

July 2012

Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



From the Chairman.

Your message from Major General Andrew Keeling, CB, CBE, RM.

I begin this month's letter on a very sad note. As many of you are aware, since 2010 we have received a great deal of support from members of 1st Battalion The Royal Welsh (The Royal Welch Fusiliers). They adopted us in 2010 after Fusilier Shaun Stocker was wounded in Afghanistan, losing much of his sight. They saw the treatment he received from us and wanted to help. Under the leadership of Captain Stephen Healey, an exemplary young officer who was mentioned in Dispatches in 2010 for his work in Afghanistan, they have carried out numerous fundraising activities for us. The latest was in February when members of the Battalion walked blindfold from their Barracks in Chester to our centre in Llandudno; a place they have made home.

At Blind Veterans UK we were all deeply saddened to learn of the death of Capt Healey, who was killed on 26th May when his patrol vehicle struck an IED in Helmand Province. We are all too aware of the human costs of war and I am sure you will all join with me in expressing to his family, girlfriend and his friends and colleagues how truly sorry we are for their great loss, and that they are in our thoughts and prayers.

Capt Healey's girlfriend Thea Davies is determined to continue his fundraising legacy. She has already set up a Just Giving page in his name, and at time of going to press has raised over £4,000. At the end of June she will complete a triathlon for us, as well as undertaking another event in September and training for a half Iron Man in the future. Again I am sure you will join with me in supporting her, if not financially, with messages of support.

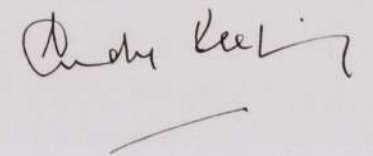
One of the less noticeable aspects of our re-branding process and of our determination to become more noticeable to the great British public, and therefore more likely to attract their financial support, is that we are now organising more major fundraising events. The biggest of these, in terms of numbers participating and of funds raised, is the sponsored 100 kilometre walk from London to the Brighton centre, the first of which happened last year.

This year's event took place on 9th and 10th June with more than 300 people registered to take part. On the day 266 people set off on the 100K from Richmond. I suspect a combination of a rubbish weather forecast and the realisation that maybe they hadn't prepared as well as they might have done, proved to be too great a challenge for those who withdrew before the start.

I was at the finish to meet some of the 165 who completed the course, and I found it a really moving experience. Most had been walking hard non-stop for about 24 hours – some more, some less. All were exhausted, not surprisingly, physically and in many cases emotionally. All were really hurting. Nearly all had blisters. Some had blisters on their blisters. Most were limping – badly. And those were the ones that completed the endurance challenge. Many more had gone on as long as they could, but eventually succumbed and somehow got lifts to the end where they were nursing their injuries – and their pride.

So why did so many people, most of whom had no previous connection with our organisation, subject themselves voluntarily to such a severe dose of physical and mental torture? Partly, no doubt, because they are the sort of people who like to challenge themselves, and to test their physical fitness and their moral fibre. But also because they like and respect what we do and wanted to help us. They undoubtedly felt good about that, in spite of the aches and pains and blisters. I found that really impressive.

Woppy and I also quite recently attended a very different sort of event at the Brighton centre – the final night's Bar-B-Q of Project Gemini, the visit by a small delegation of members of our American counterpart, the Blinded Veterans Association. It was the second annual event in this series, and our evening with them was a moving experience as well as a tremendously enjoyable one. The bonds of friendship and mutual respect forged on these visits are very powerful, and very beneficial to those who experience them and to those who observe them. I want to thank all those who helped to make Project Gemini such a remarkable success, which you can read about in the August edition of the Review.





Picture: The Chairman presents 100k walkers with their medals at the Brighton centre. **Copyright:** All 100K photos by Kathi Archery of Klickchick Photography. Contact: 07595 218006 or website: www.klickchick.zenfolio.com



Picture: Day 2: no pain no gain walking through the beautiful countryside.

On the cover: 100K walkers Ray Matthews, Kerry Levins with guide dog Pablo and Darren Murphy, Kerry's sighted guide.



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Blind Veterans UK Calendar

Key: B for Brighton centre - L for Llandudno centre - S for Sheffield centre

July

Gardening Week **B** 1st - 7th
 Writer's Weekend **B** 5th - 7th
 History Week **B** 15th - 21st
 Golf 21st - 22nd
 Amateur Radio **B** 27th - 4th

August

Race Week **B** 5th - 11th
 Writer's Forum **B** 18th
 Golf 18th - 19th
 Archery Week **B** 24th - 1st

September

History Week **L** 16th - 22nd
 Writer's Forum **B** 15th
 Golf 15th/16th

October

Widows Week **B** 14th - 20th
 Computer Club **L** 17th - 18th
 Amateur Radio Club **L** 19th - 27th
 Bowling Weeks **B** 28th - 10th

Noticeboard

Calling all bowlers

Calling all bowlers within the Brighton area who would like to join the Brighton Bowling club to play against sighted local clubs within the area. Please contact either Joan Osborne on 01273 302115, or Marjorie Scott on 01273 575231.

Blind Veterans UK Founder's Day awards for 2013

To celebrate the achievements of the family of Blind Veterans UK and its volunteers, the Founder's Day awards are made annually in eight different categories. The 2013 awards ceremony will take place in our Brighton centre on 26th March. This celebrates the date in 1915 on which the first 16 war blinded ex-Servicemen entered the new training centre at the then St Dunstan's Lodge in London's Regent's Park.

The Awards will also honour staff and other individuals who have contributed significantly to Blind Veterans UK. The recipients of the 2012 Founder's Day Awards featured in the April and May edition of the Review; you may feel you know equally worthy candidates within or outwith our organisation.

Nominations are treated in confidence and discussed by a selection committee in January. Nominees are not informed they have been nominated until the selection committee has reached its decision. For details of the various categories and guidelines, please contact Barbara Sweeney, PA to Welfare Services, Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1H 4HD, tel 020 7616 7922, email barbara.sweeney@blindveterans.org.uk

Open day at Latchetts Gardens for Blind Veterans UK

Laurence Hardy, a member of Blind Veterans UK, and his wife Rebeka, will open their beautiful gardens, at Danehill, near Haywards Heath in West Sussex, to members and the public on 28th July from 10am to 4.30pm. Fascinating and beautifully kept the country garden covers eight acres. Refreshments are available and picnickers welcome. There is free parking and entry costs £5.

Personal Independence Payment. What will the cuts mean for blind and partially sighted people? Information from the RNIB.

Background: According to the Government's own figures – about half a million people will lose entitlement altogether as Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is replaced by Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Others will qualify for a lower rate than they currently receive.

Causes for concern: There are a number of areas where the department for work and pensions (DWP) has not properly recognised the impact of sight loss.

The DWP says it wants the assessment for PIP to consider social participation and other barriers to independent living, but across a wide range of activities it envisages blind and partially sighted people scoring zero points. Sight loss is a serious disability but in key areas the PIP assessment fails to recognise this at present.

Mobility - turning back the clock? The face-to-face assessment will consider claimants' individual circumstances across eleven activities, ranging from preparing food, bathing and grooming, communicating and moving around.

The 'moving around' activity has been designed so it relates to an individual's physical ability to move around, despite cross-party recognition of the impact of sight loss in this activity just two years ago.

Someone with a vision impairment may be able to travel independently to familiar places. However there is no such thing as a 'familiar journey' as this can change at any time due to travel disruption or street works.

The proposals appear to exclude many people with a severe vision impairment from the enhanced mobility rate of PIP. Is this a conscious decision by DWP to wipe out that hard-won extension to the higher rate of DLA?

It puts the clock back to 1992 - you are guaranteed the enhanced rate if you are a wheelchair user, you don't get it if you are blind.

In reality, regardless of the length of time a person has lived with sight loss, the difficulties and barriers remain.

The impact of sight loss does not diminish over time and our experience is often that adaptation actually equates to restriction of people's previous activities.

Daily living: The activity on communicating has been drafted in a way that excludes vision impaired people who use spectacles or contact lenses to access written information. Again, this betrays a lack of understanding about the aids and appliances many blind and partially sighted people use and their fundamental role in enabling independent living.

What about people with some useful vision who need specialist spectacles or lenses to access information? Their difficulties accessing written information aren't addressed in the draft regulations.

The use of aids and appliances is taken into account in some activities, but not others. People who use aids or appliances to manage medication or a health condition score no points under the proposed scheme.

Given the Government's declared intention to wipe more than £1 billion off the projected cost of DLA, there were always going to be lots of losers.

The thresholds will be set with the cut-off for PIP standard rate, for both the daily living and mobility components, at eight points. The threshold for PIP enhanced rate will be 12 points.

To follow the DWP's proposals in detail, detailed policy briefings are available. Copies of the draft regulations are available in a range of formats, including large print, Braille, audio, BSL video/ DVD and Easy Read.

Please visit the DWP website www.dwp.gov.uk/pip, or go direct to DWP if you would like a copy. You can also email: pip.assessment@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or email the Disability Benefits helpline at: DCPU.Customer-Services@dwp.gsi.gov.uk or telephone: the Disability Benefits helpline on 08457 123456.

The RNIB can be contacted on Helpline: 0303 123 9999, or email campaign@rnib.org.uk

Sign up to the Dartmoor Yomp on 21st and 22nd September by Stan Bowers.

The yomp is organised by a charity run by former Royal Marines, the Royal Marines Charitable Trust, which raises funds for all Service charities. They are looking for any blind veterans, their families and staff who want to sign up to a 15 mile stroll across the moors in the Dartmoor National Park in Devon. Application forms can be obtained from me, Stan Bowers, or from the Dartmoor Yomp website at: www.rmctf.org.uk All expenses will have to be met by the Yompers, but if there are enough numbers we will be able to use one of our Blind Veterans UK vehicles to get to and from Dartmoor. Once you have signed up don't leave it to the last minute to book a hotel, as the local hotels in the Bickleigh area get booked up very quickly. Meals and refreshments are supplied at the Sergeant's mess. The food is very good and plentiful, and refreshments, which are available in the bar, are very reasonably priced. Yompers will need a recent photo for an I.D. card, which is supplied by the Royal Marines. Anyone who wants to know more can get in touch with me at the Brighton centre, or on my mobile 07810 504632. I look forward to seeing you all for the Dartmoor Yomp!

French holiday invitation

Gary and Rosie Ames, friends of member Terry Bullingham, have offered to host a member of Blind Veterans UK for a week at their holiday home, La Maison Ames, near the renaissance town of Barjac. It is in the Languedoc-Roussillon region in the South – France has three Barjacs! Their villa sits in a one acre secluded garden in the countryside, with swimming pool and spectacular views to the Cevenne Mountains. Wild flowers and herbs grow in the garden. Rosie is a great cook and Gary would enjoy sharing a glass or two of wine with guests and showing them around the area! There is a double and single room available should you wish to bring an escort and carer. You would be responsible for arranging and paying for travel and insurance, while Gary and Rosie offer accommodation and meals at La Maison Ames free of charge. Due to its rural location, this would require car hire from the chosen airport in France. Nimes Airport is 90km from Barjac, an approximate 1.5 hour drive. Montpellier Airport is 85kms, and Avignon TGV rail station is 8 km. Availability is for a week, any time between the 6th to 16th September. For further information, the website is: www.lavenderfieldholidays.com Or telephone 01277 228363 or 0794 1208665, or email garyames@tiscali.co.uk and rosie_ames@yahoo.co.uk

Viewing the London 2012 Games with audio description.

When London won the bid to host the Games, the organisers promised to make it the most accessible Games yet. Given below are details to access audio descriptions if you are attending the Games, or watching them from the comfort of your armchair.

Going to the Games

If you are lucky enough to be a ticket holder and require AD services, you will be able to obtain an in ear radio system from all of the venues. This will allow you to listen to a commentary of all the live action taking place at the venue. For full details of this service and other accessible information for ticket holders visit www.london2012.com/accessibility

Watching on the TV

If you are watching on TV, BBC is the official Olympic Games broadcaster and will be showing all the sporting action on BBC1 and BBC3, and also through the Red Button service to access 24 digital channels. The Olympic Games commence on 27th July and end on 12th August.

Opening Ceremony

The live BBC broadcast of the Opening Ceremony on 27th July will be audio described for the sections of proceedings that require additional description to that already being provided by the BBC1 commentator. As the ceremony is live, the AD will be delivered in a different way to standard AD broadcasts. You can access the AD on your TV in the following ways:

For Freeview viewers

- Watch on channel 301, which will have the BBC1 Opening Ceremony. Broadcast with the dedicated AD.
- AD commentary will commence between 8.50pm and 9.00pm.

Alternatively you can:

- Press the red button from BBC1 coverage.
- Press OK/Select when the interactive menu appears. This will change the audio to the Opening Ceremony with AD.

For Sky, Freesat and Virgin cable viewers

- Press the red button from BBC1 coverage
- Press Select/OK when the interactive menu appears. This will take you directly to the Olympics Red Button Menu.
- Press Select/OK again to access the Opening Ceremony with AD commentary service.
- AD commentary will commence between 8.50pm and 9.00pm.

For Virgin TIVO viewers

- Press the red button from BBC1 coverage.
- Select BBC Sport when the interactive menu appears. This will take you directly to the Olympics Red Button Menu.
- Press Select/OK again to access the Opening Ceremony with AD commentary service.
- AD commentary will commence between 8.50pm and 9.00pm.

Online

You can also view the Opening Ceremony with AD via the BBC website at www.bbc.co.uk/sport

Beer of the Month by Colin Williamson - Kozel Dark Beer

For anyone who likes to try something different, this is for you. This dark beer is produced in the Czech Republic and I had the good fortune to try one (or was it more than one?) on a recent visit to Moscow where it is a firm favourite amongst Russian dark beer aficionados.

It pours a very dark chocolate colour, almost black in fact, with a tan foamy head due to the dark malts used in the brewing process. There is very little 'coffee' bitterness usually found in a dark European beer. It has a very pleasant malty nose and a nice smooth sweet caramel taste with hints of hoppiness and obvious roasted malts. A nice clean aftertaste makes this beer a winner. Not particularly strong, it weighs in at 3.8%, it makes a great session beer for a perfect summer barbecue, especially when drunk cold.

This beer can be bought in major supermarket outlets and in Wetherspoon pubs throughout the UK.

Letters to the Editor

As we welcome your letters please do send them in to us. They could be in response to an article in the Review, or something you feel to be of interest to your fellow members. You can send letters by post to Blind Veterans UK Review, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD. Please mark them Letter to the Editor. Or if you prefer please send an email to the Review at email: revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Dear Sir,

A whisper has reached me to the effect that newly joined members are no longer to receive tuition in Braille as part of the rehabilitation package. Although I went blind in my early forties and consequently am unlikely ever to achieve the level of fluency displayed by many other practitioners of the art, I have always found the grasp of Braille, which I enjoy, to be invaluable on a daily basis.

I fully appreciate the arguments against Braille - cost of production, size of books, difficulty in reaching a high level of fluency and so forth, but the use of the medium for short messages, labelling and so forth I have found irreplaceable.

Some people may point to the plethora of electronic gadgetry available - and at such prices! But they all require a power source, or batteries that are somewhat larger than the human fingertip, and most of them demand a complexity of operation which involves confusion rather than clarification. To this can be added the inestimable advantage of mental discipline and cerebral involvement. I have never fallen asleep over a Braille volume, but have lost count of the times I have dropped off listening to my talking book machine.

Finally, now that we have at last persuaded public bodies to provide Braille labelling for toilets, on packets of medication and elsewhere, is this small step towards recognition to be abandoned?

Perhaps, after all, Rumour is a Lying Jade, but if so, maybe you could put my mind at rest, together with those of others who are concerned about this matter.

Yours faithfully,

F. R. H. Elgood.

Dear Mr Elgood,

Thank you for your letter to the Review.

All of Blind Veterans UK rehabilitation and training officers are qualified and able to teach Braille, and if this arises as an assessed need, then we will meet it. In recent years we've taught a number of people to read Braille to play cards, to read signs and labels when they're out and about, and to read magazines.

You will know of the success our IT Instructors have in teaching people who have never used a computer to become computer literate and use access software. We watch as they gain in confidence and learn to use their computer as a practical tool with which to gain independence in everyday tasks.

Equally it is a joy to watch as people become accomplished with Braille and we will continue to offer that support to teach them where there is need.

Yours sincerely,

Editor

March bowling club report, by Colwyn Lloyd, Vice Chairman.

Once again we were pleased to welcome a new bowler, Frank Breach who came along with his wife Joyce.

As our caller Jack Jay from Saltdean Bowling Club was ill we thought we were going to have difficulties, but our volunteer Daphne Brownhill, Iris Rolfe (wife of Pete) and Joan did 'a good job'. Roger McMullen has joined us and now we will soon 'get him into shape!' and have him calling for us in November.

Kathy Sullivan (widow) was always available to help our bowlers on the green. Joan Arnold was in charge of the tea and coffee, which is always appreciated. Joan O would like to thank Anne Bradshaw for her continued support in the 'office'. As usual we held our dinner and presentation on our final evening and the winners were as follows:

Singles:

Winner: Graham Johnson

Runner up: Alan Gibson

Group winners: Marjorie Scott and Alan Cade

Pairs:

Winners: Graham Johnson and Colwyn Lloyd

Runners up: Marjorie Scott and George Wrightson

Triples:

Winners: Marjorie Scott, Robbie Roberts and Pete Rolfe

Runners up: Pete Bradshaw, Brian Taylor and Roy Scadden

If you bowl outdoors I hope you have a good summer and I look forward to seeing you all in November.

Harry Beevers 10 questions on the subject of... the London Olympics.

1. Which members of the British Royal family officially opened the summer Olympics in London in 1908 and 1948?
2. Sebastian Coe, the head of the organising committee for the 2012 Games, won how many Olympic gold medals?
3. When the Olympics were held in London in 1908, where were the lawn tennis events held?
4. The 1908 Games were the IV Olympiad, the 1948 Games the XIV Olympiad, what number will be the 2012 Games?
5. After four rounds of the final voting stage, London won the vote to stage the 2012 Games defeating which four cities?
6. The opening ceremony of the 2012 Summer Olympics is due to be held on what date?
7. Why were the 1908 Olympics moved to London instead of the scheduled venue in Rome? A) the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. B) the death of the King of Italy or C) the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war?
8. The Old Wembley stadium was the main athletic venue in 1948. Which was the principal venue for the 1908 Games?
9. In which Olympic sport do competitors reach the finishing line but do not cross it?
10. Which six cities are scheduled to stage the football matches in this year's Olympics?

Jamie Weller and Jamie Cuthbertson keep the Olympic Flame going.

It's been wonderful to watch as the Olympic Torchbearers carry the Olympic flame across the UK. Blind Veterans UK members, Jamie Weller and Jamie Cuthbertson, were lucky enough to be two of the 8,000 Torchbearers. Here Jamie Weller writes of his incredible time as a Torchbearer on 22nd May on the Taunton to Bristol leg of the epic journey.

It was an experience that you could not imagine. I was completely overwhelmed and bowled over by it. It only really hit me when I was on the torch bus being taken to my drop off point at post 138 - all of a sudden there were thousands and thousands of people lining the streets. I felt like I had fallen into a celebrity world. So many people were coming up to the bus window to take pictures of us. Amazing. Then as soon as I got off the bus I was just mobbed by loads of families who were eager to take photographs with their children. The Torch brought a smile to everyone's face. It was a very happy and very moving experience but I was at first very nervous of being mobbed by the crowds. When it's your turn to carry the flame you think emotional thoughts. I thought of those who have competed in the Olympics, people like Jesse Owens, and great heroes like Sir Steve Redgrave. You feel part of that because you're helping to take the flame to the stadium. It was extremely special, very emotional.

Dozens of well wishers crowded round me taking photographs, and I felt honoured to be running with the Torch. I did the 'kiss' – the moment where the flame is passed. Then it became difficult to see as the sun was directly in my eyes and I had trouble seeing where I was going. I confuse people, as although I'm registered blind, I have some sight from the periphery of my eyes. A couple of times I veered off and the security guys had to steer me back on track. I remember coming up to an intersection of the road where there were traffic lights and not knowing whether to go left or right until I felt a hand on my hip and a voice in my ear saying "This way mate!" I remember all the yells, shrieking and shouting – particularly from colleagues in the Bristol office, who were cheering my name, and of course from my family. I remember the security team telling me I was half way there and that I was doing fine and then almost immediately it seemed they were saying stop, stop you're going to crash into the next Torchbearer!

The evening continued to be surreal and magical. I had dinner with my family and at the end of the meal we took a photo of me and my Dad standing outside in the street as I held the Torch. As soon as I took the Torch out of its bag we were surrounded by people asking to have their photo taken with it. Again a very odd experience for me, but so many people were made happy by seeing the Torch. I would say to anyone who is wondering whether to make the effort to see the Torch just go down and enjoy the experience. It is amazing how much joy it brings to people. I just hope people understand that life is never over if you've been injured. We don't let it stop us. Never say never, just because you're injured; your life shouldn't be different. This was a once in a lifetime experience and the memories will stay with me and my family for many years.



Picture: Now that's what we call showmanship! Jamie Weller busts a move.

Here Jamie Cuthbertson, from Bearsden in Glasgow, relives his experiences of the 8th June.

My wife Shauna and I got up at 7am to drive down to Kilmarnock, adding in plenty of extra time to avoid any traffic jams in the Clyde tunnel. We got the satnav going, printed off all our information and did the double checks. We drove down and everything went beautifully and we arrived 1½ hours ahead of schedule. It was all very casual but exciting as so many people were already waiting to see the Torch. We checked in and I was given my number, which was number 55 of the day. They gave a briefing and passed the Torch round to give a feel of how heavy it was. We met other Torchbearers and we waited until 11.50am to get onto the Torch bus – but it was a fun wait.

My daughter Megan was with me as she had nominated me and we would run together. My Torch had the gas cylinder in and all I had to do was wait for the previous torch runner to come up to me to touch the two flames in the 'kiss' and then I would be off. As I ran with Megan I shouted 'I can't hear you Kilmarnock where are you?' and the crowd roared in response. It was fantastic. Then it was back on the bus to wait for the other Torchbearers. It was magnificent and well organised. The excitement in all the towns was amazing. All the primary school children gathered at the school gates jumping up and down. Later my wife Shauna and I went to the Coca Cola party in Glasgow where Emili Sandé and Eliza Doolittle were playing. The cauldron was lit in the middle of George Square and everyone had a bit of a party. At the end of the concert they captured the flame, put it into its overnight vessel and extinguished the flame from the cauldron. On Saturday I put my Torch uniform on once again, picked up my Torch and went to a primary school fete I had been invited to. As I walked along the road to the school people kept coming up to me for photos. It was incredible and that continued when I got to the school as everyone wanted a photograph with me and the Torch, and with them holding the Torch. I've been on a run of visits to primary schools, which is wonderful as the children love it and it's great to hear them so happy. It's been a wonderful experience, especially as my family have been involved.



Picture: A smiling Megan and Jamie Cuthbertson run with the Torch through Kilmarnock.

Jubilee Flotilla

An estimated one million rain soaked people packed to London to watch Her Majesty The Queens 1,000 boat Diamond Jubilee flotilla weave its way along the River Thames from Battersea to Tower Bridge. It was a spectacle that hadn't been seen for hundreds of years and our very own Chief Executive, Robert Leader, had the honour to be part of it. It was one of the largest flotillas ever assembled on the river, with rowed boats, working boats and pleasure vessels of all shapes and sizes beautifully dressed and turned out in their finest rigs.

Speaking of the historic day, Robert Leader said: "I was hugely privileged to be part of the Royal Squadron in the River Pageant. Sir David Brewer, the Lord Lieutenant for Greater London, took his Vice Lord Lieutenant and ten of his Representative Deputy Lieutenants on Canary Wharf VI. We were two boats behind Her Majesty and we waved and waved at the cheering crowds who lined the river bank and buildings, the whole way to Tower Bridge and beyond. The Gloriana that led the flotilla of small man, and woman, powered boats was just beautiful and the sheer variety and imagination of all those taking part was amazing. It was a once in lifetime opportunity and even though we ended the day very wet, I was proud to be British!"

You can hear more of Robert's remarkable journey along the Thames on the Talking Review.



Picture: Chief Executive Robert Leader prepares to set sail.

Through blizzards on Mount Snowdon to enjoy an awfully good tea party on the summit

Over the past few months we've become accustomed to almost monsoon like rains as we move between sunshine to torrential downpours, of course without the monsoon heat. Some of our more intrepid members walked through the spectrum of weather fronts as they went from sunshine to blizzards over the course of a few hours. They were walking the 1,085 metres up Mount Snowdon in North Wales. Undeterred by the weather they walked with one mission – to have a great time and hold a tea party at the summit. Dear Reader, is it just me who thinks that sounds wonderfully eccentric? Here the Review caught up with Paula Sartain, a sports and recreation instructor, at the Llandudno centre, who took part in, and organised, the Snowdon walk as part of the department's activities.

Paula Sartain, a former PTI in the RAF began: "We had a really good turnout with John Hodgson, John Cantwell, Charlie Eastwood, Billy and Karen Baxter and Don Planner signing up to take part in the walk up Mount Snowdon on 15th May. We added on the tea party at the summit as we wanted to show our support for the Tarts for Troops summer fundraiser. The Snowdon walk was so well received that we'll definitely do it again as we didn't have space to include everyone who wanted to come along. Next year we'll make it bigger as it's wonderful to bring the mountains and Wales to everyone, something we're well placed to do. To make it more inclusive people who don't want to, or aren't able, to walk up Snowdon can take the mountain railway and meet us at the top. This year we started in Llanberis and almost followed the railway track up.

"We split into two groups with Charlie Eastwood, John Cantwell and some sighted guides setting a cracking pace as they headed off in front. I walked in the group with Don Planner, Billy and Karen Baxter and my colleagues Nikki Green and Kayla Hammond from the sports and rec dept in Llandudno and Brighton. When we started it was wonderfully sunny and we were in lightweight tops as we enjoyed the steady walk up. Half way up people coming down told us it was snowing further up. It was hard to believe, until of course we walked straight into a blizzard. Not deterred by the sudden extreme change in weather we carried on, but as we approached the summit visibility became really bad. For the last 300 metres we had no idea what was six foot in front of us.

"When we arrived at the top Charlie, John and co were waiting for us, as they'd made it to the top in just 1½ hours. We warmed up in the restaurant and had our sandwiches and tea before setting off for the summit and our Tarts for Troops tea party. Of course we had carried the cakes, tea and crockery with us for the party! Thankfully we had some great volunteers in Gaynor Hiscock, a carer at the centre, Mark Lovatt, the centre manager, Andy Warburton, our chef, and some great volunteers from BBC Wales.

"Holding a tea party on top of a mountain in a blizzard isn't something I've done before but it was great fun, even if the wind was so strong we had sideways snow lashing at us and the cakes blew from the plates. I think we were the first Tarts for Troops tea party to take place and probably the most extreme one to date. Making our descent the snow continued to lash at us for about 40 minutes until we suddenly walked back into glorious sunshine and had to go back to t-shirts as we started to roast. We certainly went through the spectrum of weather fronts in a few hours; it was like travelling between different countries. We finished the day with a visit to Pete's Eats, a well known mountaineers café, where we had teas, coffees and an evening meal."



Picture: Enjoying the Tarts for Troops tea party in the May blizzard. From left to right: Charlie Eastwood, John Cantwell, Andy Warburton, Gaynor Hiscock, Nikki Green, John Hodgson (seated), Mark Lovatt and Billy Baxter.

Blind Veterans UK member John Hodgson writes about his stay at the Llandudno centre and his experience of walking Snowdon.

It was late when my wife, Lorna, and I arrived at Llandudno railway station after a nine hour journey from Cornwall. Although long, the views from the train increased in beauty as we travelled into Wales. We were met by Carl Sauer, who made us feel that we really were welcome! A short ride brought us to the centre and we could not believe our eyes at the sight of the building. The sun was setting, the stonework shone and the windows glittered. The welcome we received here was magnificent and we were shown a brief tour of the ground floor on our way to our bedroom. We were delighted with such an excellent and well appointed room, and the view was outstanding. This experience was followed by an excellent supper in a dining room which we could best describe as baronial. It was hard to think that an early breakfast was all that kept me from the walk up Snowdon.

For 30 years I had wanted to do this walk but could never find a willing partner. However, my patience was rewarded by Blind Veterans UK, in the guise of Paula Sartain in Llandudno who came to my rescue with her article in the Review. The weather was cool, the breakfast excellent and at last we were ready to start. Each of us visually impaired was given a sighted guide for the walk and I had the pleasure to be with Gaynor. I soon discovered that Gaynor was a well practised walker who loved hills. The walk from the car park to the mountain felt almost vertical and whilst Gaynor kept talking to me, I was fighting for breath to stay alive. As we left the road the wind became stronger and had an unhealthy chill to it, I should have recognised the warning but the party were in high spirits. As the ground was a mix of wet shale and hard rock one had to take care, so I did not immediately notice the slight mist become cloud which soon thickened and the rising wind brought on the rain.

At about 800 metres we walked into lying snow, a slight covering of some 10 centimetres. Again I should have been warned as I had the same experience on Helvellyn some years ago and on that occasion we walked into a full blown blizzard. This time the snow started gently at first, falling a flake at a time, but which soon became sharp horizontal needles. Gaynor, obviously in her element, took my arm and advised that I should not slip and break a leg. Sound advice from one so young! Then the snow stopped, the cloud drifted away and I was left with a view of a sheer drop of some 150 metres. As this was much more

than I can see, I was unfazed and in what seemed several hours we reached the café just below the summit. I was told that we would go to the summit soon so I settled for a cup of steaming hot chocolate and a seat in a very cosy viewing area. We had made the climb in 2 hours 40 minutes, although it seemed a whole lot longer. We ate an excellent packed lunch and then prepared to go to the summit where, we were told, we would have a tea party. We had to go out into the blizzard to do this instead of staying in this cosy room which had a roof. Like a lamb to the slaughter I went out into the minus 12 degrees of howling wind and ice needles up to the summit in spite of the gale which was determined to blow us off the face of the earth. There we all sat down on ice-covered rocks and had a tea party. My cake along with that of all the others soon blew off the plate and it was not long before we were all laughing our heads off. Mass hysteria, I thought, imagining the same happening to Arctic explorers before they got well and truly lost!

As we left the summit we met a group of Royal Marine Commandoes, none of whom had any sign of sweat or fatigue. Not fair I thought as we walked off down the slope into the teeth of the gale. It was not long before Gaynor had to separate my frozen eyelashes, again urging me not to fall. It was actually hard to walk as the gale made the feet go where the brain was not expecting them to go and it was not long before I lost all my cool points by sliding down on my bum in a very undignified manner. As we rounded a rocky shoulder, the wind died, the snow stopped, the cloud became mist and even that cleared leaving us with a beautiful view of the valley below. All too soon we reached the end of the walk and began to tell stories of how easy it all was! We then found ourselves in a delightful café in a nice little village, each of us sitting in front of a huge plate of well prepared food. I know we are all grateful to Paula and Nikki Green, their team of helpers, our guides and carers for giving us all a really exciting but hard day out. It really is true that there is life after sight loss. I for one would like to sign up for the return next year and already I have started my training by riding on the back of a tandem, another new experience.

Answers to the 10 Questions on the subject of the Olympics.

1. King Edward VII in 1908 and King George VI in 1948. **2.** Two: in the 1500 metres in Moscow in 1980 and again in Los Angeles in 1984. **3.** Wimbledon. **4.** The XXX Olympiad. **5.** Moscow, New York City, Madrid and Paris. **6.** July 27th. **7.** a) The eruption of Mount Vesuvius. **8.** The White City Stadium. **9.** Swimming. **10.** London, Cardiff, Glasgow, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Coventry.

Jubilee celebrations

In this memorable year, the special events which took place over the Jubilee weekend demonstrated exactly the spirit which causes so many people to admire both our nation's spirit and Her Majesty The Queen. The Jubilee celebrations brought the nation together in salute of Her Majesty. We are proud at Blind Veterans UK to have the Queen as our Patron and in celebration of her very special year, Diamond Jubilee events were held at our three centres.

But first we must of course remember that we had the great honour to welcome HM The Queen and Prince Philip, The Duke of Edinburgh to our centres where they met Blind Veterans UK members, then St Dunstaners. We bring you extracts and photography from the 1962 and 1985 Review.

In 1948 a young Princess Elizabeth gave some money received as wedding gifts to Blind Veterans UK, then St Dunstan's. It was a sum of £36, which had been given by citizens of Grahamstown, South Africa, together with an unspecified sum to be used for the purchase of a guide dog. An Alsatian dog named Nell was bought for member Dan Pretorius, formerly of the South African Training Corps. Dan trained as a physiotherapist with us before returning to South Africa with his wife, and of course Nell.

The 16th of July 1962 was a red letter day for us when we welcomed HM The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh to the Brighton centre. They were met by our President, Sir Neville Pearson Bt. After a tour of the building the Queen said: "As Patron of St Dunstan's I am very pleased to have this opportunity of coming here with my husband and seeing this centre where, every year, many St Dunstaners come for holidays and convalescence, while others stay here to learn a trade or craft. I wish the best of luck to you all and to your families and to all St Dunstaners in this country and overseas." (Applause).

HRH The Duke of Edinburgh spoke of his admiration for our work: "I am very happy to be here also and to visit this place where so much valuable training is done. I have come across many blind people working in a great many industries, a great many workshops, and it is marvellous to see what wonderful training you are given here. I hope that those of you who are under training here now will get encouragement from the fact that people are accepted and are working

extremely well in the workshops where I have seen them. I wish you all the best of luck."

When the applause had died down, our Chairman, Lord Fraser, said: "Her Majesty and Prince Philip have already done two or three engagements today and have got six more to do. That is the measure of the duty they so willingly take upon themselves and which, if I may say so, they carry out with so much grace. The words which Her Majesty used and which Prince Philip used will go out to all St Dunstaners throughout the world and they will rejoice as we do at the honour that has been done us by this visit."

On 16th May 2001 a special reception was held at Buckingham Palace to celebrate our 85th anniversary when 250 members, 150 widows and widowers, and guests and escorts met The Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, Princess Alexandra and Sir Angus Ogilvy.

It was another red letter day on 19th July 1985 when The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh visited the Brighton centre to formally open the newly refurbished South Wing in our 70th Anniversary year. And now onto celebrations at our three centres, which were held to mark our Patron's Diamond Jubilee.



Picture: Her Majesty The Queen and The Duke of Edinburgh at the Brighton centre on 19th July 1985.

This year members and staff at the Brighton centre held a sports day to mark the Diamond Jubilee. Just as Grace Jones showed how to rock the hula hoop at the concert at Buckingham Palace they did us proud and showed they are just too cool for school. There were sack races with members and staff making great speed through the lounge in Royal Mail bags, bean bag throwing, musical chairs, tug of war and a cream cracker challenge to eat as many as possible without drinking any water.



Picture: Great hula hoop action from Corporal Bill Drinkwater, PBK's Tereza Putnam and Kayla Hammond, sports and recreation instructor.



Picture: A pretty rough game of musical chairs in the lounge at the Brighton centre. **Photos:** Sports day photos by Bill Lyth.

Nina Collingwood, a support worker at the Sheffield centre, told us about the Diamond Jubilee festivities there.

The facilities team had their third get together last week at the Sheffield centre for the local members. This get together was linked to the Jubilee, and we decorated the centre in lots of red, white and blue bunting and balloons. Sadly the original plan to have a BBQ, with games and archery on the lawn, fell through, due to the terrible weather. We had a back-up plan however and ended up enjoying a very nice buffet, which included such BBQ favourites as hot dogs with onions, and cheese burgers. Fifteen people turned out, with only two put off by the rain. The members who attended were Tony Stone, Eric Cooper, Peter Dabell, Dennis Cook, Arthur Sarson, Fred Taylor, Brian Wallace, Vincent Simpson, Sheila Rodman and Peter Bartholomew. After the initial chatting and cups of tea and coffee it was time for a super buffet and then straight into some games in the afternoon. We played boules and gnome bowling, which is basically skittles with gnome figures as the skittles, and had a quiz. Chocolates and smellies were awarded to the five people who had scored the most in the activities. After the hard work we settled back into the dining room to chat and enjoy a very British dessert of strawberries and cream, washed down with a glass or two of bucks fizz and fruit cocktail. The day was a great success as we all had fun and were a bit worn out by the end. The members all said how great it was to meet up and that they thought the food was superb, which was produced by our excellent caterers lead by Margaret Woofit and her team at Mitie.



Picture: Ready to start the Jubilee festivities at the Sheffield centre.

A great day as Llandudno holds its first fete.

At 11am on Sunday 10th June the staff and members at the Llandudno centre welcomed the public into their magnificent grounds to enjoy the first Blind Veterans UK fete to be held there. Organised by Penny Growcoat, the fundraising regional senior officer for Llandudno and Brighton, staff and members at the centre contributed towards it by making cushions and cakes and jewellery and arts and craft objects to be sold on the stands. There was a Tarts for Troops stand, a beer tent, children's rides and a bouncy castle. Billy Baxter and Kerry Reed, a local member from Anglesey, manned the awareness stand and Professor Google, aka Matthew Lee, the centre's IT instructor ran a 'Bat the Rat' stand. The sun shone, the fete was well attended and a glorious day was had by all.

The Talking Review includes an interview with Billy Baxter, rehabilitation and training support worker at the centre, who speaks of something quite incredible that happened to him at the fete when he was reunited with an Abbot gun from his Service days in Germany.



Picture: All the fun of the fete as Billy Baxter mans the awareness stand.
Photo: Tim Bagnell.

Blood, sweat and blisters for 100k success.

As you read in the Chairman's letter the second 100k challenge was a massive success and we would like to congratulate everyone who took part. The first person to cross the finish line was Paul Green in a fantastic 20 hours, 46 minutes and 59 seconds. Hot on his no doubt sore heels was former Royal Marine, and Blind Veterans UK Trustee, Tim Davis, who finished in just 20 hours, 47 minutes and 2 seconds. The slowest time was only 30 hours, 18 minutes and 13 seconds, which is highly respectable for such a distance. If you would like to register for 2013 the website is at: www.blindveterans.org.uk



Picture: A cracking pace.



Picture: Almost there.



Picture: Journey's End.



Picture: President Ray Hazan OBE and Robbie Hazan present the medals.

My time as a PoW by Bill Tomson

In July 2011 the Review featured a report by Ron Croxton, who fought at the Battle of Maleme. We were contacted by Bill Tomson, who was captured at Sparkia during the battle. Bill sent in an incredible account of life as a PoW, which we have reproduced in part. The full version will be included in the Talking Review when you can hear of Bill's escape from Stalag 3D and how after he was recaptured and escorted back to Stalag 3D, he gained an education in another camp. At Stalag 383 he studied agriculture, took tango lessons and was in the cast of the camps PoWs who performed in Gilbert and Sullivan operettas.

Here Bill begins:

I was intrigued to read Ron Croxton's article of Maleme as I was there at the same time. I was a member of a Commando Battalion. We were rushed up from East Africa, our feet hardly touching the ground, and piled into a destroyer. On 21st May we prepared to disembark, but orders were changed due to the deteriorating situation at Maleme and we spent another night cramped up on the ship. On 22nd May we landed at Suda Bay and moved rapidly to take up defence positions in the hills overlooking Suda Bay. The New Zealanders were having a rough time holding off the German paratroops and the glider born troops crashing onto Maleme airfield, and along the beaches. They were soon overwhelmed and had to give up this area and withdraw. What we didn't know was that as we landed the island was already being evacuated. Across the island on the southern coast was the small harbour of Sparkia, where troops were being evacuated from. The New Zealanders withdrew through our lines and made haste for the evacuation point at Sparkia. We were left to hold the Germans while this was happening. Each night we withdrew, holding the front during the day.

The history books say the New Zealanders fought their way back to Sparkia, but this is not true. They high tailed it to the evacuation points. We were left to fight the rearguard action to Sparkia. We eventually arrived at Sparkia at dawn on Sunday 1st June 1941 in time to wave goodbye to the last ship to leave the island. In one of the last ships was Brigadier Laycock, the man sent out to form the Middle East Commandos. I will never forget him for abandoning us.

Our CO, Lt Colonel Young of the Royal Engineers, was the senior officer left at the harbour. He was ordered to effect the surrender of our part of the island and all the troops there, which comprised our Battalion and a few stragglers from other units. We piled our arms in a heap; our knives went over the cliffs into the sea. A German officer arrived to accept the surrender and we formed up to be counted. This happened very fast and the German Air Force had not been informed. Three Stukas came over and started bombing us. They then flew round to come in and machine gun us. I will always acknowledge the bravery of the German soldiers who stood in front of the planes as they flew in, waving large flags to stop them opening fire. The first one however was too quick and started to open fire before the pilot saw the flag. The others saw it in time and veered off. The fire from the first plane went straight through our party and several men were killed. Being a survivor I finished up underneath a dozen or so bodies, I was very lucky to escape with my life.

We were lined up and started the long march back on the road, which we had defended to Maleme airport and here we saw a scene which gladdened our hearts. All around the airstrip and along the beach for about a mile it looked like a scrap yard of planes and gliders. They were piled up like cars in a breaker's yard. The invading troops had taken a real bashing, but through overwhelming numbers eventually took the area. The paratroopers suffered incredible losses, so much so that the Germans never used paratroops again. On the road back to Maleme the sole of one of my boots came loose, as we knew they would. The stitching wore out over the rough stony ground. Part of my sole came away from the upper. I then had to take one of my putties and wrap it around the boot to hold the sole on. Fortunately the British Army had a Quartermaster's store in Maleme, which held all sorts of items including clothing and British boots. The Germans allowed us to replace items of clothing and boots as required. Because of the speed of the campaign there was no time to prepare prison camps and we were herded into a field. There was no fence but armed guards patrolled round the field. One night I managed to slip through between two guards who were talking together and not paying attention. I made for the hills. In the early hours of the next morning I came into a deserted cluster of buildings. As I walked through, I came upon a German soldier leaning out of a window pointing a rifle at me, or so it seemed. I put my hands up and stood still, I stood there for about 10 minutes, but nothing happened and he had not moved. So with my hands in the air I moved closer and soon realised that he was dead.

I got out of the place as fast as I could. Unfortunately as I got to the end of the building I ran straight into the arms of two German soldiers who were part of a team searching for dead paratroopers. By various types of language I told them where I had found the dead one; they were so pleased that they escorted me back to the compound without any fuss. Once again I was very lucky. Back in the compound life was very boring and uncertain. We didn't know what our fate was to be. We had very little food and everyone began to have hunger pains, and dysentery was a problem for all of us.

After about four or five weeks we were herded out, marched to Suda Bay and loaded onto an old rust bucket of a ship. We were herded onto the dock and that was it. We had no idea where we were going. As we pulled out everyone onboard was confident the Royal Navy would come and rescue us, but of course there was no chance as the Navy had withdrawn from the area. The journey took us up through the islands of the Aegean Sea and our destination was Salonica, now Thessaloniki. It took about eight days and I was surprised the old bucket did not sink.

After arriving at Salonica harbour we disembarked and were marched to our first prison camp, this was a revelation. On Crete we were handled by the first line troops, paratroops and glider troops, who were decent people and treated us as soldiers. But now we were in the hands of the third raters whose only qualification was guarding prisoners. The camp was an old school, now surrounded by a double line of barbed wire and armed guards carrying machine guns. Food was non-existent; we received a mug of what was supposed to be soup that consisted of the water from the guards cooked food, with all the bones etc boiled up in it. We had to line up each day with our tin mug to receive a small ladle of this coloured water. It was vile but it helped to sooth the hunger pains a little. I thought we would all starve to death. On several occasions some courageous Greek threw bread over the wire and was shot by the guards. On one occasion a young boy, about eight years old, threw a loaf over the wire and was shot by a guard. He laid there for several hours before the guards would allow anyone to take him away. I did not expect to survive this place. People would do anything for food. The guards found a novel way of amusing themselves at our expense. At the end of the day they would bring out a large pot that was part filled with bones, which had been boiled clean. The bowl was placed in the middle of the schoolyard and the prisoners were invited to help themselves. With a mass of prisoners round it fighting for the bones the bowl

would be pushed up and down, round and round the yard, until it was empty. It was the most degrading sight I have witnessed. It must be remembered that some of the prisoners had been there for some time, as they had been taken prisoner in the early stage of the Greek campaign. We were housed in what would have been the classrooms, there were no beds, and we slept on the floor. Our only comfort was an old horse blanket and some straw commandeered from the Greeks. We were also still in tropical kit.

Three times a day we were paraded onto the schoolyard to be counted. This took anything from two to four hours to complete. Many of the older prisoners collapsed from exhaustion and malnutrition and had to be held up by their comrades to be counted. I wondered what the hell would become of us and would we all survive. I am not sure how long we were there but after some time we were moved out to the railway station and loaded onto a goods wagon. Forty men were herded into each wagon, which was bolted and locked; space was very limited; there was just enough room to sit down. Once down you could not move about, every time I see a film on TV that shows how Jewish people were herded into goods wagons I remember this experience. It is difficult to describe our feelings of being forced into a goods truck with 40 other men. The uncertainty of where we were going and what was going to happen to us was sickening. There was very little room to move about and everyone wanted to get close to the four air vents, high in the sides of the wagons. Here it became the survival of the fittest. Unable to see out of the train it was difficult to know where we were going, but some observant chaps discovered where we were each time the train stopped. It stopped twice a day in an isolated siding to allow us to disembark to relieve ourselves alongside the train, which was ringed with armed guards. First we had to collect buckets of water to wash the wagons out and then we were fed and watered. The food consisted of dry bread made from potato flour and a tin mug of what we called ersatz coffee. It was a coffee substitute made from acorns. It was vile but it was a hot drink. Dysentery due to malnutrition was widespread on the train and this got worse as time went by. Some were forced to wash their pants out at water troughs at the various stops, shake them into the wind and put them on again wet. Escape was of course on everyone's mind, but with the trigger happy armed guards this was impossible and during the journey two men tried and paid the ultimate price. By the time we reached journey's end we were completely exhausted and some could hardly walk and had to be carried.

The remainder of Bill's incredible story can be heard on the Talking Review.

Family News.

Congratulations to:

Diane Williams, now Mountford, on her wedding to Richard Mountford on 7th May in Hinckley, Leicestershire. Diane enjoyed their first dance to James Brown's 'I Feel Good' despite breaking her toe that morning!



Picture: Robbie Hazan, Diane Mountford, President Ray Hazan OBE and Richard Mountford.

John & Audrey Perfect, of Yealmpton, Devon, who are pleased to announce the arrival in Adelaide, Australia of their 4th Great Grandson Felix Montgomery.

Craig and Carla Lundberg on the birth of their son Ben on 5th May 2012, who weighted in at 7lbs 9oz.

Birthdays:

Violet Wood on her 101st birthday on 29th June.

Dorothy Aldridge on her 100th birthday on 7th June.

Anniversaries:

Platinum (70th):

Jack and Ethel Cooper of Worksop, Nottingham on 5th June.

Stanley and Marjorie Vickers of Doncaster, South Yorkshire on 7th June.

Richard and Jean Hardy of Bradford, West Yorkshire on 24th June.

Norman and Joan Jones of Luton, Bedfordshire on 28th June.

Robert and Lillian Bromley of Muswell Hill, London on 29th June.

Diamond (60th):

Barbara and Robert Smith of Preston, Lancashire on 2nd June.

Yvonne and David Roddis of Cromer, Norfolk on 14th June.

Ronald and Doreen Stapleton of Milton Keynes, Bucks on 21st June.

Ronald and Doris Monkley of Littlehampton, West Sussex on 28th June.

Golden (50th):

Martin and Janet Bryant of Colchester, Essex on 2nd June.

Patrick and Vera Knibbs of Buckingham, Bucks on 2nd June.

Trevor and Carole Knight of Leighton Buzzard, Beds on 23rd June.

John and Doreen Morgan of Porthcawl, South Glamorgan on 30th June.

John and Ann Rix of Lowestoft, Suffolk on 30th June.

Ruby (40th):

Brian and Pat Butler of Wimborne, Dorset on 9th June.

Silver (25th):

Len and Mary Williams of Norwich, Norfolk on 20th June.

We regret to announce the death of:

Sylvia Beard who died on 19th May 2012, she was the widow of the late Claude Beard.

Ethel Violet Blair who died on 1st May 2012, she was the widow of James Blair.

Mary Crombie who died on 16th May 2012, she was the widow of the late William Crombie.

Olive Doak who died on 1st January 2012, she was the wife of Raymond Doak.

Joan Donkin of Sunderland, Tyne and Wear who died on 28th May 2012, she was the wife of Joseph Donkin.

Kathleen Glass who died on 1st January 2012, she was the wife of Henry Glass.

Stella Green who died on 22nd May 2012, she was the wife of Ernest Green.

Rita Hitchcock who died on 7th June 2012, she was the widow of the late Ronald Hitchcock.

Audrey Howell who died on 20th October 2011, she was the wife of James Howell.

Betty Jones who died on 2nd June 2012, she was the widow of the late Stanley Jones.

Doreen Smith who died on 6th May 2012, she was the wife of Richard Smith.

Eileen Vardy who died on 3rd January 2012, she was the wife of Arthur Vardy.

Eleanor Waddington who died on 2nd May 2012, she was the widow of the late Albert Waddington.

Sue Wheeler who died on 1st May 2012, she was the wife of Gerald Wheeler.

Edna Waterton who died on 23rd May 2012, she was the wife of Richard Waterton.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to their widows, widowers, family and friends.

Welcome to Blind Veterans UK

Raymond Anstee of Coventry served in the General Service Corps, the Royal Artillery and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1945 to 1948.

Kathleen Birchall of Weston-Super-Mare, Avon served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1954.

Maurice Bourne of Wimborne, Dorset served in the 54 Training Regiment and the Royal Tank Regiment (Royal Armoured Corps) from 1940 to 1945.

Christopher Cardwell of Saxmundham, Suffolk served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1971 to 1974.

Marjorie Charnley of Huddersfield served in the Royal Air Force from 1944 to 1947.

David Cole of Devizes, Wiltshire served in the Royal Engineers from 1994 to 1995.

Leslie Cook of Newcastle Upon Tyne, served in the Hampshire Regiment from 1942 to 1964.

Stuart Croysdale of York served in the Royal Air Force from 1965 to 1973.

Lloyd Divers of Horley, Surrey served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1943 to 1948.

Kenneth Easton of Swaffham, Norfolk served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1942 to 1947.

Stephen Giles of Kidlington, Oxfordshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1951.

Nicholas Goodwin of Sale, Cheshire served in the Royal Army Medical Corps, the Royal Army Service Corps and the Corps of Transport from 1958 to 1965.

Norman Harrison of Clitheroe, Lancashire served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1944 to 1948.

Mark Heaume of Liversedge, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1998 to 2006.

David Hill of Otley, West Yorkshire served in the Army Catering Corps and the Royal Leicester Regiment from 1951 to 1956.

Henry Hogg of Edinburgh served in the Royal Navy from 1939 to 1946.

George Hudspeth of Daventry, Northamptonshire served in the Royal Scots Regiment from 1951 to 1977.

Clive Huntingford of Milton Keynes, Bucks served in the Royal Navy from 1970 to 1984.

Reginald Ingram of Basildon, Essex served in the General Service Corps and the King's Royal Rifle Corps from 1947 to 1949.

Joan Jepson of Honiton, Devon served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1946.

Nancy Johns of Ipswich served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1951.

Gordon Langton of Newcastle Upon Tyne served in the Merchant Navy from 1938 to 1947.

Harry McGee of Accrington, Lancashire served in the Royal Air Force from 1953 to 1955.

John Milton of Beckton, East London served in the Queen's Regiment and the Royal Artillery from 1941 to 1947.

Thomas Morris-Francis of Street, Somerset served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Armoured Corps from 1942 to 1954.

Elizabeth Newsome of Southport, Merseyside served in the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1955 to 1960.

Maurice Oliver of Great Yarmouth served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1948 to 1950.

Bernard Parker of Brighton, East Sussex served in the Royal Engineers from 1954 to 1960.

Royston Payne of Bristol served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

Elsie Scott of Watford served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1943 to 1946.

Walter Sharp of Falkirk, Scotland served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1940 to 1946.

Grace Sidey of Felixstowe, Suffolk served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1945.

Albert Smith of Eastbourne, East Sussex served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1943 to 1947.

Mary Tisdall of Salisbury served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1940 to 1946.

Kenneth White of Guildford, Surrey served in the Royal Air Force from 1944 to 1948.

Albert Williams of St Helens, Merseyside served in the South Lancashire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers) and the Manchester Regiment from 1948 to 1950.

Lillian Zundel of Windsor, Berkshire served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1945 to 1948.

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, family and friends.

Joan Ainsworth, Auxiliary Territorial Service

Joan Ainsworth of Poringland, Norwich died on 4th May 2012, aged 90. She spent two years as a continuity secretary at Denham Film Studios. She joined the ATS in 1942 and after training was posted to Larkhill as a driver before moving to Camberley as a driving instructor. She was discharged in 1945. Our sympathy goes to all members of her family.

Edward Allchin, Royal Army Medical Corps

Edward Allchin of Brighton, East Sussex died on 22nd March 2012, aged 87. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1959 to 1964. He was blinded in 1963 when he sustained a head injury whilst serving in Aldershot. At the time of the incident he had been studying to become a pharmacist. He went on to study physiotherapy, typing and telephony. He was a keen walker who had also enjoyed swimming and yoga with his wife Gladys. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

James Blair, Royal Navy

James Blair of Belfast, Northern Ireland died on 6th May 2012, aged 85. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and qualified as a Signaller. He served in minesweepers in the North Sea, North Atlantic and the Western Approach. He was discharged in 1946. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Peter Boorman, Royal Navy

Peter Boorman of Hythe, Kent died on 1st May 2012, aged 76. He left school at 13 to go to the *Arethusa*, a maritime training ship where he continued his education and knowledge of maritime matters. In 1950 aged 15, he joined the Royal Navy as a boy seaman. He trained at HMS Vincent and joined his first ship, a frigate, HMS *Widemouth Bay* in Rosyth. He was discharged in 1958 as an Able Seaman. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Stanley Burrell, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Stanley Burrell of Halifax, West Yorkshire died on 25th April 2012, aged 81. He served in the REME from 1952 to 1954, serving at No 2 REME Workshop at Ashford, Middlesex. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Kenneth Chalk, Royal Navy

Kenneth Chalk of Felixstowe, Suffolk died on 30th May 2012, aged 86. He served in the Home Guard before joining the Royal Navy in 1943. He subsequently served in the Fleet Air Arm and carried out a succession of training courses until the Japanese surrendered. He was discharged in 1946 as an Air Mechanic 1st Class. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Edna Corton, Auxiliary Territorial Service

Edna Corton of Redruth, Cornwall died on 16th May 2012, aged 96. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1942 and was posted to Kidderminster with the Royal Army Pay Corps. She was demobilised in 1946, leaving as a Sergeant. Our sympathy goes to all members of her family.

Alfred Churchley, King's Own Scottish Borderers

Alfred Churchley of Mutley, Plymouth died on 6th April 2012, aged 95. He joined the King's Own Scottish Borderers as a boy soldier in 1932. He was posted to India and returned when the war started. He went to France with the BEF and was evacuated from Dunkirk. He joined the West Africa Defence Regiment, being discharged as a Warrant Officer Class 2 in 1946. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

William 'Bill' Costin, South Lancashire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers), Lancashire Fusiliers, Royal Artillery, King's Shropshire Light Infantry.

William 'Bill' Costin of Shrewsbury, Shropshire died on 6th June 2012, aged 90. From an Army family, his father had fought in the Boer War and he joined the South Lancashire Regiment in 1939, transferring to the Lancashire Fusiliers a year later. Following training in the UK, he fought with the 14th Army in Burma and was discharged as a Fusilier in 1946. Having enjoyed his time in the Army, he joined the Royal Artillery and King's Shropshire Light Infantry (TA) from 1947 to 1968. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Eric Dickinson, Royal Navy

Eric Dickinson of Carlton, Nottingham died on 7th May 2012, aged 84. He joined the Royal Navy in 1945 and served at RNAS Culham and RNAS Donibristle before discharge as a Naval Airman 1st Class in 1948. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Clare Dyer, Royal Navy

Clare Dyer of Brighton, East Sussex died on 24th May 2012, aged 94. She joined the WRNS in 1941 and qualified as a writer, serving in the London HQ in the medical branch. She was discharged in January 1942 and returned to teaching. Our sympathy goes to all members of her family.

Ernest Edgington, Wiltshire Regiment (Duke of Edinburgh's) and the Royal Engineers

Ernest Edgington of Alcester, Warwickshire died on 8th May 2012, aged 92. He joined the Wiltshire Regiment in 1939, transferring to the Royal Engineers in 1944, where he qualified as a dog trainer. He was promoted to Corporal and was I/C Platoon of mine detecting dogs. He fought in France after D-Day and on through Belgium, Holland and into Germany. He was demobilised in 1946. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

John Evans, Royal Navy

John Evans of Anglesey, Wales died on 1st July 2011, aged 96. Familiar with the Catalina aircraft he joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1943, serving in the UK and the Far East, until he was discharged as an Air Mechanic in 1946. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Colin Fenn, Royal Navy

Colin Fenn of Dursley, Gloucestershire died on 13th May 2012, aged 78. He joined the Royal Navy in 1949 and trained at HMS Ganges, Shotley. He was posted to Londonderry on the frigate HMS Loch Tralaig and specialised as a communications rating. He spent some time in HMS Belfast and was later transferred to HMS Glasgow under Admiral Mountbatten. He was shore based at HMS Mercury and later joined HMS Newfoundland based in Singapore. He then spent some time in the Indian Ocean before discharge in November 1960 as a Leading Signaller. He joined the Royal Fleet Auxiliary on Tide Reach and Tide Spring, replenishing ships at sea. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Thomas Fleming, Royal Air Force

Thomas Fleming of Durham, County Durham died on 29th May 2012, aged 88. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1942 and trained as a radio engineer, serving in the UK and Europe until discharge in 1947 as a Leading Aircraftsman. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Anne Franklin, Royal Navy

Anne Franklin of Newbury, Berkshire died on 7th June 2012, aged 94. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1946 to 1947, working as a Royal Marine Wren stewardess in the Officers Mess at Eastney Barracks. Our sympathy goes to all members of her family.

Dennis Hargreaves, Royal Navy

Dennis Hargreaves of Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire died on 6th May 2012, aged 80. He joined the Royal Navy in 1949 and qualified as a Stoker Mechanic. He served in the aircraft carriers HMS Illustrious, HMS Indefatigable and HMS Victorious and was discharged in 1953. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Arthur Herron, General Service Corps and the Royal Armoured Corps

Arthur Herron of Newcastle upon Tyne died on 5th June 2012, aged 94. He joined the Royal Armoured Corps in 1943. In 1944 he was transferred to 3 Dragoon Guards, serving in South East Asia and Burma. In Burma he was wounded in his right arm and was finally discharged in 1947 as a Trooper. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Donald Hillman, Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Donald Hillman of Porthcawl, South Wales died on 21st May 2012, aged 81. He joined the RAOC in 1949 and trained at Aldershot and Chilwell before moving to Portsmouth. He later moved to Ashchurch in Gloucestershire. He was promoted to Corporal in the Provost Marshal Unit and completed his service in 1950. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Douglas Lamond, Royal Air Force

Douglas Lamond of Felixstowe, Suffolk died on 12th May 2012, aged 86. He served in the RAF from 1947 to 1971 in the UK and Canada. He qualified as a bomb aimer and completed navigation training and briefly flew on Wellington bombers as the Navigator. He later became an instructor at RAF Scampton and

was detached to Egypt on a few occasions. He later became a Fighter Control Operator and spent some time in Cyprus in that capacity in 1956. He also served in Malaya, Singapore and Malta. He left the RAF in 1971 after 27 years in service as a Flight Sergeant. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Harry Luckhurst, General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers

Harry Luckhurst of Maidstone, Kent died on 4th May 2012, aged 85. He joined the General Service Corps in 1944, transferring to the Royal Engineers five months later. He was posted to Germany where he remained until discharge in 1948 as a Corporal. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Leslie Malcolm, Royal Navy

Leslie Malcolm of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 17th September 2011, aged 87. He joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1942 as an Air Mechanic and served ashore at HMS Daedalus and Lossiemouth, working on various aircraft. He also served in Ceylon, India and Malta. He was discharged from the Royal Navy in 1946 as a Leading Air Mechanic. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

James McHugh, Royal Navy

James McHugh of Aldershot, Hampshire died on 21st April 2012, aged 88. He volunteered for the Royal Navy in 1942 and trained at Chatham. He served on the Atlantic convoy route, North Africa and the Mediterranean. He served onboard HMS Achates, HMS Nirana and HMS Zenith. During the Battle of the Barents Sea, HMS Achates was sunk by the German ship Hipper. Aged 19 he was one of 83 to survive from a crew of 185. He was discharged in 1946 as an Able Seaman. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family and to his widow Audrey, whom he met in Jersey at a reunion of personnel who served in the Russian convoys.

Harold McMullan, Royal Air Force

Harol McMullen of Aylesbury, Bucks died on 1st June 2012, aged 85. He joined the RAF in 1948 and trained at RAF Padgate. He served as a drill instructor at RAF Uxbridge and South Cerney, Wilts, before discharge in 1953 as a Corporal. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Kenneth Miller, Royal Navy

Kenneth Miller of Leyland, Lancashire died on 3rd May 2012, aged 86. He joined the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm in 1943 and trained in Canada and the

UK, qualifying as an Electrical Artificer. He left the Fleet Air Arm in 1945. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Edward Newman, Lancashire Fusiliers and the South Lancashire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's Volunteers)

Edward Newman of Radcliffe, Manchester died on 30th November 2011, aged 91. He joined the Lancashire Fusiliers in 1937. He was taken prisoner in France in May 1940 and sent to Poland to Stalag Luft XX-A. As a Jew he was vulnerable and escaped after transfer to another camp. Subsequently recaptured he was held in Stalag Luft XX-B before escaping again in 1944 in the Danzig area of Germany. He rendezvoused with General Patton's US Army prior to being transferred to Hanover. He was repatriated in 1945 and signed on for a further three years with the Army, serving in Malta, Trieste, Yorkshire and Northern Ireland. He served at the Army Small Arms school at Hythe, Kent and as a PT Instructor in Aldershot. He was discharged in 1948 as a Sergeant. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Michael Noonan, Royal Navy

Michael Noonon of Portsmouth, Hants died on 1st May 2012, aged 90. He joined the Royal Navy at HMS Ganges, Shotley in 1937 and served in HMS Gloucester, based in the Indian Ocean. He later transferred to HMS Newcastle, which he served on from 1942 to 1944. Commissioned as a Boatswain in 1948, he served in Boom Defence vessels and was finally discharged as an Acting Boatswain in 1954. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Ronald Pell, King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, West Yorkshire Regiment, the Suffolk Regiment and the Royal Engineers

Ronald Pell of Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear died on 29th May 2012, aged 90. He served in the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, West Yorkshire Regiment and the Suffolk Regiment between 1940 and 1942 and the Royal Engineers between 1943 and 1948. He left as a Sergeant. He served at home and in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Margaret Raban-Williams, Royal Navy

Margaret Raban-Williams of Petworth, West Sussex died on 8th May 2012, aged 100. She joined the Queen Alexandra Royal Naval Nursing Service in 1937.

She was posted to hospitals at Chatham, Kingseat and Rosyth before being discharged as a Nursing Sister in 1945. Our sympathy goes to all members of her family.

Annie Richards, Auxiliary Territorial Service

Annie Richards of Horsham, West Sussex died on 17th May 2012, aged 89. She joined the ATS in 1940 and trained as a clerk at Aldermaston. She was posted to Bournemouth and Leicester, doing accounts for the Pioneer Corps, until she was discharged as a Sergeant in 1946. Our sympathy goes to all members of her family.

Robert 'Bob' Rippon, Royal Air Force

Robert 'Bob' Rippon of Houghton Le Spring, Tyne and Wear died on 25th May 2012, aged 83. He joined the RAF in 1946 and was part of 88 Flying Boat Squadron, dropping mines off North Korea during the Korean War. He also served in Japan and Australia as an engine fitter. He was based in Hong Kong with 28 Spitfire Squadron working in the transport section. He was discharged in 1954 following an aircraft fire in Hong Kong which left him badly burnt. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

George Robertson, Somerset Light Infantry (Prince Albert's)

George Robertson of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 24th April 2012, aged 79. He was called up for National Service in 1950 and joined the Somerset Light Infantry. He served in the UK for six weeks and the rest in BAOR, until his discharge in 1952. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Robert Ridley, Royal Air Force

Robert Ridley of Saltburn by the Sea, Cleveland died on 24th April 2012, aged 90. He joined the RAF in 1941, served in the Middle East and North Africa and was discharged as a Leading Aircraftsman in 1946. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Gerald 'Gerry' Rogan, Royal Air Force

Gerald 'Gerry' Rogan of Hexham, Northumberland died on 22nd March 2012, aged 75. He joined the RAF in 1954 and served in Norfolk, Malta, Germany and Cyprus before his discharge as an LAC in 1959. His wife Gladys described him as a kind man, who was known for his smile, he was a man of faith who loved to

be close to nature and enjoyed freshwater angling and bird watching. He leaves Gladys and their children Juliette, Julian and Janet and grandchildren Fraser, Quinn and Ronan. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Stanley Rolt, Royal Army Service Corps

Stanley Rolt of Luton, Beds died on 30th May 2012, aged 99. He joined the RASC in 1943. He was involved with the Pluto Project, which worked to supply fuel by pipe to keep the liberation of Europe post D-Day on schedule. He moved through France, Belgium and Holland into Germany and was discharged in 1947. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

George Tate, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

George Tate of Ladbroke Grove, London died on 23rd May 2012, aged 80. He was called up for National Service in 1950 and joined the REME. He served in the UK with 27 Command Workshops and was discharged in 1952. He then completed three years with the REME (TA) until 1955. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Andrew Thatcher, Royal Navy

Andrew Thatcher of Brighton, East Sussex died on 12th May 2012, aged 86. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and qualified as Stores Assistant. He was attached to the Royal Marine Commandos during the Normandy Invasion and in July 1944 when his ship was blown up he suffered some head injuries. He then served in the Far East and subsequently after the war on minesweepers in the Mediterranean. In 1949 he was invalided out with poor eyesight as a Petty Officer but joined the RNVR. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

John Watts, Royal Air Force

John Watts of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 15th May 2012, aged 88. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1938 and was posted to RAF Calshot near Southampton where he maintained the flying boats as a fitter armourer. He was posted to Palestine, Egypt and Libya before returning to the UK in 1946 to become an inspector of explosives. He left the RAF as a Sergeant in 1948. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Lewis Weedon, Hertfordshire Regiment

Lewis Weedon of Berkhamsted, Herts died on 1st May 2012, aged 95. He joined the Hertfordshire Regiment in 1939 and transferred to the Commandos. Later attached to the Ghurkhas he gained a Commission in the Indian Army and fought in Burma from 1942. He was discharged in 1946 as a Captain. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Gordon Winter, General Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Gordon Winter of Worksop, Nottinghamshire died on 17th April 2012, aged 84. He joined the General Service Corps for National Service in 1946. He served with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Egypt and Palestine and was discharged as a Corporal in 1948. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Douglas Witcher, Royal Air Force

Douglas Witcher of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 1st June 2012, aged 94. He joined the RAF in 1938 and worked on electronic instruments in various aircraft. He was posted to North Africa and Italy before discharge as a Flight Sergeant in 1945. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.

Edith Worrall, Auxiliary Territorial Service

Edith Worrall of Stourbridge, West Midlands died on 3rd April 2012, aged 92. She served in the ATS as a driver from 1942 to 1946 and thereafter on reserve until 1954. She was posted all around the UK. Our sympathy goes to all members of her family.

Leslie Worsfold, General Service Corps, the Royal Norfolk Regiment and the Suffolk Regiment

Leslie Worsfold of Guildford, Surrey died on 15th May 2012, aged 87. He joined the General Service Corps and on completion of training transferred to the Royal Norfolk Regiment. He then transferred to the Suffolk Regiment and was deployed to France, Belgium, Holland and finally Germany. At the end of the war he was sent to Egypt before discharge in September 1947. Our sympathy goes to all members of his family.