



Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK

May 2020



Staying safe

Tackling self-isolation at home

Inside:

Avoiding falls

Our American link

Send in your rainbows



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss





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On the cover

Choir Member Colin Humphreys practices from home using Synapptic on his tablet



The long drag

If I was to ask a cross section of you what 'banking' is, I'm sure the majority would instantly think of something money-related, or perhaps some obscure sporting practice that I'm not aware of. The banking I'm thinking of though, is that which takes place on the railways and while a rare sight these days does still happen nonetheless.

Quite simply, banking is when a heavy train is helped up a steep incline by the aid of another locomotive pushing from the rear – often to the sound of quite spectacular smoke, sparks and noise. Those Members who live near Bromsgrove in the Midlands, and our ex-railwaymen veterans, will probably be familiar with the Lickey incline which is a 1-in-37 slope, over a two mile distance. Even in this modern day and age it still has a semi-resident 'banker' in case a train stalls on the hill, although that's a relatively unusual occurrence.

It struck me that our charity is at this moment of national crisis – for that's what it is, let's be perfectly clear on this – resembling a banked train. You – the Members – are at the head making their way over the seemingly endless summit of Covid-19 and us as the 'banker' at the rear – are working hard on your behalf

and supporting you on this arduous journey.

You might not see us, but we're there and making sure that your wellbeing is paramount at this time. Later on in the magazine, you'll find an update from our Operations team, who have contacted over 4,700 of our veterans since the last Review was published, and who have made nearly 12,200 telephone calls to you whether it's just for a chat or to make sure you have enough food to live on.

Remember, as always, you are not alone and we're there at the end of the telephone to help you in whatever way we can. Our need to combat isolation has never been stronger than it is now, and our role as your 'banker' has never been more necessary.

Finally, a big thank you from me to all those ex-railwaymen Members who got in touch after my appeal two issues ago! Watch this space... 🇬🇧

Chris Gilson
Editor



A national impact

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

It's clear to me that we certainly live in interesting times. A month ago, I was talking of the impact of torrential rainfall on our planned events. Today, we face a completely different set of challenges as the nation grapples with the beast that is Covid-19. The unusual aspect of this particular emergency is that we face it together regardless

of national boundaries. We have a common enemy.

As this crisis has developed and the national impact has become clearer, we have been determined as a charity to maintain our focus on the needs of blind veterans and to do anything and everything possible to make their daily



Caption: Our hard working staff at the Brighton Centre



lives easier. Having reluctantly closed the centres and cancelled our charity activities for the time being, our first response was to create a home-based outreach service, the National Support Service, which provides telephone support to our Members. We are using this to trigger personal support to Members' homes where there is a particular need identified, for example to assist with shopping or the supply of medicines. At the time of writing we have contacted over 90 per cent of our members, identified where support is needed and ensured that this is provided.

Some of this has genuinely been life-saving where we have found beneficiaries in serious difficulty. Most of it has been emotional and friendly support – a voice at the end of the phone – that can reassure during times of great uncertainty and worry. The staff have greatly enjoyed this new approach, and I have been delighted by the response from you.

Additional challenges

The national focus has understandably been on the sections of the population most at risk from Covid-19 and the magnificent response by the NHS who are the true heroes of the day. Yet we have been concerned that the visually impaired, especially those who are elderly and have additional challenges

“We have faced our own supply challenges and I have been delighted by the public response to requests for help”

in their everyday lives, are at risk of being overlooked.

Shopping becomes even more difficult for those with sight loss under the restrictions of lockdown, and the very notion of ‘social distancing’ can be seriously challenging for those who cannot see. We have therefore been keen to raise awareness nationally of the importance of community, and I have been really encouraged by the response.

We have continued to provide care to our permanent residents throughout this crisis. The Brighton staff have worked tirelessly to protect the residents from the virus and to make their lives as comfortable as we can whilst we see through this lengthy Covid-19 storm. In doing so we have been given a taste of the challenges faced by the social care sector across the country as they struggle to get hold of the necessary Personal Protection Equipment that is vital to their safety and that of the care residents they look after.



We have faced our own supply challenges and I have been delighted by the public response to requests for help. In the middle of this terrible challenge we are seeing the very best of human nature come to the fore. And nowhere is this more evident than within our Brighton care staff under the inspired leadership of Lesley and Blanche.

Watching the situation

Not surprisingly, our charity fundraising is taking a significant hit along with almost every other charity in the country. We have therefore taken advantage of the Government 'furlough' scheme for those staff who are unable to undertake their role due



Caption: Nick Caplin

to the national lockdown restrictions. This scheme provides financial support to help cover their wages – on current planning up to 20 per cent of our staff will be furloughed and this will certainly help our finances. That said, we anticipate further financial headwinds in the near future as we work our way through the Covid-19 crisis and are watching this situation carefully. Thankfully the markets appear to have paused their plunge which is welcome!

So, a few weeks in, we are OK. The National Support Service is there to respond to member needs and respond we will; our permanent residents are receiving the best possible care; and the staff are following a routine that will allow us to sustain this approach for some time.

It is impossible to say when the national restrictions will be eased and when we might begin to see a return to normality. Indeed we need to keep in mind the possibility that there might be further waves of the Covid-19 virus before an effective vaccination is deployed and we can say finally that we have seen this enemy off.

But please rest assured that the staff are here for you, that we will listen and respond to your needs and that we will stick together to stay strong as our blind veterans family. 🇬🇧



Chairman

Standing firm

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

As my regular reader will know, publishing deadlines require that I write this letter to you some time before you get to read it. This one is being written in mid-April – on the sixteenth of April in fact. That probably won't mean much to a casual researcher in years to come: just another date in the long history of Blind Veterans UK, so why make the point?

SERGEY / ADOBE STOCK

The date marks three weeks since the introduction of the most severe restrictions on public movement that the UK has seen since the Second World War, and the point at which the Government had planned to review the control measures to contain the damage that the Covid-19 pandemic is inflicting. The newspapers, radio and TV have been endlessly



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Caption: Paul Luker

dissecting every step the Government has taken, and are pressing for assurances on what is to come; when promises are to be kept in full; and what the exit strategy is going to be. There is little other news being reported.

A fearful nation?

So, by any measure this is obviously a time for the nation to be fearful. And, if led by the media, to be angry. Why is it then that I find something different? As I sit in splendid self-isolation, discovering new means of communicating with family and friends, why do I pick up a slightly different

vibration? True, most conversation is dominated by the blasted virus, but it comes across in a far more balanced way than that forced on us by the news and documentaries.

Before he was hit hard by the virus, the Prime Minister made much of his view that this was “a war on Coronavirus”. He was right to do so, in that any existential threat of this scale requires the mobilisation of the state to combat it. And, as far as I can see, that is what the Government has tried to do. The cynic in me, of course, would also point out that the Prime Minister’s greatest hero is Winston Churchill and that he relished the notion of reprising Churchill’s role at a time of national crisis.

The war analogy works for me though. General war has never come without pain, sacrifice, service and uncertainty in all quarters. Conducting general war requires great visionary leaders, supported by clear thinkers, rigorous planners and competent administrators all typically starting from a point of discovery and moving relentlessly closer to closure. The start comes as shock with anticipated failure; the end comes as a deliberate act with high expectation of success. And the route between is peppered with near-disaster and triumph in equal measure, as experience grows.





Taking a different view

Underpinning the high politics and grand strategy there must always be one vital component though: the spirit of the people. And this is where I detect the media has missed one of its key roles.

To my mind it has been overly focussed on anticipating failure and thus fuelling fear. Fortunately, the British public seem to take a different view. True, while a few take counsel of their fears, many more have hunkered down to cope with self-isolation and social distancing in a typically phlegmatic British way.

Sometimes we do behave badly. But we quickly change as we come to understand that our own behaviour is as capable of bringing the country to its knees as is the virus itself. Panic buying, for example, was a flash in the pan now replaced by orderly queuing, self-imposed rationing, increasing home-delivery and less frequent visits to the supermarkets. And everywhere I hear heart-warming stories of the able helping the less able. Is it perfect? Of course not. Is it tolerable? For most, yes. And will it continue to adapt? Of course (and unsurprisingly the Blind Veterans UK team is right on top of this to ensure that the visually impaired community are not forgotten as things evolve).

The generosity of others

I said the date was important and so I will also close on that, to make two points. First, overnight the Just Giving website told us that Captain Tom Moore's gallant attempt to complete 100 laps of his garden before his 100th birthday has already raised over £13 million as I write this for NHS charities – a true measure of how he has inspired the generosity of others, even when they face financial uncertainty themselves.

Second, today is Thursday. Tonight, as we have done on the two previous Thursday nights, Sue and I will stand in our drive and applaud our key workers for everything that they are doing to get us through this crisis. We will not be alone. Even in rural Hampshire the sound of clapping will be prolonged and widespread.

When we both join in, I will feel a monumental empathy with all our Blind Veterans UK staff and volunteers who sit so prominently in that key worker group. Having spent most of my professional life defending the nation, I now find myself humbled by the current work being done by so many previously unrecognised people striving to save the nation. And I know that you will greatly appreciate what they are doing as well. 🇬🇧



In Your Community

Members offer support to those in need

Two of our veterans John Williams and Gary Stevenson have been contacting other Members to make sure that they do not feel alone during this isolation period.



Caption: John Williams

John decided that he wanted give something back for everything that we have done for him. The retired Welsh teacher says: “I called the charity to see if there was anything I could do to help during this time. They have done so much for me and given me so much kindness and support. I decided to check in with some of the veterans to see if there’s anything they need. As Welsh is my first language, I’ve been singing the hymn ‘Calon Lan’ to a few of them”.

John joined the Royal Air Force in 1950 when he was only 20 years old. He served until 1952 when he then trained to become a teacher. He says: “My experience of education wasn’t the best and I left school at 14. When I left the RAF I knew I wanted to go back to college. I worked hard, went to night school before going to university. I became a Welsh teacher and taught for 32 years in Abergele”.

His community support worker Lisa Lee says, “John was actually my teacher at high school! All these years later, I have now taught him how to get to grips with the IT equipment that he uses such as his Synapptic tablet. What



Caption: Gary Stevenson

John is doing to help is invaluable. He is always singing when he's at the Llandudno Centre, so it's lovely that he is still able to bring some of that joy into our veterans' homes. He is such a lovely man".

In Derby, Gary Stevenson has signed up to volunteer as a telephone befriender, calling up other Members to make sure that they have everything that they need during the isolation period.

Gary has been volunteering as an IT Instructor for the past year and wanted to continue to do something for the charity during lockdown. He says: "The charity have given me so much, it's the least I can do. Normally I go to

Members' homes, help them with their IT problems and show them how to use new equipment. As I can't do that at the moment, I have been contacting some of them just to check up and have a chat. If they need anything, I pass their message on to the right people to help".

Gary has regularly visited the Brighton and Llandudno centres for training and activity weeks. It was here that he trained to become an IT Instructor. It was also at the centres that he was introduced to woodwork. He says: "Before Blind Veterans UK I was never into any of that but now I'm even building my own workshop at home".

"The charity is like one massive family. You turn up at the centres and everyone is so friendly and welcoming. I'm proud to be a member and I want to help the charity in any way I can so I can give something back. It's important for us all to look out for each other at the moment".

Take part in our Covid-19 Pandemic Survey

We are all facing many challenges due to coronavirus, yet little coherent data is currently available →

regarding the impact on health and wellbeing across different segments of society. Being aware of the requirement to move quickly in order to capture relevant data, our Research Team working with the University of Oxford has produced an online survey.

The purpose of the survey is to explore the experiences of individuals during the current pandemic situation in order to provide informed feedback. The survey captures current status, physical and emotional health, and perspective on isolation and loneliness; it is also designed to be followed up (with a smaller survey every 2-3 weeks) in order to provide insight on changes to respondents' situation over time. At the end of the survey, you can choose to be contacted again or not.

■ The survey in a visually impaired compatible format, can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/yx63x8cw>

John Hardy

Bridgwater-based Member John Hardy has been walking up to five miles a day with his guide dog Sidney to deliver prescriptions and supermarket essentials for people in his community.

John, who has been with us since

2015, has walked over 170km over the past month to make sure that those in his community are able to get exactly what they need during the lockdown. He says: "I want to get out there and help any way I can. I have dropped off items for about 120 people in total and I think it's just so important to help your local community at a time like this".

John has had his guide dog Sidney for about three years and he has been helping John with all his daily trips. He says: "I live in a rural area so if I have three houses to go to one day they could be very spread out. Both I and Sidney enjoy the exercise though and it's a great way to keep fit".

Since joining the charity, John has had



Caption: John picking up supplies with the staff of Boots, Bridgwater. With John is resident pharmacist Chris, who has been very helpful in John's quest

IT training and been given equipment to help him with day to day activities. He added: "I want everyone in my community to be looked after and that's why I want to go out and help in any way I can".

VE Day 75

Friday, 8 May is the 75th anniversary of VE Day, and there were due to be celebrations across the country and the rest of Europe but, with the impact that coronavirus has had, many of these are now cancelled.

We will be trying out a new "virtual" gathering, that we are calling our 'Virtual Street Party', to bring as many people together as possible who wish to mark the occasion. Each of our community teams and the Brighton Centre will be hosting a virtual table and there will be messages and activities as well as an opportunity to catch up with friends.

Members who are selected will only require a phone to be able to join in, and initial priority will be given to those veterans who served in the Second World War.

■ **Anyone interested in taking part should contact their local community team.**



Caption: Llandudno goats on display

New gardeners start at Llandudno

Our Llandudno Centre received a helping hand in keeping its grounds tidy when it had a visit from some of the many Welsh goats that are currently roaming the Welsh seaside town. Normally shy creatures, the goats are becoming bolder in the now-quiet streets, and have been seen happily exploring their unfamiliar surroundings.

Roger Williams

It is with sadness that we announce the passing of Roger Williams on 13 April in Llandough Hospital, →

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Cardiff. Roger was a Member since 2003 and lived in Barry, South Wales. He set up and ran the Barry Lunch Club for over 10 years, welcoming new members to the club, with over 24 members and guests attending each month.

For many years he also organised an annual holiday to our Llandudno Centre for members of the lunch club. They really valued Roger's dedication and commitment to bringing together those living in Barry and its surroundings. Roger organised annual Christmas parties for our veterans, and these were always well attended and enjoyed by all with him often taking the role of quiz master.

He will be sadly missed by the whole Blind Veterans UK family. The community team will be working with our Members to plan a memorial and tribute to Roger when safe to do so.

Rob Thornton MBE

It is with sadness we also announce the passing of Rob Thornton MBE on 13 February.

Rob joined the charity as a volunteer in 2015, assisting the Amateur Radio Society, which appreciated his work on the station aerials and equipment

at our Brighton Centre, and a member's station nearby. Rob, who had the callsign G4JCY, went on to do home visits, group escort duties and fund raising.

After spending time in the Territorial Army, he joined the Royal Signals at Brighton in 1968 and in 1971 transferred to 7 Queens at Horsham. He advanced to Captain, receiving an MBE in recognition of service in March 1991.

The Company became HQ Coy 5/7 Prince of Wales Royal Regiment where Rob remained until the unit at Horsham closed and his final years were with the TA at 103 Battalion Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in Crawley, spending much of his time as Signals Officer.

In recent times, he was a committee member of the Horsham branch of the Queens Regimental Association, organising battlefield tours and social events.

Rob's work was with British Telecom, and his communication skills were also used in RAYNET, the radio amateur emergency network, while additionally he was in the Vintage Military and Amateur Radio Society, Amberley Museum and the Bluebell Railway.





Caption: Rob Thornton MBE

Still a keen motorcyclist, he was chairman of the Greeves Club, member of the Royal Enfield, BSA and Sunbeam clubs, and competed in the Land's End Trials.

As Rosemary Hegarty, our volunteer co-ordinator said, 'he never had an off switch'.

News about HMS Sultan annual camp

It is with deep regret that due to the current situation regarding coronavirus,

we have had to take the decision to cancel the HMS Sultan annual summer camp that was scheduled this year between 7-15 August.

All being well, the camp will take place in 2021 and I will confirm the dates accordingly. We look forward to seeing you all again soon.

Andy Salter

HMS Sultan Summer Camp organiser

Going the extra mile

One of our Members, Darren Blanks from Cumbria is going to be running a marathon in his garden on 26 April in order to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK.

Darren was originally going to run the London Marathon but when that was cancelled he decided that he was going to do the challenge from home instead. He says: "It will be 10 years in June since I lost my sight so I decided to run the London Marathon for Blind Veterans UK as they have been supporting me for nearly nine years. Even though the London Marathon has been cancelled, I still wanted to do the challenge to support the charity. The care team work so hard, especially at the moment, as a lot of our members are in the vulnerable category" →

Darren is also doing the marathon as part of the '2.6 Challenge' which has been set up to encourage people to do fundraising challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic and ultimately help charities to continue to raise funds.

Darren, who has previously completed seven marathons and 16 half marathons, will be completing 436 laps of his garden on the day to make

up the 26 miles. He says: "I'm going to have to change direction every mile and a half! I'm hoping to do the marathon in under four hours".

"The charity support people of all ages and it's important to keep raising funds for them as they need the support now more than ever".

■ You can support Darren via Just Giving at bit.ly/2x1e9HW



Caption: Darren Blanks

Bill stays in touch across the Channel

Blind Veterans UK Member and Second World War veteran, 94-year old Bill Ridgewell is staying in touch with the pupils of Collège St Louis, Cabourg in France during the continuing period of self-isolation.

Bill has been in touch with the school after receiving his Legion D'Honneur last year when some of its pupils were present as he was awarded the medal for his service in France during the Normandy campaign.

To keep himself occupied, Bill is teaching himself French, while his daughter Mary is filming him talk about various subjects such as gardening for the students to translate. 🇫🇷

Fitting the pieces together

This month our chaplain **Clare Callanan** confesses her secret love of puzzles and explains how they fit into our daily lives

Here's something about me you may not know...I'm a dissectologist and proud of it. It sounds vaguely biological but it's not. I'm someone who likes doing jigsaw puzzles. Puzzles of any kind are good to do as they exercise the brain and help calm us. I have often listened in on the crosswords and

quizzes that happen in the Centre here in Brighton, and see people enlivened and satisfied by them. I am sure that at some time in your life you have done a jigsaw puzzle too.

I wonder if puzzles can help us through life? We engage the mind in some mental gymnastics that promote better quality of life, longer life expectancy and mental and emotional wellbeing. We have a sense of achievement. Aspects of our lives often leave us confused and overwhelmed, just like tackling a puzzle when we start with that first clue, opening question, or piece of jigsaw. There seems to be no clear starting point. There is only disorder and seeming randomness. Does that sound familiar at the moment?

Yet as we start to piece together the puzzle, fill in the clues or answer the questions, our minds start to shift from focussing on the confusion →



PHOTO BY MARKUS SPIKE ON UNSPLASH

Caption: Puzzles of any kind are beneficial



to creating solutions. We can begin to see how little fragments come together to create a bigger picture. We begin to notice patterns. Sometimes we can't find the piece to complete that particular section and I find it interesting that just when I've pretty much given up, the piece seems to reveal itself. But why did I work so hard to find that single piece? Why did I let it cause frustration?

A matter of patience

The truth is that the piece was there all along, and if I had just been patient, I could have had the same result without the frustration. Sometimes we push and push for a desired result. We're attached to an outcome. We can't wait. We get frustrated at the lack of results ... and then "it just happens". The



Caption: Clare Callanan

answer was there all along, but until we let go, until we surrender the answer just doesn't seem to come. Until it does.

Another thing about a puzzle is that it takes time to put it all together. You usually know what the final product is going to look like, but you have to go through the effort of placing each piece into its rightful position. There are no short cuts. One piece at a time, it's always a work in progress right up to the last piece.

In our life and spiritual puzzles, we simply keep putting pieces together and the picture keeps growing. Sometimes we finish off a section, take time to appreciate that part, and then move on to another section... and the puzzle keeps growing, piece by piece, section by section, linking and connecting.

Mine has a couple of missing pieces at the moment, and somehow I know that someone is going to jump in very soon to help me. And there are a couple of new sections that have been started and the pieces are really starting to fall into place now.

Now where is that piece that goes right there.....? 🍷

Clare Callanan



Lockdown lunch

Our resident cook **Penny Melville-Brown** offers you this tasty recipe she gained in a lockdown swap from her friend 'across the pond' in America

Here's a great recipe for chicken with tarragon and lemon from my friend Orly, one of the semi-finalists for the 2020 Holman prize for blind ambition that was run by San Francisco's LightHouse organisation. It might just cheer you up...

Method

- Sauté the onions and garlic in a pan.
- Add the chicken thighs and cover with the wine, a mug of water, add the lemon zest, stock cubes, tarragon leaves.
- I cooked for two hours on my smallest gas ring, on a heat defuser for two hours but you could also cook on a very low temperature in the oven.
- Remove the chicken thighs.
- Slake the cornflour with a little water and whisk in the juices in the pan until thickened. Add the lemon juice and season to taste.
- Pour over the chicken.

This is enough for 10 portions and freezes well to make dishes for the future. Just de-frost in the fridge overnight and then heat in the microwave on a low/medium power. 🍷



ADOBE STOCK / NELEA REAZANTEVA

Ingredients

3 onions peeled and diced

5 cloves garlic, peeled and finely chopped

1 tablespoon olive oil

1 knob butter

10 (1kg) chicken thighs, skinned

1 large glass dry white wine

Zest of one lemon

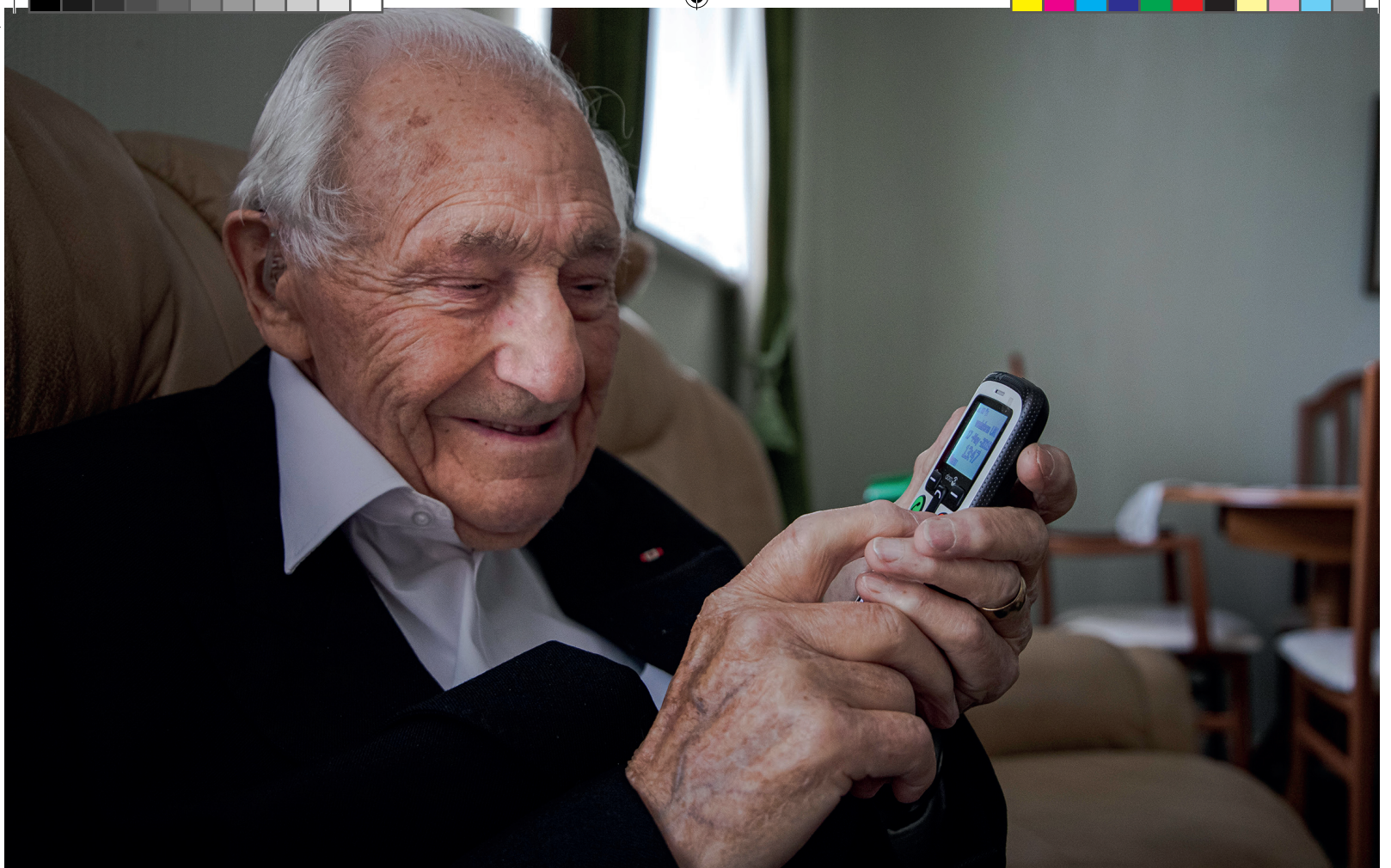
2 chicken stock cubes

1 tablespoon fresh French tarragon leaves, chopped

3 heaped teaspoons cornflour

Juice of half a lemon

Salt and pepper to taste



Staying safe

An update from our Operations Team on what we have been doing to keep you safe during this time, and how we can continue to aid our beneficiaries

Dear Members and friends,

We are writing to let you know how we are getting on with our new National Support Service which we started on 23 March as a response to the Government's advice about social distancing and the need to stay at home. As you know we are

not able to provide our usual Centre and community-based services at the moment.

The new service involves staff and volunteers from across our charity pulling together to make sure that you are supported through the lockdown period. The response from the teams

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has been fantastic, with many staff working outside their normal day jobs or outside their normal hours to help.

By now, most of you will have received a phone call or contact from someone to see how you are and to see if you need any help. From 23 March–15 April we spoke to almost 4,700 Members and beneficiaries and arranged support for them. This has involved a staggering 12,138 telephone calls or emails - so as you can see we have been busy.

We have been able to help Members with practical things like arranging for their shopping or prescriptions to be picked up and arranging someone to walk guide dogs or to get vital equipment delivered. Many of our Members live alone and we have connected them with volunteers or staff to have a regular phone call for a chat. Members have also been setting up their own ways to keep in touch with each other such as through Facebook groups or video chats.

Our Member Support Hub (MeSH) helpline has seen an increase in calls about IT. Many Members are realising the benefits of using technology to stay in touch with family and friends, and are brushing up the skills learned on their IT training. We have been able to provide support to lots of Members

over the phone to get up and running or to fix problems, so do please call the helpline if you get stuck.

We are now moving into the next phase of the service, which is to look for more ways we can help Members to feel connected and entertained during the lock down. This could be anything from a telephone group pub quiz, a virtual choir or just a regular one-to-one or group video chat or phone call. We are open to any suggestions, so if you have any ideas or would like to run a group please do get in touch with your community team.

Alongside all this, we are meeting regularly with the RAF Association, The Royal British Legion, SAFFA, Royal National Institute of Blind People and local sight loss charities so that we can let you know about what they are offering and to join forces with them where we can.

Finally, just a reminder that we are here if you need anything. You can either contact your community team in the usual way or MeSH helpline on **01273 391 447** during usual working hours.

We wish you all the very best during this time, and we look forward to being able to see you again in person soon. 🍷

Your Operations team



A chance to get creative

Our fifth annual Exhibition fundraiser is still on - **Louise Kirk-Partridge** explains how you can take part

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, hopefully from Monday 12th until Friday 30th October (dates may be later in the year or we may go 'online' depending on the Covid19 situation). 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. louise.kirk-partridge@blindveterans.org.uk. 07824 552828**

Please arrange delivery of your artwork to: Dave Bryant, Art & Craft Workshop, Blind Veterans UK, Greenways, Ovingdean, Brighton, East Sussex, BN2 7BS, on or before Tuesday 1 September, 2020.

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



Rainbows over Brighton

A selection of the rainbow artworks sent in to support our hard working Brighton Centre staff during the Covid-19 lockdown



Swimming with dragons

Jinpa Thubten talks you through your next Qi-Gong exercise as a way of keeping you healthy during self isolation

Hopefully you have been keeping to your minimum of two minutes of daily exercise and are feeling some benefit.

If you have not managed to do the daily two minutes don't worry just start again and follow the old saying

of "fall down seven get up eight".

This month's exercise is Swimming Dragon which will help improve the flexibility of the back.

Seated stance

■ (Use a dining chair if possible).



YAKOBCHUK OLENA / ADOBE STOCK

- Feet are about hip width apart.
- Knees relaxed (slightly bent).
- Keep your coccyx (tail bone) pulled forward.
- Keep your back elongated as if pulled gently from the crown of the head.
- Weight evenly spread over the feet.
- Chest open yet soft.

Standing Stance

- Feet are about hip width apart.
- Knees relaxed (slightly bent).
- Coccyx (tail bone) pulled forward.
- Back elongated as if pulled gently from the crown of the head.
- Weight evenly spread over the feet.
- Chest open yet soft. 🌟



Caption: Jinpa demonstrates the Swimming Dragon exercise

Swimming dragon

- A.** Bring your hands to your hips with palms facing heaven.
 - B.** As you inhale raise your hands along your body to chest height and turn the palms to face earth.
 - C.** As you exhale let your hips move back and your heart move forward as your hands move out in front of you. (Do not over reach or bend too far. Keep it gentle and soft.)
 - D.** As you inhale let your hips move forward and your heart move
 - back as your hands come to your shoulders creating a slight curve backwards. Make sure to keep your chin tucked in.
 - E.** Repeat stage D and E
 - F.** Finish with a gentle sigh as the hands return to the hips.
- Mix and match your exercises to suit your own ability and aim to commit to two minutes a day. Above all commit!

Not taking a tumble

It's important to stay safe in your home during this period of isolation. Our Llandudno Centre gives you some ideas on how to help make your home fall-proof

It's a little-known fact that six out of 10 falls happen in the home or garden. This is even more of a problem for those suffering from sight loss, who might be unable to notice clutter building up, or stay on top of day to day maintenance. Most of the time, we don't notice problems because we've lived with them for so long, so have a read through our suggestions and see how you can improve your living environment during this period of lockdown.

- 1** Avoid trailing cables from lamps that could trip you up
- 2** Check that all rugs and mats have non-slip underlays and ask someone to



TOA555 / ADOBE STOCK

make sure carpets are tacked down.

- 3** Try to organise any wires and cables such as those leading from the computer or television. If there are any, ask someone to help you tape them to somewhere out of the way.
- 4** Clear away clutter, especially in hallways and landings
- 5** Never put items on the stairs
- 6** Be careful of your pets – many people trip over them. If necessary buy them a bright coloured collar and bell
- 7** Are you always reaching up? Rearrange cupboards so that frequently used items are within easy reach.
- 8** Clear up any spills
- 9** Consider installing grab rails in the bathroom, on the stairs or on your front steps
- 10** Always use a non-slip mat in the bath or shower 🚿

A helping hand

Blind Veterans UK Member **Michael Clarke** explains his heartfelt feelings during these incredible unprecedented times during the pandemic of the Covid-19 virus

Having been a Member of Blind Veterans UK for nearly 10 years now, I know how much the clubs and holidays mean to me. I am quite sure that many others are feeling the same; isolated and bored from not being able to socialise and interact with each other with the help of dedicated and willing staff. Everyday living is challenging for everybody at the moment, whether you are sighted or visually impaired like myself and many others.



Caption: Michael Clarke

I was registered blind in my early 40s and issued with a white cane, which was quite small. The eye complaint I suffer with is retinitis pigmentosa which many Members will be familiar with. In some instance you have very good central vision and so I was given a 3-foot-long cane which was not very practical for somebody of my height, which is over 6ft.

As a consequence, I didn't use it very much and a few years later swapped it with somebody shorter than me in exchange for the longer cane. But it was not until I got the long cane, with a roller ball on the end, which I thoroughly recommend, that I felt more confident. Naturally you are taught to hold the cane in your hand up against your stomach moving it from side to side and when I first started to practice with this, sighted people were coming towards me and overtaking me and accusing me of tripping them up, as it was likely I was swinging the cane too far to the left and right, so I had to adjust. →



On some occasions I had to tell people, “What do you think the white cane is for”? On other occasions “you can see me, but I can't see you”.

I now use a tapping technique with my 5ft cane in front of me and I use this to guide me up steps as well. I can tell you there are 42 steps up to the nearby reservoir, which is one of my favourite walks as the air feels so fresh, I can hear the birds and the geese and there are so few people who are all respecting the two-metre rule. Which brings me to an interesting question...

“How can the visually impaired social

distance, when you rely on an arm to be guided”?

Lynne's idea

My Communicator Guide, Lynne Mallows from Sense, who supports me four hours per week, thought of guiding me using my cane horizontally, where she uses my cane like a paddle to steer me and I can feel whether to move left or right, along with her increased voice level of communication to me. This has solved the problem of social distancing. I thought this was totally brilliant and it's made me feel that I am doing my bit to conform to the Government guidelines like everybody else. As a bonus it also



Caption: Michael Clarke and his guide Lynne





enables me to get to do more cardiac exercise.

It is practical when in an area like where I live, around a farming community and a rural environment but it would not work for people who are in busy cities or on uneven and unfamiliar territory. I wish to emphasise, that it is not possible for Lynne to guide me like this all the time, so we have to revert back to the correct way of guiding when extra safety precaution prevails. The last thing I need is to fall and break a limb and I wouldn't want anybody reading this to do likewise.

Well, I thought long and hard about the situation that I and many others are in because this pandemic is going to go on for some time yet, so I either sit at home and get cabin fever, depressed and bored or I try and fill my days with keeping busy.

How am I doing this you might ask? By talking to friends and family on the telephone, gardening and baking (after many years of making my own bread I do not need to be sighted). I also enjoy writing poetry, listening to music, audio books and playing my trumpet, which exercises my lungs.

I am taking advantage of catching some sun rays, to increase my Vitamin D and boost my serotonin levels. It is great to

get out in the garden to potter around, listen to the birds, which usually appear distant because of everyday traffic and to feel the sense of calmness from the usual hustle and bustle of everyday life. However, this still feels so surreal as there is no regular social interaction, which is important. The Government guidelines have been enforced for a reason, to ensure that we keep safe and that we avoid the spread of this virus, to which I truly endorse.

Other measures

When my Communicator Guide delivers my shopping to me, I go out to the boot of her car and between us we wipe down all the items with an anti-bacterial wipe before entering my cottage and transferring the food into my fridge, freezer and cupboards.

All the time Lynne is helping me to minimise the risk of me catching the virus. It may sound rather obsessive, but I do believe in taking responsibility, especially when it comes to my health, by also eating and drinking well to keep my immune system up and this I would encourage everybody to do.

If this little initiative gives anybody else the confidence and reassurance that it gave me, it is worth sharing at this challenging time.

Keep Safe... Keep Well... 🇬🇧



Quiz time

Member **Ron Russell** presents another brain teaser for you

- 1** Of the 34,800 Messerschmitt Bf109 fighters produced by Germany, to the nearest five how many survive today?

- 2** On what date was the Second World War declared?

- 3** Who was Hitler's deputy and parachuted into Scotland on 10 May 1941?

- 4** What event on 7 December 1941 brought the USA into the Second World War?

- 5** What were the names of the British and German commanders in the North Africa campaign?

- 6** What was the name of the British battlecruiser sunk by the Bismarck?

- 7** Who was known as the 'forces sweetheart'?

- 8** What was the date of D-Day?

- 9** Who was the Italian leader for much of the Second World War?

- 10** Which decisive sea battle against the Japanese by America took place between 4-7 June, 1942?

- 11** Who was the head of the Luftwaffe?

- 12** What was the name of the Yugoslav resistance leader?

- 13** What was the former name of the Soviet city besieged by German forces?

- 14** What was the name given to Australian and New Zealand army troops in the First and Second World wars?

- 15** In what years were the battles of the Nile and Trafalgar fought?

Answers

01. 67 **02.** 3 September, 1939. **03.** Rudolph Hess. **04.** The attack on Pearl Harbour. **05.** Montgomery and Rommel. **06.** HMS Hood. **07.** Vera Lynn. **08.** 6 June, 1944. **09.** Benito Mussolini. **10.** The Battle of Midway. **11.** Hermann Goering. **12.** Josip Tito. **13.** Stalingrad. **14.** ANZACs. **15.** 1798 and 1805 respectively.



Caption: Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain

A long way from home

When lockdown hit, our Standard Bearer **Brian Eldridge** and his wife Margaret were in Tenerife. Here's his thoughts on self-isolation – Spanish style

BALATE DORIN / ADOBE STOCK

Life goes on even in lockdown Spanish style, but here in Tenerife, lockdown means lockdown. There's no daily exercise allowed for us. We can venture out of our apartment to obtain basics only.

Three weeks in and we now have a repetitive and regular routine with a few disciplines incorporated into our daily lives. It's later to bed and later to rise but hey, what's there to rush about?



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By the time we have welcomed another day, said good morning to the world, greeted each other, read our phone mail, (must keep in touch with our friends and family) discussed any plans for the day, showered and dressed, time is creeping towards mid-day. But who worries about time these days?

Having already drunk three cups of tea before breakfast we now have a full glass of orange juice and a bowl of porridge with our daily banana. My turn to wash the dishes and clean down the kitchen tops and sink while Margaret cleans the bathroom. Yes, I still have my daily jobs that Margaret puts me in charge of – just in case I think I can get away with doing nothing. I might add at this point that we are slowly running out of cups, plates, wine glasses and bowls which we all know when living with a blind person is a frequent occurrence.

Now back to our balcony to check if anything has changed since we last looked. Nothing. Still surreal silence, which is how we blind veterans gauge our surroundings. I look to my left and with my very limited central sight I can see the church square where normally the locals would gather for their daily chats and the schoolchildren would play after their lessons, but it is deserted. No noise until I can hear the church bells ringing which remind me of the time

of day it is. How I love to hear those bells. They remind me of others in the town that can also hear them ringing in their homes. Somehow I don't feel quite so isolated now. I thank God that it is only my sight that is fading and not my hearing. How I would hate to live in a silent world.

Not even the seagulls

Turning further to my left I can just see the blue sea, which would normally be very active with local ferries and tourists trips around the harbour. Today there is nothing - not even a seagull waiting for his dinner from the local fishermen who delivers daily into our port.



Caption: Brian Eldridge



We chat about our evening meal and what we might cook together later, which is always a big decision, but an even bigger decision is who will gown up for a trip to our supermarket across the road to purchase our needs. It's my turn today as Margaret did it yesterday for the fruit and veg. So after a spray of alcohol, (not your drinking type) and donning of rubber gloves and a facemask, I go into our lift to carry out the big adventure of the day – shopping.

All shoppers must have a two-metre distance between them, so after only a few minutes of waiting outside the supermarket I'm allowed to move to the butchers counter. Entrecote steak and pork chops please. On my way to the cash counter one of the shop assistants accidentally bumps into me. A white stick is not quite understood here as it is in the UK. Another two-metre distance to wait to pay for my shopping and while waiting in the queue I cannot help but notice that the shelves are still well stocked, with no shortages that I can see, including loo rolls and plenty of alcohol.

I will add here that if you are stopped by the police while out of your apartment you must justify the reason why. You are allowed out of your apartment for food shopping or medicines only. You must shop at your

nearest supermarket and not walk to any other shop. If you are found to be outside of the 'Emergency Law' then you are heavily fined on the spot. As I said, lockdown means lockdown here in Tenerife.

It's back up to our apartment block via the lift but still wearing rubber gloves and mask. A quick wipe with pure alcohol to my protective clothing and then I wash my loose change in soapy water including the bank notes. I return the gloves and mask to the same shelf ready for my next adventure out of the apartment. My Blind Veterans UK friends will understand that routine is key here; any change and it is lost forever.

Now I wash my hands while singing "happy birthday" three times. Who has a birthday anyway? Meanwhile nearby, Margaret is preparing a salad for later in the day and chopping the fresh fruit for desert. It's now two o'clock(ish) and we still have a few hours before we have our barbeque. So, what to do now? Sunbathe for half an hour? Something we would never normally do before the lockdown, as we are far too busy meeting friends, taking long walks or playing petanque or even dancing.

Now for a few routine daily exercises followed by another cool drink. Got to keep fit and healthy even though →



we are told we are “high risk” at being over 70 years of age...really. It’s back to our large balcony to lay out in the sun while listening to a piano concerto or similar, but with a strict time limit of half an hour a day only. It’s too easy to have too much sun when we have plenty. Vitamin D intake completed we retire to the shade and top up our liquid intake with water or squash. Note - still no alcohol, that comes later. Another catch up with our phones or books while cooling down and time is creeping towards our four o’clock mug of tea. How British are we?

The big event

Now for the big event of the day – it’s ‘Barbie’ time using our electric barbeque. I start to cook the steaks but first pour a glass of wine each (bet you thought we would never get around to the wine) to enjoy and celebrate another day together in our apartment and think how lucky are we to have remained healthy. Drinking up, eating up, washing up and cleaning up ready for the nightly 7pm clap on our balcony which we have done every evening since our first day of lockdown three weeks ago. This is our chance to check up on all our neighbours and confirm that everyone is accounted for, and then welcome another session from one of our Spanish neighbours who sees himself as a Pavarotti or similar and has taken

it upon himself to serenade us each evening. Wonderful. We love the camaraderie. More clapping with shouts of encore! A final wave to our neighbours before retiring indoors for a night with a film, a book or another drink. Which would you choose?

Later there’s a toss of a coin to see who will gown up to do our final errand down in the lift before we finally close our doors for the evening. There’s just enough light outside for us to carry our daily bag of rubbish to the communal bin provided each evening by our local council. Gloves, mask and more swabs of alcohol. Great news - I won - that’s two trips out today while Margaret has none. Never thought I would get so excited at the thought of taking a bag of rubbish downstairs.

Our final action before retiring to bed is to step out onto our balcony once again to listen to the silence and compare the size and shape of the moon from the previous evening. There’s not a soul to be seen and still no traffic, or so Margaret says, as I cannot see a thing in the dark. I hear the midnight bells and know it is time to retire.

Until that day, to all my Blind Veterans UK friends, we hope that your days are equally as exciting as ours, and we can exchange our stories some time in the future. 🇬🇧



Family News

Birthdays

Rosemary Lang who celebrates her 101st birthday on May 1.

Ian Corsie who celebrates his 102nd birthday on May 6.

Elsie Hayes who celebrates her 100th birthday on May 14.

Henry Hogg who celebrates his 101st birthday on May 17.

Donald English who celebrates his 100th birthday on May 30.

Condolences

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

Margaret Bates who died on 12 April 2020. She was the wife of Arthur Bates.

Beverley Francis who died on 14 April 2020. She was the wife of Edward Francis.

Mary Goddard who died on 1 April 2020. She was the wife of Robert Goddard.

Anne Jarps who died on 11 April 2020. She was the wife of Brian Jarps.

Eileen Roberts who died on 1 April 2020. She was the wife of Evan (Bob) Roberts.

Jean Simpson who died on 19 April 2020. She was the wife of the late Leslie Simpson.

Marilyn Walters who died on 9 April 2020. She was the wife of Theophilus (John) Walters.



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

Samuel John Adams of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk died on 12 April 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Artillery.

Joyce Adams of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 3 April 2020 aged 96. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as an aircraftwoman (second class)

Edward Archbold of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire died on 21 March 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Air Force Police.

Marie Theresa Ayres-Regan of Marlow, Buckinghamshire died on 18 March 2020 aged 94. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a lance corporal

Patrick Allan Ball of Brackley, Northamptonshire died on 4 April 2020 aged 84. He served in the Royal Air Force as a junior technician.

Kenneth Percival Beale of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 27 March 2020 aged 87. He served in the Royal Engineers as a corporal.

George Whinham Bell of Haywards Heath, West Sussex died on 23 March 2020 aged 97. He served in the Royal Signals as a signalman.

William Brian Bird of York, North Yorkshire died on 17 March 2020 aged 69. He served in the Devonshire and Dorset Regiment (11th, 39th and 54th foot) as a warrant officer (1st class).

Patricia Constance Bohea of Gosport, Hampshire died on 30 March 2020 aged 97. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service as a petty officer writer.

John Dennis Braine of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 28 March 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Marines.

Marinealun Breese of Newtown, Powys died on 6 April 2020 aged 97. He served in the Royal Navy as an able seaman.

Ronald Thomas Bullock of Brighton, East Sussex died on 5 April 2020 aged 96. He served in the Royal Navy as an acting leading airman.

Vincent Joseph Burns of Preston, Lancashire died on 27 March 2020 aged 98. He served in the Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) as a major.

John Donald Cameron of Haywards Heath, West Sussex died on 31 March 2020 aged 96. He served in the Worcestershire Regiment as a private.

James Leslie Cavender of Newcastle upon Tyne died on 9 April 2020 aged 101. He served in the King's Own Scottish Borderers as a private.

Arthur Henry Chambers of Clacton-on-Sea, Essex died on 7 March 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve as a seaman.

Montague Frederick Chappell of Slough, Berkshire died on 6 April 2020 aged 98. He served in the Royal Navy as a signalman.

Reuben Henry Charles of Chester-le-Street, County Durham died on 3 April 2020 aged 95. He served in the Border Regiment as a private.

James Edward Clarke of Newcastle upon Tyne died on 13 April 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Marines as a marine.

Roderick Bomford Coates of Stourbridge, West Midlands died on 22 March 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman (first class).

David Brian Cooper of Broadstairs, Kent died on 1 March 2020 aged 77. He served in the Royal Navy as a leading seaman.

Jacques Ignace Marie Crighton of Livingston, West Lothian died on 28 March 2020 aged 81. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.





Gordon Leonard David of Neath, West Glamorgan died on 30 March 2020 aged 97. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal.

Pearl Edna May Davis of Southampton died on 1 April 2020 aged 94. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as an aircraftwoman (first class)

Brenda Deacy of Cardiff died on 15 April 2020 aged 98. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as an aircraftwoman (first class)

Terence DeBono of Cardiff died on 3 April 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Pioneer Corps as a private.

Josef Deren of Blackburn, Lancashire died on 29 March 2020 aged 96. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman

Clarice Diana Dickison of Wokingham, Berkshire died on 20 March 2020 aged 98. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service as a Wren.

Kenneth Joseph Dolan of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 27 March 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps as a driver.

Gerard Eccles of Blackpool, Lancashire died on 19 March 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Air Force.

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Norman Edwards of Leamington Spa, Warwickshire died on 1 April 2020 aged 100. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal.

John Bennett Edwards of Faringdon, Oxfordshire died on 6 March 2020 aged 93. He served in the Welch Regiment (war substantive) as a corporal.

Robert Emmett of Nottingham died on 30 March 2020 aged 93. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman (second class).

John Richard Evans of Chester died on 25 February 2020 aged 104. He served in the Royal Air Force as a sergeant.

Richard John Evans of Pevensey, East Sussex died on 31 March 2020 aged 85. He served in the Welsh Regiment as an acting captain.

Robert Herbert Field of Hythe, Kent died on 22 March 2020 aged 101. He served in the Royal Army Pay Corps as a sergeant.

Peter James Fold of Bexhill-on-Sea, East Sussex died on 1 February 2020 aged 90. He served in the Welsh Guards as a guardsman.





Martin Henry James Ford of Bristol died on 1 April 2020 aged 84. He served in the Army Catering Corps as a lance corporal.

Ernest Foster of Pershore, Worcestershire died on 11 April 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Engineers as a lance corporal.

Jack Foster of Walsall died on 29 March 2020 aged 93. He served in the Royal Air Force as a sergeant.

Anthony Gollop of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire died on 15 April 2020 aged 61. He served in the Royal Engineers as a sapper.

William Greaves of Wickford, Essex died on 1 February 2020 aged 100. He served in the Royal West Kent Regiment.

Charles Green of Poulton-le-Fylde in Lancashire died on 8 April 2020 aged 98. He served in the Royal Air Force as a flying officer.

Albert Elliott Hall of Wigton, Cumbria died on 31 March 2020 aged 89. He served in the Royal Navy as a supply assistant.

Catherine Hands of Brighton, East Sussex died on 3 April 2020 aged 72. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service as a leading seaman.

Robert Lawrence Heseltine of Manchester died on 14 April 2020 aged 84. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman (first class).

William Holmes of Birmingham died on 13 March 2020 aged 86. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Phillip Howarth of Northampton, Northamptonshire died on 25 February 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Signals as a signalman.

Frank John Henry Howell of Bristol died on 23 March 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Merald Austin Hutchins of Braintree, Essex died on 7 April 2020 aged 66. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps as a lance corporal.

Peter Edwin Jackson of Birmingham died on 7 April 2020 aged 88. He served in the Royal Air Force as a senior aircraftman.

Roland Victor Jones of Neath, West Glamorgan died on 13 March 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Navy as a sick berth attendant.





William Harvey Kemp of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 23 March 2020 aged 83. He served in the Royal Signals as a signalman.

Ronald John Kirby of Kingsbridge, Devon died on 26 March 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Navy as an able seaman.

Geraldine Beryl Lancaster of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire died on 10 April 2020 aged 96. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a lance corporal.

Alice Mary Lane of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire died on 3 April 2020 aged 96. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a private.

Eric Lewin of Stocksfield, Northumberland died on 2 April 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as a lance corporal.

William Joseph Longhurst of Billericay, Essex died on 17 April 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Gerald Louis Loret of Witney, Oxfordshire died on 5 April 2020 aged 85. He served in the Royal Signals as a corporal.

Alistair James Macdonald of Peasmarsh, East Sussex died on 1 April 2020 aged 99. He served in the Royal Engineers as a captain.

Kenneth Ivor Matkin of Ely, Cambridgeshire died on 6 April 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Armoured Corps as a trooper.

Mary Matthews of Oldham, Greater Manchester died on 1 April 2020 aged 99. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a lance corporal.

Myles Joseph McGuire of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 5 April 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman (first class).

William Henry Rex Millington of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 17 March 2020 aged 76. He served in the Royal Air Force as a corporal.

Kenneth Griffin Milward of Dunmow, Essex died on 5 April 2020 aged 96. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Peter Charles Frederick Nash of Harwich, Essex died on 11 April 2020 aged 97. He served in the Fleet Air Arm as a leading airman.



Jack Peter Nicholson of Nottingham died on 28 March 2020 aged 97. He served in the East Yorkshire Regiment (The Duke of York's Own) as a private.

Maria O'Donnell of Rayleigh, Essex died on 24 March 2020 aged 94. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service as a private.

Peter Ernest Olliver of Newhaven, East Sussex died on 5 April 2020 aged 97. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Frederick Palmer of Hunstanton, Norfolk died on 25 March 2020 aged 92. He served in the Royal Artillery as a gunner.

Thomas Desmond Parsons of Exmouth, Devon died on 21 March 2020 aged 93. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman (first class).

David Robert Pugh of London died on 1 March 2020 aged 97. He served in the Royal Navy as a sub lieutenant.

Michael Graham Quilter of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 5 April aged 81. He served in the Suffolk Regiment as a captain.

Jennifer Mary Reynolds of Lee-on-the-Solent, Hampshire died on 7 April 2020 aged 84. She served in the Royal Navy as a 3rd officer.

Geoffrey Ley Roberts of Colchester, Essex died on 30 March 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Navy as a telegraphist.

Thomas Rogers of Aldershot, Hampshire died on 26 March 2020 aged 83. He served in the East Surrey Regiment as a private.

Kathleen Rosoman of Storrington, West Sussex died on 1 April 2020 aged 96. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service as a wren.

Lily Rounsfell of Daventry, Northamptonshire died on 15 April 2020 aged 99. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as a leading aircraftwoman.

Reginald Russell of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire died on 15 April 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Air Force as a Chief Technician.

John Scott of Liverpool died on 1 March 2020 aged 86. He served in the Royal Artillery as a gunner.

Gordon Thomas Scott of Brighton died on 13 April 2020 aged 95. He served in the Royal Navy as a stoker 1st class.





Shirley Silburn of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 1 April 2020 aged 94. She served in the Royal Army Service Corps as a private.

Peter Edward Sivyler of Sawbridgeworth, Hertfordshire died on 9 April 2020 aged 81. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps as a private.

Ronald Lionel Skelton of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 2 April 2020 aged 92. He served in Fleet Air Arm as an air mechanic.

Edward George Austen Smith of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 12 April 2020 aged 95. He served in the Suffolk Regiment as a warrant officer 1st class.

William Smith of Morecambe, Lancashire died on 9 April 2020 aged 88. He served in Royal Army Medical Corps as a lance corporal.

Rupert Louis Stant of Leicester died on 14 April 2020 aged 99. He served in the Royal Navy as an engine room artificer.

Maureen Beryl Steenmeijer of Martock, Somerset died on 4 March 2020 aged 91. She served in the auxiliary territorial service as a private.

Henry Foster Stevenson of Washington, Tyne and Wear died on 2 April 2020 aged 90. He served in the Royal Artillery as a craftsman.

Sam Royal Strawson of Plymouth died on 20 March 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Marines as a sergeant.

Harry Tailford of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire died on 1 April 2020 aged 91. He served in the Royal Engineers as a lance corporal.

Norman Taylor of Southsea, Hampshire died on 30 March 2020 aged 89. He served in the Royal Air Force as a senior aircraftman.

Dennis Thwaites of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 3 April 2020 aged 83. He served in the Royal Armoured Corps (68 training regiment) as a trooper.

John Thomas Tomblin of Burnley, Lancashire died on 1 April 2020 aged 100. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps as a private.

Ernest Frank Trossell of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 1 March 2020 aged 93. He served in the Royal Army Pay Corps as a private.

Roy William Truman of Rochford, Essex died on 8 March 2020 aged 83. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.



Ronald William Vince of Watford died on 6 April 2020 aged 87. He served in the army catering corps as a private.

Anthony Charles Vincent of Alfold, Surrey died on 29 March 2020 aged 85. He served in the Royal Navy as a petty officer.

Colin John Wakeham of Bristol died on 10 April 2020 aged 84. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Anne Wake-Walker of Colchester, Essex died on 24 February 2020 aged 99. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service as a 3rd officer.

Peter John Warner of Corby, Northamptonshire died on 20 March 2020 aged 83. He served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers as an acting staff sergeant.

Peter Welham of Swindon, Wiltshire died on 22 March 2020 aged 88. He served in the Royal Navy as a petty officer.

Brian Girvan Wheelton of Ruthin, Clwyd died on 13 April 2020 aged 88. He served in the Royal Air Force as a warrant officer.

George White of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 27 March 2020 aged 99. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Geoffrey Kear Wiggins of Cardiff died on 24 March 2020 aged 92. He served in the Royal Air Force as an aircraftman (first class).

Roger Williams of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 13 April 2020 aged 73. He served in the Royal Artillery as a bombardier.

Thomas Williams of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 2 April 2020 aged 87. He served in the Royal Engineers as a sergeant.

William Philip Williams of Flint, Flintshire died on 18 March 2020 aged 94. He served in the Royal Air Force as a leading aircraftman.

Rosa May Wilson of Worcester died on 12 April 2020 aged 96. She served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as a leading aircraftwoman.

William Wrigley of Preston, Lancashire died on 31 March 2020 aged 93. He served in the Royal Navy as a steward.



Support from the States

Our charity has had a long association with our American counterparts. Information and Archives Executive **Rob Baker** tells the story of William V C Ruxton and Melplash Court

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) of the United States marked its 75th anniversary on 28 March this year. Blind Veterans UK has a long history of collaboration with and support from the USA. This dates from our very beginnings, when the American businessman and philanthropist Otto Kahn kindly lent us his property, St Dunstan's Lodge in Regent's Park, for the training and rehabilitation of those blinded in the war, through to our current collaboration with the BVA on Project Gemini.

One of our links with the United States relates to a fine building in Melplash in Dorset, Melplash Court. This dates back to the 16th century. When the Second World War began, Melplash Court was owned by an American businessman, William Vernon Chickering Ruxton. Married to Ruth,

and with twin daughters Dorothy and Cass, Ruxton was a friend of our then Chairman Lord Fraser and he very kindly lent the property to us in 1940 after he and his family vacated it earlier that year as a result of the war.

It was during 1940 that we temporarily moved our training and rehabilitation work from Brighton to the town of Church Stretton in Shropshire. Hundreds of newly-blinded men and women from the war went there over the course of the next six years, and some of those who had lost their sight in the First World War were there too, helping those new to the charity with the training and generally in adjusting to their new circumstances.

At the same time, others of the earlier generation who were in poor health and had been permanent residents at Brighton moved either to a property



we had been loaned in Blackpool or to Melplash Court. As the war went on, we also needed accommodation to house those of our veterans who had been unfortunate enough to lose their own homes as a result of bomb damage and they too were able to go to Melplash, which could accommodate up to twenty people at a time.

Appointing a matron

A local matron was appointed for Melplash, Mary Crossley, who was an Assistant Commandant of the British Red Cross, and our blind veterans there were kindly supported by local people.



WIKIPEDIA COMONS

Caption: Otto Kahn

Being in Dorset clearly had some advantages – a report in the *Review* of July 1941 mentioned that ‘Everyone is well and thoroughly enjoying the fresh vegetables we are able to obtain’. There were also ‘indoor amusements’ of dominoes, whist and darts, and another type of amusement, going to the local pub, was clearly also popular; local residents helped by driving them there and back.

During the war Ruxton also served as President of the British-American Ambulance Corps. This was one of a number of American charities which developed in the early stages of the war to provide humanitarian assistance in Great Britain. They came under an umbrella body, the British War Relief Society, and continued to provide this support even after America’s own entry into the war.

William V C Ruxton and the British-American Ambulance Corps were also responsible for our receiving an ambulance. This was donated to us at Church Stretton. At this time in addition to our training and rehabilitation work we also, uniquely in our history, were operating a general eye hospital for all those who had suffered substantial eye damage as a result of the war, so the ambulance would doubtless have been a very useful vehicle for us.



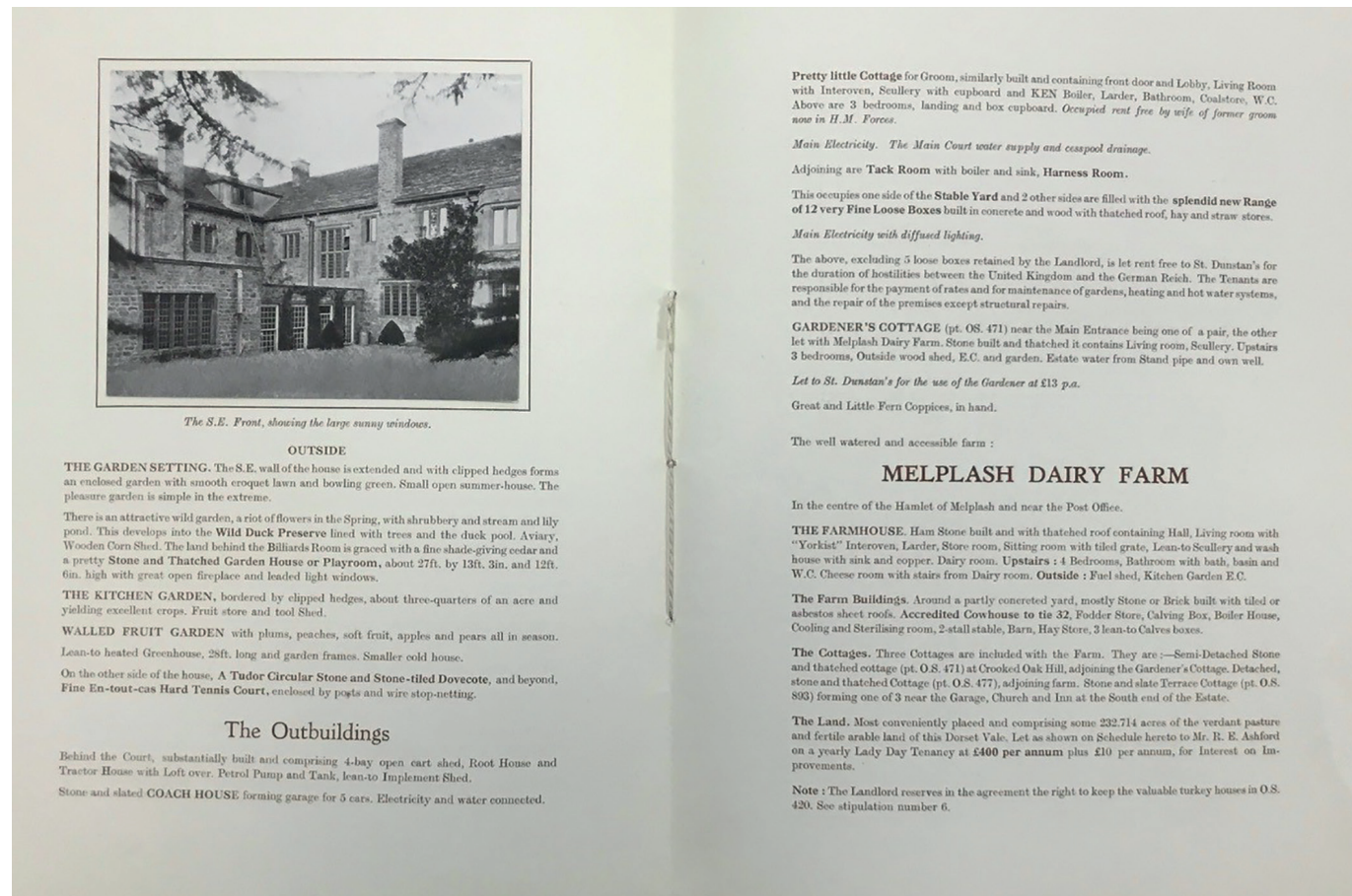
A curious commemoration

Ruxton's name is, rather curiously, commemorated by a vintage car. The Ruxton was originated in New York in 1929 and was named after William V C Ruxton apparently in an attempt to encourage him to invest in its mass production. However, he did not wish to do so and although the name of the car remained, Ruxton himself was not involved in any way with it.

We returned Melplash Court to the Ruxtons in July 1945, although they went on to sell it later that year. The building survives to this day.

Melplash Court, and our links with it, was going to be part of a new exhibition which had been due to be held at Beaminster Museum, Dorset, from April. We hope that this will be rescheduled to a later date. The exhibition was set to feature interesting aspects of the parishes around Beaminster, in the west of the county, one of these being Melplash.

■ Our thanks to Sarah Drinnan of Beaminster Museum for letting us know about the exhibition. For information about the museum see beaminstermuseum.co.uk.



Caption: The original sales brochure for Melplash Court in 1945

Contact details

Contact address Blind Veterans UK,
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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**



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Caption: A chalk tribute left on our Brighton Centre drive by the public