



On the cover: Back row from left to right: Stan Bowers, Steve 'Sparky' Sparkes, Major General Andrew Keeling, CB, CBE, RM, Alan Holderness and Woppy Keeling. Front row: Steve Nixon & John Morgan.



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Review

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Blind Veterans UK Calendar

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

December

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

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

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

January 2014

Winter Warmer Week 5th - 11th **B**

Computer Club 29th - 31st **B**

March 2014

Amateur Radio Club 14th - 22nd **L** - Archery Club 7th - 15th **B**

Bowling Club 16th - 29th **B**

Details of all activities will feature in the February 2014 Review.

Season's Greetings

All staff at Brighton, Llandudno, London and Sheffield, and working around the country, wish the members of the Blind Veterans UK family a very Happy Christmas.

We trust everyone will enjoy good health and happiness during the coming year. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.



From the Chairman.

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

I am writing this on 11th November, the day after this year's Remembrance Sunday, and Remembrance is still very much on my mind. Last Thursday Robert Leader, our Chief Executive, and I joined many hundreds of others outside Westminster Abbey for the annual Service of Remembrance. This is when thousands of little wooden crosses, with poppies attached, are planted in hundreds of different plots to remember those who have fallen in wars. Each plot belongs to a separate ship, regiment, squadron or distinct military unit. The Duke of Edinburgh and Prince Harry were there, as well as other dignitaries, and many were wearing their medals and their old unit headgear. It seemed to me to be a uniquely British gathering which says much about our military heritage.

Yesterday Woppy and I marched with the Blind Veterans UK contingent again. It was a beautiful day – clear blue skies, a warm autumn sun, but even so with a hint of a chill in the air. The atmosphere at and around The Cenotaph is always tremendously powerful, for you see the so-called great and the good (Royalty, Cabinet Ministers, Ambassadors, the heads of our military Services) alongside many so-called ordinary people, all doing the same thing – paying their humble respects to those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for us and for our children. It is a powerful moment. Add to this the cheers and applause for the Blind Veterans UK contingent as we march to and from the Cenotaph from Horse Guards Parade, and it makes you realise that many people really do care, too, for those who have Served, and that they are thankful. It is humbling, and very thought-provoking.

After lunch back at the hotel with the whole Blind Veterans UK contingent, including members, escorts and some supporters and staff, I had my normal little chat with everyone and explained I would be standing down as Chairman and as a Trustee before the end of this year. I have been closely associated with the charity since 1992, first as a supporter, then as a Trustee for 18 years, including five years as Vice-Chairman and five years as Chairman. It has been a tremendous experience and I count myself extremely fortunate to have been allowed to play a part in the life of this great organisation, but I feel strongly that the time has come for the Council to be chaired by someone with other

strengths and skills. That person will be appointed by the Council at our December meeting and you will all be informed soon after that.

So I want to close this final Review letter of mine by thanking you all — members, members' partners and families, staff and volunteers — for your friendship, your courage, your determination, your humour, your enthusiasm and your example. All these wonderful qualities have inspired me and many others, and will remain with me for the rest of my life.

Thank you – and good luck.



Picture: The Chairman Major General Andrew Keeling, CB, CBE, RM right with his wife Woppy and his son Guy ahead of the Parade to the Cenotaph.

From the President.

Your message from Ray Hazan OBE.

This year has seen a plethora of activities new and old in all our centres – walking, rafting, music and history theme weeks and arts and crafts, as well as competitive sporting events, to name but a few.

To me, it is proof of how Blind Veterans UK gives us a new lease in life when we thought our world had come to an end. The opportunity to try new hobbies in an atmosphere of comradeship and fellowship.

My wife Roberta joins me in wishing everyone a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and may next year continue as busily as the past 12 months.



Picture: Ray Hazan OBE speaks at the Ceremony of Remembrance in memory of Sir Arthur Pearson Bt, GBE.

From the Chief Executive.

Your message from Robert Leader DL.

Another Christmas and another year has passed only too quickly, a sure sign that I'm getting old!

When I was a child Christmas was a favourite time, with its hand bell ringers, carol singers, tobogganing in the snow if we were lucky, and the excitement of giving presents to those one loved.

My father was a priest, so Christmas was always a busy time in the vicarage, where I grew up with my brothers and sisters. Looking back now I see how incredibly lucky we were in having the most idyllic childhood and family life. I'm only too aware that for some Christmas can be a time of loneliness, financial hardship and sorrow.

I truly hope however that belonging to the family of Blind Veterans UK brings joy and friendship to you all. The 'family' continues to increase in numbers and, as I write this, I see that we now have over 3,500 blind and vision impaired members and have broken the 6,000 barrier for the total number of beneficiaries who can call on us for help. We still believe however that there are a significant number of people who would qualify to join us, but are not yet aware of the difference that we could make to their lives.

The great thing about a family is that, as one generation passes another comes on to succeed it and I am confident that Sir Arthur Pearson, our founder in 1915, and Lord Fraser, our Chairman for 53 years, would be incredibly proud to see everything that you achieve with the help of the organisation that they started and nurtured, almost a century ago, and which continues to go from strength to strength today.

I still love Christmas, it is definitely a family time and all the childish joy that I felt when I was growing up, I now see reflected in the faces of my grandchildren with whom we shall be staying this year. I hope that all of you will have a very happy and blessed Christmas, whether you are with your own families, the family of Blind Veterans UK or elsewhere.

Best wishes to you all for Christmas and the New Year.

Noticeboard.

Dates for your diary and useful information.

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 were involved in preparations leading up to the D-Day Landings or if you took part in the D-Day Landings.

You can telephone Catherine on: 020 7616 8367 or email: revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Free passports if you were born before 2nd September 1929.

Quiz master Harry Beevers brought to our attention that people born before 2nd September 1929 are entitled to a free passport. If you need help with your application because of a disability Her Majesty's Passport Office (previously called the Identity and Passport Service) offers special services for people with disabilities.

If you recently paid for a passport you can apply for a refund of the standard passport fee if you qualify for a free passport and paid for one after 19th May 2004.

To apply for a refund, contact the Passport Adviceline on:

Telephone: 0300 222 0000 or Textphone: 0300 222 0222 or
Text relay: 18001 0300 222 0000.

Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am to 8pm, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, 9am to 5.30pm.

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

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 ideas 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

If you would like to change the format you receive the Review in.

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.

Did you Serve on the Russian Convoys?

Blind Veterans UK member Stanley Fleming would like to meet or speak with any fellow veterans who Served onboard HMS Victorious in the Russian Convoys during WWII. Please contact Catherine Goodier of the Review on telephone: 020 7616 8367 or email: revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Random acts of kindness.

Nev Lees from Lincoln phoned to tell the Review of a random act of kindness by a shopper in M&S Oxford Street. While queueing to pay for a bottle of wine Nev and his wife Kathleen entered into conversation with a young woman in the queue behind them. She discovered that Nev, like her father, was a veteran of WWII. As Nev took his wallet from his pocket and extracted the money to pay the bottle of wine the kindly soul raced in front and put her debit card into the machine and paid. She refused to take any money and Nev and Kathleen graciously thanked her for her kindness. What a lovely story.

Do write in if you have experienced any further random acts of kindness.

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. Perhaps you travel back in time to the years 1914 to 1918.

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:

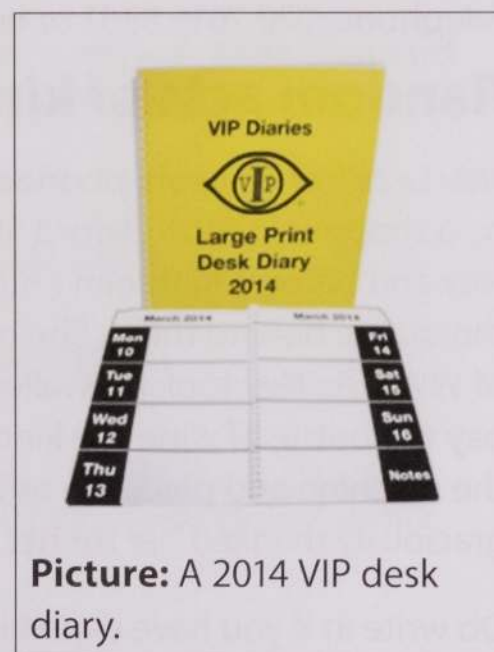
- 1) Entries should be typewritten and should not exceed 1,500 words.
- 2) Only one submission per person.
- 3) Entries must be received by the Editor, Blind Veterans UK Review, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD by 17th January 2014.

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 01273 391441 to discuss your requirement and payment processes.



Picture: A 2014 VIP desk diary.

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.



Picture: Stars in remembrance of loved ones at our centres.

The Chairman.

When Major General Andrew Keeling CB, CBE, RM became Chairman of Blind Veterans UK in January 2009 one of the first things the outgoing Chairman Michael Gordon-Lennox did was to present him with a pair of cufflinks. The cufflinks are hugely significant to Blind Veterans UK as they belonged to Lord Fraser who was Chairman for 53 years. It is a tradition that has been passed down from Chairman to Chairman since Lord Fraser's death in 1974. And now General Keeling will present the cufflinks to our next Chairman.

As you have already read in his letter, Major General Keeling announced his intention to stand down as Chairman at the lunch that followed the Parade to the Cenotaph. He gave a moving speech when a few tears were shed by those listening and at the end, after telling a most amusing joke at the expense of Chief Executive Robert Leader, he received a standing ovation.

You no doubt have your own memories of meeting the Chairman over the Cenotaph weekend, at Reunions, Founder's Day, HMS Sultan Summer Camp and at the annual concert by HM's Band of the Royal Marines. Here the Chairman says how he became involved with Blind Veterans UK and what has made the last 18 years as a Trustee, then as Chairman so special for him. There is also a 30 minute interview with the Chairman in the Talking Review.

The Chairman begins: "It all started for me when Steve Nixon, a Royal Marine, was wounded very badly in Iraq when I was the Brigadier. I was kept informed of his progress and about 18 months later when I'd just become a General and I was working in London I got a message that Lance Corporal Nixon had been admitted to Blind Veterans UK and asked if I would like to go and give him his Blind Veterans UK badge. Well I knew who Marine Nixon was but I'm rather ashamed to admit that although I had been in the Royal Marines for 33 years I didn't know what Blind Veterans UK was.

"I went to the Brighton centre where they had organised a small parade on the top floor. I met Steve and we talked and had lunch and that was my first visit to Blind Veterans UK and to the Brighton centre, which really left me with a warm feeling and I was hugely impressed.

"A few months later a Royal Marine Sergeant, Sergeant Perrin, known to his mates as Reg, had an argument which he lost with a hand grenade on Salisbury Plain. I got the call again to go down to the Brighton centre and give Reg Perrin his badge, which I did. It was riotous. By this time I was captivated by the whole place. I thought it was an amazing organisation with a fantastic spirit and an incredible service was being given to the members.

"I asked Admiral Sir Henry Leach, who was then the Chairman, if there was something I could do to help and he said he'd get in touch with me when I retired from the Royal Marines, which was to be a year or so later. And sure enough he did and asked me if I'd like to be a Trustee. I said yes and for a number of years I was a Trustee under the Chairmanship of Sir Henry, who as older members will know was a fantastic chap.

"I increasingly liked meeting the members at Reunions, at camp [Sultan], at any opportunity I could really, although I must admit that I did specialise at that time meeting the Royal Marine members. When Sir Henry left, Michael Gordon-Lennox took over as Chairman and I became Chairman after him.

"The part that I've enjoyed most in my role, first as Trustee then as Chairman, was getting out and about and meeting the blind veterans. I wanted to get a feel what the charity was all about and how it was for members and their families and staff. And because of the wonderful atmosphere and attitude of the veterans that's been a real pleasure. It's been hugely impressive to see the way that so many people deal with their sight loss and it's been very inspiring and it has certainly underlined to me the fact that in life in general it's so much more sensible and practical to look forward, rather than look back at what's happened. I'm certainly very much in the forward looking club.

"I've been to quite a lot of Reunions and events and I've been so incredibly warmly welcomed, which has been very flattering and really good fun and I'd like to think that I've made a lot of friends. I'm very sad to be leaving but it's the right thing as it will give me time to do other things and I'll keep in touch. It's just been a fabulous experience and I'm so pleased to have been here."

And what of the cufflinks? "I always wore them for special Blind Veterans UK occasions and Council meetings and they always helped me to have a calm and pleasant day! I am quite certain they will have the same effect on the next Chairman."



Picture: Major General Andrew Keeling CB, CBE, RM undertook his first duty with Blind Veterans UK when he presented Royal Marine Lance Corporal Steve Nixon with his badge at the Brighton centre.

Steve Nixon attended the Remembrance weekend with his wife Janet. He recalled how honoured he was when the Chairman presented him with his badge more than 20 years ago. During the Parade to the Cenotaph Steve spent the two minute silence in reflection as he thought of his grandfather Fred Nixon, who landed on D-Day and fought through to Belgium where he was injured, losing his leg.

Speaking of the Chairman, Alan Holderness, who Served with 40 Commando Royal Marines during the Falklands war, said: "The Chairman brought the family of the Corps to the family of Blind Veterans UK and introduced an esprit de corps. He takes time to speak with everyone and you know he really cares about the members of Blind Veterans UK.

"As a Royal Marine I knew of him by reputation and I first met him at a Blind Veterans UK Reunion in 2007. Shortly after that Reunion while visiting a Memorial Wall with fellow former members of the Royal Marines I noticed the Chairman close by in conversation with a group of senior officers. He saw me and left his group and came over to say hello and ask how I was. My friends knew who he was by reputation and asked what I had done to warrant such a warm greeting from so senior a Royal Marine. We owe the Chairman a great debt of gratitude for all he has done for our charity."

Reg Perrin, whom the Chairman mentioned in his interview, said: "As an organisation we have been extremely fortunate to have been founded and led by men cut from a unique mould. These men who could have made their fortunes many times over or could have even moved in offices of high state, but instead they devoted many years of personal time and effort into leading Blind Veterans UK. Andy Keeling is one such man.

"I consider myself both lucky and proud to have Served under Andy Keeling. Even today he is held in high regard by Serving Marines. He was one of those few officers you would follow into any situation with total trust.

"He always had a genuine concern about his Marines' welfare, which no doubt has made him such a good leader of men and our Chairman. He was cast from the same mould as our founder Sir Arthur Pearson, and another Chairman, Sir Henry Leach, who also led us through difficult times of change."

Andy Bull. After the Fall, return to Belfast 30 years on with ITV Cymru Wales.

Thirty years ago a team from ITV Cymru Wales This Week were completing their final day of filming with the soldiers of the Royal Regiment of Wales in Belfast. As the day drew to a close, an explosion was heard which echoed through the city. Twenty year old Private Andrew Bull from Nant y Glo in Gwent had been caught in a bomb blast, while on a routine patrol along the Falls Road, in the West of the city. The explosion left him severely injured and in a critical condition.

Some months later, though blind and severely scarred, Andy had pulled through the worst of his injuries and ITV Cymru Wales This Week caught up with him to hear his account of what had happened that night. Now, thirty years on, Andy a member of Blind Veterans UK returned with ITV Cymru Wales to the Falls Road in Belfast for the first time, this time reliving those near fatal moments through the eyes of his wife Nicola. The result is a moving documentary by Alun Jones.

We begin with a written account by Andy, which is continued in the Talking Review. It is followed by the audio of the very powerful report with Andy and Nicola by Alun Jones of ITV Cymru Wales. Andy begins.

On 24th November 1983 in West Belfast we were the primary brick with call sign Lima. The patrol consisted of myself Lt Brayshaw, Sgt Rummage attached from Int Section, Pte Pember and two RUC Officers. As we made our way down to the junction from the White Rock estate we turned left onto the Falls Road.

I was the second man in relation to the formation of the patrol on the immediate left as we turned into the Falls Road. The Falls Road was really busy as it was late evening and there was a queue of rush hour traffic with everyone on their way home. As I made my way along the Falls Road I passed the Rock bar on my left, up ahead of me and on the opposite side of the road I could see Lt Brayshaw and just in front of him the two RUC Officers. That day I was carrying on my back a special piece of equipment, which to the every day person looked nothing more than a normal military Klansman radio. I was wearing a headset that had a mouthpiece very similar to the ones in Thunderbirds. However this particular piece of equipment would override and cut out the signal being emitted from a remote control device used by the IRA in the detonation of their bombs.

Unfortunately for me and everyone else who was injured that day, the IRA chose a command wire to detonate their bomb. Had the bomb been remote controlled I would have heard a series of intermittent high pitched tones in my head set. I often wonder now and then had the bomb been detonated by remote control would the equipment have done its job that day, I suppose I shall never know. As the patrol continued the traffic was a constant stream of noise and hustle and bustle as it flowed into the city centre of Belfast. Walking towards me was a young woman and as we passed one another I wished her a good evening.

I can't remember if she answered me or not because no sooner had we passed one another, when there was a tremendous explosion. I didn't hear the bang or if I did my brain couldn't comprehend what had happened, my only recollection of that day is of the terrible high pitched screaming buzzing sounds in my ears. It was like a giant switch had been thrown, because all the sounds from the immediate traffic and the normal everyday sounds of a busy city environment had disappeared. I can only describe it as a sea of silence apart from the high pitched buzzing in my eardrums. To my left was a wall that ran for at least a thousand yards or more into the city of Belfast, that was quite thick and made of the old dressed stone. The bomb had been behind the wall. It was a large welder's acetylene bottle that had been packed inside with nails, nuts and bolts, and about six pounds of semtex plastic explosive.

As I said all I remember today was the horrendous high pitched buzzing that was in my eardrums and it was pissing me off big time, also it felt like there was a great weight on my chest and I couldn't fill my lungs with air. It was a feeling that I can only describe as drowning. I kept trying to lift my hand towards the headset to remove it from my head in the hope of releasing the noise in my ears. I was as weak as a new born baby, and try as I may I just couldn't work out why I couldn't perform this simple action.

All around me was mayhem and destruction with people screaming, some bleeding, some crying and many just stunned into silence with shock. To the onlookers the Falls Road had been turned into a giant scrap yard at the flick of a switch. In the distance could be heard the mournful cry of the sirens as the emergency services raced towards the scene.

This is continued in the Talking Review and at www.blindveterans.org.uk in the blog. We would like to thank Alun Jones of ITV Cymru Wales for allowing us to include the audio of After The Fall and for the introduction to this article.

Bryan Adams launches Wounded: The Legacy of War, by Catherine Goodier.

The Canadian rock singer songwriter Bryan Adams is famous for his music, he has spent decades performing to packed stadiums and his with songs have topped the charts worldwide. He is also a photographer with an extraordinary talent and his photographs have been exhibited in the UK at the National Portrait and Saatchi Gallery.

For the last five years he has worked on Wounded: The Legacy of War, photographing Servicemen and women who have been wounded in the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. It is a body of work he undertook to help the general public understand the lives of Service personnel who were wounded in the 9/11 wars. The images are accompanied with interviews by Caroline Froggett, co-author of Wounded, which provide a narrative to each person's personal journey to recovery.

Wounded: The Legacy of War includes Blind Veterans UK members Simon Brown, Billy Drinkwater, Ken Facal, Rob Long, Craig Lundberg and Chris Nowell. The book went on sale on 11th November 2013 and proceeds from the sale of the book will go to Blind Veterans UK, BLESMA, Combat Stress, SSAFA and War Child.

Here we bring you an interview with Bryan Adams who talks about Wounded.

Review: When did you take up photography and what was it that gave you the idea for Wounded: The Legacy of War?

Bryan Adams: I starting doing my own album covers in the 1990s. The idea for Wounded: The Legacy of War was brought to me by my now co-author on the book, ITN journalist Caroline Froggatt, who was passionate about the needs of injured Servicemen and women being recognised and properly met. I agreed to do the project, thinking that it might one day be an exhibition. It's a book for now, and a document of some of the atrocities of the Iraq and Afghanistan

wars. Obviously this is only a glimpse of what kind of horrors people went through, whether in the military or not, but I felt it was important to see and we mustn't forget these people.

Review: How long did the entire project take?

Bryan Adams: Five years

Review: As a photographer you have to be insightful and gain an instant understanding of the person you are photographing. When you met and photographed the men and women who feature in Wounded were you moved as you spoke with them and did they surprise you?

Bryan Adams: They were amazing, the humility and humour they have considering their circumstances. It must be noted that not many of these people had ever revealed their injuries before, let alone have themselves be photographed, so for many it was a big step.

Review: What were the qualities you most admired in the people you photographed for Wounded?

Bryan Adams: Their good nature and their courage to be at the studio to be part of the book.

Review: Was it a happy experience? I know from my own experience that when I interview people about the toughest of times they always throw humour at it and we spend most of the time laughing. When I first met Simon Brown and asked if he would have done anything differently he laughed and said he would have ducked. Did you find that?

Bryan Adams: It was a great experience to meet all of the soldiers and hear all of their incredible stories from their experience in theatre.

Review: Has it changed you? Did this make you more philosophical about life and how precious it is and how it can be changed in a split second and how that impacts on the person who is wounded and also their family and friends?

Bryan Adams: After experiencing every session with a different person with

a different injury, some without legs in wheelchairs, some burnt, some very young who had been hit by an IED, some had been shot, some blind - how can you not get the picture? I'm extremely grateful for the experience.

Review: Do you have one favourite memory of working on Wounded?

Bryan Adams: The whole experience was a privilege and again it makes you consider the cost of war not only to the people sent to fight, but to the civilian populations that had to endure it. It's such a mess.

Review: Has this experience changed your perception of the military and military service?

Bryan Adams: There is this camaraderie which every soldier takes with them for the rest of his life, but aside from that, I think that discipline is a good thing for people. You meet a soldier even if he's in plain clothes, and you will get a sir or a ma'am, very polite.

Review: Do you have plans for any similar projects? Perhaps another Wounded?

Bryan Adams: I'd like to exhibit the collection of these images in London sometime and other than that, next summer my foundation will be hosting a fundraising evening to coincide with this book. We will give you the details at a later date.

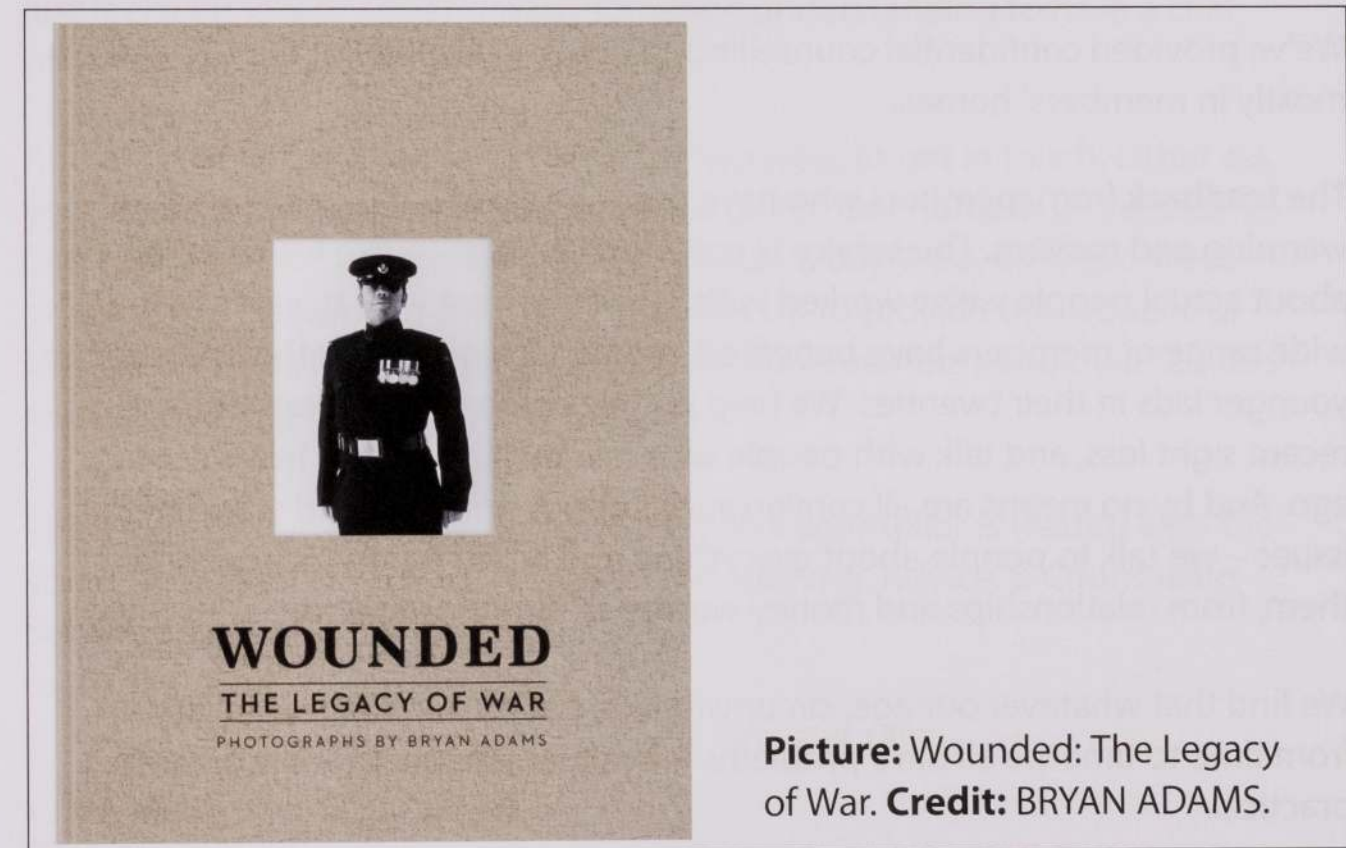
Wounded: The Legacy of War is published by Steidl priced at £50 (ISBN 9783869306773). For details visit www.steidl.de

Simon Brown was the first person from Blind Veterans UK to be approached to take part in Wounded: The Legacy of War. It was because of Simon's involvement that so many members of Blind Veterans UK were involved. Simon said: "They asked me to do some photos with Bryan Adams and next thing I'm sitting in the kitchen discussing being photographed."

"Bryan treated us all with dignity and respect and the book tells a story you don't often see. It is graphic, but it will make people realise that we wear the scars - they don't wear us. I'm very hopeful about what it will open up to the rest of the country and hopefully in future to the rest of the world."



Picture: Simon Brown photographed by Bryan Adams.



Picture: Wounded: The Legacy of War. **Credit:** BRYAN ADAMS.

The Listening, Advice & Counselling Service by Emma Swayne, Case Management Team at Wellbeing Solutions.

It is now almost two years since the confidential Listening, Advice & Counselling Service (or counselling service for short) started at Blind Veterans UK. We thought we'd give everyone a quick update on how it's going and a summary of what it's all about, as well as an invitation to try it out if you have not already done so.

But before we go any further, a quick reminder of what it is: The Listening, Advice & Counselling Service is a free and confidential support service, offering Blind Veterans UK members, their families and their carers confidential counselling and expert advice on any subject. Appointments can be arranged by Welfare Officers, or by contacting us direct, using the phone number given at the end of this article. It's free and confidential.

Since February 2012 we have provided counselling and emotional support services to members of Blind Veterans UK and relatives of members and we're really pleased with how it's taken off.

We've provided confidential counselling sessions, in all parts of the UK, and mostly in members' homes.

The feedback from members who have used the service has been heart warming and moving. The service is confidential, so of course we can't talk about actual people we've worked with. However what we can say is that a wide range of members have benefited, ranging from gents in their nineties, to younger lads in their twenties. We help people come to terms with their very recent sight loss, and talk with people who lost their sight over half a century ago. And by no means are all conversations about sight loss and associated issues – we talk to people about everything and anything that is worrying them, from relationships and money worries to family problems.

We find that whatever our age, circumstances, background or role in life, from time to time we all have problems – whether personal, family or practical.

Talking to a counsellor or advisor can help us understand a problem, make a tough decision, try a different approach or just learn how to cope with a situation that we can't change. Our aim is to help you find your own answer or solution to whatever is worrying you.

Our team of counsellors are wonderful, and they have really settled into the service. All of our counsellors are carefully selected, fully trained, professionally qualified and properly insured. They are accredited with the appropriate and recognised professional body in their field of practice, for example, the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP). I also want to reassure everyone that it's a confidential service. What you discuss with a counsellor is private, between them and you. This is an important ethical principle at the heart of counselling. Your confidentiality and anonymity would only ever be broken in the most extreme circumstances, for example, if a counsellor considered that you may pose a significant danger to yourself or others around you.

So to everyone within the Blind Veterans UK family, please try this service out if you would like support. Remember, if you want to talk in confidence to a friendly and sympathetic counsellor, or want useful practical advice, the Listening, Advice & Counselling Service is there for you. We can help with any issue, problem or subject that may be troubling you. Alternatively you may just feel a bit low or sad and want someone understanding to have a chat with. You do not pay for the counselling.

And as I said at the beginning, there are two ways to get in touch. Either ask your Welfare Officer to refer you, or call us direct. Our number is (freephone) 0800 328 1437. We answer the phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We're delighted to be working with Blind Veterans UK to provide this wonderful service, and look forward to helping many more members and their families and carers in the months to come.

The service is free and everything you say to a counsellor is treated with the strictest confidence. You can contact The Listening, Advice & Counselling Service on:

- Freephone 0800 328 1437. Via mobile: 800 328 1437.
- Via Minicom: 01482 661 911.

Chaplain's Chatter by Allan Meakin.

"It's that time of year again," says Dennis unenthusiastically as he attempts to step lively through the park on his way to the gym. The morning air is damp and the spiders have left their night's work clinging to the bushes and hedgerows. The cold air is causing problems with his partially amputated left leg and prosthesis. It was on the 24th December, whilst on patrol, when he stepped on an IED.

Dennis recalls the times when his twins were young, excited, all fired up learning their lines for the inevitable nativity play and then, very early on Christmas morning, silently stepping down each stair, missing the squeaky one of course, eagerly in search for their neatly wrapped presents, only to find their parents had anticipated their visit. Hugs and laughter filled the room.

Times appeared to have changed without noticing. The twins are both at University. Their grandparents have passed away. Lots of income doesn't provide as much as it used to, but he's learnt that the love of a good woman is worth everything. The festive season seems to begin before bonfire night with the music of carols in every shop, but where is the real meaning of Christmas? Has it been obliterated? 'Seek and ye shall find' comes to mind.

But listen! It's there, in the old church bells as they ring out the celebration of this miraculous birth!

It's there, in the words of familiar carols sung by a local choir and accompanied by the Salvation Army Band proclaiming Christ as a means of hope — to the person out of work, to the struggling families, to the 'squeezed middle', to those whose financial status and wellbeing is secured.

It's there, in the public address of the minister as he stands in the pulpit before a large congregation with many committed Service personnel and an 'old soldier' fighting back emotions endeavouring to equate 'peace and good will' to the horrors that he has witnessed.

It was there, but not that obvious, during the Christmas truce along the Western Front in 1914, only to be lost within hours amongst the mud and slaughter.

The place and birth of the Lord Jesus Christ was foretold 750 years before the event and recorded in the Jewish writings, known to us as The Old Testament, and it remained a hope until around 2,000 years ago when it became a reality. Before this time, God seemed distant, hidden away, seemingly inaccessible, but this birth celebrates a renewal and fulfilment of that hope. It's not a false hope, nor a childish fairy tale that ends 'happily ever after'. It's solid and real. But why, I hear the question?

For many people, it is difficult to imagine Christmas without the frenzy of giving and receiving presents. Yet millions who gladly accept gifts, large or small, refuse to receive the greatest gift ever offered, and one that can be theirs at any time of the year.

The very purpose of this birth is that people might see the true nature of God through the life, teachings, death and resurrection of His Son - Jesus Christ. His titles, to name just a few, are: Emmanuel – God is with us; Messiah – the Anointed One; Shiloh – Peace bringer; Redeemer; Prince of Peace, all declare with triumph, His mission in life. So, amongst all the tinsel, all the excitement, all the kitchen activities and all the preparations for the extended family to stay at the family home, may the blessings of peace, the beauty of hope and the spirit of love, be your gifts this Christmas.

Happy Christmas everyone.



Picture: Allan and Olive Meakin. Allan joined Blind Veterans UK in 2012.

Ceremony of Remembrance in Memory of Sir Arthur Pearson, Bt, GBE.

'Out of the darkness he arose as a light and by his example of courage and self reliance gained victory over blindness and the homage of the world.'

Those are the words inscribed on the grave of our founder Sir Arthur Pearson. Words that resonate within the family of Blind Veterans UK.

On Saturday 9th November our President, Ray Hazan OBE, and his wife Roberta led the annual Ceremony of Remembrance at the graveside of Sir Arthur Pearson in Hampstead Cemetery. Ray and Roberta first held the memorial service in 2005 to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of the charity and it is now an important part of the Remembrance weekend.

As the rain wept on Hampstead Cemetery at the untimely passing of a man so great as Sir Arthur Pearson, the Ceremony of Remembrance commenced with an introduction from Ray who said the memorial service was a way to give thanks to Sir Arthur Pearson for all he had done for the blind. Ray said how Sir Arthur had given hope to so many people, who like him, had thought their lives were over when they were blinded. Ray said he felt ashamed that he had been a member of the charity for 30 years before he visited the grave and the simple Ceremony of Remembrance was a way to make amends for that. He stated that the memorial service would continue each year for everyone to pay their respects to our founder.

Roberta read an account of Sir Arthur Pearson's passing which moved those listening. This is reproduced in the Talking Review.

For the first time Ray laid the wreath on Sir Arthur's grave, assisted by Barry Porter, Director of Welfare Services. Nigel Whiteley lowered the Standard assisted by Eric Brotherton.

After a two minute silence when everyone present thought of Sir Arthur Pearson, Charlie Eastwood lead the Lord's Prayer. Barry Porter read Let There Be Light, a tribute by Third Reserve to Sir Arthur Pearson that featured in the Review following his tragic and untimely death. This is also reproduced in the Talking Review.

Peter Phipps from Oxfordshire attended the service for the first time. He said how honoured he was to attend and how moved he had been by the readings and he felt he had gained a better understanding of the charity.



Picture: Shielded from the rain Roberta Hazan moved everyone with her reading of the untimely death of Sir Arthur Pearson.



Picture: Ray Hazan OBE places the wreath with Barry Porter.

Report from the Cenotaph, by Catherine Goodier.

Ninety five years ago in the November 1918 edition of the Review, our founder Sir Arthur Pearson wrote:

'Though the actual details of Peace will not be completed for some time to come, the signing of the Armistice and the cessation of hostilities mean the end of a terrific struggle in which you men have played so prominent a part. I know the tremendous enthusiasm which filled the heart of every one of you when the great news came along, and I think that I have entered sufficiently into your lives and feelings to be able to really appreciate the extent of triumphant joy. You fellows have given very much to attain the wonderful results which have been reached; and I believe your feeling of triumphant enthusiasm is in true relation to the extent of the sacrifice you made - in other words, I do not believe that any body of men living today have more cause for jubilation at the magnificent success of our arms, or that any body of men are more sincerely stirred by this feeling of jubilation.' (Continued in the Talking Review).

On 10th November 2013, in the solemnity of Remembrance, 102 blind veterans gathered with their escorts at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Sunday. All divisions of HM Armed Forces were represented. Our column was formed of those who had Served during WWII, overseas and in the UK, there were Cold War warriors, those who had Served in Korea, Northern Ireland, completed their National Service, fought in the Mao Mao uprising, Rhodesia, the Malaysian confrontation, the Falklands, the first Gulf war, Bosnia, Iraq and Afghanistan.

They followed in the footsteps of the First World War members of our charity who on 11th November 1919 gathered at the Cenotaph in homage to the fallen in the first act of Remembrance on the first anniversary of the Armistice as they joined the Comrades of the Great War. It was only a year since the guns had fallen silent after four years of bloodshed, and although we do not have written accounts by those men we can only presume that like today's members they too were lost in their own very personal thoughts as they stood before God, the King and the Cenotaph and paused to remember friends and comrades during the great silence and give thanks for victory and freedom.

For future generations who read the Review we bring you accounts of today's members and escorts from the latest Remembrance Sunday at the Cenotaph.

Ken Facal and Billy Drinkwater Served in the 1st Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment until they were injured in an IED explosion in Afghanistan on 10th January 2010. They were interviewed live on the BBC by Sophie Raworth.

They said that it was an honour to be able to pay their respects to the guys who didn't make it as they had lost friends and colleagues in Afghanistan and they spoke of the very positive impact Blind Veterans UK has on their life. Following their interview David Dimbleby said it was humbling to listen to them speak. Ken and Billy were accompanied by Craig Webb whom they Served with.



Picture: Private Ken Facal and Corporal Billy Drinkwater and Craig Webb of the 1st Battalion Royal Anglian Regiment.

Jey Muir, who was once again escort to Tony Eldridge DSC, said: "Remembrance to me is all about praise and respect for all those who put their own lives on the line so that we could enjoy the freedom and lifestyles we lead today. It's about doing the right thing. It's about remembering those who died. Being at the Cenotaph with all these great people is something that makes me very proud, proud to be British and proud to be an ex-Serviceman."

Jey, who Served for 34 years in the Royal Navy as a Marine Electrical Engineer, first came into contact with Blind Veterans UK 15 years ago at HMS Sultan, the Royal Navy Engineering College in Gosport, Hampshire when he became Vice President of the Warrant Officers and Senior Rates mess.

Paul Palmer, a Trustee and member of Blind Veterans UK, is a former Major who Served in the Royal Corps of Transport from 1973 to 2002. He said: "It is extremely important to remember those who have given their lives or have been injured fighting for freedom. It is also extremely important to remember the families and friends of those who have given their lives."



Picture: From left to right: Paul Palmer and Gerry Betts.

When asked what Remembrance meant to him blind veteran and Trustee Kerry Levins, who now works in the technology sector, said: "To me, having Served, Service means writing a cheque to your country up to and including the value of your life. Whether that cheque is cashed or not is out of our hands. Therefore, Remembrance is not solely about remembering the Fallen; it is also about sparing a thought for those who are still Serving, their Families and Loved Ones and about those whose Service has ended and for who every day is a battle. It is our continuing duty to look after each other; we must ensure always that no one is left behind. To my Brothers and Sisters of the Uniformed Services: Past, Present and Passed; on this day as always my thoughts are with you."

Janet Hayes travelled from the West Midlands to take part in the Parade, something she does each year, attending with her daughters Marie or Louise. Janet's late husband Roy was a member of Blind Veterans UK and Janet thanked Niki Kokonas, Blind Veterans UK Reunions & Cenotaph Manager, for acting as her escort to make it possible for her to take part in the Parade.



Picture: Janet Hayes and Niki Kokonas, Blind Veterans UK Reunions & Cenotaph Manager.

Niki Kokonas said: "I attended many small Remembrance ceremonies in my Army career, but never the main parade at Whitehall until I joined Blind Veterans UK. I can say without a shadow of a doubt nothing beats the atmosphere at the Cenotaph, it is truly amazing. I feel honoured to be able to take part every year. I take time to think about all those who gave their lives for us. Thanks to them we are able to live as we are today, in a free country. I think about all they had to endure and this year I gave special thoughts to those who Served in WWI and the terrible conditions in the trenches. Lastly, I pray for the protection of the soldiers who are Serving today and in future operational tours, hoping they come back home to their families and friends safe and sound, both physically and mentally."



Picture: Martin Bailey with Reg Lake.



Picture: Blind Veterans UK President Ray Hazan OBE with Rob Long.

Our President Ray Hazan OBE marched to the Cenotaph with the Chairman Major General Andrew Keeling CB, CBE, RM and Rob Long, a 26 year old veteran who was blinded in an IED explosion in Afghanistan in July 2010 while Serving with the 5th Regiment Royal Artillery.

During the two minute silence, when the only sound came from seagulls as they hovered in the blue sunny skies above Whitehall, Rob thought of his friend and colleague who was killed in the explosion that blinded him. He also thought of Lee Rigby of the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers, who in May this year was murdered in a savage and cowardly attack in the streets near his Barracks.

Ray Hazan OBE said: "At the silence I thought of Lyn Dobbie, killed in the same incident which injured myself; of Sgt Graham Wright, who rescued me after the incident and who was mentioned in Dispatches as a result; of my father, who Served in occupied France, but survived the war; and of many First and Second war blinded veterans I have had the privilege of knowing."



Picture: Peter Phipps who joined Blind Veterans UK in 2013 with Mike Purse, Membership Manager. His team organise the weekend.

In his speech at the hotel following the parade the Chairman said he defied anyone to go on parade and not have a lump in their throat or feel the hairs rise on the back of their necks as they stood on Whitehall.

The Chairman mentioned the important role that is played out behind the scenes by our Vice Patrons: Air Chief Marshal Sir Joe French KCB, CBE, ADC, Admiral Sir Jonathon Band GCL, DL, General Sir David Richards GCB, CBE, DSO, ADC Gen, Rear Admiral Sir Donald Gosling KCVO and General Sir Peter de la Billière KCB, KBE, DSO, MC & Bar.

Each year we are honoured to greet our good friend General Sir Peter de la Billière as he gives his support at the Cenotaph. The most highly decorated British Army Officer since World War II, he was once again this year escort to Wallace Burnet-Smith, who had a very distinguished career in the RAF that spanned more than three decades.

The Chairman spoke of the important role played by the escorts. He mentioned Stan Bowers, a former Royal Marine who was praised in a speech the previous evening by Barry Porter, Director of Welfare Services. Stan has worked for many years as a driver in the transport department. The Chairman said how Stan has given up a lot of his spare time for Blind Veterans UK, he also said he is a lovely bloke who loves the organisation and has given everything to it.



Picture: General Sir Peter de la Billière KCB, KBE, DSO, MC & Bar and Wallace Burnet-Smith.



Picture: Jean Burnet-Smith a former WREN Writer who worked for Admiral Sir Wellwood-Maxwell.

Jean's escort was Karen Webb (pictured).



Picture: Simon Brown with James and Chris Nowell and Andy Allen who laid the wreath for Blind Veterans UK. James and Chris were interviewed live on BBC News 24.

Simon Brown's escort was Mark Elliott, Head of External Operations at Help for Heroes (not pictured).



Picture: Thea Davies with Kingsman Anthony Cooper, 1 Lancashire Regiment.

Thea has supported Blind Veterans UK since the tragic death of her partner Captain Stephen Healey of 1st Battalion the Royal Welsh, who was killed by an IED explosion whilst serving in Afghanistan. Stephen and his Battalion were heavily involved with the Llandudno centre and Thea has continued his work.



Picture: Brigadier Johnny Walker OBE DL OStJ, who is another very important supporter of Blind Veterans UK, was escorted to Chris Pett.



Picture: Bill Hall and Mike Watson MBE.



Picture: Blind Veterans UK Vice Chairman Tim Davis with James Gray.

On Remembrance Sunday Violet John, who lives in Glasgow, turned on her television and listened to the commentary from the Cenotaph as she remembered her family and the friends she served with during World War II.

Violet joined Blind Veterans UK in 2012. The former Corporal, who served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1943 to 1947, said: "I felt so much at one with my fellow veterans who marched to the Cenotaph. Like them I always remember those I served with and one of my fondest memories is Christmas Day 1945. I had been stationed in the Canal Zone in Egypt and I had been waiting for some time for an Air Ministry compassionate posting to Italy as my older sister Vincie was there. While the Air Ministry would approve my posting my Desert Unit and Headquarters in the Middle East Force in Cairo refused to release me as they said I was their very best Airwoman.

"I know that's very flattering but I just wanted compassionate leave to go to Italy to see my sister. My mother was Scots through and through and my father was Italian. He was making his way to America via Glasgow when he met my mother, fell in love and they married. He never made it to America but he adopted Glasgow as his home and fought with the British Army during WWI. My sister studied in Italy from a young age and spent most summers teaching there. In 1939 when war broke out she was unable to return to Glasgow and for years we didn't know where she was and if she was safe. It was a cousin who was in the British Army in Italy who found her and gave us her address in Tuscany. As soon as I knew her location it became imperative that I saw her. It was all I could think about.

"Ultimately to get to Italy I had to withdraw my labour. I never thought I would do anything so extreme but I was desperate to see Vincie as we were worried sick about her. By withdrawing my labour I was given 14 days CC and a posting to Italy. I travelled from the desert in Egypt to my posting in Italy with the Education Officer. It meant I was allowed leave and I picked up a lift with the Red Cross from Sienna to Tuscany. My sister was Assistant Head of a beautiful residential school in an Etruscan hill town in Tuscany for young boys who had been orphaned in the war in North Africa.

"The Red Cross VADs persuaded the driver to wait while I went in to get Vincie as I hoped to persuade her to take two weeks leave. I was in my WAAF uniform and I knew enough Italian to ask for my sister. She ran down the stairs and it was wonderful to see her again after so many years of not knowing anything about her. For years we didn't even know if she was alive and the relief was immense when I saw her run towards me. She was granted leave and we climbed into the waiting Red Cross van. I told the girls that I didn't know where we would stay and they invited us to be their guests at an Army hotel in Florence. For two weeks we went around Florence as we took in all the places of interest and had a wonderful time together. I took snapshots of my sister to send to my mother to let her know that she was well.

"Going back in time to the transit camp in Egypt, the three people I always think of at Remembrance time are three British Airmen, Arthur, Harry and Charlie, who made Christmas Day 1945 so very special for me. I had worked with them in the Canal Zone in Egypt and Arthur had become a great friend. On Christmas Day 1945 they left their tent at the crack of dawn to hitchhike the 90 miles to the transit camp in Cairo where I was waiting to go to Italy. A Corporal came to my tent to tell me there were three Airmen at the gate who were asking for me. I remember how shocked I was to see them at the gate but I can't remember what I said. I do remember Arthur said they'd come to take me to dinner and I told them that I was confined to camp as I had withdrawn my labour. Arthur said it didn't count on Christmas Day and he was quite right as I was given a pass and we went for a lovely meal that was followed by a wonderful floor show. Afterwards they took me back to the transit camp and they began the 90 mile hitchhike back to the Canal Zone. It was such a wonderful thing for those three young Englishmen to do and I still remember it so very clearly and this year, like every year, I thought of them at Remembrance time and thanked them for making that 180 mile round trip on Christmas Day 1945."

Bowling Club report, by Alan Gibson, Chairman.

Our tournament started on a sad note with the news that Jim Willingham had passed away. Although we were pleased to welcome three new members: Connie Apletree, Nadia Boys and Ken Parker, who brought the number of bowlers participating in the November competitions to 27. We were also glad to have Jimbo Booth back with us after missing the last games - not bad for nearly 102 years young.

The bowlers were pleased and proud to support our President Joan Osborne when she switched on the 75th anniversary lights that shone on the front of the centre to celebrate 75 wonderful years.

What would we do without our ladies? Daphne and Iris who called the games, Shirley who kept us going with teas and coffees and Cathy who helped the bowlers on the green. Also Roger who helped in the morning and the gym staff. Joan O says she doesn't know what she would do without the help of Ann who she will promote to manager in the office!

The winners were as follows:

Singles - Winner: Graham Johnson. Runner Up: Pete Rolfe.

Group winners - John Russell and Ron Jones.

Pairs - Graham Johnson and James Poole.

Runners up - Alan Gibson and Norman Perry.

Triples - Graham Johnson, Ron Croxton and Ken Parker.

Runners up - George Wrightson, James Poole and Norman Perry.

This is the first time anyone has been the winner in all three competitions - and congratulations must go to Graham Johnson.

It was a good two weeks, although two of our bowlers were taken ill, and we hope they will soon feel better. We are all now looking forward to 16th March and our next tournament.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Joan Osborne switches the 75th Anniversary lights on at the Brighton centre.

As we celebrate the 75th anniversary year of the Brighton centre it was appropriate that Joan Osborne was asked by centre manager Lesley Garven to turn the lights on. Joan has known Blind Veterans UK her entire life and as a young girl she spent the Christmas of 1938 at the centre with her family, a time she remembers fondly. Surrounded by her family and her many friends Joan delivered a very moving speech before switching the lights on and illuminating the exterior of the front of the building with the Blind Veterans UK logo, 75th anniversary message and search lights.

Centre manager Lesley Garven introduced Joan saying: "Welcome everyone. Well, this is a fantastic occasion for us. We are celebrating the 75th Anniversary of this wonderful building in Brighton. It was opened in 1938 and the foundations were laid on behalf of Blind Veterans UK, formerly St Dunstan's, by Lady Fraser for the sole purpose of providing a safe place for former Servicemen and women who had become blind to learn new skills and take forward their life with purpose.



Picture: Joan Osborne with her family and centre manager Lesley Garven. From left to right Joan's son Keith, granddaughter Caroline with son Charlie and husband Andrew, Joan and daughter in law Linda and granddaughter Louise with husband Dan and centre manager Lesley Garven.

"This centre is much more than bricks and mortar – its about the people, they are the cornerstone of this building, and Joan Osborne and her family have been a cornerstone since 1938. So it gives me great pleasure in asking Joan to say a few words before we have the countdown to switching on the lights that will shine over the building for the next three nights from 25th to 27th October."

Joan began: "My father lost his sight, his left arm and sustained other serious injuries when he was 20 years old, when he was wounded at Ypres on the 31st July 1917. At the time he didn't know what impact this would have on his life.

"I was only 11 years old when this great new building was opened in 1938 and we spent the first Christmas here, together with the First World War veterans who stayed in dormitories. Women weren't allowed to stay here but thankfully that changed, but not until 1985. We also came for Christmas in 1939 just before we transferred to Church Stretton because of the war. This building was then taken over by the Royal Navy and called HMS Vernon.

"Happily I returned to Brighton in 1946 with my parents as my father was a Braille teacher and I was a member of the Music Department and it's where I met my husband Bob.



Picture: The Brighton centre with 75th Anniversary celebratory lighting.
Photo: Alex Beaton Photography www.alexbeatonphotography.co.uk

"Bob was only 20 years old when he was wounded; having lost his sight, an arm and leg in the horrendous Battle of Hill 112 in Normandy on 11th July 1944. Bob and I ran a shop here for 22 years and met some wonderful characters who arrived without hope, but they left with confidence and skills that prepared them to lead an independent life. Men like Dickie Brett, a member of the blind and handless group who went on to become a highly skilled carpenter. Dickie received great support and inspiration from the WWI veterans and this continues to this day when the WWII veterans in turn help the newly blinded Servicemen.

"If I had my life over again I wouldn't change a thing. I would like to say how honoured and proud I am to celebrate this occasion with everyone here."

The lighting display was provided by Jonny Gaskell, Pinnacle Productions Ltd www.pinnacleproductions.co.uk

Amateur Radio Society report, by Ray Hazan OBE.

The Blind Veterans UK Amateur Radio Society's contribution to the Brighton centre's 75th celebrations was to announce that fact to the world! During its meeting from 11th to 18th October, 232 contacts were made over the airwaves with the outside world using a special callsign, GB75BVB (Blind Veterans Brighton).

The majority of the contacts were made by the Society's Chairman, Ray Peart, G0FHK and the log kept by Claire Peart, G1FHK. Support on the microphone was rendered by Steve Claxton, G0TOT, Graham Moore, affiliate member, G0IOF, who also did some log keeping, and Ray Hazan, G0PQQ.

Much of the UK amateur radio fraternity are well aware of our organisation, but it can do no harm to refresh their memories!

Computer Club report by Robert Waller.

The October Computer Club was held at the Llandudno centre for the second year from 16th and 17th October when it was attended by five regular and one new member. Members attending with me were John Pullinger, Clifford Swann, Robert Waller, James Wright and new member George Theobald. Walter McGreevy gave his apologies.

My wife Margaret was much appreciated for helping us all with various problems. Unfortunately the Chairman and organiser, Ray Hazan OBE, was unable to attend and therefore it fell to me to take up the reins.

Dave Cawley and John Bingham-Forbes in the IT Department and Jane Duddle in the Rehabilitation and Training Team had an interesting programme for us.

Wednesday 16th October.

After opening the meeting then introducing the team John and Dave kicked off with a very interesting demonstration of Windows 7 and 8. We were informed of all the intricacies that we did not know about. The differences between Apple, Android and Windows systems were shown to us.

Coffee was served by Margaret and we then continued with a session called Form Factors. This consisted of explaining and demonstrating the differences between phones, iPhones, iPads, laptops, tablets and fablets all superseding the tower. Also covered were the Galaxy S11, S11 and Note 11, and Surface Pro.

In the afternoon we started with photography. As the item was entered late in the programme no one had brought a camera and we were demonstrated photographs that were taken on mobile phones and some good shots were produced. During this time Hugh Megarry, a blind user of a talking phone, gave a demonstration to showcase the phone capabilities — with a bit of practice.

A question and answer period followed in which we tried to beat the instructors, but once again we failed. Many interesting questions were answered and problems solved.

In the evening a few bottles of wine were purchased to go with our evening meal where we discussed what we had learned or were baffled by.

Thursday 17th October.

The morning session was taken by ROVI Jane Duddle who demonstrated phones from Synaptic with easy to use talking software which can be installed on most phones. A lot of interest was shown in this as we were all impressed by what it could do. We were also shown the Alto 2 talking phone, and also TV voice guidance through a set top box sold by the RNIB.

We had an interesting demonstration of Future Technology that consisted of two short films demonstrating OrCam, which is a sensor fitted to glasses that sees what is in front of you, understands what information you seek and provides it to you through a bone-conductive ear piece. Another film followed, Augmented Reality, which showed how empty rooms would look when furniture, etc was installed. The last item, the Agent Smart Watch, was discussed and marvelled at.

All members of Llandudno staff were thanked for their time and expertise in providing such a varied programme and we hope to see them next year.

In the afternoon we had a quiz on general topics and bird songs. In the absence of Harry Beevers this was designed by myself and Margaret. We had a visit from Billy Baxter who added to the fun when he told some outlandish jokes. We all went home with heads filled and brains spinning with all the information given to us, and realising that there is a wealth of technology available of enormous assistance to blind and visually impaired people. Many thanks to all those involved with the club.



Family News.

Births:

Congratulations to Ronald and Joan Jefferies who celebrated the birth of their great granddaughter Phoebe Ellen Morris, who was born to their granddaughter Victoria and partner Steve on 18th October.

Congratulations to Helen Hunter on the birth of her great great granddaughter Lexi, who was born on 26th May 2013 to Mr & Mrs D Hunter. She also celebrated the birth of her great grandson George who was born on 26th October 2013 to Mr & Mrs P Hunter.

Joan Osborne celebrated the arrival of three great granddaughters. Lalie was born to her granddaughter Felise and husband Adam on 13th October. Great granddaughters Amalie and Betsy were born to her granddaughter Louise and husband Dan on 4th November.

Birthdays:

Bernie Stevens who celebrated his 103rd birthday on 23rd November.

Max Adams who celebrated his 100th birthday on 11th November.

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.

Catherine Androlia who died on 8th November 2013. Catherine was the widow of Louis Androlia.

Rachel Davies who died on 27th October 2013. Rachel was the widow of the late Frederick Davies.

Alice Morris who died on 2nd November 2013. Alice was the wife of John Morris.

Alice 'Sally' Simcocks who died on 18th October 2013. Sally was the widow of the late Alfred Simcocks.

Anniversaries:

Blue Sapphire (65th):

James & Vera Walker of Stourport on Severn, Worcs on 13th November.

Diamond (60th):

Peter & Susan Murdoch of Newport, Gwent on 7th November.

Doug & Mary Griffiths of Morpeth, Northumberland on 7th November.

Adam & Mary Brownlie of East Kilbride, Glasgow on 12th November.

Golden (50th):

Joseph & Anne Elsender of Durham, County Durham on 9th November.

Ted & Eunice Bunting of Scarborough, North Yorkshire on 30th November.



Picture: Steve & Janet Nixon in Barbados on their wedding day on 26th November 2012.

Welcome to Blind Veterans UK.

John Acheson of Selby, North Yorkshire Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Armoured Corps from 1944 to 1948.

Antony 'Tony' Canning of Deal, Kent Served in the Royal Navy from 1948 to 1951.

Captain Christopher 'Dickie' Bird of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear has Served in the Adjutant General's Corps since 1982.

Ronald Bird of Rednal, Birmingham Served in the General Service Corps, the South Staffordshire Regiment and the Warwickshire Yeomanry from 1947 to 1952.

Raymond Blackmore of Cambridge Served in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1939 to 1946.

Kenneth 'Harry' Brough of Padgate, Warrington Served in the Royal Air Force from 1948 to 1950.

Charles Cawthorne of Swindon, Wiltshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1939 to 1974.

Montague Chappell of Windsor, Berkshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1941 to 1946.

George Croft of Prescot, Merseyside Served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1951.

Graeme Cubbin of Wirral, Merseyside Served in the Merchant Navy from 1940 to 1986.

Sidney Cutter of Solihull, West Midlands Served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1947.

Richard 'Glyn' Davies of Church Stretton, Shropshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1945 to 1948.

Guardsman John Dawson of Birmingham has Served in the Grenadier Guards since 2009.

Owen Diaper of Stowmarket, Suffolk Served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

John Douglas of Holyhead, Gwynedd Served in the General Service Corps and the Cameron Highlanders from 1944 to 1945.

John Duff of Newcastle Upon Tyne Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1940 to 1946.

Arthur Duggan of Chichester, West Sussex Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

Ronald Elgood of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1947.

David Evans of Port Talbot, West Glamorgan Served in the Royal Artillery from 1952 to 1957.

William Ford of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

Colin Freeman of Rotherham, South Yorkshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.

William Habbergham of Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire Served in the Prince of Wales's Own Regiment from 1965 to 1968.

Patrick Halpin of Luton, Bedfordshire Served in the Welch Regiment from 1954 to 1960.

John Harlin of Livingston, West Lothian Served in the Royal Navy from 1963 to 1965.

Robert Hewson of Newcastle Upon Tyne Served in the Royal Engineers from 1957 to 1962.

Barrington Horton of Honiton, Devon Served in the Royal Signals from 1944 to 1968.

Kenneth Howe of King's Lynn, Norfolk Served in the Royal Engineers from 1951 to 1956.

John Jones of Wolverhampton Served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1954.

Thomas Levett of Uckfield, East Sussex Served in the Royal Navy from 1934 to 1947.

Leslie Manklow of Heathfield, East Sussex Served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1939 to 1946.

Eion McEwan of Milton of Campsie, Glasgow Served in the Black Watch from 1940 to 1946.

Joseph Milburn of Gateshead, Tyne and Wear Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

Leonard Mills of Seaford, East Sussex Served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1947.

Leonard Moore of Eltham, South East London Served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946.

Eric Newlan of Lancing, West Sussex Served in the Non Combatant Corps, attached to the Royal Engineers from 1941 to 1943.

Francis Odling-Smee of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1954 to 1959.

John Oliver of Tonbridge, Kent Served in the Royal Air Force from 1955 to 1957.

William Phillips of Fareham, Hampshire Served in the Army Catering Corps from 1975 to 1979.

Thomas Port of Marlborough, Wiltshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1934 to 1977.

Arthur Powell of Flint, Clwyd Served in the General Service Corps, the South Wales Borderers, the Welch Regiment and the Royal Artillery from 1947 to 1964.

Arthur Ramsden of Faversham, Kent Served in the Royal Air Force from 1937 to 1946.

James Randall of Haverhill, Suffolk Served in the Royal Military Police in 1948.

Joseph 'Ray' Ransome of Middlesbrough, Cleveland Served in the Green Howards from 1945 to 1948.

Kenneth Robertson of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1946 to 1948.

Henry Ruscoe of Bury, Lancashire Served in the Royal Signals from 1948 to 1950.

John Schartau of Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Signals from 1946 to 1948.

Edward Shaw of Glasgow Served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Royal Navy from 1946 to 1968.

Beatrice Shields of Sheffield, South Yorkshire Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1944 to 1952.

Leslie Simpson of Southport, Merseyside Served in the Royal Signals from 1952 to 1954.

Kazimierz 'Kazik' Slaski of Great Shelford, Cambridge Served in the Polish Army Armoured Division from 1942 to 1948.

Ronald Smith of Sheffield, South Yorkshire Served in the Coldstream Guards from 1939 to 1945.

Anthony Strutt of St Leonards-On-Sea, East Sussex Served in the Royal Navy from 1949 to 1954.

Michael Surgenor of Belfast, Northern Ireland Served in the Irish Guards and the Royal Irish Regiment from 1987 to 1997.

Laurance Ulyatt of Castle Douglas, Kirkcudbrightshire Served in the Royal Signals from 1957 to 1964.

Alan Walker of Tadworth, Surrey Served in the Royal Corps of Transport from 1975 to 1990.

Robert Walker of Colwyn Bay, Clwyd Served in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1957.

John Watson of Morpeth, Northumberland Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1953.

Harold Welton of Poole, Dorset Served in the General Service Corps, the Reconnaissance Corps and the King's Royal Hussars from 1944 to 1947.

Robert Williams of Windsor, Berkshire Served in the Royal Artillery from 1940 to 1946.

James Wood of Newbiggin-By-The-Sea, Northumberland Served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1959.

Patrick Wraight of New Milton, Hampshire Served in the Royal Artillery from 1944 to 1945.

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.

Bernard 'Gerry' Asquith of Solihull, West Midlands died on 21st October 2013, aged 87. He Served in the Royal Navy from 1944 when he took part in the Russian Convoys and was also in the Mediterranean and Pacific. He was discharged as an Ordinary Seaman in 1947.

Margaret Austin of Dorking, Surrey died on 23rd October 2013, aged 87. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Army in 1944, trained as a driver in Guildford and was posted to Ayr and Stranraer to drive lorries and ambulances. Posted to Cairo, she worked as a radio announcer on Forces Broadcasting before her discharge in 1947.

Raymond Beer of Crawley, West Sussex died on 6th November 2013, aged 86. He joined the General Service Corps for National Service in 1946 and transferred to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps a month later, Serving in Maidstone and later in Egypt prior to discharge in 1948.

Geoffrey Bishop of Norwich, Norfolk died on 20th October 2013, aged 83. He joined the Royal Navy in 1948. He Served on board the Battle class destroyer HMS Finisterre and subsequently in the frigate HMS Morecambe Bay operating from Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Japan and Korea. He was discharged in 1955 as an Able Seaman.

Frederica Bruce of Shepperton, Middlesex died on 5th November 2013, aged 91. She joined the Women's Royal Naval Service in 1943, training at RNAS Yeovilton qualifying in communications and radar. She Served in Northern Ireland at a naval air station in support of the Battle of the Atlantic. She was discharged in 1946 as a Leading Wren.

William 'Bill' Burrows of Luton, Bedfordshire died on 26th October 2013, aged 83. He Served in the Royal Air Force from 1948 to 1950, leaving as a Leading Aircraftman.

Charles Carpenter of Blackpool, Lancashire died on 17th October 2013, aged 100. Before joining the Armed Forces he drove a pony and cart with his father helping to maintain the extensive gardens on an estate in Haslemere. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1940 and Served as a driver in Benares, India before being deployed to Burma. He was discharged in 1946.

Richard Charters of Wirral, Merseyside died on 18th October 2013, aged 84. He joined the Merchant Navy in 1945 as a Cabin Boy and served in the SS Tamaroa and was involved in Operation Zipper, the invasion of Malaya. In 1945 he transferred to the British Prospector. He left the Merchant Navy as a Seaman in 1946 to join the RAF. He was discharged as a Leading Aircraftman in 1966.

Joseph Chippendale of Darwen, Lancashire died on 6th November 2013, aged 87. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943, training at Portsmouth. He Served in the cruiser HMS Hawkins and was in the Far East Serving in minesweepers. He was discharged in 1946 as a Stoker First Class.

Christopher Christmas of Liskeard, Cornwall died on 6th October 2013, aged 87. He joined the Royal Artillery (TA) in 1957, transferred to the Royal Engineers (TA) in 1961 and was discharged in 1964 as a Lance Corporal.

Sheila Clune of Emsworth, Hampshire died on the 17th September 2013, aged 87. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1945 and Served in the motor transport section as a driver in Scotland. She was later posted to Austria where she met her husband. She was discharged in 1947.

Albert Cochrane of Catford, South East London died on 7th November 2013, aged 93. Called up in 1939 he joined the Royal Fusiliers and after training was stationed in the UK and France. He was injured in an ammunition dump explosion and invalided out of the Army in November 1943, leaving as a Private.

Vernon Cocks of Camforth, Lancashire died on 21st October 2013, aged 93. He joined the Royal Artillery (TA) in 1939 and trained in the use of Bofors guns. He was stationed in the Orkney Islands for 17 months where his battery was protecting naval ships and he was later posted to the Midlands and then to the protection of the south coast. His battery was sent to Germany in 1945. He was discharged in 1946 as a Warrant Sergeant.

Norman Craven of Huddersfield, West Yorkshire died on 2nd November 2013, aged 90. He joined the RAF in 1945, just before VE Day and qualified as a flight electronic engineer on Lancaster bombers and DC3s. He Served in India and Burma and was discharged in 1947 as a Leading Aircraftman.

Joseph Donkin of Sunderland, Tyne & Wear died on 3rd November 2013, aged 85. He Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1946 to 1948 in Egypt and Italy, leaving as a Sergeant.

Christopher Fitzsimons of Altrincham, Cheshire died on 24th July 2013, aged 93. He joined the RAF in 1940 and Served at Wick and St Athan as an aircraft fitter. He was discharged as an Aircraftman 1st Class in 1946.

Roy Flanders of Walthamstow, East London died on 6th November 2013, aged 94. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1939 and Served in North Africa and Europe before discharge as a Sergeant in 1946.

Margarita Greenwood of Cardiff, South Glamorgan died on 23rd October 2013, aged 93. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1939 and trained as a radar operator. She was mentioned twice in Dispatches during the Battle of Britain. She Served in the UK at air stations in Sussex, the Isle of Wight and Lincolnshire. She was demobilised in 1946 leaving as a Section Officer.

Albert Hardie of Bexleyheath, Kent died on 20th October 2013, aged 78. He began Served as a Driver in the Royal Signals from 1954 for National Service. He Served in Edinburgh and Glasgow until he was discharged in 1956.

John Jones of Solihull, West Midlands died on 16th October 2013, aged 98. He joined the Royal Naval Voluntary Reserve in 1939 and trained as a radio mechanic. He was based at Chatham and Served in HMS Ships Suffolk, Primrose and Valiant. He was discharged as a Petty Officer Radio Mechanic in 1946.

Thomas Jones of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 1st November 2013, aged 86. He joined the Steward branch of the Royal Navy in 1945, trained in Portsmouth and Served in the Mediterranean, Aden, Colombo and the Far East. He was discharged in 1947.

Peter King of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk died on 17th October 2013, aged 81. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1951 and Served as a radar operator near Bournemouth. He left as a Senior Aircraftman in 1953.

William 'Bill' Laycock died on 4th November 2013, aged 89. He Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 when he qualified as a Signaller and Served largely in Atlantic convoys. He was discharged in 1945 as a Leading Telegraphist.

Michael Lee of Brighton, East Sussex died on 5th November 2013, aged 69. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1962 and after training at Compton Bassett he spent two and a half years between Cyprus and Libya and two years at Mildenhall. He Served until 1967, leaving as a Senior Aircraftman.

Barry Longbone of Washington, Tyne and Wear died on 22nd October 2013, aged 82. He joined the Royal Air Force for National Service in 1949 and Served at RAF Melksham specialising in electronics. He was discharged in 1951 as a Leading Aircraftman.

Dennis Pennicott of Gosport, Hampshire died on 4th November 2013, aged 82. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1948 and specialised in plant machinery and Served in Cyprus, Jordan, Egypt, Libya, Aden, Sri Lanka and Hong Kong. He also Served with the SAS in Malaya and was discharged as a Corporal in 1960.

Frederick 'Ted' Pontefract of Dronfield, Derbyshire died on 11th October 2013, aged 93. He joined the 8th Surrey Regiment Royal Artillery in 1941 and Served in North Africa and Italy. He was discharged as a Lance Bombardier in 1946.

John Ramshall of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 17th October 2013, aged 87. He joined the Royal Navy in 1944 and after training specialised in gunnery and torpedoes. He Served at HMS Hornet on motor torpedo boats in the English Channel and Irish Sea. He was later sent to the Mediterranean onboard HMS Trouncer before discharge in 1947 as an Able Seaman.

George Readshaw of Barrow in Furness, Cumbria died on 9th April 2013, aged 98. He joined the RAF in 1940 and trained at RAF Padgate, then in Wales. He was posted to India, Serving as a Signaller and was discharged in 1946.

Charles Rew of Brentwood, Essex died on 20th October 2013, aged 96. He joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1940 and fought in Greece and Crete where he escaped the German invasion. He then fought in Egypt and North Africa, providing fuel to vehicles in the front line. He was discharged in 1946.

Elizabeth Rimington of Haywards Heath, West Sussex died on 6th November 2013, aged 90. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1942, training at Compton Bassett as a ground to air wireless operator. She was posted to RAF Silverstone followed by Byler Hall, the HQ for 190 Squadron, where she remained until discharge in 1946 as a Leading Aircraftwoman.

James Ross of Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex died on 25th October 2013, aged 96. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943. His ship took part in the Normandy Landings at Omaha Beach and he also Served in Malta before being discharged as an Acting Able Seaman in 1947.

Hugh 'Hughie' Saunders of Holywell, Clwyd died on 1st November 2013, aged 80. He joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in November 1951 and was posted to Port Said in the Suez Canal Zone. He transferred to the South Wales Borderers. He then Served in Eritrea, Mombasa and elsewhere in Kenya. In Germany he joined the band as a Drummer and completed his National Service in 1953.

Sheila Starns of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 5th November 2013, aged 91. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1942 where she was an M/T driver Serving in Monmouthshire and Scotland. She was discharged in 1946.

William Stening of Hove, East Sussex died on 13th May 2013, aged 93. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1939 and Served in Malta during the siege and later in Europe. He was discharged as a Sergeant in 1946.

Francis 'Frank' Timlett of Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex died on 1st July 2013, aged 88. He joined the Fleet Air Arm in 1943 and trained at HMS Daedalus, Lee-on-Solent. He was posted to Trinidad and was in the escort carrier, HMS Campania as an air gunner in Swordfish aircraft. He was discharged in 1946 as a Naval Airman.

David Weltman of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 20th October 2013, aged 81. He Served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 in the UK and USA. He was discharged in 1952 as a Gunner.

Gloria Williams of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 23rd May 2013, aged 86. She joined the Women's Royal Naval Service in 1944, after training at Mill Hill she Served as a writer at a Navy base in Ivybridge, Devon. She was discharged in 1945 as a Leading Wren.

