020 aged 79. He served as an S.A.C. in the Royal Air Force. →

Schera Morris Masters of Ilford, Essex died on 28 June 2020 aged 101. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps.

William McMahon of Glasgow, Lanarkshire died on 24 June 2020 aged 92. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

John James Montague of Sheerness, Kent died on 29 June 2020 aged 77. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Archibald Morton Paton of Selkirk, died on 29 June 2020 aged 90. He served as an A.C. 1 in the Royal Air Force.

Geoffrey Plume of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk died on 29 June 2020 aged 90. He served as a Private in the Royal Engineers.

Keith William Riley of Northampton, died on 11 July 2020 aged 88. He served as an L.A.C. in the Royal Air Force.

Ronald Primrose Scobie of Paisley, Renfrewshire died on 14 July 2020 aged 75. He served as a Sergeant in the Royal Engineers.

Doreen Audrey Scott of Dorchester, Dorset died on 26 June 2020 aged 92. She served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Military Police.

Alexander Sim of Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire died on 1 February 2020 aged 77. He served as a Private in the Gordon Highlanders.

Leslie Victor Simpson of Southport, Merseyside died on 27 June 2020 aged 88. He served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals.

Gordon Smith-Viera of Caldicot, Gwent died on 26 June 2020 aged 91. He served as a Leading Air Mechanic in the Fleet Air Arm.

William Templeton of Lytham St. Annes, Lancashire died on 20 June 2020 aged 83. He served as a Lance Corporal in the Black Watch (Royal Highland Regiment).

Margaret Sheila Thornton of Winchester, Hampshire died on 1 July 2020 aged 96. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Ronald Welsby of Derby, Derbyshire died on 1 July 2020 aged 93. He served as an Acting Able Seaman in the Royal Navy.

The National Creative Project

Creative Activities. Creative Book. Creative Circles.

We are looking for the future **Jamie Oliver's** and **Mary Berry's** as we launch a new way for Members across the UK to get involved with activities from home.

Under **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES** we will bring Members opportunities to join in with art, craft, written word, spoken word, listening, discussions and gardening projects using post, telephone, video chat and social media. It will be a rolling programme and as projects end, new ones will be introduced. Through **CREATIVE CIRCLES**, you may choose to take part in video calls and telephone chat groups with fellow Members who are also signed up for the projects.

The **CREATIVE BOOK** will be an opportunity for Members, volunteers and staff to contribute their Covid-19 experiences through creative writing, art, photography and spoken word.

And finally, **CREATIVE CIRCLES**. Opportunities for Members to get together on the telephone or by video call to chat with like-minded people about **CREATIVE ACTIVITIES** they are taking part in, or as hobby groups.

We would love to hear from you if you are interested in joining a regular telephone or video call chat group in one of the subjects below.

Woodturning Group.

Filip Lament. **01492 868 727**
filip.lament@blindveterans.org.uk

Mosaic Group.

Dave Bryant. **07443 548 391**
david.bryant@blindveterans.org.uk

Painting Group.

Hattie Lockhart-Smith.
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■ For our photographers we already have a Facebook page (Blind Veterans UK Photography); and a Photography Chat Group.

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My friend Christine

Member John Cockcroft remembers **Christine Keeler** whose involvement in the Profumo affair helped bring down the Macmillan government in 1963

This article consists of snapshots of my good friend, the late Christine Keeler who was heavily linked with the infamous Profumo Affair that rocked the country in 1963.

To recap briefly, Christine had become involved with John Profumo, who was the Secretary of State for War in Harold Macmillan's cabinet. When the affair was discovered, Profumo – who had first denied impropriety to the House of Commons – resigned. Overnight, Christine Keeler (and her friend Mandy Rice-Davies) became household names, although their fame was brief, and not as welcome as you'd expect.

I first met Christine in October, 1969. I had been at a Conservative Party conference and went straight to a

party in Chelsea given by a friend of mine, Oliver Baxter. I had not been there very long when I asked Oliver, "Who is that woman on the other side of the room?" He said, "Well, why don't you go and talk to her? She'll have no hesitation in telling you who she is," which she duly did – it was Christine Keeler. I asked her what her present activities were, and she said she worked for a charity called Release, for drug and alcohol addicts in Notting Hill. I asked if I could come and write an article for The Daily Telegraph, where I was Economics Editor at the time.

I duly met her colleague Rufus Harris, and wrote a signed article, taking it a few days later to show to the Editor, Morris Green who I revered as a sort of elder statesman in my life and a very talented and caring man.

Morris was very taken by the article, but said it needed tweaking here and there a bit. He was intrigued by the mention of Christine and asked if she could come to meet him to discuss the article, which was rather a thin pretext I thought. I thought that was a very bad idea, because people would be bound to harrass her in that large building, and I didn't want a snippet in Private Eye saying the Editor of The Daily Telegraph was 'seeing' Christine Keeler as I thought that would not be helpful.

I suggested as a compromise that Colin Welsh, the Deputy Editor should meet Christine at The King and Keys pub next door. The editor thought that was a good compromise - in any case, he never went to The King and Keys himself.

The summer of 1970

This would have been in the summer of 1970. Christine arrived late at the bar of The King and Keys - I was very impressed with her eloquence and somehow the conversation got around to whether Shakespeare wrote Marlow or vice-versa.

Subsequently Brian Harvey, the Features Editor said, "John, what do you think has been your greatest achievement in your seven years at The Telegraph?" and I said, "Well, I

thought my article on Britain and the Common Market last week was rather magisterial and definitive", he said, "That's typically pompous of you - your greatest achievement was getting Christine to come so close to The Telegraph!"

She subsequently came to the Press Club with Rufus Harris, and I →



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Caption: Keeler going to court in September 1963

“The last years of Christine Keeler were apparently very sad – she was deserted by her former friends and lived in comparative poverty”

lined up a large lunch party on one of the big tables there, while she talked to everyone and made a good impression. There was never any mention of Profumo, Lord Astor, Mandy Rice-Davis or any of the events of 1963.

Christine came to my cottage near Cambridge, in the village of Great Gransden twice - once on her own and once with her husband, Anthony Platt.

I think that she has been maligned posthumously because of the events of 1963, which arguably brought down the Macmillan government. But, for what it's worth, as I never met either of them, my impression is that Stephen Ward [a friend of Keeler's and involved in the affair] was obviously a 'fall guy' for the Establishment, and that he was an honourable man in a rather seedy situation.

In contrast my view is that Profumo was not the most honourable man. Having said that, he paid a very heavy

price for his affair with Christine, spending many years at the Toynbee Hall charity in the East End and raising money for its cause.

A succinct remark

I thought that at the end of the Profumo debate, a member of the Labour Shadow Cabinet, made a very succinct remark when he said, "There has been a lot of Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy in this debate. The Secretary of State for War is to be congratulated on knowing a very beautiful woman", and sat down, which was rather an apt comment, I thought, albeit one firmly of its time.

The last years of Christine Keeler were apparently very sad - she was deserted by her former friends and lived in comparative poverty in a council flat at the unfashionable end of the Kings Road. I think it was sad that she didn't make more of her life.

I met Mandy Rice-Davis at the flat - they remained close friends, and she was much more positive about her career. She married an Israeli airline pilot, and had an antique business in Jerusalem as far as I can remember.

Anyway, it's an interesting episode and I'm glad, in a way, that it's been revived by the BBC in its recent drama 'The Trial of Christine Keeler'. 🎬

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