

November 2013

Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



On the cover: White Water Rafting at the Lee Valley White Water centre during the Brighton Activity Week. They are left: Craig Brindley, Steve Mills, Dave Blagg and right: Lorraine Chambers, Steve Burchett, Steve Parnell, Ian Patterson and front Sue Eyles.

Review



Nov 2013 | No 1041



Contact: Review Editor, Catherine Goodier 020 7616 8367
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Blind Veterans UK Calendar

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

November

Military Week 4th - 11th **L**

Cenotaph 8th - 10th

Writers' Forum 16th **B**

Dance Week 17th - 23rd **B**

December

Writers' Forum 8th - 10th **B**

Christmas theme week 9th - 13th **S**

Christmas theme week 15th - 21st **B**

Patron: Her Majesty the Queen

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From the Chairman.

Your message from Major General Andrew Keeling, CB, CBE, RM. I'm just back from the Sheffield Reunion, the last to be held in 2013, and can safely report that it was, as expected, a most enjoyable gathering. Apart from anything else I was able to announce to all present that the eldest member there had just celebrated his 100th birthday, while the youngest, a casualty from Afghanistan in 2007, was 30. This 70 year age gap is, I feel, one of the very special features of our remarkable Blind Veterans UK family. The occasion also reminded me that a huge amount of painstaking work has gone into the 35 very successful Reunions we have held this year around the country. Most of this has been done by the Welfare Officers and their support staff out there in the field, backed up by a small and very diligent team in Harcourt Street. On behalf of all those who have attended and enjoyed the Reunions, many, many thanks to all you organisers.

We will shortly be turning our minds to our annual Remembrance ceremonies. This is, of course, a very significant time of year as we cast our minds back to events in the past, some quite recent and some many years ago. As we privately recall those who didn't make it back home, or who did come back but who have crossed the bar since, we do so knowing that those around us and those we care about most are doing exactly the same thing at exactly the same time. This is a very powerful experience. In my 18 years as a Trustee for this charity I have paraded and marched with Blind Veterans UK at the Cenotaph in London on at least 15 occasions, and I have always found it a most thought-provoking and rewarding experience. Like many of you I was a war baby. My father, who I didn't meet until I was three, was one of the last off the beach at Dunkirk, was in the 1st Army in North Africa and subsequently fought at the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy. I grew up in the shadow of war, and I have always been very aware of the sacrifices that were made for this country. I look forward to paying my respects again, alongside many of you in London, to those who have given their all in this cause, wherever and whenever that may have been. I do know that 1968 is the only year since World War II in which no British Service-person was killed on operations. We have a lot of people to remember and to be thankful for.

I found the articles in the October Review concerning Alan Saunders at Dieppe in 1942 and Syd Tavender as a Far East POW for three years incredibly moving. To me they represent an enormous amount of raw courage, determination, humility and brilliant good old fashioned Britishness, and while I am well aware that many of you have similar tales to tell, I am hugely grateful to Alan and Syd for sharing their experiences with us. We are all the richer for their words.

Noticeboard.

Dates for your diary and useful information.

Founder's Day Awards 2014.

You have until 30th November 2013 to make your nominations for the 2014 Founder's Day Awards. The 2014 Founder's Day Awards ceremony will be held on 26th March at our Sheffield Centre, which commemorates the date in 1915 when the first 16 war blinded ex-Servicemen entered the new training centre at St Dunstan's Lodge in London's Regent's Park.

This annual ceremony celebrates the special achievements of the members, staff and volunteers of Blind Veterans UK. The recipients of the 2013 Founder's Day Awards were featured in the May Review. Do you feel you know an equally commendable candidate?

The categories are:

- i) **Community Award** for the best contribution to their local community or the family of Blind Veterans UK by a member, spouse, widow or widower.
- ii) **Training Achievement Award** for the best novice on learning new skills – members only.
- iii) **Creative Art Award** will recognise endeavour in a creative activity and encompass art, handicrafts, sculpture and music. If practical, an example should be sent with the proposal form. If not practical, then please send a photograph – members only.
- iv) **Sports Person of the Year Award** will celebrate an exceptional sporting achievement during the award year – members only.
- v) **Outstanding Achievement Award** is made to a member who has achieved an outstanding level of independence via their participation in activities promoted or provided through and by Blind Veterans UK – members only.
- vi) **Volunteer of the Year (aged 25 or over)** to a volunteer who has shown an exceptional contribution to Blind Veterans UK to the benefit of our members – registered volunteer only.

vii) **Young Volunteer of the Year** for a young person aged 24 or under, where they have used their enthusiasm and dedication to achieve positive things with Blind Veterans UK members or to be an inspirational fundraiser – registered volunteer only.

viii) **Group/Team Volunteer of the Year** to a team or group of volunteers who have together worked with each other to create a positive experience that benefits our members or to an inspirational fundraising group – registered volunteers only.

ix) **Chairman's Commendations** for exceptional staff achievement. Nominated by line managers.

For guidelines and proposal forms for the above, please contact Barbara Sweeney, PA to Welfare Services, Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1H 4HD. Or you can contact her on telephone: 020 7616 7922, or email barbara.sweeney@blindveterans.org.uk

Nominations are treated in confidence and discussed by the Selection Committee in January. Nominees are not informed they have been nominated until the Selection Committee has reached its decision. Closing date 30th November.

If you would like to change your Review format.

If you would like to change the format you receive the Review in, please contact Catherine Goodier on telephone: 020 7616 8367 or email: revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

The Review is available as a large print magazine, as an MP3CD, on USB stick, by email and in Braille.

If you are a Sonata user you can listen to the Review through The British Wireless for the Blind Fund.

Calling all D-Day Veterans.

As we prepare to mark the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings in June 2014 please do contact Catherine Goodier of the Review if you took part in the D-Day Landings. You can telephone Catherine on: 020 7616 8367 or email: revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Time Travel - Blind Veterans UK Short Story Competition 2014.

They say everyone has a novel in them, but for the 2014 Blind Veterans UK Review short story competition we want to find out how many people have a great short story in them. We invite you to send a fictional work on the theme of time travel. So please get super creative and get writing.

All submissions should be an original work and not previously published. The competition is open to members, their spouses, widows or widowers. The judge's decision will be final.

The winning story will be published in the Review in 2014.

Please follow these steps when submitting entries for the competition:

- 1) Entries should be typewritten and should not exceed 1,500 words.
- 2) Only one submission per person.
- 3) Entries must be received by the Editor, Blind Veterans UK Review, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD by 17th January 2014.

Please contact the Review with suggestions for the January 2014 WWI edition.

Looking ahead to 2014, to mark the centenary of the outbreak of WWI, there will be a special edition of the Review in January.

If you have any suggestions for stories or would like to contribute, please do contact Catherine Goodier of the Review. Perhaps a member of your family fought in WWI or they may have been a VAD; they do not need to have been a First World War member of Blind Veterans UK. But if they were please do get in touch.

Please contact Catherine Goodier on telephone: 020 7616 8367 or email: revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Blind Veterans UK is awarded £1 million.

Blind Veterans UK is delighted to have been awarded £1 million from the Armed Forces Covenant LIBOR Fund towards our vital work. The money will be invested in a major refurbishment of the Brighton centre.

Chancellor George Osborne said: "I am delighted that we have been able to provide this support to the Armed Forces charities, those that demonstrate the best of British values."

In 2012, the Chancellor allocated £35 million to the MOD from fines levied on banks for attempting to manipulate the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor) benchmark for interest rates. The intention of the Libor Fund is to support the two key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, which are that the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services, and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

Do you want to run the London Marathon in 2014?



We have limited places available to members. If you would like to run please contact the Sports Department at the Brighton Centre 01273 391467



Blind Veterans UK London Christmas concert.

Tickets for our London Christmas concert are now on sale. The concert will take place at Marylebone Parish Church from 7pm on Thursday 5th December 2013. Tickets, which are priced from £15, are available online at www.blindveterans.org.uk/carolconcert or you can telephone: 020 7616 7927 to request a ticket order form to pay by cheque, or to buy tickets over the phone.

Music will come from PHILSAVONIA - The Savage Club Brass Ensemble directed by Stephen Henderson and featuring soloist Emily Burnett. The readers are: Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles KCMG LVO, actress Jane Asher, actor Lance Pierson, and Blind Veterans UK Membership Officer, Simon Brown.

Remembering loved ones at our centres this Christmas.

If you visit our Brighton, Llandudno or Sheffield centres during December you will find our Christmas trees adorned with remembrance tributes to lost loved ones. We are inviting you to place a tribute on the trees in memory of someone who was dear to you. Christmas can be a hard time for people who are on their own and for those who have lost someone they love. The tributes on our trees are a way to remember them. The tributes can have a message written on the back and can then be hung on the centre Christmas trees. We hope that this will bring a small amount of peace and comfort to those who are missing someone special this Christmas. Tributes are available from the reception desk at each centre for a small donation. If you can't get to a centre, but would like to include a tribute to your loved one, please contact Kim Cavanagh-Martin on telephone: 020 7616 7953.

Order your VIP diary and address book for 2014.

It's the time of year to order your 2014 VIP diary and address book.

An A4 VIP address book is priced at £8.95.

An A4 VIP telephone book is priced at £8.95.

An A3 VIP wall calendar is priced at £4.95.

An A6 VIP pocket diary is priced at £4.95.

An A4 VIP desk diary is priced at £7.95.

Please contact Nathan Clements in Procurement on telephone: 01273 391441 to discuss your requirement and payment processes.

Join the Blind Veterans UK Weekly Lottery!

The Weekly Lottery is a new way of raising funds so that we can continue to offer lifelong support to all of our members and their families. We hope it is one you will enjoy taking part in too!

For just £1 a week you could help support Blind Veterans UK and be in with a chance of winning cash prizes. Due to rules and restrictions - residents of Northern Ireland are not eligible to play.

The fantastic cash prizes that you could win are:

£500 cash

£100 cash

£50 cash for two winners

£10 for 30 winners

Four times a year you will be entered into our Superdraw as a bonus where the prize fund is a whopping £15,000!

How it works:

Each entry costs just £1. You can play more than once so the more times you enter, the more chances you have to win.

To enter, call our lottery helpline or request an entry form to complete your details.

You can pay by cheque or credit/debit card and choose for your direct debit payment to be taken monthly or annually.

Once your payment details have been confirmed, our computer will generate a unique number for every one of your entries – you'll receive confirmation of entry and your numbers by post.

Lines only cost £1 and remember the more times you play, the greater your chance of winning!

For further information you can call our lottery helpline on telephone: 0845 6016 936 or email: enquiries@blindveterans.org.uk

Harry Beevers's 10 questions on the subject of The Netherlands.

1. Who is the current Dutch monarch?
2. What is the Dutch capital that is also the largest city?
3. The name of which side-dish comes from the Dutch for cabbage salad?
4. Which Dutch city is the busiest port in Europe and from 1962 until 2004 was the busiest in the world?
5. Which disease was first recognised in the Netherlands in the year 1919 and caused much havoc, claiming millions of victims in the 20th century?
6. The Anne Frank house at Prinsengracht 263 to 265 is in which city?
7. What in the Netherlands is a polder?
8. The Netherlands has maritime borders with which three countries?
9. In which city was the football club Feyenoord founded in the year 1908?
10. What is the name of the 1977 film featuring the historic telling of the failed attempt to capture several bridges to Germany in World War II in a campaign in the Netherlands called Operation Market Garden.

Answers on page 15.

Thank you to Harry and Joan Beevers.

The Fundraising team would like to extend a very special thank you to Harry and Joan Beevers who organised a very successful concert in Trinity Methodist Church in Castleford, West Yorkshire. They raised a fantastic £400 from the evening in aid of Blind Veterans UK. We are extremely grateful to the Trinity Methodist Church for hosting the concert and to the very talented Trinity Choir, as their wonderful musical programme ensured the evening was a great success. Congratulations and thank you.

You'd be barking not to love her! By Catherine Lawry, Centre Administrator.

Our resident artist at the Sheffield centre, Stephen Moss, Night Support and Security, impressed everyone this month with his pastel drawing of guide dog, Lexie. Lexie is an Italian Spinone cross Labrador and is the guide dog for proud owner and Blind Veterans UK member, Glynn Evans. Lexie delights everyone she meets. Glynn has visited Sheffield several times and on his last visit asked Stephen to create a picture for him of Lexie as Stephen liked her so much.

When Stephen was asked about the picture he said, "Lexie always has a wet snout which gives her character. This was quite a challenge to do in pastels but I think her character comes through."

Stephen is new to working in pastels but he enjoys the medium very much. In the past he has used watercolours for his work and one of his pieces, a watercolour of the Sheffield centre, hangs in reception at the Brighton centre.



Picture: Lexie by Stephen Moss.

Billy Orr receives his Korean Ambassador for Peace Medal.

You may have watched or heard him recently on television, in his radio interviews or read of him in the newspaper as Billy Orr, a resident at the Brighton centre, recently received the Korean Ambassador for Peace Medal in recognition of his Service in the Korean War. Unable to travel to Korea in 2011 when the medals were awarded to his fellow veterans, he gained a special award from the UK Ambassador for the Republic of Korea, His Excellency Sungnam Lim.

A highly decorated soldier, Billy Served in the Gloucester Regiment from 1939 to 1954, when he saw active service during World War II, the Greek Uprising and the Korean War. It was during the Korean War that Billy was captured in 1951 and made a Prisoner of War for three years. Billy escaped only to be recaptured and was branded a war criminal by his captors. His eventual loss of sight is the result of his internment as a POW.

Billy said: "It's nice to have the medal. I lost a lot of good friends in Korea and this medal is also for them. The people in South Korea really appreciated what the UN Forces did for them but we were just soldiers doing our job, it was as simple as that."

Ambassador, Mr Sungnam Lim said: "It is my honour and privilege that Mr Orr has received this medal. As a former POW his bravery is beyond measure. He and his brothers in arms are heroes to all Koreans, and we remain eternally grateful for the courage, dedication and sacrifice of the Korean War Veterans and their families."

The official proclamation from the Ambassador for Peace Medal reads:

"It is a great honour and pleasure to express the everlasting gratitude of the Republic of Korea and our people for the service you and your countrymen have performed in restoring and preserving our freedom and democracy.

"We cherish in our hearts the memory of your boundless sacrifices in helping us re-establish our Free Nation. In grateful recognition of your dedicated contributions, it is our privilege to proclaim you an 'Ambassador for Peace.' With every good wish the people of the Republic of Korea. Let each of us reaffirm our mutual respect and friendship, that they may endure for generations to come."

The official proclamation (below second photograph) was signed by Park, Sung Choon, Minister, Patriots and Veterans Affairs, Republic of Korea and by Park, Se Hwan, General (Ret.), ROK Army, Chairman, Korean Veterans Association.



Picture: Brighton centre manager Lesley Garven presents Billy Orr with his Ambassador for Peace Medal as Billy holds his many campaign medals.



Blind Veterans UK Biennial Satisfaction Survey, by Barry Porter, Director Welfare Services.

Since 2003, we have commissioned an independent company, Clariant Research, to carry out a survey to help us understand the level of satisfaction our members and other beneficiaries have with the services we provide. The survey runs every two years and aims to interview by phone a sample of 200 individuals chosen randomly from a larger sample of those who receive services and support from us.

If you were one of those chosen for interview by Clariant and agreed to take part, thank you very much, we are very grateful for your participation.

The questions we ask every two years remain broadly the same from survey to survey; this allows us to track responses over time and gives us clear indications about how people feel about the services we offer.

We aim to understand the level of satisfaction with the delivery of the current services, to listen to what experience beneficiaries have of these services, what needs are met or not met, whether expectations of services have changed and what the overall satisfaction rate is.

Overall satisfaction with services remained high at 4.76 (each question is scored out of 5), this is slightly below the 2011 figure but still very high. When asked their satisfaction level of the services and support received by Blind Veterans UK, 84.2% of those asked rated these as "excellent".

Many useful comments were made during the course of the survey and managers of services will be asked to look at these in the context of the services they run so that we can ensure any improvements or suggestions can be considered.

Of particular note were comments from some of the Blind Veterans UK 'family' that they no longer felt as in touch with the organisation than they had previously. We recognise that this may have stemmed from our withdrawing access to the Review inappropriately in some cases and we are addressing this.

A number of those interviewed expressed some frustration with some of the telephone based support we provide, for example our ROVI on Duty Service and access to individual member's own Welfare Officer. We have initiated an externally led review of some of these services and hope to make some adjustments and improvements to what we provide in the near future.

In the rare occasion of negative comments being made, they relate to single, one off instances. All individual concerns or outstanding queries raised in the phone interviews have now been followed up.

We are always keen to learn from any survey what we could do better and whilst delighted with the overall results, we will be focusing on continued adjustments to how we do things to ensure we continue to deliver effective support and help.

Answers to 10 questions on the subject of The Netherlands from page 10.

1. King Willem-Alexander.
2. Amsterdam.
3. Coleslaw.
4. Rotterdam.
5. Dutch Elm Disease.
6. Amsterdam, she was born in Frankfurt in Germany in 1929 and hid for two years and one month from the Germans.
7. An area of land reclaimed from the sea.
8. Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom.
9. Rotterdam.
10. 'A Bridge Too Far'.

Project Gemini Goes Stateside!

By Jamie Cuthbertson.

On 17th August, a small and dynamic group gathered at Heathrow Terminal 5 for the next episode in the Project Gemini story, which started back in 2011. Those involved were: Mark Threadgold, Kingsman Anthony Cooper of the 1 Lancashire Regiment (better known as Coops), Chris Nowell, and me Jamie Cuthbertson, along with Louise Timms, Simon Brown and Colin Williamson from the staff and Marika Kato and Johnny Davies also in attendance.

Colin arrived early and immediately took up his role as shepherd, gathering his flock into the safety of his ample bosom! After we had all hooked up, a speedy move to the British Airways Business Class lounge was made - Project Gemini has friends in high places these days and the flights for Mark, Coops, Chris and me had been sponsored by British Airways; many thanks to BA for this very generous gesture. The flight to Seattle was followed by a short hop to our final destination at Spokane in Washington State.

The Blinded Veterans Association (BVA) Convention (the event for which we had travelled) was in fact a two part event: Operation Peer Support (OPS) for the younger members of BVA, and also the main convention. Many of the items on the programme overlapped but some of them were just for the OPS group, which included our party from the UK.

After a bit of settling in, it was great to catch up with some of our American counterparts, in particular those with whom we had become good friends on previous Project Gemini events - Tom Zampieri, Doug Cereghin, Steve Baskis, Steve Beres, Dexter Durrante and James Nealey immediately come to mind, but there are many more I could name. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly people pick up from a previous meeting as if no time had passed at all and so it was on this occasion!

In the OPS programme, there was a good mixture of business and relaxation, including discussions on a variety of online education opportunities such as those offered by the Hadley School for the Blind and presentations on opportunities to participate in Paralympic sport. We were also treated to a day paddling kayaks on a local lake with fresh pizza served at lunch

from a converted fire truck - only in America I hear you cry! Other evening entertainment included a bowling night and casino night.

The main convention was launched with a formal opening including singing of the American national anthem. In addition, and much to our surprise, all the Brits were asked to sing the British national anthem which we managed with aplomb, though I must confess to nearly forgetting the words!

There were a number of interesting sessions in the main convention including presentations about studies into the use of supplements in the treatment of age related Macular Degeneration (AMD). Findings appeared to indicate that the use of a combination of supplements reduced the risk of progression to an advanced form of the disease by up to 35%. Further information about the study can be found at the following website: www.ocuvite.com

A technology exhibition was also available for most of the convention and it provided delegates with the opportunity to check out the latest gadgets and software.

During the week, there were three formal meals, one for just the OPS group and two for the whole convention. After one of these, we had the opportunity to listen to an inspiring presentation by 90 year old Lt Col Joe M Jackson USAF. The presentation was about how he and his crew saved the lives of three soldiers who had been trapped at a base that was being overrun by the North Vietnamese Army during the Vietnam War. For his bravery and ingenuity in carrying out this impromptu rescue mission, he won the Medal of Honour.

All too quickly the week was over and we were heading back to the UK. A cool bit of blagging by Louise and Colin saw their seats upgraded to business class so they were able to enjoy the delights of the pampering along with the rest of us.

What a wonderful week we all had. Many thanks to the BVA for their hospitality and comradeship. Thanks again to British Airways for the upgraded tickets and excellent service during the flights.



Picture: Simon Brown and Jamie Cuthberton prepare to work up an appetite kayaking before a fire truck pizza lunch.



Picture: At the pizza fire truck from l to r: Simon Brown, Mark Threadgold, Jamie Cuthbertson, pizza chef, Coops, Chris Nowell and Colin Williamson.

Life after life by Kate Atkinson. Book Review, by Deb Ryan, Reader Services Manager RNIB.

What if you had the chance to live your life again and again, until you finally got it right? During a snowstorm in England in 1910, the same baby is born and lives to tell the tale. What if there were second chances? And third chances? In fact an infinite number of chances to live your life? What choices would you make? 'Life After Life' follows Ursula Todd as she lives through the turbulent events of the last century again and again, including the London Blitz.

Kate Atkinson deftly intertwines the strands of each plot, cleverly avoiding repetition, and yet managing to make the reader think, 'oh this was where she did this or that the last time'. Like Ursula you get the nagging feeling that you've been here before but it is very subtly done. I found it a compelling read that twisted backwards and forwards through the timelines of each 'life' and yet still managed to be a real page turner. I think that is because the story outweighed the structure of the novel, as it should do, but some authors would have got caught up in their own cleverness transporting the reader from one point in time to another.

Despite the fact that you know Ursula is going to 'come back' and live her life all over again, albeit in variety of ways, the author still makes you care about the suffering she sometimes experiences, whether she is happy or unhappy and the outcome of each life. Extraordinary really but Atkinson has that magic touch and paints such vivid characters that you do feel a connection with them. But be warned it is very thought provoking and if, like me, you revisited some of your choices in life just remember it's only a story – although it's a cracking one.

If you would like to read this book it is available to buy in Braille, order no. 23557203 price £11.99 or you can join RNIB's National Library Service and borrow it. To find out more about the RNIB National Library Service and more reviews and suggestions for books go to our webpages www.rnib.org.uk/reading or contact the Reader Services Team on 0161 429 1970.

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Record Breaker Billy Baxter.

Here we catch up with Billy Baxter, the Rehabilitation & Training Liaison Officer, at the Llandudno centre. Billy speaks of life at the Llandudno centre, but first he writes of his journey since he joined Blind Veterans UK in 2000, and the stages he went through from sight loss to acceptance, adjustment and achievement.

Billy begins. Having left school at the tender age of 15 with not a single qualification I embarked on my dream to become a professional soldier. I learnt very quickly that education was a very important part of learning life skills, and essential in soldiering in the modern Army. This was to be a lesson I would learn at a greater level later on in my life.

With 20 years' service under my belt, now married with three children and about to be promoted to the dizzy heights of Sergeant Major disaster struck! I lost my eyesight as a result of the job and also lost the career I loved. From living an active dynamic life, overnight I became totally lost and no longer in control.

The blind veterans reading this article will only know too well what my family and I went through. I arrived at the Blind Veterans UK Brighton centre in June 2000 a very lost, angry and frightened young man. Nothing could get me back on track to living a normal life without my eyesight, or so I thought!

I soon discovered that my fellow members and the dedicated friendly staff were there for me and my family every step of the way in my adjustment to blindness. I learnt that training and education and new technologies were available to give me the skills needed to live an independent and fulfilling future. I was inspired by amazing people living normal lives, and humbled by the staff who provide us with a service that is the envy of many organisations.

My training and rehabilitation is still ongoing, and I have learnt that you never stop learning, there is always something new to discover, whether a new gadget or situation or tip you have learnt about. My journey has not been all sunshine and light, but at times demanding and hard not only for myself, but my family, friends and the staff who put up with our little antics and tantrums. Oh yes, the toys were chucked out of the pram numerous times!

As a result of some gentle pushing from my Welfare Officer, Jennie Hammond

(who needs a medal), I was persuaded that the time was right to launch Billy back into full time education. This would test the skills that I had learnt at Blind Veterans UK to the full, by interacting with society in a place I all those years ago ran away from. I would not only learn academic skills and gain qualifications but learn a lot more about the life skills needed to interact with my fellow students and people in a world I was part of as a soldier. Civvy Street is a very different place to what I was used to.

I have done some scary things in my life, and getting on a college bus with 50 teenagers was like the first time I went for a walk on my own with a long cane. Blind Veterans UK was there for me. As were the team of like minded staff at the college who provided guidance and support every step of the way.

I worked hard and again at times felt like quitting but with fighting spirit and the support of friends and good people and the tutors and staff I overcame these problems. I completed a two year full time course at a mainstream college that was both physically and mentally demanding. It tested my skills as a blind veteran. This is what our founder Sir Arthur Pearson set out to achieve from his vision to help blinded Servicemen.

My life has greatly been enriched by education and training, and given me valuable life skills to take on future challenges and goals. Thank you Sir Arthur. If I can do it then anyone can give it a go, you will not be disappointed, believe me.

Thanks to that training, just over two years ago I started my working, post Army, life at the Llandudno centre and I love my role as Rehabilitation & Training Liaison Officer. Every day I think how lucky I am to work here, in fact I think I'm the luckiest person in the world.

Blind Veterans UK has allowed me to do some incredible things and one was to break a Guinness World Record for the fastest blind man on a motorbike over 165mph. I was informed a couple of weeks ago that the record we set as Blind Veterans UK on 2nd August 2003 will be included in the latest edition of the Guinness Book of World Records in 2014 as it has not been broken since. The book is available now and it's a three dimensional book, which I believe is a revolutionary piece of publishing. I'm really excited about being included in the book as it mentions Blind Veterans UK and that the record is held by a blind ex-Serviceman.

That's why I went for that record over 10 years ago and am pleased that the record still stands. It was a combination of work by many hundreds of people, not just the silly Billy on a motorbike. But more importantly the support, love and care from our staff at Blind Veterans UK who got me back on the road to believing in myself again — to my Army mates who helped me accomplish an amazing dream. It took 18 months of hard work by all the staff and the inspiration and moral support from you guys out there, all the members of Blind Veterans UK who I am indebted to, as without your support and help I wouldn't do these things. That's why that record is ours, is not mine, it's ours.

Talking of world records, on 8th October we were joined at the Llandudno centre by adjudicators from the Guinness Book of World Records. They were here to see if a team from our caterers, TNS Catering, and a team from blind veterans could beat three world records. The first one was apple bobbing. The record stands at 300 apples in three minutes for a team of six. Sadly they didn't break the record but they each got a good hair wash and nice clean faces!

Then there was vegetable chopping to slice and chop a cucumber and carrot in a record breaking time. Steve Boswell, R&T Manager is an unsung hero in our R&T dept in Llandudno, as he attempted the carrot chopping and he did very well and held his own against a skilled professional chef. Sadly neither broke any records.

The last challenge was to eat 16 Ferrero Rocher in three minutes 48 seconds. One of the TNS caterers, Russell Snowdon, ate 16 in three minutes 18 seconds and we are now awaiting for official confirmation that we smashed the world record for eating Ferrero Rocher chocolates. We'll keep you updated. ITV Wales reported on the day and the footage is on their website: www.itvwales.com What's really important is that the record breaking attempts involved all members who were at the centre for training or on holiday and all of the staff.

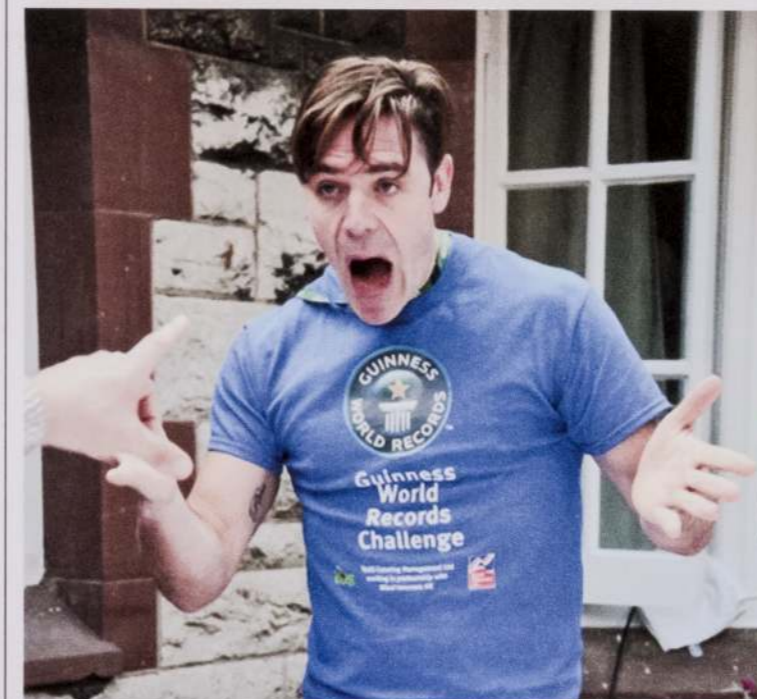
We opened just over two years ago and I remember when I first came into the centre. Over the last two years life at the centre has continued to evolve and it's now a constant hive of activity. Now, I've mentioned hive, and as you may know we now have some bees here and hopefully next year I'll be talking to you about our first pot of honey. I don't know a lot about bees but we have three hives at the bottom of the grounds and for the little chaps to survive the winter they need 25lbs of honey in each hive.

Now staying in the grounds, Esmore Davies, a local Welsh entrepreneur, plans to drive a JCB digger from John O'Groats to Lands End in an attempt to raise in excess of £150,000 for a number of beneficiaries. If he raises the £150,000 he will give us £50,000 for a sensory garden and path in the grounds. It will be VI friendly and accessible to everyone, irrespective of whether you have mobility issues or use a walker or a wheelchair.

There will be flora and fauna around the path and windchimes will be discreetly hung in the summer house as an indication of location. There will be tactile objects, sculptures and rocks and the smell of wild flowers, shrubs and herbs. We will extend this into the woodland which surrounds our grounds where we will create a sensory garden. We already have a team of volunteers from HSBC and Joanna Tann, our Volunteering Development Officer, has an army of people who have volunteered to clear our woods. The path would continue through the woods and sensory garden and it would also incorporate bird boxes as the wildlife here is phenomenal.

Well, that's what's going on centre wise and of course we're getting excited about Christmas. But it's you who make the centre what it is when you come here and bring this building to life. We love having you here as you fill our building with laughter and life.

There is a 30 minute recording of Billy in this month's Talking Review when he speaks more of life at the centre.



Picture: Ferrero Rocher eating legend, Russell Snowdon of TNS Catering, shows a clean tongue and empty hands to the Guinness World Record adjudicators.

Thea Davies completes her 415 mile challenge, by Laura Luxton, PR Manager and Olivia Dunn, PR Officer.

On Sunday 6th October, the partner of the 415th British Serviceman to die in the war in Afghanistan completed the 415 mile running challenge she organised in his memory and in aid of Blind Veterans UK. Thea Davies's life changed forever on 26th May 2012 when her partner, 29 year old Captain Stephen Healey of 1st Battalion the Royal Welsh, was killed by an IED explosion whilst Serving in Afghanistan. At the inquest into his death Stephen was described by his Commanding Officer as "one of the best of his generation".

Wanting to do something worthwhile and meaningful in his memory, Thea set herself a 415 mile running challenge, choosing that distance as Steve was the 415th British Serviceman to die. She chose to support Blind Veterans UK as Steve and members of the Battalion had done so much since 2010 to raise funds for the Llandudno centre after they saw how the charity supported their comrade, Fusilier Shaun Stocker, after he was wounded in Afghanistan.

In total Thea, who is 30 and based in Cardiff, has run over 20 marathons, half marathons, triathlons and long runs in the UK and other parts of the world.

Thea ran the final 415th mile, or 'Steve's mile' as she describes it, at the Chester Marathon on Sunday 6th October 2013. She completed the Chester Marathon in three hours 56 minutes. The Chester Marathon was the first marathon Thea ever tackled when she completed it with Steve in 2011. In addition to this Chester is the home of Steve's Barracks.

Thea said: "Steve was never one for just sitting around and neither am I. It was while watching the Brownlee brothers win gold and bronze in the London Olympics that I decided I needed to do something in Stephen's memory. The support I have received throughout has been phenomenal. I have had someone running every race with me, from Army wives to Stephen's Company Commander.

"I felt rather emotional and apprehensive about running my final marathon but I knew Steve would get me through as well as all those who are supporting

me and I cannot thank them all enough for the love and support they have shown me through the past year".

Her courage, enthusiasm and determination unwavering, Thea has singlehandedly raised an impressive £12,800 over the past year for Blind Veterans UK.

Chief Executive, Robert Leader, said: "Thea's support for Blind Veterans UK has been one of the most inspirational things I have ever seen. At a time of enormous personal tragedy for her she chose to take up Stephen's mantle and continue the amazing work that he had done to support our members. We owe both her and Stephen and the 1st Battalion the Royal Welsh a huge debt of gratitude, as what they have done for our people will never be forgotten."

You can read more about Thea Davies and her 415 mile challenge at www.blindveterans.org.uk and online on BBC Wales and ITV Wales websites. Thea has also featured in The Lady and Glamour magazines, the Daily Mirror, Sun and Star and many other media outlets. We are honoured that she will take part in the parade to the Cenotaph in London on 10th November.



Picture: At the end of the Chester Marathon as Thea displays the many medals from her 415 mile challenge.

Gardening Week at the Brighton centre 10th - 15th June 2013, by Liz Baddiley, volunteer.

Gardening Week for me was a week of contrasts. On the Tuesday we went to Nyman's Gardens, near Haywards Heath, West Sussex and it rained — all day. It was that steady, annoying drizzle that we all love! But, we still managed to have a good time, with the help of the large golf umbrellas that Lesley Styche, our helpful ROVI, dug out from a hidden recess in reception. Luckily the café was warm, bright and friendly, so that was our first stop for an early lunch, which was delicious. Lesley again came up trumps and managed to book golf buggies (maybe it was golf week, not gardening week!) for all those who wanted to go round the grounds and couldn't walk too far. The member I was escorting, let's call him Gentleman Jim, was a very nimble old boy who was used to walking a couple of miles every day at home. We followed a buggy around the grounds with our trusty umbrella and the driver/guide kindly waited for us to catch up before starting his spiel. He was very informative and we learnt a lot. The walled garden looked beautiful and it would be great to return later in the season to see it in its maturity. Unfortunately we managed to lose the buggy, but luckily it was towards the end of the tour and we weren't too far from the café and were able to warm up with a hot latté.

On Friday we visited Sheffield Park, Uckfield, West Sussex. We couldn't have had a better day. It was lovely and sunny, which really showed the rhododendrons in all their glory. They were stunning, together with the lake and waterfalls, not to mention the ducks with their chicks who followed us around hoping for a scrap of bread. Again the guide was very informative and we were able to take some lovely photos of the stunning blooms. The members always enjoy these outings and are very grateful to all those involved in arranging the trips and the escorts for their time and patience. It was also very useful to have a ROVI on hand, especially when large groups are involved. Those who took part in the week were: Joy Beatty, Tanya Tyler, Tony Vincent, Ray Wiggins, Gordon Picken, Alis Coxon, Geoffrey Simms, Brian Gibson, Pauline Gibson, Kate Harvey, Sidonie Dawson, Eleanor Swindell, Wilfred Holmes and Albert Simpson.

Member Gordon Picken of Mickleover in Derby said: "A love of gardening runs in my family as I learnt from my father and my nephew is now Curator at the Winterbourne Gardens in Birmingham. Even though I've been gardening for

years and have attended Gardening Week at the Brighton centre for the last seven years, I still learn something new each year. I go to Gardening Week with my partner Alis who is also partially sighted and we're a good team as she can see colours and between us we manage. There's so much to do and the visits to the gardens and houses are very interesting. I wish I lived near Brighton as I'd go to the centre everyday to help with the garden! As someone who is partially sighted I find gardening very therapeutic, especially as it's tactile and you rely more on your sense of touch rather than sight.

"When my sight problems started I lived near a market garden and I went in part time to help out. When they asked me to plant seeds I told them I couldn't as my sight wasn't up to it. They told me to feel the different type of seeds, and I did, and today I can identify seeds just by touch. Last year I bought 300 polyanthus plants, which are hardy perennials; I am planting them in pots to go into my garden next year. I always say that gardening is 70% knowledge and 30% common sense. Years ago my dad gave me an old book called '52 Weeks Work In the Garden'. It was a lovely book with the old fashioned ways of growing things. When I worked as a tanker driver with BP the drivers would swap gardening tips and books and I was loaned one about commercial glass house crops. I read about tomatoes and people think I'm gaga when I tell them that tomatoes need eight hours sleep a day. Plants are like human beings — they have feelings. If you treat them with tender care and feed and water them they will grow and do well — just like people. It's common sense."



Picture: Making hanging baskets during Gardening Week 2013.

75 mile South Downs Way Walk to celebrate 75 years of the Brighton centre, by Peter Burbery.

From 6th to 10th September I walked with three of my fellow blind veterans along 75 miles of the South Downs Way from Winchester to the Brighton centre. We took on this epic walk to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Brighton centre, a place that is very special to each of us who took part. I knew I had my work cut out as my fellow veterans Mark Threadgold, David Cranson and Steve 'Sparky' Sparkes are known for their sporting prowess. In 2006 Mark set a world record when he became the first blind diver to reach a depth of 100 metres. He also holds a powerboating world record! And David Cranson was recently runner up in the Hartlepool Mail's Disabled Sports Person Award and recognised by them for his contribution to disability sport. I think you'll agree that's quite an achievement, and one which David says he would not have achieved without the assistance of Louise Timms and her team in the Sports & Recreation department at the Brighton centre. And as for Sparky, well he's just an unstoppable force.

Now to begin my account of the five days when we enjoyed two days of dry weather and three (less enjoyable) wet days. We heard various birds including robins, pheasants, woodpeckers, buzzards, blackbirds and an annoying pigeon. Apart from the wildlife there was plenty of chat between us and our sighted guides. Johnny Davies and Nicky May walked the entire 75 miles with us over the five days, and we were joined on other days by Neil Davies, Claire Townsend, Steve Mills and Craig Brindley.

The first day was dry and warm with two pubs en-route. The second day was showery as we walked through open grassland and wooded areas. This took us to the 30 mile mark and bits of the body began to ache, including creaky knees. On Sunday, day three, we had to endure heavy rain and hail as we walked through a very heavy thunderstorm. The fourth day finished on my home ground and there was a heavy downpour for the final 45 minutes of the walk. My family came to greet us, bringing our two dogs to the bottom of the hill where there was 18" of flood water. Everyone was drenched as we finished the day by crossing the River Adur and then waiting for the coach.

Day five, our final day, was dry. There was a lot of uphill walking at the start and we stopped for a coffee break at Devil's Dyke and then it was on to the

last mile and a half of the South Downs Way in an eastward direction before heading south for Hove Lawns and then eastwards towards Brighton Pier.

Then it was on to the Brighton centre where we were greeted by loud cheers and clapping and plenty of smiling faces as we walked the final few metres towards the building. It was the end of our 75 mile journey and what a great journey it had been. Once in the building we were given massages by Iain Millard and his team of therapists. It was wonderful to relax and enjoy a soothing massage and listen to the ambient background music and birdsong, except that pesky wood pigeon again.

Then later that evening we got together again when Louise Timms cooked a sumptuous roast dinner for us. It was a wonderful end to five memorable days.



Picture: From left to right: David Cranson, sighted guide Johnny Davies, Mark Threadgold, Sports & Recreation Instructor Craig Brindley, Peter Burbery, Sports & Recreation Instructor Claire Townsend, 'Sparky' and Nicky May.

Blind Veterans UK Merchandise.

Our online shop has a range of clothing, mugs, Christmas cards and items for the home and office. Many of them bear the Blind Veterans UK logo.

The merchandise is available at all our centres and at Harcourt Street. Or you can place your orders by telephone: 0845 450 8446 or order from the website at: www.blindveterans.org.uk/shop where you will find our full selection.



Picture: Blind Veterans UK zippered hoodies are an extremely popular item of clothing. Warm and comfortable they cost £25. They come in sizes small, medium, large, extra large and extra, extra large.



Picture: Another popular item is the Blind Veterans UK wristband that shows the name of the charity you belong to and are supporting. The wristband retails at £1.50.



Picture: Bearing the logo of Blind Veterans UK, this white t-shirt retails at £6. T-shirts are available in sizes small, medium, large, extra large and extra, extra large.



Picture: Blind Veterans UK mug. If you like your hot drinks in a good mug, rather than a dainty cup and saucer, this is perfect for you. And it bears the Blind Veterans UK logo. The mugs retail at £5.95.



Picture: In Blind Veterans UK blue with our logo, this baseball cap retails at £7.00.

Llandudno Recreation Taster Week.

During a recent Recreation Taster Week at the Llandudno centre from 11th - 17th August Blind Veterans UK member Richard Davies became 'the world's fastest 93 year old'. Probably.

Billed as 'The Nearest Thing to Flying' at Zip World in Snowdonia, Richard was strapped into a harness and sent to hurtle along a specially constructed and spectacular zip line when he reached speeds of up to 100mph. He sped along at the great height of 500ft above the mountain lake in the ride of a lifetime. Richard, who took part in the week with his daughter Glynis, described it as 'a fantastic experience'.

Ken Scott, 82, from Derby also took part in the week when activities included lawn skittles, archery, tennis and croquet in the centre's grounds and training in the gym. Activities outside the centre included clay pigeon shooting, golf, 10 pin bowling, horse riding, skiing, a tour of the Great Orme and a walk along the promenade. A planned speed boat trip was cancelled due to bad weather and other activities substituted in its place. For the final day there was the excitement of a train ride to the top of Snowden. Cultural pursuits included a movie night and trip to the theatre. Ken said of the week: "I'd do it all again, it was fantastic and I tried things I'd never done before. I chose not to do the zip wire, but I did more than I thought possible. When can I sign up for next year?"

With a full programme of activities that were devised by Steve Boswell, Nicola Green and Dewi Roberts there was something for everyone to try during the week, regardless of age or health conditions: as activities were tailored to the individual.

Presentations were made on the final night with awards for everyone who took part in the week. Roger Williams won the Top Gun Award for his impressive display during the clay pigeon shooting. Roger said "I'm blown away by the whole week. The company has been great and like everyone who took part I've done things I didn't think I could. The programme of activities lives up to its name as it was a taster week when we could try a range of things. Everyone should try the week."

Mark Sutton summed it up when he said: "I was at Llandudno for a holiday when I heard about the recreation taster week and they let me join in. I had a great time and want to thank everyone for including me. It made my week."



Picture: Richard Davies in harness as he hangs suspended above the Snowdonia countryside, ready to 'fly' through the skies.



Picture: Roger Williams accepts his Top Gun Trophy from Dewi Roberts and Nicola Green, Sports & Recreation Instructors.

Brighton Activity Week.

After taking part in the Fitness Week at the Brighton centre in June, Dave Blagg from Stafford signed up to the Brighton Activity Week and found himself taking home the Sportsman of the Week Cup — a title he will defend in next year's Activity Week. The week was also enjoyed by Steve Parnell, Gary Ogden and Sue Eyles with Brighton Recreation and Sports Instructors Steve Mills, Claire Townsend and Craig Brindley.

Dave, who joined Blind Veterans UK in 2000, said: "It was an action packed week and I'll definitely be back next year. All of the activities were great, but my favourite was driving the Argocat, a six wheel all terrain vehicle, through woodland tracks. As it's been such a dry summer the ground was relatively dry, although there were places where we drove through a couple of feet of muddy water. It was exhilarating and great to drive again after so many years as it's the thing I most miss."

The Activity Week ran from 19th - 24th August. Monday kicked off with a morning spent on the water playing around in a power boat rib and zap cating. In the afternoon it was time to complete the Seven Sisters Walk from Beachhead to Cockmere. Tuesday morning was spent climbing at Boulder Brighton indoor rock climbing centre, then it was on to an afternoon of fun wakeboarding and paddle boarding at Hove Lagoon Watersports centre.

On Wednesday a great day was spent at Southern Pursuits, which included driving Argocats, the all terrain vehicle, clay pigeon shooting and axe throwing. The evening was spent Tenpin bowling. It was White Water Rafting at the Olympic Lee Valley Water Park on Thursday (featured on the cover) and an evening trip to the dogs at Hove Greyhound Stadium. On Friday, the final day, the morning was spent cycling round the Velodrome at Herne Hill on a range of bikes. Then it was on to Go Ape, a tree top assault course in the afternoon. What a great week.

Gary Ogden said: "I really enjoyed the week and the company, everything was excellent and it was nice to do activities that are local to Brighton, especially driving the Argocats. I had to do the clay pigeon shooting left handed, but I listened to the instructor and I hit the target first time. It was a brilliant week."

Lorraine Chambers said: "I was privileged to go along to the activities. I was a bit scared of getting into the water for the rafting and it was Sue Eyles who gave

me the courage to do so as she encouraged me to just jump in. At Southern Pursuits it was great to see the instructors try the axe throwing blindfolded, they realised how good the blind veterans were as not one instructor managed to hit the target."



Picture: Dave Blagg, right, is put through his paces to drive the Argocat.



Picture: Sue Eyles and Steve Mills take a tandem ride around the Herne Hill Velodrome.

Pamper Week, by Iain Millard.

Staff at the Brighton centre held our first Pamper Week from 9th to 14th September. We organised the weeklong event to offer a range of relaxing treatments to blind veterans and staff.

The Pamper Week was done to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of the Brighton centre. It's quite incredible to think of the number of people whose lives have been transformed within the walls of the Brighton centre. I know mine was. Today my philosophy is, 'The only thing standing between you and your dreams is you'.

I lead the week with my fellow therapists Kerry Reed, Chris Francis, Steve Parnell and Blind Veterans UK volunteer Anna Evans. Activities Coordinator Natasha Cartwright helped the team by doing manicures.

The Pamper Week included such treatments as a full body massage, aromatherapy massage, Indian head massage, hopi ear candling and reflexology. All of these wonderfully relaxing treatments were carried out by Blind Veterans UK members Kerry, Chris, Steve and myself, as we are all qualified practitioners.

We charged £7.50 for each treatment, irrespective of the time it took, and during the Pamper Week we completed 137 treatments and raised £951 for Blind Veterans UK.

I would personally like to thank all the therapists who came to help me as they made it a very successful and enjoyable week, both for us and for the clients who enjoyed a pampering treatment. The therapists have said that it was a good week and a positive learning curve, and we would all be willing to do it again next year.

Kerry Reed said: "Iain was my inspiration to learn about massage and other therapeutic treatments and after two years training at college I qualified in body massage in June 2013. When Iain phoned to ask me to take part in the Pamper Week as one of the therapists, I was gobsmacked and incredibly honoured that he had considered me, especially as I had only just qualified. Of course I said yes but was nervous as the other therapists have more experience

than me. I needn't have worried though. I already practice at the Llandudno centre and it was good to use my skills at the Brighton centre. It really was an extremely rewarding week for everyone.

"We would all like to thank Iain for devising the Pamper Week and special thanks must also go to Angela Blake, Natasha Cartwright and Anna Evans for their organisational help, as it enabled the week to run smoothly for everyone. It was great to hear the positive feedback from the members and staff who all said how much they enjoyed their treatments. The week was immensely enjoyable for the therapists too."

If you would like to book a treatment with Kerry Reed at the Llandudno centre, please telephone the main desk on telephone: 01492 868700.

I have run a clinic at the Brighton centre for the last eight years. If you would like to book treatments with myself or Anna please telephone the lounge desk at the Brighton centre on telephone: 01273 391659.



Picture: From left to right Chris Francis, Kerry Reed, Anna Evans, Steve Parnell and Iain Millard.

Family News.

Birthdays:

Congratulations to:

Joan Trench who celebrated her 106th birthday on 16th October.

Ernest Frobisher who celebrated his 100th birthday on 31st October.

Births:

Congratulations to George and Freda Brooksbank on the birth of their great granddaughter, Mia, who was born to Robin and Georgina Tipper on 5th September.

Anniversaries:

Platinum (70th):

Ron & Kathleen Whittaker of Poynton, Cheshire on 16th October.

Blue Sapphire (65th):

Arnold & Olga Ayres of Scarborough, North Yorkshire on 23rd October.

Diamond (60th):

John & Ellen Robinson of Wigan, Lancashire on 17th October.

William & Muriel Northeast of Salisbury, Wiltshire on 21st October.

Golden (50th):

Fred & Kathleen Crossley of Preston, Lancashire on 5th October.

Ron & Joan Tuft of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire on 5th October.

Terence & Jean Kettle of Crewe on 5th October.

Derek & Margaret Illingworth of Stanley, County Durham on 19th October.

Pearl (30th):

Eddie & Alice Cooper of Stamford Hill, London on 28th October.

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following and we offer our heartfelt condolences to their widows, widowers, families and friends.

Jessie 'Jan' Barclay who died on 16th September 2013. She was the wife of Robert Barclay.

Barbara Connolly who died on 2nd October 2013. She was the wife of George Connolly.

Mary Cross who died on 18th October 2013. She was the wife of Francis Cross.

Florence Foster who died on 29th September 2013. She was the widow of the late Victor Foster.

Janet Geary who died on 8th August 2013. She was the wife of Thomas Geary.

Alma Gilmour who died on 2nd November 2012. She was the wife of John Gilmour.

Mabel 'Mae' Harrison who died on 3rd October 2012. She was the widow of the late Maurice Harrison.

Ronald 'Ron' Hope who died on 28th September 2013. He was the husband of Kathleen Hope.

Christine Hughes who died on 26th September 2013. She was the widow of the late David Hughes.

Marguerite 'Margy' Hughes who died on 1st March 2013. She was the widow of the late Roy Hughes.

Vera Male who died on 7th December 2012. She was the widow of the late Anthony Male.

Rosetta 'Etta' Sefton who died on 10th February 2013. She was the wife of John Sefton.

William Williams who died on 13th April 2013. He was the husband of Joy Williams.

Welcome to Blind Veterans UK.

Elizabeth Allan of Faversham, Kent Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1940 to 1943.

Peter Ball of Sale, Cheshire Served in the Royal Signals from 1949 to 1955.

Reginald Bartram of Egham, Surrey Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers from 1942 to 1947.

Frank Berry of Northampton Served in the Army Catering Corps, the Wiltshire Regiment, the Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1957 to 1961.

Arnold 'Ben' Boulton of Leigh Woods, Bristol Served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1948.

Frederick Burrows of Norwich Served in the Royal Signals from 1939 to 1946.

Ronald Burroughs of Barnsley, South Yorkshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1955.

Dixon Buxton of Houghton Le Spring, Tyne and Wear Served in the Royal Air Force from 1944 to 1947.

Gabrielle Caine-Brady of Holyhead, Gwynedd Served in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps from 1955 to 1958.

John Cancellor of Halesworth, Suffolk Served in the Royal Signals from 1943 to 1947.

Alan Chilvers of Grimsby, South Humberside Served in the Royal Engineers from 1952 to 1958.

John Dawson of Saffron Walden, Essex Served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946.

Margaret Dixon of Brighton, East Sussex Served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1952.

Reginald Dray of Newport, Gwent Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1946 to 1948.

Brian Evans of Saltash, Cornwall Served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

Douglas Forester of Cleethorpes, South Humberside Served in the Royal Navy from 1940 to 1946.

Victor Fry of Norwich Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers from 1945 to 1948.

Peter Gadsby of Kempston, Bedford Served in the Royal Navy from 1966 to 1970.

Steven Gill of Stowmarket, Suffolk Served in the Royal Military Police from 1976 to 1977.

Andrew 'Glen' Petrie of East Finchley, London Served in the Welsh Regiment, the Royal Army Educational Corps and the Royal Artillery from 1950 to 1955.

James Gordon of Dunfermline, Fife Served in the General Service Corps, the Royal Scots Regiment, the Highland Light Infantry, the Gordon Highlanders and the King's African Rifles from 1942 to 1947.

George Goucher of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands Served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1952.

Albert Green of St Albans, Hertfordshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

Walter Hall of Braintree, Essex Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1948.

Gilbert Halls of Stowmarket, Suffolk Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Artillery from 1945 to 1948.

John Hayman of Wigston, Leicestershire Served in the Royal Leicestershire Regiment and the Royal Military Police from 1955 to 1964.

Derek Hews M.B.E. of Crediton, Devon Served in the Royal Signals from 1944 to 1947.

Thomas Holliman of Wadhurst, East Sussex Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

Michael Hope of Skegness, Lincolnshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1966 to 1989.

Madge Howe of Lichfield, Staffordshire Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1946.

Joan Jones of Merthyr Tydfil, Mid Glamorgan Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1941 to 1945.

John Kearns of St. Helens, Merseyside Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1953.

Rita Kirkwood of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1951.

Roy Langdale of Thetford, Norfolk Served in the Royal Engineers from 1956 to 1962.

William Langridge of Bridport, Dorset Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

Ronald Layfield of Prestatyn, Clwyd Served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1952 to 1959.

John Legg of Bath Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers from 1944 to 1947.

Ernest Matthews of Lymington, Hampshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1949 to 1950.

John McCann of Dundee Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1945 to 1948.

Gordon Mills of Edinburgh Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

Jessie Moy of Middlesbrough, Cleveland Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1944.

Ronald Mullett of Mount Vernon, Glasgow Served in the Royal Engineers from 1955 to 1961.

Jozef Munko of Solihull, West Midlands Served in the Polish Army from 1942 to 1948.

Kenneth Noon of Wimbledon, London Served in the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers from 1955 to 1958.

Edwin Parker of Hitchin, Hertfordshire Served in the Buffs and the South Wales Borderers from 1944 to 1949.

Sidney Roberts of Ramsgate, Kent Served in the Royal Artillery from 1934 to 1946.

Peter Rooke of Ipswich, Suffolk Served in the Royal Signals from 1951 to 1964.

Anna Roper of Prestatyn, Clwyd Served in the Royal Air Force from 1944 to 1948.

Reginald Roper of Bargoed, Mid Glamorgan Served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946.

Reginald Russell of St. Neots, Cambridgeshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1956 to 1978.

Frances Shaw of Bradford, West Yorkshire Served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1948 to 1950.

Frank Sherman of Eye, Suffolk Served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

William Stallard of East Grinstead, West Sussex Served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1948 to 1959.

Derek Taylor of Wirral, Merseyside Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.

Ian Tott of Preston, Lancashire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1946.

Allan Vidow of Lymington, Hampshire Served in the Royal Air Force in 1939.

Frank White of Nottingham Served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

David Williams of Baldock, Hertfordshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.

Ernest Williams of Alfreton, Derbyshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.

Leonard Wise of Birmingham Served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1949 to 1951.

In Memory.

It is with deep regret that we record the deaths of the following members and we offer our heartfelt condolences to their widows, widowers, families and friends.

Edward 'John' Ackerman died on 21st September 2013, aged 89. He joined the RAF in 1943 and trained as an air fitter at RAF Cosford. He Served in Johannesburg for two years where the RAF pilots did their flight training. He returned to the UK and was discharged in 1946.

Arthur Beard of Hartlepool, Cleveland died on 30th September 2013, aged 80. He Served with the Royal Army Medical Corps as a National Serviceman from 1954 to 1959, leaving as a Private.

John Bingham of Tring, Hertfordshire died on 25th September 2013, aged 85. He joined the RAF for National Service in 1950 and Served in Bomber Command as a Flight Engineer. He was discharged in 1952 as a Sergeant.

Alan Connolly of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 14th October 2013, aged 79. He Served in the Royal Army Service Corps for National Service from 1953 until discharge in 1955 as a Lance Corporal.

Eric Cooper of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 28th September 2013, aged 88. He Served in the Royal Fusiliers from November 1944, transferring to the Royal Army Service Corps in December 1944, then to the Sherwood Foresters in 1945 and finally onto the Royal Hampshire Regiment in 1947. He was employed as a staff car driver throughout his military service until he was discharged as a Private in 1948.

John 'Jack' Cooper of Worksop, Nottinghamshire died on 16th October 2013, aged 88. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and became a Seaman/Torpedoman on the US lease lend ship, HMS Montserrat guarding the Atlantic Convoys in the North Channel, working out from Londonderry. He was responsible for the depth charge settings. He completed his Service in 1946, leaving as an Able Seaman.

Gordon Cupid of Barrow-In-Furness died on 16th April 2013, aged 82. He completed National Service in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1954. He trained at RAF Padgate, completed an armourer's course at RAF Kirkham and was posted to RAF Ringway where he worked on Meteor and Vampire Jets. He was discharged as a Leading Aircraftman.

Benjamin 'Ben' Darnley of Uckfield, East Sussex died on 14th December 2012, aged 80. He joined the Royal Armoured Corps (17/21 Lancers) in 1958 and Served in Hong Kong, Aden and Northern Ireland. He was discharged as a Staff Sergeant in 1976.

Alan Hodgson of Skelmersdale, Lancashire died on 9th October 2013, aged 81. He joined the Royal Artillery for National Service in 1953 and Served in Germany and Korea before being discharged as a Gunner in 1955.

Winifred 'Win' Hollins of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk died on 28th September 2013, aged 84. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1947 and Served at RAF Stanmore Park and RAF Bentley Priory. Discharged in 1948 she joined her husband in Malta where he was Serving with the RAF.

John Holloway of Droitwich, Worcestershire died on 6th October 2013, aged 93. He joined the Northamptonshire Regiment in 1939, transferring to the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. At the outbreak of the war he was deployed to France as a member of the British Expeditionary Force. Captured by the Germans he was sent initially to Stalag 8B in Lamsdorf moving to a variety of different camps. He eventually escaped and walked to Regensburg where he met the US 14th Armoured Corps. He was discharged in 1946 as a Private.

Ada Hughes of Newbiggin by the Sea, Northumberland died on 13th October 2013, aged 88. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1942 and spent time in Felixstowe and other locations around the UK. She worked in the Sergeants and Officers Messes and was demobilised in 1946.

Mina Gibson (nee Patterson) of Belfast, County Down died on 13th September 2013, aged 90. She Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1941 to 1946 in Taunton and Somerset, leaving as a Corporal.

Royston 'Roy' King of Lancing, West Sussex died on 9th October 2013, aged 89. He joined the Royal Navy in 1942. He qualified as an Engine Room

Mechanic (Hostilities only) and Served in the UK and Bombay repairing engines and machinery for RN frigates and corvettes alongside. He was discharged in 1946 as a Petty Officer.

Simeon 'Simmy' Lowe of St Saviour, Jersey died on 4th October 2013, aged 97. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1940, trained in Aldershot and was posted to 154 Field Ambulance. He was deployed to Madagascar, India and then Burma prior to discharge as a Sergeant in 1946.

Philip Marsh of Bedford, Bedfordshire died on 17th October 2013, aged 92. He joined the Royal Navy in 1941. He Served on Arctic convoys in HMS Berwick for four years and earned a Russian medal. He then joined HMS Enterprise and was injured at D-Day. He left as a Leading Stores Assistant in 1946.

Robert Myland of Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex died on 12th October 2013, aged 86. In 1944 he enlisted in the Merchant Navy. He joined an LMS refrigerator ship, the Derne, transporting frozen meat from London to the channel ports for the troops in Europe. After a spell in Hull and later the Mediterranean he joined the Orient Line on the Far East run repatriating POW's. He subsequently joined the Everard Line and was discharged as a Deckhand in 1947.

Eric Nightingale of Marton, Middlesbrough died on 3rd September 2013, aged 80. He Served in the Royal Air Force from 1954 to 1956 in the UK, Egypt and Iraq.

Kenneth Parker of Burton-On-Trent died on 30th September 2013, aged 82. He completed National Service from 1949 to 1951 as a unit clerk at the Royal Engineers Longmoor Railway Stores. He enlisted into part-time National Service in 1951 until 1953 and immediately joined the TA with the North Staffordshire Regiment. He left the TA in 1967.

Barbara Pawley of Swaffham, Norfolk died on 5th September 2013, aged 88. She joined the RAF in 1941 and trained at Cirencester followed by Morecambe where she specialised as an operational telephonist. She was posted to Morton Hall, Lincolnshire and at the end of the war to No 3 Bomber Command. She Served in France, Belgium and Germany on Air Traffic Control until 1947.

Samuel Pegman of Maidenhead, Berkshire died on 24th September 2013, aged 93. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1939 and Served in the UK before being discharged as a Lance Corporal in 1945.

John Richardson of Luton, Bedfordshire died on 13th October 2013, aged 88. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and was drafted to HMS Guardian in the Far East – the ship was doing a variety of jobs including relaying underwater cables. He was demobilised in 1947 but rejoined in February 1948, Serving in HMS Constance during the Korean War. He was demobilised again in 1953.

Ralph 'Roy' Robinson of Wotton under Edge, Gloucestershire died on 29th September 2013, aged 94. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1939 and subsequently went to France and was evacuated from Dunkirk with the second British Division. He was then employed in coastal defence and runway construction in England. In 1942 he went to India and fought in the Burma Campaign. He returned to Calcutta and later to the UK in November 1945. He was demobilised in 1946 as a Sergeant.

David Schofield of Ilkeston, Derbyshire died on 30th September 2013, aged 83. He was first employed in a Band Boy with the Black Watch in 1946 where he played the oboe. He then joined the Army Air Corps in 1948. He attended the Army School of Music at Kneller Hall from 1946 to 1950. He was then posted to Bahrain and Egypt. He eventually left the Army in 1957 as a Corporal. With his partner Glenys he set up the Dance Club at the Brighton centre, which they ran for many years with great success.

Blind Veterans UK Legacy Gifts.

We are grateful to the following members who left bequests to Blind Veterans UK in their Wills.

Joan Kent who died on 2nd September 2013.

John 'Jack' Leslie Easter who died on 15th August 2013.

James Kay who died on 6th August 2013.



Picture: Korean Defence Attaché, Captain Juhyeon Park, shows his gratitude to Billy Orr at the Brighton centre as Billy proudly holds his recently awarded Ambassador for Peace Medal in recognition of his Service in the Korean War.



Picture: Billy Orr is interviewed by Korean television with centre manager Lesley Garven at the Brighton centre.