

April 2013

# Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



**On the cover:** Featured skiing in Canazei, Italy on Robbie Burns Day are front: Stew Graham. Rear l to r: Jamie Weller and Mark Brewin, who with Carl Williams organised the ski trip. Neil Graham, shown standing to the right, was also celebrating Robbie Burns Day.

# Review



April 2013 | No 1034

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## Patron: Her Majesty the Queen

Blind Veterans UK Review is published monthly by Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD [www.blindveterans.org.uk](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk) A company limited by guarantee No. 189648, registered in England. Registered Charity No. 216227 (England & Wales) and SCO39411 (Scotland). ISSN 2050-1404. Unless otherwise stated all content © copyright Blind Veterans UK. All rights reserved. Printed by Newnorth.

## Blind Veterans UK Calendar 2013

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

### April

Widows' Week 14th - 20th **B**  
 Snowdonia Experience 14th - 20th **L**  
 History Week 15th - 19th **S**  
 Writers' Forum 20th **B**

### May

History Week 6th - 11th **L**  
 Watersports for heroes 15th **B**  
 Writers' Forum 18th **B**  
 Golfing 18th - 19th **B**  
 Archery Club (II) 24th - 3rd June **B**

### April continued

Golfing 20th - 21st **B**  
 Ex-PoW Reunion 19th - 22nd **B**  
 Masonic Weekend 26th - 28th **B**

### June

Gardening Week 9th - 15th **B**  
 Canoe River Trip and Wild Camping 2nd - 8th **L**  
 Sports Week - 10th - 14th **B**  
 Writers' Forum 15th **B**

### June continued

Advanced Fishing Week 16th - 22nd **L**  
 Gardening Week 17th - 21st **S**  
 Cricket at Lord's 18th **B**  
 Church Stretton 50-year badge holders reunion 26th - 29th

### July continued

Fishing Taster Week 14th - 20th **L**  
 Ladies' Week 21st - 27th **B**  
 Advanced Photography Week 22nd - 26th **S**  
 London Triathlon 27th - 28th **B**

### September

South Downs Way walk - 6th to 10th **B**  
 75th Anniversary Pamper Week 9th - 14th **B**  
 Cycling Week 15th - 21st **L**  
 Writers' Forum 21st **B**  
 History Week 22nd - 28th **B**  
 Walking Week 30th - 5th October **L**

### November

Military Week 4th - 11th **L**  
 Cenotaph 8th - 10th  
 Writers' Forum 16th **B**

### Booking of themed and Club weeks at Brighton, Llandudno and Sheffield:

For holiday bookings please contact the bookings office on 01273 391500. Or your Welfare Officer if you require care.

### To book in for the activities:

**For Brighton** please call the Sports & Recreation dept on 01273 391465 or 01273 391467.

**For Llandudno** call the Sports and Recreation dept on 01492 868700.

**For Sheffield** please book in via the bookings office on 01273 391500.

### July

Raft building & paddle round pier 1st - 6th July **B**  
 Writers' Forum 4th - 6th **B**  
 Music Week 7th - 13th **L**  
 Royal Marines Band Concert 10th **B**

### August

Amateur Radio Week 2nd - 10th **B**  
 Race Week 4th - 10th **B**  
 Recreation Taster Week 11th - 17th **L**  
 Writers' Forum 17th **B**  
 Activities Week 19th - 24th **B**  
 Archery Club (III) 23rd - 31st **B**

### October

Devon activity weekend 4th - 6th **B**  
 Music Week 6th - 12th **B**  
 Culture Week 7th - 11th **S**  
 Writers' Forum 19th **B**  
 Dance Week 17th - 23rd **B**  
 Bowling Week 20th - 2nd November **B**  
 Great South Run - 27th **B**

### December

Writers' Forum 8th - 10th **B**  
 Christmas theme week 9th - 13th **S**  
 Christmas theme week 15th - 21st **B**

# From the Chairman.

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

There was plenty in the January and February editions of the Review about the important part that Reunions have played in the life of Blind Veterans UK. I'd just like to add to this by writing a few words about the 2013 Reunion season which, in case you don't know, has already started. It all kicked off at Derby on 12th March and by the time you read this will also have hit Brighton and Middlesbrough. Before Reunion stumps are drawn in Sheffield on 8th October there will have been a total of 34 Reunions this year in places as far flung as Bodmin and Inverness, Llandudno and Norwich, Eastbourne and Belfast. Each one is attended by a variable number of members and escorts, a representative group of staff, volunteers, local guests and even a member of Council. Over the past 18 years I have been to well over 50 and I can assure you that they are always extremely enjoyable events. So if you haven't been to one yet, or even if you have, do make it to your nearest one if you can. I am absolutely sure you wouldn't regret it.

A much more recent development in the charity is the growth of Lunch Clubs around the country. These are smaller, more informal gatherings, and are organised on a local rather than a national basis, but are fast becoming popular. I think this is a very healthy trend and congratulate all those who are responsible for organising these get-togethers.

Reunions are an important and very well accepted part of life, especially in large families or in groups of people who have shared a common experience at some stage of their lives. If you've been to one of ours before, I really hope you'll keep going. If you've felt a bit shy about going and of meeting people you haven't met before, give it a try this year – they don't deserve to be denied the pleasure of your company!

"The bond that links your true family is not of blood, but of respect and joy in each other's life."

"Call it a clan, call it a network, call it a tribe, call it a family. Whatever you call it, whoever you are, you need one."

"If you don't believe in ghosts you've never been to a Reunion."

# Noticeboard.

Dates for your diary and useful information.

## Themed Weeks at the Sheffield centre in 2013.

### History Week 15th - 19th April

The history week will focus on the various industries that South Yorkshire and the local area is renowned for. There will be a trip to Macclesfield Silk Museum, a visit to Nottingham Industrial Museum and a trip to the National Coal Museum in Wakefield.

### Gardening Week 17th - 21st June

The gardening week will include a visit to formal gardens, garden centres, the Botanical Gardens and the Sheffield Winter Gardens. You can also make your own hanging basket at our table top gardening session.

### Active Outdoors Week - date to be advised

As this week will include interesting walks in and around the Peak District it is essential that you have good mobility, along with a good pair of walking boots! The week will also include a day at the seaside to enjoy a beach walk, so do please bring a towel so that you may enjoy a paddle.

### Culture Week 7th - 11th October

Soak up some true Yorkshire culture during this week. We will enjoy an evening at the theatre; there will be a black and white dinner at the centre, followed by an evening of classical favourites. We will visit some of the local art galleries and enjoy some poetry, when you can share your favourite poems with the group.

### Christmas Week 9th - 13th December

During this week you can participate in some Christmas crafts and enjoy a trip out to the theatre. We will visit a Christmas market to do some shopping and back at the centre you can try your hand at baking mince pies and making truffles. A traditional Christmas lunch will be served at the centre to ensure a truly seasonal experience.

Each of the themed weeks will include social time when you can take the time to relax and enjoy yourself, along with the visits to places of interest too of course. We have done this to allow you to relax and enjoy one another's company.

The socials may include a meal out at a local restaurant, a pub quiz and a cheese and wine evening at the centre. All themed weeks at Sheffield will cost £132 for four nights. There will be additional charges for entry into certain venues and for some visits. Partners and carers are welcome to join you for all activities throughout the weeks.

To book please contact the bookings office on telephone: 01273 391500.

### **Register your interest for 1Touch. Martial arts designed for those with a vision impairment, by Kerry Levins, Blind Veterans UK member and Trustee.**

It is a sad but true fact that sight loss leaves us feeling more vulnerable than we felt when we could see and this inevitably erodes our self-confidence. I speak from personal experience in saying that I have been startled far more easily since my sight problems started than I ever was when I could see properly. Whether we care to admit it or not we end up feeling vulnerable and the risk is that this vulnerability translates into becoming withdrawn or stand-offish.

Anything that helps us move with confidence in our environment can only be a good thing. Knowing that you are able to control a situation or, should the unlikely need arise, defend yourself, provides a stepping stone that could well be the key to regaining the confidence that we used to possess. As anyone who has been in an antagonistic situation knows, being quietly confident, not arrogant or aggressive, but possessed of a calm self-assurance is the best way to defuse any tense situation.

1Touch (CIC) is a self-defence program devised specifically for the vision impaired. It has been created by Stephen Nicholls, a martial arts instructor with over 30 years experience of teaching the practical application of self-defence techniques. The programme has already been well received by the Blind Veterans Association in the US and in November 2012 a one day 'taster' course was held at the Brighton centre.

John Cantwell, who attended the introductory course, said:

"I believe that teaching blind veterans this technique would not only give a valuable skill, but also give a boost to personal confidence."

Whilst ostensibly a self-defence course the primary application of the course is to develop communication skills, tactile sensitivity, and the investigation into social and personal perceptions. The 1Touch is unique in its approach to the challenges facing blind communities, especially those who have experienced recent sight loss.

Blind Veterans UK is considering running a Certification Course later in the year. Successful candidates will be certified as instructors and able to hold their own classes in their local community should they so wish. The course is suitable for all, the course content can be tailored to take into account most disabling conditions, for example Stephen has successfully taught single, double, and triple amputees with this unique approach.

Provided you have a desire to learn something new and are prepared to actively participate in moderate physical activity then please contact me to indicate your interest in the course. I can be reached on telephone on: 07810 820 646 or by email: [Kerry.Levins@uk.bp.com](mailto:Kerry.Levins@uk.bp.com)

### **Biennial Satisfaction Survey.**

Blind Veterans UK has commissioned an independent survey by Clariant Research to monitor our services and seek views and comments from members, widows and widowers. We will write to you individually at the end of April asking if you wish to take part. Interviewees are then selected by Clariant Research at random. As it is a telephone survey, the researcher from Clariant will contact you by phone. They will ask a series of questions to find out how you feel about our services, as this will help us to evaluate our performance to ensure we meet your needs and that we maintain our high standards.

Each telephone interview will last for approximately 15 to 20 minutes and will take place in June. All information gathered is confidential to Blind Veterans UK and comments will not be attributed to individuals. Results will be published in the Review in the autumn. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

## Blind Veterans UK Sports and Recreation Events 2013.

### 21st April – Virgin London Marathon.

**15th May – Water Sports for Heroes:** A range of water sports including sailing and waterskiing for younger members.

**10th – 14th June – Sports Week at the Brighton centre:** Open to members of all fitness levels, this is a week of training for those who want to improve their fitness. During the week there will be a range of indoor and outdoor physical activities, including group sessions and opportunities to work on a one to one basis with the instructors.

**18th June – Lords Cricket Day:** Travel from the Brighton centre to enjoy the Inter Service Match at Lords.

**1st – 6th July – Raft Building/Paddle Round the Pier:** Are you prepared to take on the mammoth challenge that is 'Paddle round the Pier'? The challenge, should you choose to accept it, is to build a craft from scratch that can travel around Brighton Pier. Previous entries in the competition have been both brilliant and ridiculous - what can members create with the help of the Art & Craft Workshop, resident 'experts' and lots of other support! The wackier the better, come on, get involved and have a slice of this paddle pie!

Create your raft with the Art & Craft Workshop and then paddle round the Pier with the Sports & Recreation Department - [www.paddleroundthepier.com](http://www.paddleroundthepier.com)

### 27th/28th July – London Triathlon.

**19th – 24th August – Activities Week:** The destination is yet to be advised, but during the week you can take part in a range of extreme sports that will include absailing, rock climbing, horse riding, surfing and rafting.

**6th – 10th September – South Downs Way Walk:** Take part in some or all of the South Downs Walk, which we will do over four days. You can choose to walk a section of the South Downs Way, or the entire 100 miles. Enjoy good company as you walk through the idyllic setting of the South Downs.

**4th – 6th October – Devon activities weekend:** You will stay in the Sergeant's Mess at Lymestone and take part in the activities at Lymestone with staff from the Sports & Recreation Department.

**27th October – Great South Run.** The fast and flat 10 mile route takes in the iconic sites of the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard including Portsmouth Cathedral, Spinnaker Tower and the HMS Victory, which has played host to the Band of HM Royal Marines, who often perform for passing runners. The final flat stretch along the sea front has given thousands of people the opportunity to get a personal best time for more than 20 years.

To take part in any of these Sports and Recreation events, please contact the Sports & Recreation Department in Brighton on telephone: 01273 391465 or 01273 391481 or 01273 391467.



**Picture:** After building their own raft the group are shown rafting along the river during Activities Week in 2012.

## Exhibition to take place in the Chapel at the Brighton centre in May to celebrate our wonderful building, history and people, by Esther Freeman Art & Craft Manager.

This is an epic year for us, as Blind Veterans UK has been in Brighton for 75 years! We want you to come and celebrate this milestone with us. We are delighted to open our beautiful 1930s' Chapel to everyone for an exhibition of photographs, some from our archives that show our unique and rich history, and others commissioned to capture the members, staff, volunteers and of course the building.

Everyone is welcome to come along and join us to view a wonderful showcase of memorabilia, from nostalgic photographs, to an exciting array of items that will give you a real sense and understanding of our members' time here and how our buildings have been developed over the years.

We are fortunate to have had a truly inspirational photographer in Darren Baldwin, who is working alongside the Blind Veterans UK project team. His prints expertly draw the viewer in and capture the 'feeling' of this unusual, interesting and magical building. All of us at Blind Veterans UK look forward to welcoming you on 4th May, 11th May, 18th and 19th May and 25th and 26th May between 10am to 4pm. The exhibition is audio described.



**Picture:** Men and nurses on a ward of the former eye hospital at the Brighton centre.

## Harry Beevers's 10 questions on the subject of Settings.

1. Two Gilbert and Sullivan operas are set in the county of Cornwall, one is entitled Ruddigore, what is the name of the other?
2. Which English public school was the setting for the novel Tom Brown's Schooldays?
3. The musical Phantom of the Opera is set in which European capital city?
4. Margaret Mitchell's novel Gone with the Wind is set during which 19th century war?
5. Beryl Bainbridge's novel Every Man for Himself is set where?
6. Ian Rankin's Inspector Rebus stories are set in which British city?
7. The radio soap The Archers is set in the village of Ambridge. What is the name of the nearest town or city to Ambridge?
8. Which 1954 stage musical was set in the Sleep-Tite Factory, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, USA and featured the songs Hey There and Hernando's Hideaway?
9. Daphne du Maurier's novels Rebecca, Jamaica Inn and Frenchman's Creek are all set in which county?
10. The fictional town of Denton was the setting for which long-running series featuring actor David Jason?

Answers on page 36.

## Lesley Garven, Brighton centre manager.

When Lesley Garven saw the role of Brighton centre manager advertised, her immediate thoughts were that it would be her perfect role, as it was everything she had worked towards. Six months into the job her thoughts are unchanged.

The Review met up with Lesley who said: "When I saw the position advertised I knew it was what I really wanted to do. I've been in place since October 2012 and I still feel the same."

Before joining Blind Veterans UK, Lesley worked in Brighton, initially as a Sensory Services Team Manager, then as an Operations Manager. Working with the Royal Sussex County Hospital, the PCT and Action for Blind, she set up the low vision clinic in Brighton & Hove. Lesley managed a range of services which included Rehabilitation & Training, Occupational Therapy and Social Work for blind, disabled or elderly people. Her skills were perfectly transferable to those needed in the role of Brighton centre manager.

Lesley continued: "Blind Veterans UK is the first charity I've worked for and I have found it liberating and very refreshing to see how things work here. What's great is that we are able to do things faster and make decisions earlier. We listen to staff and if we think we can improve something to benefit our members, we can make those improvements quickly. I think the people who benefit are staff who can initiate change and of course most importantly the members, as improvements can be made sooner rather than later.

"When I arrived at the centre on my first day, I walked through the doors and I felt a very, very lucky person. It's a great feeling to come to work each day - the members are absolutely fantastic and I have learnt so much from them. The support from staff here and my fellow centre managers, Mark Lovatt and Terry Heaton at the Llandudno and Sheffield centres, has been fantastic.

"For me it's really about making my job meaningful. It's not just about ticking boxes, it's about actually making a difference to the people who made a difference to my life; made a difference to all our lives. I want to give something back, but at the same time I'm growing and learning all the time by listening to our members' experiences and knowledge. Not just about what they did in the Second World War, but how they face life now with all its challenges. It's something I feel very proud of and very lucky to be a part of.

"One of my first invitations came from Joan Osborne and the Brighton Bowling Club to attend their prize giving dinner and to make the presentations. I felt very honoured. Jimbo Booth, who is 101, was there and I met some great characters who all made me feel very welcome. I delivered a speech about which I was very nervous, but everyone made me feel very welcome - this made me realise what it is to be part of Blind Veterans UK.

"To ease me in gently to the organisation of course Christmas came along - the busiest time of the year! On Christmas day, [Blind Veterans UK Chief Executive] Robert Leader gave me a message to read to everyone in the centre and I have to say that it was quite emotional. I felt the message conveyed the essence of Blind Veterans UK and what it meant to be a part of this fantastic family: to remember that we're here for life to support our members. I felt how true it is and I know that the members felt it too and that was very important. I feel I'm part of something very worthwhile.

"As this is the 75th anniversary year of the Brighton centre we have a huge amount of activities planned. The pamper week was advertised in the March edition of the Review and we will have an Armed Forces themed dinner in October, the month of the anniversary. We have open house events planned and there will be an exhibition in the Chapel during May. We also hope to light up the building at some point. Watch this space! I may have arrived at a very busy time, but I wouldn't have it any other way. By the end of 2013 I will be well and truly inducted into Blind Veterans UK!" Originally from Kilmarnock in Scotland, Lesley lives in Brighton with her partner and their two daughters.



**Picture:** Brighton centre manager Lesley Garven with Terry Walker.

## By gracious permission of Her Majesty The Queen, Frogmore House, Windsor Home Park, opens its gardens for Blind Veterans UK.

We have the honour to have been granted an open day at Frogmore House Garden, Windsor Home Park, by our Patron, Her Majesty The Queen. The open day will take place on Thursday 16th May 2013 and tickets cost £5.50.

A leaflet has been included in each edition of the Review providing further information, but you can also book a tour of the gardens with the Head Gardener. Please do tell people who you think may be interested in attending about the day. For more information, please telephone: 020 7616 7927. Or email: [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk)

**Frogmore House Garden  
Charity Day: 16th May 2013**

By gracious permission of Her Majesty The Queen, Frogmore House Garden, Windsor Home Park, will be open to the public in aid of Blind Veterans UK, the charity for vision impaired ex-Service men and women.

To purchase tickets for this unique opportunity, priced at only £5.50 each go to [www.blindveterans.org.uk/frogmoregarden](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/frogmoregarden) or complete the booking form overleaf.

Registered Charity No. 216227 (England & Wales) and SC039411 (Scotland).  
Royal Collection Trust / © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2013. Photographer: Philip Craven

**Blind Veterans UK**

Life beyond sight loss  
St Dunstan's since 1915

## Hell Hath No Fury, by Harry Beevers - winner of the 2013 short story competition.

It was 2am on a bitterly cold November morning and for the third consecutive day Mrs Celia X was once again seated at her parlour table weeping uncontrollably. Her real name wasn't Celia and I make no apologies for not disclosing her real surname, for she was a woman I had known and admired for many years. When the tears finally stopped she wiped her eyes and once again looked at the photograph on the table in front of her. It featured her husband John (again not his real name) and an unknown woman somewhat 20 years his junior. What was devastating was that it gave her irrefutable evidence of his unfaithfulness to her after 30 years of what the world would have called a perfect marriage.

What should she do? What could she do? These were questions which had haunted her since the incriminating photograph had come into her possession a few days earlier. It had been delivered shortly after John departed for London to attend a business conference. She must come to a decision before he returned home in two days time. What were the alternatives? Should she confront him and try to sort things out? No, she refused to be so humiliated after his wicked betrayal. Should she immediately file for divorce? No, that would entail court proceedings, weeks of endless wrangling, arguments, more tears and a complete upheaval of what had been, up to a few weeks ago, a life of apparent sweet contentment. Should she pack her bags, leave John and try to build a new life for herself? No, she certainly was not prepared to do that either. At the age of 50 Celia was still an attractive woman but to leave now was like conceding defeat and handing victory to her husband and the unknown woman. Should she simply try to forget about what was obviously going on, forgive him and try to accept his weakness? No, her face hardened as she finally came to the conclusion which best offered her peace of mind. She would murder him.

John was a self-made man. As a youth he was tall and handsome and extremely well-liked by his peers. He worked hard at school and was rewarded for his dedication when he finally qualified as a civil engineer whilst still in his early twenties. He joined a small but thriving engineering company and quickly began climbing the rungs of the corporate ladder before almost reaching the pinnacle by marrying the boss's daughter, Celia, in what was



the local wedding of the year. As the only daughter of the firm's Managing Director everyone agreed that John had made a fine catch. Not that he didn't deserve it. The feeling too was that his new wife had also made a remarkably good choice. She was a rich young woman in her own right when she became the recipient of a very generous annuity from her late grandmother shortly after her marriage to John. Their home, their vacations, their whole lifestyle left nothing to be desired. Their three children, two boys and a girl, all had promising futures as a result of university successes and shortly after John and Celia had celebrated their Pearl wedding anniversary after 30 years. Life was good.

Ironically it was just two days after the furore of the celebratory party when the initial blow was struck. After a short shopping expedition in town, Celia called in at her husband's office and whilst waiting in a small ante-room to have a few words with John, she accidentally overheard a snatch of conversation between two of the female members of staff. They were in the next room and as the door of the ante-room was slightly ajar Celia, who was not particularly listening, caught snatches of their conversation. They were obviously unaware of her presence and were swapping yarns about some of the activities of certain male members of staff. Suddenly she stiffened when she heard her husband's name mentioned as one girl warned the other to "watch her step" if she found herself alone in a room with "Lover Boy" as she described him.

Celia was shocked at what she had overheard and though she tried her best over the next few days, she could not put the conversation out of her mind. The more she tried the more it became an obsession. Surely she had misheard or at least misinterpreted what the two members of staff had said. Those accusing words couldn't be true. Despite herself Celia began to watch her husband for any change in his attitude towards her. There was none. It was all a misunderstanding. Or was it?

The strain caused by her rising doubts put her under more and more stress, until finally she could bear it no longer. After checking the internet she telephoned a private detective operating from a city some 20 miles away and arranged an interview. Following her visit to his office the next day she outlined the situation and engaged him to make discreet enquiries to find out whether there was any truth in what she had heard. She was taken aback at the cost of what was agreed would be a six week investigation, but she had

reached the point where she had to know the truth, whatever the cost.

The detective sent weekly reports and for the first three or four weeks, his information indicated that her fears seemed groundless. But then came the body blow. The detective would never tell her how he had obtained the incriminating photograph and to tell the truth she didn't really want to know. The moment she saw it, she felt her life crumbling around her. When John announced he would be absent from home for a week, attending an important business conference in London, Celia determined to spend his absence finally making up her mind which of her various options she should take. It had been a sad week for her, she slept very poorly and her 2am interludes left her pale, listless and dispirited. However, now her mind was made up, there was now no other way. It had to be murder.

The following day Celia was up early and after driving to a nearby town made her way to a large dispensing chemist. Approaching the counter she spoke to the young female assistant.

"Could I have a few private words with your dispensing chemist please?" She asked.

The girl hurried away through an office door and a few moments later the pharmacist appeared and greeted Celia.

"Good morning Madam, what can I do for you?"

As the assistant was still at the counter Celia replied.

"Do you think we could have a few moments in private please, I have something very important to ask?"

The pharmacist, a youngish man of about 30, looked slightly surprised but giving a small shrug he replied.

"Very well, will you come this way please" and he led her into a small dispensing laboratory and gestured for her to sit down.

"Now then," he said when Celia was settled, "how can I help?"

"I would like a large bottle of potassium cyanide please".

The pharmacist smiled thinly.

"I'm very sorry Madam, potassium cyanide is an extremely dangerous substance, I'm afraid I'm not allowed to sell it to the general public. Would you mind telling me why you want this particularly nasty poison?"

"Certainly", said Celia, "I want it to poison my husband". The pharmacist took a step back in surprise and almost lost for words managed to gasp, "Why on earth do you wish to poison your husband?"

Without a word she extracted the damning photograph from its envelope and handed it over. The man looked at the photograph and a look of horror spread across his face. He found himself looking at a clear black and white picture of his own wife and a middle-aged man, in a most compromising situation.

"Well" said Celia, "are you able to supply me with what I want?"

There was a long moment, as the chemist struggled for words, but pulling himself together he replied. "Certainly Madam, I didn't realise you had a prescription".

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It was almost 10 years since the sudden death of John X and the mysterious disappearance of his bereaved widow, when next I heard news of Celia.

It appeared that under an assumed name she was now living in the Spanish holiday resort of Malaga. She and her partner were settled happily, amid a small but active British community. Celia herself did not have a job but spent a great deal of time following her lifetime hobby of water-colour painting.

Together with this and the round of social activities she was enjoying life to the full. Her partner however did have a part-time job. For three days a week he was employed in a small, private hospital just outside Malaga. He worked as a dispensing chemist.

## Fred Dinenage, legendary television presenter, judges the short story competition.

Having read all twelve entries for the Blind Veterans UK short story competition I have to say that picking a winner was one of the most difficult things I have ever had to do! The standard of writing was extremely high - and some of the twists and turns in the various stories were mind-blowing! I know it's a cliché but, to my mind, all twelve finalists were winners.

However, I had to pick just one. And the one I have chosen is 'Hell Hath No Fury' by Harry Beevers. Why? Because it is a simple, believable tale - with a real sting in the tail! I became so involved in Harry's story I really want to know HOW Celia got away with the murder? How she gave the poison to her unfaithful husband. And what happened to the dispensing chemist's unfaithful wife? There's a book here, Harry!

Thank you, all of you, for the wonderful stories. I've had a lovely time reading them all. And that - as a very ancient former children's television presenter used to say - is: HOW FOR NOW!!!!!!!



Picture: ITV Meridian presenter Dr Fred Dinenage.

# Another great year on the slopes of Canazei.

The Blind Veterans UK ski team has been hitting the slopes of Canazei, Canazei Val Fasse in the Italian Dolomites, for many years. Here, **Blind Veterans UK member and Trustee, Kerry Levins from Hampshire**, who works in IT, speaks of his experience on the Italian mountain range in January with the 50 strong group.

**Kerry said:** "The ski week was excellent. I had a great time and definitely have the ski bug. In fact the first thing I did when I got home was to pay the deposit for next year's ski trip and I plan to buy a pair of ski boots in the end of season sales! I can't recommend the week highly enough. The camaraderie and team building that took place during the week was priceless and the team spirit by the end of the week was phenomenal.

"It was 21 years, almost to the month, since I last skied. It was during my Army days, but I gave up when I failed the joint Service ski instructor's course. It was a case of being 21 and fresh out of Sandhurst and slightly arrogant, as I decided that if they didn't want me, I didn't want to ski and found other activities to do.

"My guide on the slopes was Arthur Bloomfield, who was absolutely brilliant. Under his expert guidance we started out on the nursery slopes, spent a couple of days on the blue runs and then moved onto the red runs. The biggest hurdle to overcome was muscle pain, as my legs were incredibly tired for the first few days and I did a great impression of Bambi on skies!

"The sense of independence and freedom on the slopes was fantastic and on coming back to the UK I immediately felt quite restricted. Out on the mountain skiing with a guide, you get a sense that you can do whatever you want - and that is fantastic. It's so liberating to ski at speed down a mountain and it's just you, your guide and the mountain. It's not limiting in any way and you are safe, as long as you listen to the guide's instructions. It's truly exhilarating.

"Special mention must go to Carl Williams, Jamie Weller and Mark Brewin who organised the week. Further mention must go to the guides for their unending patience and in particular to Charlie Eastwood's guide, Paul 'Jacko' Jackson,

who took a hit for the team. He saw a skier careering at great speed towards Charlie and moved in front of him to take the full impact. We were all wearing bright yellow and black jackets, 50% of us with blind written on the back, but this guy hadn't noticed! Special thanks must also go to British Airways as we were very well looked after and the service was exemplary."



**Picture:** In the scenic mountains of Canazei, left Arthur Bloomfield and right Kerry Levins.

**Chris Francis, a holistic therapist from Sudbury**, made his inaugural ski trip with the group in 2012 and he says why he came back for more this year. "Once again it was an absolutely brilliant trip, although I was bereft of my coach Pogy, which left me somewhat disappointed, as she was inspirational last year. I inherited Bob Cook, another inspirational guide and thanks to his skills, I was awarded the most improved skier accolade. Bob had worked in Whistler in Canada and was a very competent guide who dragged me up a level or two with his expert tuition. He was great and my thanks must go to Bob for his patience and expert tuition.

"This year's trip was as liberating as it was the first time. The whole week was very self-affirming, especially if you have a vision impairment, as skiing increases confidence and trust in yourself. On the final day we did a tour of the resort when we skied for 23 miles. It took us from 9am until 4.30pm and I was a bit

leg weary at the end. In fact it challenged the leg muscles in all of us and the hot chocolate at the end of the day was more than welcome. On the slopes you don't forget your vision impairment, but you don't dwell on it every five minutes, anymore than you would at any other time.

"As an ex RAF PTI, although almost a quarter of a century ago, I've always been reasonably fit. Prior to the ski trip I went to the gym at the Brighton centre where Louise Timms and her wonderful team worked to get me in shape for the slopes. Craig Brindley, Sports & Recreation Instructor, looked into the physiology of skiing and put a programme together that he named 'Carnage!' It worked and it was thanks to Louise, Craig, Kayla Roscoe and Steve Mills at Brighton that I was in some decent condition to ski."



**Picture:** Taking a break in between high adrenaline action on the slopes - left Bob Cook and right Chris Francis.

On 15th December 2012, on completion of an eight month course at the National College in Hereford, Chris qualified as a holistic therapist with qualifications in anatomy and physiology, sports massage, Swedish massage and reflexology. He will run his practice from home and, armed with his new skills and a massage table and chair, from clients' premises.

When asked his philosophy for life, Chris said: "When you lose your eyesight, you are presented with three choices - either go backwards, which is no choice at all. Go sideways, in which case you never get anywhere. Or keep your head down and keep moving forward, which is the only choice. You focus on what you want to achieve. You work with what you have, and the devil take the rest!"

So will Chris be back on the piste in 2014? You betcha!

**Chris' guide Bob Cook responded:** "I have known a number of long-serving Blind Veterans UK guides for many years and can't remember when I was first asked if I would like to get involved as a guide. There always seemed to be a reason I couldn't make it. Not that there was any lack of encouragement, usually centred around bar stories - once military always military, the sense of humour doesn't change regardless of age or disability.

"At last, in 2013, the stars aligned and I made it on my first ski week. Admin Instruction? I was given a time and date to be at Gatwick, whereupon I would be issued with a blind man who would look after me for the week. What more did I need?

"En-route to Canazei, as promised, I was issued with Chris Francis. Chris is an extremely driven individual who was determined to be on the first and last lift of the day, regardless of the previous night's bar exploits. We had to get the basics first, to learn each other's ways, strengths and weaknesses and yes, to learn left from right. It's amazing how difficult the basics can become with so much else to concentrate on. On the other hand, digging someone out of waist deep snow because you let them get too close to the edge of the piste can help to focus attention.

"It was an amazing week; from laughing like I was back in The Mess, to the humbling experience of having someone you have never met put their complete trust in you, to the courage and determination shown by the vets. But more than anything it was the satisfaction gained in the knowledge that in some small way you have helped - given something back.

"All I had been told was true; the stories that come from the hotel bar are plentiful and legendary (and stay in the hotel bar), but they pale into insignificance compared with the on-piste experience. If I could only ski for one week a year I hope it can be with the blind veterans."

**John Cantwell from Oxfordshire, a second time skier in Canazei, said:** "At 12.45pm our aircraft touched down at Gatwick Airport and shortly afterwards we were shaking hands, exchanging phone numbers and email addresses. It was the end of the 2013 Blind Veterans UK annual ski trip to Canazei.

"Blind Veterans UK members have skied there for a number of years, mainly for the slopes of a natural bowl formed by the surrounding mountains. This gives wide, gently sloping ski runs. These are both novice friendly, or challenging for the more advanced and demanding skier. The friendly hotel in which we stay is a family run business, equipped with all the facilities, including a small sauna. The staff are well used to our requirements and I challenge anyone not to put on weight whilst there!

"Once again I was impressed by the speed at how quickly friends are made and how individual confidence improves as the week goes on. The guides play a major part in this, as teaching us to ski is only part of their contribution. They ensure we each gain as much as possible from the week, by drawing everyone into the group. Guides are also responsible for the general welfare of their charges, ensuring they are fully fed, watered and involved.

"At the end of the week, we all take home many happy memories. It is not only the ski enjoyment, the personal fears overcome, but for me the making of new friends to be met and kept in touch with over the year. My son, a 30 year old snowboarder, came along and he had a tremendous time mixing with everyone. We will both, God willing, be there in 2014.

"This year, a new innovation in bluetooth communications was launched by the committee. The ski club invested in hands free full duplex radio sets, the type motorcyclists usually use to communicate to their pillion passenger - Stereo ear piece and flexible microphone boom to match. This allowed guide and pupil to speak to each other in harmony. This proved to be a great tool, but did have two drawbacks. If your guide has a favourite tune which they hum ALL the time, you become brain washed. The Gambler by Kenny Rogers

will never be the same again! Seriously, Nathan, a personal thanks for all your help during a great and rewarding week."

Speaking of the equipment Carl Williams, one of the three organisers of the week, said: "Secondly, when you get picked off by snipers or boarders and vanish into 10ft of off-piste powder, all you experience in loud, crystal FM, is demonic laughter in your ear from your ski guide, which only makes you more geographically confused than you ever were in the first place!"

Tony Whitelaw from Bristol took a week off from work for the MoD, where he is an engineer and project manager for equipment for the Forces, currently working on Chinook helicopters.

Tony said: "I'll definitely be back in 2014 - in fact I've already paid my deposit. I'd skied a lot before, but in the early 1990s I stopped skiing for 12 years, as my sight wasn't good enough. I went back with some friends, as they would guide me and then the Blind Veterans UK ski trip came up.

"There's so much that's great about the week, but one has to be the feeling of speed and control as you go down a ski run at 30mph. Although you're being guided you feel independent and the confidence the guides give you is great. It's a fantastic feeling in a very supportive environment.

"Taff Harford was my guide and he really helped to improve my skiing and my confidence. As each year is different as my sight deteriorates I have to adjust and we worked as a team to deal with this. To be with the guys to help me continue to ski is fantastic. I did ski completely blind at one time, but this year we skied on different slopes and took the opportunity to get into some powder skiing too, and we ended up falling down a bit. One of the things I took from Canazei was the feeling of elation that carving down a slope at speed gives you, it is immense.

"I also want to mention Louise Timms, Sports & Recreation Manager, as three years ago I broke my arm and she was fantastic arranging medical treatment. She's always there if something happens and to laugh with."

A photograph of Tony and Taff, who is resplendent in kilt, and Taff's chilly knees, feature on the back page of the Review.



**Picture:** Private Ken Facal, Si Hayes (guide) and Corporal Billy Drinkwater of the 1st Battalion the Royal Anglian Regiment.

Two more intrepid skiers to return to the slopes for the second time were **Blind Veterans UK members, Private Ken Facal (26) and Corporal Billy Drinkwater (28), of the 1st Battalion the Royal Anglian Regiment.**

They came to Blind Veterans UK in 2010 after they were wounded in an IED explosion in Afghanistan.

**Ken Facal said:** "Mick 'Shep' Shepley was once again my jedi ski master and it was great to ski with him again. Thankfully I hadn't forgotten everything I learnt last year and under Shep's expert tuition I managed to improve this year, especially as I followed him to learn from his technique. He's been a guide for 18 years and is a seriously impressive skier. I did my best to keep up with him, to learn how he became such a good skier. Of course I also had to make sure that it was Shep I was following and not someone else! It was great having Billy Drinkwater and Rob Long in the group this year, as it meant I wasn't the new kid on the block anymore. Obviously I know Billy really well as we Served together and are friends, but it was great getting to know Rob, as I'd only ever met him at the Cenotaph weekend. Every aspect of the ski week was fantastic and I will definitely be back again next year."

**Billy Drinkwater continued:** "My guide this year was Si Hayes, who is Serving with my former Regiment. We didn't Serve together, but we had a lot in common and knew some of the same people. Si and I skied on our own, which meant we were able to challenge ourselves more, as we just concentrated on skiing as much as we could. I went a lot further and felt a lot more confident than previously. We did a lot of skiing, going off piste, which was new, and getting some really long runs in. The skiing was really good this year and I improved a lot from last time." Billy is training to run in the Virgin London Marathon on 21st April for Blind Veterans UK. If you would like to sponsor him his justgiving page is at: [www.justgiving.com/Billy-Drinkwater1](http://www.justgiving.com/Billy-Drinkwater1)



**Picture:** Alan Lock makes some shapes on the slopes of Canazei.

**John Cantwell** informed the Review that **Alan Lock, a 33 year old member of Blind Veterans UK**, was one member of the group to be awarded the Stavelly. Alan neglected to tell anyone that, over the last three years, he had rowed across the Atlantic as part of a two man crew, for which he landed himself in the Guinness World Record books. And that the following year he had trekked to the South Pole. He was awarded the Stavelly, not for the usual reason of doing something very silly, but as it was agreed that he did not use any of his bragging rights after completing these two fantastic achievements. Alan is now training to run the Virgin London Marathon on behalf of Blind Veterans UK in April. If you would like to sponsor him, his justgiving page is at: [www.justgiving.com/alanandrich](http://www.justgiving.com/alanandrich)

## Altar candle by Mabel L Haynes.

The recent cold spell reminded me vividly of the winter of 1946/47, which was the coldest of the last century. It made me think of my Service days during World War II and I have written of one very strong memory that still stays with me today.

The winter of 1946/47 was very bleak and bitterly cold. I was stationed with the ATS in Hamburg at that time. I'd travelled over on a convoy from Tilbury Docks. I remember when we arrived at the Docks; a massive cheer went up from the lads, as they were so pleased to see us. But then, as I looked around, I saw that many of the young men were crying. I'd never seen a man cry before, in fact I didn't know until then that men cried. It was a heartbreaking scene and those young men were going to Caen and half of them would not return. Enroute from Tilbury to France one of the ships in our convoy was sunk, but the one I was on made it through. We had rats onboard the ship and I thought that was a good sign, as it wouldn't sink as long as there were rats.

We landed in France and went through Belgium to Germany. When we arrived in Hamburg, the centre of the city was devastated and the locals had a hostile manner towards us, which was to be expected. At that time the city was without bread for five days and we were without light, heat and hot water for three days. Although, when I remember it now, it seemed much longer.

On Sunday morning, transport was made available for those who wished to attend church and I was often able to attend. The transport was, of course, the Army truck. The church was in the centre of Hamburg, but as there was hardly a building standing for at least a square mile, it could have been anywhere. The church itself was almost a shell of a building and looked very bleak, although at one time it must have been very beautiful. There were no ornaments, altar cloths, or kneeling pads, as everything that was removable had been taken. I'm sure that if the pews had not been fixed to the floor they too would have been removed. The altar was completely bare except for a small wooden cross and one lighted candle. The latter, for me, gave life to the church and I thought of what it must have been like in the catacombs years ago.

There were between 40 to 50 people in the congregation, all of whom were Service personnel and the service was conducted by the Army Chaplain. This

continued for the duration of my time stationed in Hamburg. However, during one particularly bleak spell, of which there seemed to be plenty, when our billets were without electricity, heat and hot water you can imagine what it was like trying to cope with the temperature at 0 degrees Fahrenheit. German girls would come to clean the billets and one of them offered to get me a candle at a cost of five cigarettes. I remember arguing about the price, as the cost should have been two cigarettes, but we had to barter then. However, when she brought the candle it was an altar candle. I must admit it was an absolute treasure and it benefited all of us in our shared billets.

When I attended church the following Sunday there was no candle on the altar, and even now, all these years later, I can't look at a lighted candle on an altar without experiencing a swift feeling of guilt.



**Picture:** Mabel Haynes in her ATS uniform during World War II.

## Writers' Forum celebrates its tenth anniversary, by Donna Vaughan.

The Blind Veterans UK Writers' Forum celebrates its tenth anniversary in April, so I look back in time to those moments that made the group really special to me and to all those who have been involved with the group over the years.

One of the very first members of the forum was a little lady who was about 90 years old and her name, rather appropriately, was Dorothy Wright. Dorothy was the inspiration for the game we play at the start of every meeting. When I told her about the idea for a group devoted to writing she gave me a copy of a novel she had just finished reading. In the novel there was a writing group and at the start of their first session together one person was asked to come up with the first line of a story, the second person then had to come up with the second line and so on until the story was told. Dorothy thought this would be a delightful way to get our group started. It has now become a ritual. Every time the forum gets together we warm up using Dorothy's little ice-breaker.

Now Dorothy came to every session she could, but while she enjoyed listening to everyone else's work she never felt really confident in writing anything herself. Then one day, two years later, I asked everyone if they could think of an event in their lives that changed them in some way. It could have been a conversation, someone they met in passing or something they read. Anything that sparked a change in them or the way they felt about themselves or the world. Dorothy sat quietly for a moment and then told us that when she was a little girl she was taken by her aunt to see the pantomime, Aladdin.

She sat in the front seat and was amazed at the spectacle before her and particularly the part where the genie appears from Aladdin's lamp. At the end of the show she and her aunt were invited to a back-stage party and Dorothy managed to sneak onto the stage where she found the genie's lamp rather unceremoniously dumped amongst some rags. Dorothy sat on the stage with the lamp between her knees and rubbed the lamp with her sleeve. Nothing happened. She rubbed and rubbed and eventually found herself with tears streaming down her face crying out to the guests at the party, "Why won't the Genie come out?"

Everyone laughed. Dorothy said this was the point when her childhood ended. With the help of one of the Forum's volunteers, Dorothy wrote her story and it was put on display at an exhibition of arts at the Brighton centre later that year.

Dorothy is no longer with us, but her story lives on, along with so many other stories written by members of the group.

Some of our members have gone on to write their autobiographies, most have written short stories and some have won writing competitions, but every month there are new stories being told. When one member tells a story another is inspired to write one.

In the 10 years since the Writers' Forum began we have been delighted and enthralled by the many published authors, poets, directors and actors who have been guests at the Forum.

Peter James, the bestselling author of the Roy Grace series of novels, has been one of the many highlights for the Forum. Peter has an incredible knowledge of what it takes to write good, solid, believable characters, but it is his ability to pass on his knowledge with charm and humility that has captured the hearts and minds of the blind veterans.

John Healy, the author of *The Grass Arena*, which was later made into the film with Mark Rylance, talked to the members about his early life of crime and how he found a way out after learning how to play chess, becoming a grand master years later.

Julia Copus had a short residency at the Brighton centre and went on to write the poem *Waking with the Blind*, which was inspired by the building and its residents, such as Stan Grimsey and Dorothy Wright.

Actor Stephen Beckett provided the voice for poems by Ernie Bowditch and also played a role in the audio version of *Waking with the Blind*.

Along with these there are so many others including actor/director, Chris Orr; writer, director and musician, Dirk Maggs; the historical novelist, Beryl Kingston; the poet Alan Morrison; and University lecturer and writer of *Sectioned: A Life Interrupted*, John O'Donoghue.



I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved in making our meetings run so well including housekeeping, the lounge desk, reception and all the PBK catering staff.

I would also like to thank all my wonderful volunteers over the years including Shirley Hall, who for years typed up notes from taped recordings; Maureen James and Catrin Edwards-Jones, who tirelessly transcribe the stories told to them each month at our meetings, and who have the most amazing capacity for patience and kindness; to the many volunteers who can no longer be with us; and to many others including the spouses who have supported and encouraged their writers to continue to write.

I would like to say an extra big thank you to those who regularly attend the meetings: George Oliver, Bob Glendinning, Mabel Haynes, Reg Goding, Edna Wilkinson, to those who send or email their work to us and to those who come to the Writers' Weekend each year: Harry and Joan Beevers, Ken and Joan Waugh, Betty Busby and to all the writers out there. You are the reason why the Writers' Forum is the success it is.

Since I began to write this article I received a little piece of extra news that I wanted to pass on to you. Peter James, the award winning author, has graciously agreed to become a patron of the Blind Veterans UK Writers' Forum. Peter's new novel, *Dead Man's Time*, will be published in June 2013.



**Picture:** Reg Goding, Catrin Edwards-Jones, Maureen James and George Oliver at the Brighton centre where the Writers' Forum meet.



**Picture:** Donna Vaughan and Peter James, again at the Brighton centre, where the Writers' Forum meet.

### **From Eddie O'Brien, Blind Veterans UK member.**

I carry a cross in my pocket, a simple reminder to me of the fact that I am a Christian, no matter where I may be. This little cross is not magic, nor is it a good luck charm. It isn't meant to protect me from every physical harm. It's not for identification for all the world to see, it's simply an understanding between my Saviour and me. When I put my hand in my pocket to bring out a coin or a key, the cross is there to remind me of the price he paid for me.

It reminds me, too, to be thankful, for my blessings day by day. And strive to serve him better, in all that I do and say. It's also a daily reminder, of the peace and comfort I share, with all who know my master and give themselves to his care.

So I carry a cross in my pocket, reminding no one but me, that Jesus Christ is Lord of my life, if only I'll let him be.

## Computer Club report.

Our February meeting this year encountered a few gremlins from the start with our Chairman, Ray Hazan OBE, our "Guru" Brad Crashaw and a number of our regular members unavoidably not able to attend. However, Ray had arranged the programme well in advance and with two new members, Walter McGreevy and Winifred Amos, plus a lonely archer who joined us for IT help and advice we had a working quorum of twelve for our opening session with Senior ROVI Bryan Kilburn assisted by Steve Murphy.

The highlight of this first session was a demonstration of the RNIB's TVonics Talking Freeview+ HD recorder - DTR-HD500. This piece of equipment enables the user to watch and record their favourite Freeview TV or radio programmes and series at the touch of a button. You can pause and rewind live broadcasts with the help of a Synthetic speech with a female voice reading all the on-screen information including programme guides, all menus and your library of recorded programmes. We were all impressed by the quality of the voice which gives on-screen information, easy-to-use menus and programme guide announcing the present programme and the one which will follow.

Two channels can be recorded at the same time and up to a maximum of 175 hours can be recorded on the 500 gigabyte hard disk. Included is a well laid out remote control with raised buttons and audio description button. With this button turned on, significant visual information such as scenery, action, facial expression and body language is described between dialogues. For more information please call 08456 010181.

Bryan also showed us the Alto 2 talking mobile phone from Orange. It has lots of useful attributes, such as being able to read to you with its built-in talking features. On-screen information is spoken and you'll also hear key presses. It has a well-spaced number keypad and simple menus. It is also compatible for use with some hearing aids.

The final demonstration was of the Powertel 710 talking cordless telephone. The touch of any button announces dialled numbers, phonebook entries and menu options in a clear synthetic English female voice and once again it has lots of other very useful features.

Finally, Bryan gave us the following useful contacts:

- RNIB helpline – 0303 123 9999.
- RNIB Media and culture – 020 7391 2150.
- RNIB volunteers – 0845 604 2341.
- Telephone preference service – 0845 070 0707.
- ROVI on Duty – 01273 391447.

After a very enjoyable meal provided by PBK and served by members' wives, we ended our opening day.

Our second speaker was David Dent from the IT Department, who covered a series of topics, which included the following: Windows 8, Supernova and Guide developments, social networking, improved computer provision at London's Union Jack Club and tiny computer projects.

We heard that Adrian Sach, the inventor of the Guide programme used on our members' computers, has created a new program that runs on mobile phones and tablet computers. It is very much like a colourful version of Guide in the way it works and the IT departments in our three centres are currently evaluating it. David also repeated his warning to all our computer users regarding cold calling scams - if you are a computer user and you receive a phone call claiming to be from a well-known computer company saying that they have detected a virus on your computer, it is a confidence trick. Several Blind Veterans UK members in recent months have reported receiving such a call. Our advice is to put the phone down. In addition to his very informative talk, David arranged to meet with the various members of the Computer Club to help them with their individual technical problems.

Once again our closing session took the form of a Computer/British Armed Forces/Musical/Allsorts quiz resulting in a final score of: Probables twenty-nine, Possibles twenty eight and a half.

We look forward to our next gathering which will be held at Llandudno on 16th and 17th October. New members are more than welcome and please note, if you are thinking of joining us, a deep computer knowledge is definitely not required.

## Answers to 10 questions on the subject of Settings from page 11.

1. The Pirates of Penzance.
2. Rugby.
3. Paris.
4. The American Civil War.
5. On board the Titanic.
6. Edinburgh.
7. Borchester.
8. The Pajama Game.
9. Cornwall.
10. A Touch of Frost.

## Colin Williamson's Beer of the Month

### Old Crafty Hen

Old Crafty Hen is brewed by well known Bury St Edmunds brewers Greene King and is a blend of a slightly stronger version of Old Speckled Hen and oak aged Old 5X, both by the same brewery.

It is a very interesting beer, spicy and malty with a hint of raisins and vanilla, which together form a winning combination!

It pours a delicious amber red colour, with a foamy head, which stays to the end and has a very decent ABV of 6.5, which makes it a great winter warmer.

Old Crafty Hen is available in most large supermarkets and comes in a 500ml bottle, which at under £3, makes it a very good buy. Cheers.



## Family News.

### Congratulations to:

#### Births:

**Sheila & James Thrower** on the birth of their great granddaughter, Lexie Leeann Richardson, who was born to Anthony and Lauren Richardson on 20th November.

#### Birthdays:

**Frances Raine** of Darlington, Co. Durham who celebrated her 104th birthday on 24th March.

**Arthur 'Archie' Cooledge** of Rhyl, Clwyd who celebrated his 100th birthday on 5th March.

**Michael Taite** of Uckfield, East Sussex who celebrated his 100th birthday on 25th March.

#### Anniversaries:

##### Blue Sapphire (65th):

**William & Phyllis Woolf** of Hove, East Sussex on 15th March.

**Geoffrey & May Walker** of Chepstow, Gwent on 25th March.

**Fred & Annie Allen** of Durham, Co. Durham on 27th March.

**Joyce & Harry Fleet** of Brewwood, Staffordshire on 28th March.

##### Diamond (60th):

**Syd & Joan Wilson** of Fleetwood, Lancashire on 6th March.

**Ray & Mackay Khan** of Marlow, Buckinghamshire on 7th March.

**Frank & Elspeth Harrop** of Romford, Essex on 7th March.

**Eric & Betty Lockwood** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire on 14th March.

**Albert & Jean Vickers** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire on 14th March.

**Brian & Betty Wheelton** of Holywell, Clwyd on 16th March.  
**Patrick & Molly Vernon** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire on 17th March.  
**John & Sheila Lomas** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire on 21st March.  
**Bert & Freda Stanier** of Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire on 28th March.  
**Eryl & Edwena Hughes** of Abergele, Clwyd on 28th March.  
**Charlie & Nan Robertson** of Edinburgh on 28th March.

**Golden (50th):**

**John & Cameron Bower** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire on 9th March.  
**Lionel & Kathy Green** of Hartfield, East Sussex on 23rd March.  
**Vincent & Irene Collier** of Leek, Staffordshire on 30th March.  
**Alan & Jean Murphy** of Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire on 30th March.  
**Randolph & Kathleen Watson** of Seaham, Co. Durham on 30th March.

**Silver (25th):**

**David & Linda Martin** of Walworth, South East London on 11th March.  
**Pat & Fran Sidnell** of Chippenham, Wiltshire on 19th March.

**We regret to announce the death of:**

**Phillip 'Phil' Boys** who died on 8th February 2013. He was the husband of Nadia Boys.

**Jean Bruce** who died on 18th February 2013. She was the wife of Joseph Bruce.

**Maud 'Mollie' Hewitson** who died on 9th January 2013. She was the widow of the late Norman Hewitson.

**Olwen Landin** who died on 4th March 2013. She was the wife of the late Dennis Landin.

**Mary Lord** who died on 3rd February 2013. She was the widow of the late Ronald Lord.

**Audrey Perfect** who died on 23rd February 2013. She was the wife of John Perfect. A professional pianist, Audrey would often play the organ in the Chapel at the Brighton centre.

**Mary Rivers** who died on 8th February 2013. She was the wife of Arthur Rivers.

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

# Welcome to Blind Veterans UK.

**Francis Bailey** of St Clement, Jersey Served in the Royal Engineers from 1957 to 1959.

**James Bentham** of Newton-Le-Willows, Merseyside Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.

**John Bridge** of Prescot, Merseyside Served in the Royal Engineers from 1945 to 1946.

**Irene Causer** of Poulton Le Fylde Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1944 to 1946.

**Louise Collins** of Basingstoke, Hampshire Served in the Royal Signals from 2000 to 2004.

**John Cunnington** of Polegate, East Sussex Served in the Royal Air Force from 1961 to 1992.

**Marion Dawson** of Wells-Next-The-Sea Served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

**Malcolm Dunford** of Truro, Cornwall Served in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1954.

**Edward Fawcett** of York Served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

**Frederick Forshaw** of Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

**James Fitzsimons** of Liverpool Served in the King's Regiment, the Green Howards and the Highland Light Infantry from 1939 to 1945.

**Leonard Forde** of Colwyn Bay, Clwyd Served in the Royal Signals from 1936 to 1947.

**Grace Haddow** of Luton, Bedfordshire Served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

**Arthur Hawkins** of Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire Served in the Duke of Wellington's (West Riding Regiment) from 1942 to 1947.

**Zoe Holman** of Lisburn, County Antrim Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1940 to 1945.

**Georgina Gallimore** of Pevensey, East Sussex Served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1945.

**Albert Green** of Spalding, Lincolnshire Served in the Royal Pioneer Corps from 1951 to 1956.

**Wilfred Gough** of Handbridge, Chester Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Signals from 1944 to 1947.

**Douglas Hall** of Rossendale, Lancashire Served in the Royal Engineers from 1955 to 1961.

**Harold Hansford** of Wareham, Dorset Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1953 to 1956.

**Joseph Harker** of Bradford Served in the Royal Irish Fusiliers from 1944 to 1948.

**Peter Hayden** of Broxbourne, Hertfordshire Served in the General Service Corps, the Royal Armoured Corps and the Royal Tank Regiment from 1947 to 1949.

**William Hewson** of Kingston Upon Thames Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Armoured Corps from 1944 to 1948.

**Ernest Higgins** of Cannock, Staffordshire Served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1942 to 1946.

**Eileen Howard** of Chorley, Lancashire Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1946.

**David Hughes** of Colwyn Bay, Clwyd Served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1939 to 1946.

**Cyril Jones** of Fareham, Hampshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1953 to 1955.

**Robert Jones** of Liverpool Served in the Royal Engineers from 1940 to 1946.

**Margaret Kenyon** of Abergele, Clwyd Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1945.

**John Longley** of Topsham, Exeter Served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1969.

**Joan Millwood** of Berkhamsted, Hertfordshire Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1944 to 1946.

**Frederick 'Fred' Misselbrook** of Worthing, West Sussex Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

**Joan Mullany** of Lewes, East Sussex Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1945.

**Daniel Murphy** of Aberdeen Served in the Royal Air Force from 1955 to 1966.

**Gerald Openshaw** of Turton, Bolton Served in the Royal Signals from 1942 to 1946.

**Mary Peck** of Lowestoft, Suffolk Served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1946.

**James Penfold** of Brighton, East Sussex Served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

**Eileen Pennell** of Salisbury, Wiltshire Served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1946.

**Raymond Poel** of Liverpool Served in the Royal Air Force from 1946 to 1947.

**Peter Phipps** of Kidlington, Oxfordshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

**Frank Pollington** of Manchester Served in the Durham Light Infantry and the Royal Irish Fusiliers from 1940 to 1946.

**Frank Potter** of Carlisle Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1944 to 1946.

**Margaret Powell** of Uttoxeter, Staffordshire Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1947.

**Patricia Proctor** of Liverpool Served in the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1952 to 1961.

**Mary Racey** of Neston, Cheshire Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1946.

**Norman Sheldon** of Consett, Co. Durham Served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1947.

**Roy Shepherd** of Padstow, Cornwall Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1947.

**Charles Smith** of Penicuik, Midlothian Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

**Harold Smith** of Manchester Served in the Royal Air Force from 1958 to 1963.

**Alan Spedding** of Leyland, Lancashire Served in the Royal Engineers from 1952 to 1954.

**Ronald Taylor** of Hailsham, East Sussex Served in the Grenadier Guards from 1951 to 1953.

**John Tipping** of Liverpool Served in the General Service Corps, the King's Regiment and the Royal Warwickshire Regiment from 1943 to 1945.

**Douglas Triggs** of Derby, Derbyshire Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1951 to 1988.

**Stanley 'Roy' Wardell** of Frinton-On-Sea, Essex Served in the Royal Engineers from 1939 to 1946.

**Leslie Waugh** of Newcastle Upon Tyne Served in the Royal Signals from 1949 to 1955.

**Peter Wilson** of Bingley, West Yorkshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1958 to 1962.

**William Winstanley** of Liverpool Served in the Royal Engineers from 1939 to 1946.

**David Woollett** of Rye, East Sussex Served in the Queen's Regiment and the Royal Engineers from 1984 to 2002.

# 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.**

**Mary Ackland** of Solihull, West Midlands died on 11th November 2012, aged 87. She Served in the Royal Artillery from 1942 to 1946, leaving as a Private. She Served at home.

**Donald Bass** of Rushden, Northamptonshire died on 13th January 2013, aged 90. He joined the RAF in 1942 and joined the 13th Air Gunners School in Egypt. He was attached to the South African Air Force, Serving as an air gunner in Italy, where on a bombing run, his plane crashed and he ended the war in a German hospital. He was discharged as a Flight Sergeant in 1946.

**Hubert 'Bert' Birch** of Handbridge, Chester died on 23rd February 2013, aged 90. He Served in the RAF from 1938 to 1949, specialising as a Wireless Operator. At 18 he went to Aden via South Africa, where he remained for two years on ground and flying duties. He was then posted to Egypt for a year before returning to the UK via Sicily where he took part in Operation Overlord and went through France, Belgium, Holland and finally into Germany with a mobile signals unit with 2nd Tactical Air Force. He was posted to RAF Hucknall and demobilised as a Corporal in 1949.

**Alan Breeze** of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire died on 3rd February 2013, aged 75. He joined the Coldstream Guards in 1958 and Served in England and Germany. He was discharged in 1965.

**Ronald 'Ron' Burbridge** of Tenterden, Kent died on 4th March 2013, aged 98. He joined the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in 1940 and was in Coventry when it was bombed. He transferred to the RAOC in 1941 and finally settled in the RAMC in 1942. He trained as a nurse and Served in London, Belfast and Caterham, mainly dealing with casualties of the Blitz. He was discharged in 1946.

**Shaun Canham** of Camberley, Surrey died on 16th February 2013, aged 43. He Served in the Royal Navy from 1990 to 1997, leaving as an Able Seaman. Specialising in mine warfare he Served in Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Senegal,

Russia, Brazil and the Middle East whilst on board HMS Herald. He also Served in Europe, South America and the Persian Gulf.

**Albert 'Bill' Cole** of Clevedon, Avon died on 7th November 2012, aged 80. He Served in the Royal Military Police from 1950 to 1952 and he was initially posted to Trieste followed by Egypt. He was later posted to Cyprus where he completed his Service as a Lance Corporal.

**Lewis Dale** of Norfolk died on 24th February 2013, aged 96. He joined the Hertfordshire Regiment in 1940 and went into the Intelligence section of his Battalion. He Served in Singapore and was captured by the Japanese in 1942. He worked on the Burma railway and was then shipped to Japan to work in the shipyards. He was in Nagasaki when the atomic bomb dropped. He returned home and was discharged in April 1946.

**Leslie 'Les' Dean** of Reading, Berkshire died on 4th November 2012, aged 85. He joined the Royal Navy in 1944, specialising as a telegraphist. He Served on board HMS Cossack in the Pacific and HMS Adamant, followed by HMS Vengeance in the Southern Atlantic then HMS Peacock in the Mediterranean. His last ship before discharge in 1956 as an Acting Leading Seaman was HMS Wakeful.

**Albert Dickinson** of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 2nd March 2013, aged 101. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1940 and was stationed on the East Coast defences in Kent during the Battle of Britain. He landed on D-Day and fought through to Germany before returning to the UK for discharge as a Company Quartermaster Sergeant in 1946.

**David Faircloth** of Reigate, Surrey died on 22nd February 2013, aged 95. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1942, trained as a radiographer and Served at the military hospital in Malta during the war. He was discharged as a Sergeant in 1946.

**Norman Gavin** of East Grinstead, West Sussex died on 18th February 2013, aged 90. He Served in the RAF from 1941 in the UK, Middle East, Syria and Italy. He was discharged as a Leading Aircraftman.

**Edith Gray** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 5th February 2013, aged 92. In 1940 she was commissioned in the WRAC Serving in Palestine, Egypt and was discharged in Cyprus as a Lieutenant in 1950.

**Douglas Haig** of Liverpool died on 6th November 2012, aged 93. He joined the Royal Army Pay Corps in 1939, transferring to the RASC he was posted to the Middle East as a Supply Clerk in the HQ. He was then with division transport for three years in Beirut before discharge as a Corporal in 1946.

**Basil Hancock** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 30th January 2013, aged 88. He joined the General Service Corps in 1945, transferring to the Royal Engineers. He Served in Egypt, UK, Germany and Aden, eventually retiring from a full career as a Warrant Officer First Class in 1967.

**Charles 'Charlie' Hanwell** of Hove, East Sussex died on 25th November 2012, aged 86. Following training he joined the Royal Leicestershire Regiment in 1944, fighting in Germany and Holland on the front line. He Served in the Highland Light Infantry from 1945 to 1948. He then re-enlisted in the Royal Leicestershire Regiment and Served in Palestine before final discharge in 1952 as a Corporal.

**Reginald Haywood** of Exeter died on 28th January 2013, aged 90. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1942 and Served in Burma, India, French Indo-China and Tripoli. He was discharged in 1946.

**Elsie Hunter** of Kirkcaldy, Fife died on 25th January 2013, aged 89. She joined the ATS in 1941 and trained in Inverness with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. She Served in London during the Blitz with General Montgomery and following D-Day she went to Belgium and Germany. She worked in Intelligence and Echelon before being discharged in 1946 as a Lance Corporal.

**David Jones** of Stafford, Staffordshire died on 20th December 2012, aged 84. He joined the RAF in 1946 for the 'duration of the present emergency', the forerunner of National Service and qualified as an armourer. He worked on Lancaster bombers and Served at various UK air stations. He was discharged as an Aircraftman Second Class in 1949.

**Horace Jones** of Shrewsbury, Shropshire died on 15th February 2013, aged 92. He joined the South Staffordshire Regiment in 1940 and transferred to the RAOC in 1941. In 1942 he moved to the REME and was posted to North Africa in support at El Alamein. He moved to Iraq and Egypt before discharge in 1946.

**Joseph King** of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 6th November 2012, aged 95. He Served in the RASC from 1940 to 1946, leaving as a driver. He Served in the Western Desert and Palestine before moving to Cairo and was then deployed to Greece. He was made a POW and taken to Austria in April 1941.

**Ronald Lord** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 18th October 2012, aged 84. He joined the Coldstream Guards in 1946 and Served in the UK, Palestine, Cyprus and Tripoli. He was discharged in 1952 as a Guardsman.

**Joseph 'Tony' O'Donnell** of Welling, Kent died on 12th February 2013, aged 80. He Served in the Royal Military Police in Libya, Egypt, Cyprus and Holland from 1950 to 1952, leaving as a Lance Corporal.

**Leslie Perkins** of Redcar, Cleveland died on 21st February 2013, aged 91. He Served in the RAF from 1946 to 1948 in the UK and Germany. He was discharged as an Aircraftman 1st Class.

**Arthur Pilgrim** of Kesgrave, Ipswich died on 10th February 2013, aged 93. He Served in the Royal Artillery from 1940 and fought at El Alamein in North Africa and through Sicily and Italy. He was sent to Greece following the Communist uprising after the war and was discharged in 1946 as an Acting Sergeant.

**Leonard Rees** of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 15th February 2013, aged 89. He joined the General Service Corps in 1942, before transferring to the RAC 49th Royal Tank Regiment in 1943. He landed in Normandy and fought through to Germany with his Regiment before being discharged in 1947.

**Douglas Scadden** of Maidstone, Kent died on 15th February 2013, aged 90. He Served in the Royal Navy from 1941 to 1946. He was posted to the United States, travelling to New York in the Queen Mary. He was involved with aircraft maintenance for a Squadron training air crews in the West Indies. He was discharged as an Air Fitter (Electrical) in 1946.

**Charles 'Ron' Scaife** died on 31st March 2012, aged 94. He joined the RASC (TA) in 1937, specialising as a driver. In 1941 he transferred to the Royal Military Police and spent four years of his Service in Egypt. He spent some time in Libya and was demobilised in 1951 as a Lance Corporal.

**Sylvia Schofield** of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 25th February 2013, aged 92. She joined the Women's Royal Air Force in 1942 and Served at Cheadle Hulme, Compton Bassett and RAF Cranwell. She was discharged in 1945 as an Aircraftwoman 1st Class.

**William 'Bill' Sibley** of Leigh on Sea, Essex died on 4th February 2012, aged 84. He was underage when he joined the Merchant Navy in 1944, Serving until 1947. He then joined the Metropolitan Police and did 35 years as part of the

Royal Protection Squad; his proud moment was dancing with the Queen at a Balmoral staff party.

**Joseph 'Garnet' Simmonds** of Haywards Heath, West Sussex died on 3rd March 2013, aged 99. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1940, specialising in communications and was deployed to North Africa. He was then posted to Italy via Salerno. He went to France on D+2 and moved through Belgium, Holland and finally Germany. He was discharged as a Bombardier in 1946.

**Peter Spencer** of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 2nd November 2012, aged 82. He Served in the Royal Navy as a Petty Officer/Engineering Mechanic from 1948 to 1955. He Served on board the aircraft carriers HMS Implacable and Indomitable and the Battleship HMS Anson.

**Arthur Steemson** of Ravenshead, Nottingham died on 24th February 2013, aged 102. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1940, Serving in the Far East. On evacuation from Singapore his ship fell foul of the Japanese and he was taken PoW. Mr Steemson was kept in Indonesia from 1943 to 1945. Following repatriation to the UK he was discharged as a Gunner in 1946.

**Harry Streather** of Barrow in Furness, Cumbria died on 13th February 2013, aged 91. He joined the Royal Signals in 1941 and from 1943 Served in Algiers, Tunisia and Morocco. He was later deployed to Italy via Naples, followed by India. He was demobbed in 1946 as a Signaller.

**Philip Teacher** of Watford, died on 18th February 2013, aged 99. He enlisted into the RASC in 1940 and Served in Northern Ireland for three years before taking part in the Normandy Landings. His unit carried bridging equipment for the Royal Engineers. He Served in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. He was discharged in 1946, leaving as a Company Quarter Master Sergeant.

**Reginald 'Reg' Tunncliffe** of Swadlincote, Derbyshire died on 17th February 2013, aged 97. He joined the Army in 1940 and was posted to the Pioneer Corps, later joining Montgomery's 21st Army in France. He was wounded in action and was medically discharged as a Corporal in 1946.

**Albert Williams** of St Helen's, Merseyside died on 1st March 2013, aged 82. He initially Served in the Manchester Regiment from 1948 before transferring to the South Lancashire Regiment. He Served in Germany and was discharged as a Private in 1950.





**Picture: Taff Harford and Tony Whitelaw skiing on Robbie Burns Day.**