

March 2014

# Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



In the dearest  
memory of

ERNEST HENRY  
SHACKLETON  
EXPLORER

Born  
15<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1874  
Entered Life Eternal  
5<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1922





**On the cover:** Blind Veterans UK member Diane Mountford places a Blind Veterans UK wreath at Sir Ernest Shackleton's Memorial at Grytviken in South Georgia.



March 2014 | No 1045

# Review

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## Patron: Her Majesty the Queen

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

## Blind Veterans UK Calendar

### March.

Photography Week 30th March – 5th April **B**

### April.

Brighton Marathon 6th **B**

Virgin London Marathon 13th **B**

Masonic Weekend 25th - 27th **B**

Exploring the Peaks 7th - 11th **S**

Ex POW Reunion 11th – 14th **B**

The Golf Club 19th – 20th **B**

Adventure Week 13th - 19th **L**

### May.

Widows' Week 4th – 10th **B**

Archery Club 30th May – 9th June **B**

Potting & Plants Week 4th - 10th **L**

11th - 17th **L**

The Golf Club 17th – 18th **B**

Water Sports for Heroes Day **B**

Welsh History and Culture Week

Wood-fest 25th May - 31st **L**

# From the Chairman.

## Your message from Tim Davis.

On Tuesday 4th February I visited our Brighton centre to host a visit by the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State and Minister for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans Anna Soubry MP. She announced a further £40M would be made available for nationwide housing projects for Veterans. This money has been made available as a result of the fines paid by banks for their well published misdemeanours. Blind Veterans UK has already started to benefit from a £1M donation and is currently refurbishing a significant number of rooms at the Brighton centre.

The work in progress will mean Blind Veterans UK members will have larger rooms, walk in showers and better in room facilities. It will greatly help our members improve their quality of stay at Brighton and increase their ability to live independently. It is that independence of life we all value, and for which our organisation is principally in place. We are all hopeful that we may benefit further from this new fund, and continue to increase the volume and quality of accommodation that Blind Veterans UK offers in Brighton and our other centres.

During my visit I had the chance to talk to a number of our members and staff and see first-hand many of the activities that are available. I was extremely impressed with the range of activities from archery, shooting, arts and crafts, to the training and sports facilities. What also struck me was the fun members were having meeting old friends and making new ones, in the lounge, over a meal or at the bar! The positive spirit, exchange of humour and sense of fun was infectious.

Having grown up by the sea near Portsmouth, it was a real pleasure to visit the centre, smell the salt air and feel the sea breeze again; bracing as it was, it was invigorating too and I would commend it to all members, as well as our other centres in Llandudno and Sheffield.

On a separate note, the season of Reunion lunches starts in March. The calendar of locations and dates was published in the February Review. These events are always well attended and are a great opportunity to connect and enjoy the camaraderie of others. I greatly look forward to meeting many more members and staff up and down the country during the course of the year. Finally, I'm sure none of you have escaped the wet and windy weather and the continuous news of destruction and challenge it has created for so many people. Please keep safe, help others if you can. Spring is around the corner my favourite time of year!



# Noticeboard.

Dates for your diary and useful information.

## **The Summer Camp at HMS Sultan, by Dave Burrows, Organising Secretary.**

This year's summer camp at HMS Sultan will take place from 1400 Friday 1st August to 1000 on Saturday 9th August. We are once again limited to 25 Blind Veterans UK members due to Service accommodation constraints.

### **Background**

For many years members of Blind Veterans UK have assembled at Lee on the Solent, Hampshire for the annual Summer Camp sponsored by the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm. From the late 1940s this was held at HMS Daedalus until the Establishment's closure in 1996, when we transferred to our present location. There has been a long association with members of the Fleet Air Arm Field Gun Crew (FAAFGC) who acted as helpers (known affectionately as 'dogs'). They attended the camp on completion of the competition at the Royal Tournament, Earls Court. The FAAFGC Association continues to support the camp following the demise of the Royal Tournament in 1999.

### **Applications**

We have endeavoured for many years to create a summer camp 'family' and to maintain that ethos and atmosphere we do have members who regularly participate. That said, I am very careful to ensure that some places are offered to new applicants each year. There are no boundaries with regard to age or physical ability but we do check with the Welfare Officers to ensure suitability.

### **Finance**

The Summer Camp is funded through donations, fundraising by the FAAFGC Association and our local community. The campers are charged a nominal fee that goes towards insurance, transportation (visits during camp), catering and licences to use Service facilities. The committee has two Blind Veterans UK member representatives who are encouraged to voice the opinions and wishes of the campers in the planning of the event.

To recap, HMS Sultan Summer Camp in 2014, will take place from 1400 Friday

1st August to 1000 on Saturday 9th August, applications are to be forwarded to Dave Burrows either by telephone on: 02392 550532, or by email at: [dcb119399@aol.com](mailto:dcb119399@aol.com) or by post to: 18 Portsmouth Road, Lee on the Solent, Hampshire, PO13 9AG.

The application list will close on 1st May and everyone will be informed if they have been successful or not. We look forward to receiving your applications and meeting up in August.

Someone who has been on the annual HMS Sultan Summer Camp is Bill Goddon. Bill says why it's so great: "It's a good week away, but importantly it gives our spouses a break, as it's not easy living with someone with a vision impairment. Over a period of time it's draining. As I have problems with light, when I'm indoors I tend to walk around with the curtains and blinds closed. It's nice for one week a year for my wife to live a normal existence with them open and the lights on. It also gives me a break as I meet up with people I only see once or twice a year, at Sultan and at the Cenotaph for Remembrance weekend.

"There's a great bond between the campers, and Dave Burrows organises so many great activities. I think gliding is the most exciting thing I've done. It's an incredible feeling when the cable drops away and it's total silence as you move through the air. Summer Camp has helped my confidence 100%. I've attended the Brighton centre since 2005 and that has also made me a more confident person. As my fellow members know all too well, when you can't see properly it knocks your confidence and life becomes very difficult. At the Brighton centre and HMS Sultan Summer Camp you meet people who are similarly placed. We tease one another when people walk into door frames. There's the usual banter that goes on between the Services.

"I still need to ask for assistance for certain things, but my confidence has grown and I'm a changed man. Thank you Blind Veterans UK and thank you Dave Burrows."

## **Margaret Neale.**

It was incorrectly reported in the February 2014 edition of the Review that Margaret Neale from Downham Market in Norfolk had passed away. This is not the case as we can confirm she is very much alive and looking forward to the Widows' Week at the Brighton centre. We extend our sincere apologies to Mrs Neale and her family and friends.



## **Blind Veterans UK events in 2014.**

If you want to take part in an event this year we have a range for you to challenge yourself in 2014, while raising money to help us in our work.

### **Red Devils sky dives in Nottingham on 7th May and in Salisbury on 28th May 2014.**

Experience the adrenaline rush of tandem skydiving with the best in the business at Nottingham's Langar Airfield or Salisbury's Old Sarum Airfield. The Red Devils are one of the world's most famous parachute display teams and the official parachute display team for both the Parachute Regiment and the British Army. The registration fee is £299 or £100 and you need to raise a minimum of £500 in sponsorship.

### **Nightrider — 7th to 8th June 2014.**

The 100k Nightrider cycle challenge around London is a unique event as it takes in so many iconic sights to ensure you have a really memorable experience. You will cycle over Tower Bridge, through Canary Wharf, around the buzzing Piccadilly Circus; past the London Eye and you will cycle over the iconic zebra crossing on Abbey Road and much, much more! The ride starts from either Alexandra Palace in North London or Crystal Palace in South London. The registration fee is £39 and you need to raise a minimum of £175 in sponsorship.

### **London to Brighton 100K walk — 21st to 22nd June 2014.**

The event is a tough personal challenge for anyone who wants to take part; experienced walkers, recreational strollers, or beginners who want to do something great for themselves and for charity. You can take part as an individual and tackle the whole 100km course, or you could take part as a team relay. A team of four can each complete 25km or a team of two can complete 50km each. The registration fee is £99 for an individual or £120 per relay team. Individuals need to raise £250 and relay teams £500.

### **Unite and Bike for Heroes — 4th to 8th August 2014.**

A moving, inspiring and unique event to commemorate and pay tribute to the fallen heroes of The Great War. It is only open to military charities and this cycling event follows the WW1 centenary route from Folkestone into Northern France to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The

registration fee is £149 and you will need to raise a minimum of £1,895 or £775 in sponsorship. There is also a self-funding option.

### **Ride London — 10th August.**

Celebrate the London 2012 cycling legacy and jump on your bike to cycle 100 miles through London and Surrey in August 2014 in the Prudential Ride London to Surrey 100 event. The cycle starts at the Olympic Park in Stratford, along the closed roads of London, through the beautiful Surrey countryside and finishes on the Mall outside Buckingham Palace. The registration fee is £400 and you will need to raise a minimum of £700 in sponsorship.

### **Great North Run — 7th September.**

Join us for the UK's most popular half marathon which has been described as the greatest in the world! The route takes in the iconic Tyne Bridge, goes through Gateshead passing the famous international athletics stadium and finishes in the coastal town of South Shields. The registration fee is £30 and you will need to raise a minimum of £300 in sponsorship.

### **Berlin Marathon — 28th September.**

This hugely popular running event spans the vast urban metropolis of this historic city, both starting and finishing close to the world famous Brandenburg Gate, it's a must do event for running enthusiasts! The registration fee is £45 and you will need to raise a minimum of £1,000 in sponsorship.

### **Cardiff Half Marathon — 5th October.**

Take part in one of the UK's biggest road races in this glorious capital city of Wales. We have 10 gold bond places available. The registration fee and sponsorship have yet to be confirmed.

### **Royal Parks Half Marathon — 12th October.**

You will run the 13.1 miles through four of London's Royal Parks — Hyde Park, Kensington Gardens, St James' Park and Green Park in their autumnal splendour. The registration fee is £30 and you need to raise a minimum of £300 in sponsorship.

If you have any questions about any of the events or you would like to find out how to apply for a place, please email [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk) or telephone Aaron Tillyer on 020 7616 7927.



## Contact numbers.

### Our centres:

The telephone number for the Brighton centre is: 01273 307811.

The telephone number for the Llandudno centre is: 01492 868700.

The telephone number for the Sheffield centre is: 0114 2672550.

### The Booking Office:

To book your accommodation please contact the Booking Office on telephone: 01273 391500. Please do remember that if you have care needs you must first contact your Welfare Officer.

**ROVI on Duty:** If you need to speak with the ROVI on Duty please telephone: 01273 391447.

## October computer club dates.

The Computer Club at the Llandudno centre will now take place from 21st to 24th October 2014.

## Are you in contact with family members of WWI VADs from our Regent's Park centre?

If you are in contact with descendants of any of the wonderful women from the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VADs) who worked at our Regent's Park centre during World War One please get in touch with Catherine Goodier of the Review. Her telephone number is: 020 7616 8367 or email: [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk)

## The Golf Club.

It was stated in the February Review supplement that members who wished to attend the Golf Club would need their own guide. If you do not have a guide Blind Veterans UK will attempt to pair you with a local volunteer. You can obtain details from Pam Crossan on 02381 787636 or email: [pcrossan@talktalk.net](mailto:pcrossan@talktalk.net) Alternatively telephone Graham Johnson on 02380 702505.

## Join the Sheffield Blind Bowling Club.

In his role as secretary of the Sheffield Blind Bowling Club, Blind Veterans UK member Graham Draycott is inviting his fellow members, and any vision impaired friends they may have in Sheffield and the surrounding areas to join the Sheffield Blind Bowling Club.

Graham said: "The club meet every Wednesday and it is open to men and women. In the winter we play at the Concord Sports Centre and transport is provided to and from the venue. We meet there at 11am and play for an hour when we break for tea and biscuits and a chat before heading to the town centre for 1pm.

"In the summer months we play at Hillsborough Park Bowling Club when we start at 10am and play for an hour before we break for tea and biscuits before resuming our bowling and finishing at 12 noon.

"I'd like to thank the Primary Club who are based at Lords Cricket ground as they have sponsored our winter season."

If you would like to take part please contact Graham Draycott on telephone: 0114 286 4121 or email him at [graham.draycott@gmail.com](mailto:graham.draycott@gmail.com)

## Thank you to the Milton Keynes Community Foundation.

Blind Veterans UK recently received a £4,963 grant from the Milton Keynes Community Foundation; this generous donation was made to contribute towards the costs of providing welfare support to members living in Milton Keynes. The Milton Keynes Foundation works to provide support to the voluntary sector in Milton Keynes with the aim of enriching the lives of the town's citizens. We are grateful for their support and our ongoing relationship with them.

Their website can be viewed at: [www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk/](http://www.mkcommunityfoundation.co.uk/)  
**About-us**



# Letters to the Editor.

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

Dear Editor

On behalf of my wife and myself we would like to thank Blind Veterans UK for the beautiful basket of flowers received on the occasion of our Golden Wedding Anniversary in December. We would also like to thank the Council of Blind Veterans UK for their kind letter of congratulations. The day was celebrated with a quiet family lunch as the main celebration had been an all expenses paid luxury two week cruise earlier in the year around Norway and the Fjords from family members.

Yours faithfully,

David & Rose Stevenson,  
Wimborne, Dorset.



**Picture:** David and Rose Stevenson during their anniversary cruise in 2013.

Dear Editor,

## **Lasting friendship.**

Many years ago our daughter and her family were moving to Germany. My grandchildren were concerned about their black Labrador 'Alfie' and asked if we would look after him until their return. Thinking this would perhaps be a couple of years, we agreed. However this turned out to be about 14 years! Our daily walk took us down to the beach through a country park, a route of approximately two miles.

While walking one day I met another gentleman who was also walking his daughter's dog. We passed the time of day which consisted of general conversation: nice day, what's your dog's name, lovely walk etc. Little did we know this was to be the start of a long lasting friendship. Some time later we were joined by another local chap and became known locally on our morning constitutional as the 'last of the summer wine' gentlemen.

The years have gone by and sadly our dogs have gone to the great kennel in the sky and yes we do miss them. But they were the catalysts for a friendship that continues today.

Sadly my eyesight has deteriorated, but we still go walking. They are my eyes and I am their ears, which helps when crossing busy roads.

They are in their 90s now and their friendship means a lot to me. It allows me the independence to enjoy exercise and fresh air, not to mention their antics!

Yours faithfully,

Doug Griffiths,  
Morpeth.



# Defence Minister visits the Brighton centre.

As you read in the Letter from the Chairman, on 4th February 2014, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary for State for Defence Personnel, Welfare and Veterans, Anna Soubry MP, visited the Brighton centre when she announced the Government's second stage of its commitment to house veterans. Up to £40 million from Libor fines imposed on banks will help veterans' charities build new homes, buy new accommodation and spruce up ageing facilities.

The Minister was invited to the centre by Andrew Jones, Blind Veterans UK's Director of Fundraising and Communications, when he attended a reception at Downing Street in 2013 following the announcement that we would receive £1 million from the Libor funds. The £1 million has been used to refurbish accommodation facilities at the Brighton centre.

The announcement made at the Brighton centre is that the Government funded projects are expected to include homeless hostels and half-way houses for veterans who have fallen on hard times, supported housing for the wounded, injured and sick, and care homes. This demonstrates the Government's continued commitment to our Armed Forces, veterans and their families.

Ms Soubry, was shown around by the Chairman Tim Davis and Centre Manager Lesley Garven who introduced the Minister to a number of our members who included Sybil Henderson, Mark Threadgold, Idris Evans, John Cunnington, Clifford Gower and Norman Perry. John Cunnington, a former RAF Senior, gave an archery display and Norman Perry spoke with the Minister in the Art & Craft Workshop.

Ms Soubry said: "The men and women of our Armed Forces have served their country with honour and bravery so it is only right that we help meet their housing needs when they have fallen on hard times, been wounded in service or need day-to-day care and support once they have left the Armed Forces. I am delighted that we have been able to double the amount we have already invested in projects through the Libor fines."

The Ministerial visit generated coverage on BBC South East, ITV Meridian, BFBS, the Press Association, the Argus, the Independent and websites.



**Picture:** Anna Soubry MP speaks with Brighton centre resident Sybil Henderson and the Chairman Tim Davis.



**Picture:** The Minister speaks to Clifford Gower with Lesley Garven and Chairman Tim Davis.



# Arfur's war.

Arthur and Lilian Cole were recently invited to reopen the retitled Lloyds Bank in Knapphill, Surrey by Simon Lambert, their Bank Manager. Arthur, who fought in the Royal Pioneer Corps in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, spoke about his war time experiences, 'Arfur's war' as he calls it, and the support he receives from Blind Veterans UK. He and Lilian manned a stand to collect money and raise awareness for Blind Veterans UK. They collected a highly respectable £550 in one morning.

Arthur said: "I told them about Blind Veterans UK and the support I receive and then one of my stories from 'Arfur's war'. It was about the day we arrived at Portsmouth Harbour station, 225 Company RPC, with all equipment for embarkation for the D-Day Landings and made our way along a dimly lit platform.

"Our attention was drawn to the gates, through which there came a number of officers, perhaps 12 in all, some of them carrying trays. The officers were dressed in full length greatcoats that were worn by Staff Officers and the Imperial Guard. They spread themselves along our numbers and we stood to attention.

"An officer proffered a handshake and said a few words to the man and passed a small package to him from the tray. He then passed on to the next man and it was soon my turn. The officer spoke to me. 'What is your name Corporal?' I replied 'Cole Sir.' Noting my hesitancy he smiled and waited, I quickly recovered and said '13093381 Arthur Cole Lance Corporal Sir.' He handed me a small packet and said 'Keep well, keep safe with the Lord. Come home safe and well.'

"As he was almost in full shadow I made a very slight turn and was able to face him fully. As our eyes met, it was then I realised I had been addressed by the King. I was well aware that he had approached several others before me and afterwards. That did not negate the fact that my King had spoken with me and I with him. It was then we started to board the The Maid of Orleans to sail to the D-Day landing beaches. Once onboard I opened the packet and it contained a copy of the New Testament that stayed on me for the remainder of the war and long after."





## **Former Royal Engineer Ian Slack to cycle through the Battlefields of WWI from 4th to 8th August to support Blind Veterans UK — and you can join him.**

On 4th August 1914 Sir Edward Grey, Britain's foreign secretary at the time, said: "The lamps are going out all over Europe, we shall not see them lit again in our lifetime."

A century later, on 4th August 2014, Ian Slack, a 47 year old former Royal Engineer from Braintree in Essex, will remember those who fought and those who perished in the first truly global war as he cycles through the WWI battlefields of Belgium and France. He will take part in the Unite and Bike for Heroes cycle ride from 4th to 8th August 2014.

Ian served in the Royal Engineers for nine years, until sight loss forced him to take medical retirement in 1997. For four years of his career he served with the Queen's Gurkha Engineers. He was in the first Gulf War and he served in the UK, Germany, Bosnia, Hong Kong, Brunei, the Falklands and many other countries.

There are still places available for anyone who would like to sign up to the Unite and Bike for Heroes cycle ride and join Ian and others as they cycle through the battlefields of Ypres to Arras, then on to Amiens to Compiègne to finish in Paris.

Ian chose to support Blind Veterans UK as he understands the importance of our work. His association with us started after a very dramatic episode in his life. Ian said: "I signed up to take part in Unite and Bike for two reasons. The first was to pay tribute to those we owe a great debt of honour to, and secondly to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK.

"I'd lost the sight in my left eye during a PT session whilst serving in Germany. I was a keen sportsman, playing rugby, skydiving and other risky sports. Absurdly I was playing Five a Side football in the gym when I was hit in the eye by a soft fluffy football. After a period in hospital and several operations, it was found I had a detached and torn retina, which has left me with no useful sight in my right eye and resulted in my medical discharge. I continued to play a number of sports including rugby until 2012, when I picked up a parasitic infection following a tournament in Asia which resulted in temporary blindness. I finally 'Saw Sense' and decided to retire from the game I loved. However, I took the opportunity to turn a negative into a positive and raise money for Blind Veterans UK. In that final month, I raised over £7,000"

When Ian retired from rugby he continued to help out with a junior team at Braintree Rugby Club. Unfortunately, by Christmas in his own words he was 'the fattest man in the world.' He returned to the gym with his usual gusto and after a couple of months and under duress, he tried a spinning class (indoor cycling) and became instantly addicted and was soon spinning four times a week. In May 2012, he made the transition to cycling when a friend lent him a bike and he was soon cycling in excess of 200km a week.

In August 2013 Ian saw the adverts for Unite and Bike for Heroes and decided to cycle the 325 miles through Belgium and France as it was a fitting way to show his respects and raise funds for a cause he feels very strongly about.

Ian continued: "The most immediate impact sight loss had was the complete loss of my self-confidence. I was no longer self sufficient and able to do things I had taken for granted. I couldn't walk around without flinching. The things that enabled me to cope most significantly were the advice from Blind Veterans UK and the various technical aids which allowed me to magnify and dictate. These aren't cheap and I was fortunate to have them to hand. I was so impressed to learn that part of the support that Blind Veterans UK offers their members, is training and the loan of technical aids to help them cope with their new environment. This is the key reason that I want to raise as much money as possible to enable them to continue their mission to help the thousands of veterans with sight loss.

"Losing my sight, although only temporary, taught me an important lesson. It was the importance of moving past denial and anger as quickly as possible so that you can accept help and make use of the many opportunities that are there to assist you to adapt to a life of sight loss. This is often easier said than done and as you the blind veterans reading this will know the charity helps with the three As of acceptance, adjustment and achievement."

During the battlefield cycle ride Ian will take time to remember the fallen. At selected memorials on the route he will stop to remember those who fought, those who tended the wounded and those who made the supreme sacrifice. He will place a poppy at memorials in the solemnity of Remembrance.

If you would like to sponsor Ian you can go to: [www.justgiving.com/FSS2](http://www.justgiving.com/FSS2) or you can phone Aaron Tillyer in the Blind Veterans UK Events team on 020 7616 7927.



Ian is devoting the year to raising funds through various two wheeled events, culminating in the ride to Paris. You can follow his exploits and the challenges, and offer support on his Facebook page at: [www.facebook.com/FSS2wheels](http://www.facebook.com/FSS2wheels)

If you would like to take part in the Unite and Bike for Heroes cycle ride from 4th to 8th August 2014 please contact Aaron Tillyer on telephone: 020 7616 7927 or email: [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk)

On registration you will be given a Blind Veterans UK t-shirt and training guides to prepare for the challenge and there will be regular email updates to keep you motivated. On the outward journey you will take the ferry from Dover to Calais and the Eurostar from Paris to the UK on return. As you cycle through the battlefields there will be route markers and you will be accompanied by vehicles carrying medical support and mechanics. There will be English speaking guides.



**Picture:** Ian Slack in action as he trains to cycle through the WWI Battlefields of Belgium and France. **Photo:** Ben Slack.

## This is what Blind Veterans UK means to me. By Graham Kiff.

I was blind I could not see  
I was blind I could not see  
What you could do for me

I wasn't strong I was meek  
I wasn't strong I was meek  
I went away on induction week

I came away with something new  
I came away and because of you

I don't need sight to have a vision  
I don't need sight to have a life

Because of you in every way  
My life gets better every day

Now I see  
Now I see  
What you did for me

To all the staff and volunteers at Blind Veterans UK from Kiffy.

When asked about the inspiration for his poem, 45 year old Graham Kiff from Stoke on Trent in Staffordshire, said: "I don't normally write poetry but it just came to me and I think it says everything I feel. I was thinking of all the help I've received from Blind Veterans UK since I became a member in 2006.

"I've just finished an introduction to counselling course at North Staffs University, which Blind Veterans UK paid for, and I had to write a lot and I think that made me think about things a bit more. For me the most important thing about being a member is that there's always someone to ask for help if you need it. And for that I am extremely grateful."



## Shackleton Revisited — A journey to South Georgia. By Diane Mountford.

After spending five glorious days exploring the north-western bays of Antarctica (and I have the stamp to prove it) we set sail for South Georgia. We passed the now notorious Elephant Island, a bleak and unwelcoming place. The following day, whilst crossing the Southern Ocean, which was unusually calm for the time of year, we were accompanied for around half an hour by a large pod of Fin Whales. These mighty mammals tend to travel in groups of four or five, but on this occasion some 50 to 60 saw fit to escort us through the freezing waters. It was an interruption to lunch that nobody minded!

We were part of an expedition that would take us to the final resting place of Sir Ernest Shackleton.

Saturday 28th December arrived and we awoke to see that we were anchored just off Cooper Bay, South Georgia. The weather was abysmal, severe winds and heavy snow obscured much of our view of the island. However, not to be defeated, we did venture out into the Zodiac boats for a closer view of fur seals, elephant seals, macaroni, chinstrap and king penguins. This island group is renowned for its abundance of wildlife. Snow-encrusted mountains loomed large behind the shoreline. They served as a daunting reminder of how disheartening it must have been to need to cross them when those brave men were already weak from cold, lack of nutrition and exhaustion. Later that day our ship moved on to view the Drygalski Fjord, a spectacular cleft in the rocks leading to the Risting Glacier. Our ship continued its quiet journey through the night, in full black-out. This is to prevent small petrels from being attracted to the light and crashing into the ship, harming and possibly killing themselves.

On the morning of Sunday 29th December we were anchored in the bay which is home to the small community of humans who live and work in this distant outpost of Great Britain. The view from our cabin, looked on to the dwellings, called Grytviken, and what we could loosely refer to as 'the town' basked in some rare summer sunshine. My husband, Richard, and I donned our Blind Veterans UK hoodies and then our Antarctic parkas and waterproof sea-boots and made our way to our Zodiac for the journey ashore. By this time the weather had closed in somewhat and a determined snow was falling. We trundled onto the rocky beach, clutching our precious cardboard box with its important contents. Several people had asked if they could accompany us

and so we passed the time watching fur seals and king penguins go about their everyday life. That isn't very much actually. The seals spend a great deal of time lying around belching and other exhalations and the penguins preen themselves in preparation for each and every photo opportunity. Spending time in the company of these cute and curious birds is delightful. Everyone returns to the ship smiling. They are an instant mood-lifter. Just don't smell them too closely.

At our agreed hour of 2pm local time we made our way up the slippery slope to the tiny cemetery where the body of Sir Ernest Shackleton lies. The grave is a simple slab of rock; inscribed on the back with a quote from Robert Browning: "I hold that a man should strive for his life's set prize". How true!

By now our helpful expedition team had taken the cardboard box for safe return to the ship (no litter or unnecessary waste is permitted) and we carried the lovely wreath between us, trying not to let too much snow dampen it before it was placed. On arrival at the cemetery we removed our parkas to ensure that our Blind Veteran UK coverings could clearly be seen. Previous to our ceremony the ship's tailor had sewn badges onto each left arm, linking the expedition with our organisation. A small crowd of fellow travellers assembled around the grave and Richard handed me the Blind Veterans UK wreath, which I placed on the front of the grave. For the sake of the environment we had arranged that it would later be removed and taken to the little church. Snow continued to fall as cameras snapped away. So we had the rare privilege of being on the photographic records of the expedition amongst all the penguins, seals, birds and the occasional whale.

Minutes after our event the snow stopped and a pale sun appeared. Shadows were short as it was their summer and so we picked our way through the rusting remains of a whaling station and visited the lovely little church and museum. Richard and I felt quite emotional. This island has many stories to tell, but the two most wonderful of all are the bravery of Shackleton and his team in 1915 and the bravery of serving members of Her Majesty's Armed Forces in 1982. Richard and I are proud to have had the honour of linking the two events by the simple laying of a wreath one cold and blustery summer day.

There were a lot of people on the island to visit Shackleton's grave who had travelled from all over the world. We travelled with Seabourn and we were honoured that Gunter, its director, came to the laying of the wreath at Sir Ernest



Shackleton's memorial. We were also honoured that the Island's Governor Simon thanked us for placing the wreath as he said it meant a lot to the islanders. He has just come out of the Army and it is his first civilian job. Shackleton's was one of the greatest feats of human endurance. It was also the greatest display of loyalty ever, as he told the men he would go in search of help to ensure they were rescued, and he did. He kept his word. It was akin to the loyalty you get in the Forces and now the loyalty we find at Blind Veterans UK.

It's been said before by many people that Blind Veterans UK is without doubt a family that none of us ever realised we would have. It has given me my confidence back. I was in a really low place when I came to the organisation, but I spent time with other members and learnt what they had achieved and they inspired me and gave me encouragement. It's a great comfort to know Blind Veterans UK will be there for the rest of my life. I have been asked to speak on behalf of the No One Alone team about my experiences of sight loss to try and reach other vision impaired veterans. They estimate there are 68,000 vision impaired veterans in the UK who are eligible to join us and they too can benefit, as we all have, by becoming a member of this great organisation.



**Picture:** Leaving Grytviken on the Zodiac.

## **Sir Ernest Shackleton's visit to our World War One training centre in Regent's Park. From the July 1917 edition of the Review.**

"Mere words cannot show my respect for you, and therefore I have come to St Dunstan's to see you first before I go to speak to anyone else."

Those are the words which Sir Ernest Shackleton used when he came to Blind Veterans UK (then St Dunstan's) quite shortly after reaching London from his thrilling expedition to the South Pole regions, where, as everybody knows, his

good ship was smashed by the ice and his crew left marooned for months, whilst he went away north in an open boat to get assistance for their rescue. Six days and nights Sir Ernest spent in that open boat. He recounted some of the thrilling incidents encountered on that perilous voyage, and described the experiences of himself and crew previous to the disaster which necessitated it.

Many interesting narratives of one kind and another have previously been given here, but never one which was listened to with greater interest and appreciation.

Of the 41 men who went on the expedition with Sir Ernest, 36 of those men are now serving at the Front. Just the sort of thing one would expect such fine fellows to do.



**Picture:** Sir Ernest Shackleton with our founder Sir Arthur Pearson in 1917 at our World War One training centre in London's Regent's Park.



## Alf Jones speaks of his time with the 8th Army during WWII. By Catherine Goodier.

On the day war was declared Alf Jones and six of his mates were already in uniform. They had joined the Royal Artillery (TA) in 1935 and on 3rd September 1939 the friends met up in Marylebone where they had grown up together to make their way to Paddington Barracks. It was the last day they would all be together.

Speaking with the Review at his house in Borehamwood, former Warrant Officer Alf Jones 846540, who is now 95, said: "By the time war was declared we already had two years on our service. There were seven of us in a crowd, Danny Fowles, Tom Whittaker, Bert Gibbs, Tommy Late, Matt Piggott and Harry Mac and each weekend we would go dancing with our girlfriends at The Portman Rooms in Marylebone and the Hammersmith Palais. When we joined the TA we didn't have the slightest idea that war was coming, we thought it would be an interesting thing to do, and it was, it was the making of us.

"Sadly Matt Piggott was killed during the war and I don't know what happened to Harry Mac as he was transferred to another unit. Bert Gibbs left the unit and went straight to the Middle East. When he came back he'd picked up some complaint in the desert and was discharged in about 1943.

"From Paddington Barracks I was initially stationed at Edgware where the Regiment was formed of 254 Battery Royal Artillery, 64th Field Regiment, we were part of the 8th Army. I went right through the war with that Regiment.

"I was amazed when the Colonel promoted me to Warrant Officer within a month as I was still only 21. Since joining the TA I'd worked really hard to improve my education and I think he recognised that. As a Warrant Officer I found myself in charge of troops who had returned from India, some of them Sergeants who had served in the British Army for 10 to 15 years. Initially some weren't too keen to take orders from me but I pacified them and most of them stayed with me.

"In early 1940 we transferred to Canterbury shortly before the air raids started. There was a Lieutenant Arnold who had come straight from university. He had a brand spanking new Austin 8 and I wanted a night out to take three or four of the Sergeants to a dance at the Hammersmith Palais. I asked Lieut Arnold if I could borrow his car and he said 'By all means.' So off we went. We walked

into the Hammersmith Palais and the dance was already in full swing, the big chandeliers were revolving and most of the girls were in evening dress. I can picture it clearly, it was a wonderful sight. All the girls looked beautiful in their frocks — in fact they looked out of this world. As we drove back after midnight we got caught in the first air raid and the shrapnel was popping down on the car. Being a brand new car you could really see the chips from the shrapnel. But Lieut Arnold was quite nice about it. We went right through the war together. I don't know what happened to him as once I was wounded I lost all trace of the unit.

"We went overseas in 1941. We left on ships that shouldn't have been at sea as they were real old tugs and we only got as far as Johannesburg in South Africa when they had to pull in as there were too many submarines around. We went up to a camp called Retreat where we remained for six weeks under canvas while we waited for a ship and we had a marvellous time. We learnt to surf, went on safari and to nightclubs and to the top of Table Mountain.

"Our adventure ended when the SS Nieuw Amsterdam, the fastest ship afloat, docked and we boarded her. She was so fast that we didn't have a submarine escort as they were left standing. Two or three times the alert went out for German submarines but we had a safe voyage.

"It was a wonderful feeling to go to the stern of the ship and just watch the waves. Growing up in Marylebone back in the 1920s and 30s I hadn't seen the sea as we couldn't afford to leave London. From the age of 10 I worked for a living. I'd go round the building sites and pick up all the wood, chop it up, tie it in bundles and go round the streets and sell it for a penny a bundle. I left school at the age of 14 and realised after I joined the TA that I still had a lot to learn and put my mind to it.

"In Suez we were under canvas for quite a while as we were the reserve division waiting for the guns to finish firing at El Alamein so that we could take off. When the firing finished we went straight into action and we fought through to Tunis in North Africa. Our first casualties when we took off were the Brigadier and his driver as their jeep hit a mine and they were both killed. They were our only casualties on the move. We served under Field Marshal Montgomery right from the start and we drove Rommel's Afrika Korps back to North Africa. I was in Protville when the Germans' surrendered and by May 1943 the war in North Africa was over.



"I shall never forget the sight of the Germans as they marched down the mountainside after they had surrendered. They were as proud as anything. They were just ordinary soldiers like us and in my opinion they were a wonderful crowd. They weren't sorry for themselves they were thankful that it was all over for them.

"We stayed in Protville in Tunis for about six weeks where we rested. Then three or four days after the Germans surrendered the King came out with Winston Churchill and we lined the route and took the salute from The King, Churchill and Montgomery. The King looked very pleased and proud and I always thought that Churchill was a real man. Our wounded were taken back to Cassasin and Cairo. After that Montgomery went back to England with half of the 8th Army for the invasion.

"It was then we were told we would take part in the invasion of Italy. As a Warrant Officer I was in the first group and we took off from North Africa in a landing craft, through some of the roughest seas in the world. We landed in Salerno at 0230 where we reconnoitred the ground. The Intelligence group came over with us and funny enough when I joined the Royal British Legion after the war the secretary asked me where I'd been and he was on the beach at the same time. He must have been right next to me.

"We got the feel of the beach and the surrounding areas and when first light came the troops came in. I was on the beach when the barrage started from the Royal Navy ships out at sea. I'd never seen a sight like it. There were rocket ships firing and that was constant for about three or four hours, it was deafening and very frightening in places.

"The troops landed and Captain Maine was one of the first ashore with the half track and he said: 'See you later Sergeant Major' and off he went. Half an hour later he came back and they'd blown his head off. He was ever such a nice chap and he was our first casualty. His father was Brigadier Maine. As the troops landed I told them where to go and we went forward and met the Germans and then the battle really began. At that time all the war ships were firing their rockets and shells in. The 18" guns were tremendous.

"We went forward and fought our way to Monte Cassino and that's where we came to a stop as we were the reserve division. As everyone knows the Germans were in peak position at the top of the mountain and they just wiped out the allied troops when they tried to take the mountain. The Australians, the

Canadians, the Sikhs, the American 5th Army and the 8th Army were fighting there. They were all scattered around and we couldn't go forward. All you can say about Monte Cassino is that the fighting was fierce, especially where the American 5th Army and the Sikhs were as they lost a heck of a lot of men. We lost men day after day, after day, and there wasn't a thing we could do about it.

"At that time I was offered a commission by Major General Templer, which I refused, and he called me a bloody fool. He informed us that there had been an invasion in Italy at Anzio and the rest of the 8th Army were put onto that. Again I landed early in the morning at Anzio and there was no opposition. There were no German troops there and the troops landed safely after us. At Monte Cassino Lieutenant General Mark Clark was in charge of the Army. The American General in charge at Anzio was under him. When we landed it was so quiet. We moved forward about three miles and he said that was where we would stay. We were puzzled at his decision but we couldn't argue with a General. If he tells you to stay — you stay.

"The reporters went forward and reported that we had a clear run to Rome without meeting any Germans. We would have been at the back of the Germans in Monte Cassino and they would have been in trouble. But we had to stay where we were as he'd given the order. If he'd let us go on to Rome we could have swept around the back of Monte Cassino and bottled them in. We could have stopped their supplies and they wouldn't have had any food or ammunition and that would have forced them to surrender. But we didn't. We stayed where we were and after three days the German Panzer division came down to meet us at Anzio from the other side of Monte Cassino.

"The fighting was so fierce that we lost about half of the Regiment in a week. It was terrible. I lost all my pals there. We were so short of men in my unit that they pulled us out of Anzio and sent us back to Cassasin to reform.

"I really want to mention the nurses who were at Anzio as they were with us all the time when we were in close combat. At Anzio their marquee was no more than 50 yards from the guns and they were under constant heavy fire as they operated. That's where I lost all my pals, and in particular two of my best friends, Sergeant Gavel and Ted Lewis. I had four guns on my unit and I lost three of them. The remaining gun was so badly damaged that we couldn't use it at all. The nurses operated all the time with the guns raging all around them during the battle. How they did it I just don't know and they did that right through the war. They weren't mentioned until 10 years after the war. At the



Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph the 8th Army were at the front and I thought that the nurses would be there with us, but they weren't included until years later when they were brought to the front.

"Lieutenant General Mark Clark had the orders that when the troops reached Rome they were to carry on to Florence and other key locations to drive the enemy back. But he didn't do that. He marched through Rome with his hat flying through the air to show that he was the victor and the people of Rome crowded onto the streets to welcome the victorious Allied troops. I met General Mark Clark once and thought of him as 'Two Gun Pete' as he had a pistol on either side of his belt.

"Anyway I was in Cassasin and not Rome as we were getting reinforcements to replace the men we'd lost at Anzio. When they arrived I'd go along the line and they were aged just 17, 18 and 19 and I thought to myself oh blimey we're in trouble again. I was still a young man myself but I didn't realise that. It didn't even go through my mind. We trained the units and returned to Italy. We landed in Salerno and went straight through to Florence. That's where I was badly wounded in mortar fire. You couldn't tell where they would land and if you were in the spot where they landed you were unfortunate, and on that day I was unfortunate. All I knew was that one moment I was walking along and the next moment I was in the air. It took me right off my feet and I hit the ground and after that I was unconscious. I had head wounds and I lost an eye. We were driving the Germans back and we were hit by the rear echelon who were covering their tracks. Of course we didn't realise it until we met them and by then it was too late wasn't it. Well for me it was too late, but then again we'd already beaten them and driven them out.

"I was unconscious for about four days before coming round in a large hospital in Rome. The American surgeon Colonel McCracken and the Australian surgeon Major Skeart operated on me. I was totally blind when I came to, but after about three weeks I got some of my sight back and the doctors told me to be careful, as I could lose the sight in my remaining eye.

"I was in hospital for about six weeks, including the day war was declared over, although I can't remember it. After I'd got back on my feet I'd become friendly with one of the nurses and we went to the opera and the ballet and round Rome. I had to leave without saying goodbye to her as my name was called over the tannoy to report at 0900 to return to England for an immediate dispatch.

"The voyage home was onboard a hospital ship and I was so excited when we reached England. They sent me to the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich where I went up before the Colonel who offered me a job, but I turned it down and told him that I was no good to the Army and they didn't want me. I told him I'd lost my career and I'd like to get out now. I asked for three weeks leave, which he couldn't refuse as I'd been overseas for two and a half years. He said I'd done a good job and that was it.

"I went straight to see my parents who couldn't believe it when I walked through the door as they didn't know I was coming home. That night we went out to The Phoenix pub to celebrate. The bomb damage was a real shock and everything my parents had been through in London. But you had that comradeship that you don't have now when you don't even know your next door neighbour. Then everyone worked as a team. Look at Dunkirk with the small boats. The comradeship with the public was out of this world, they couldn't do enough for the country.

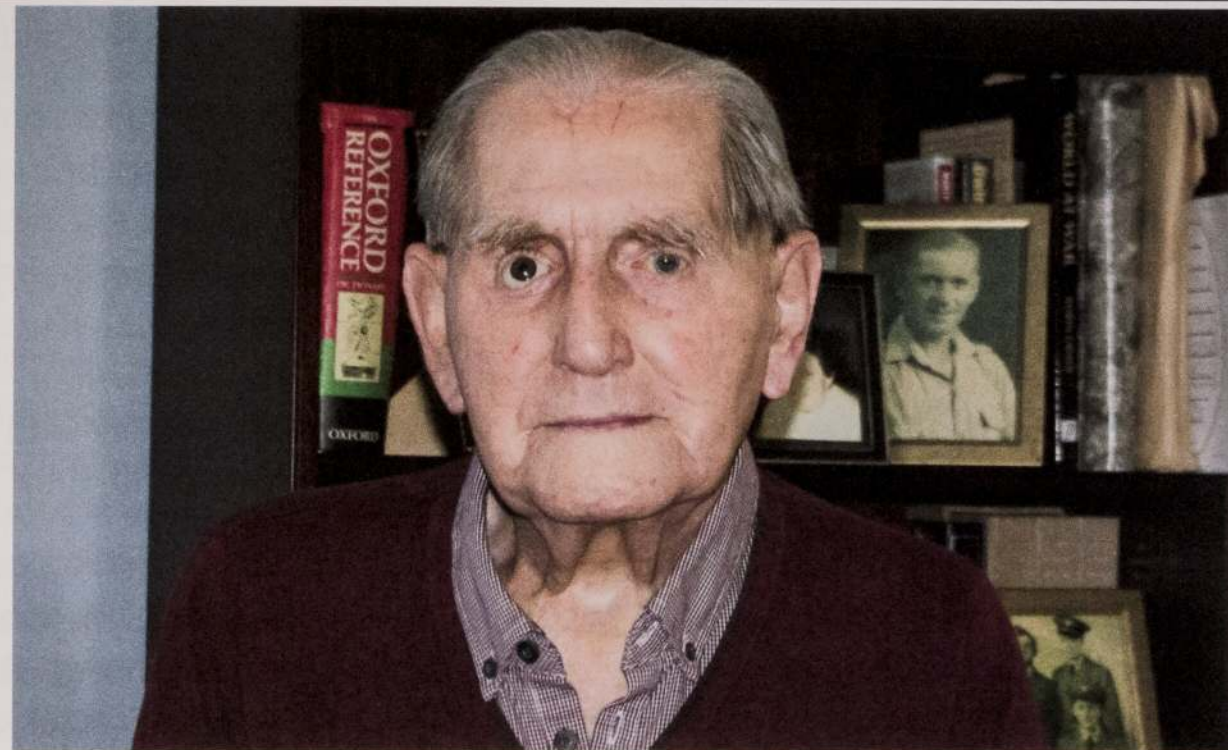
"After that I went back to see the Colonel who gave me a suit and told me that I was demobbed. I was sent for three weeks convalescence at Eton College. On the first day a girl came in. She was the chief pay clerk at the Lagonda factory, which made aircraft parts during the war, and she invited us to a dance on Saturday night. I said I didn't want to go but the lads turned round and said we should all go together. Some of them had lost their legs, some of them their arms. So I went. Well I had quite a few dates with that girl, Joan, who became my wife and we had 50 years of happy marriage together.

"When the three weeks were up I told her that she didn't have a future with me as my future was over. I really believed that but she didn't. She said she would stick — and she did and it was wonderful. If you were disabled you couldn't get a job as they only wanted the fit men and I was unemployed for 12 months. I didn't draw unemployment money but used my savings and went for dozens and dozens of interviews. In the end I set up a florist business in Swiss Cottage with my brother Bill who'd been in the RAF and we stuck at it for a few years until he went to run a pub in Marylebone. I packed up the florist and went to work for WH Cook who ran the black cabs in London. At the interview I was asked where I was during the war. He had been a Major in the desert and he started me straight away. After a few months he promoted me to night manager. After many years there I moved to the Central Electrical Generating Board at Paternoster Square where my brother Bill worked. I was security on the



post there until I retired and went on to set up as a gardener in Borehamwood."

Alf joined Blind Veterans UK in 2011 and he said that the Christmas he spent at the Brighton centre in 2013 was a real highlight for him as he had a very good time.

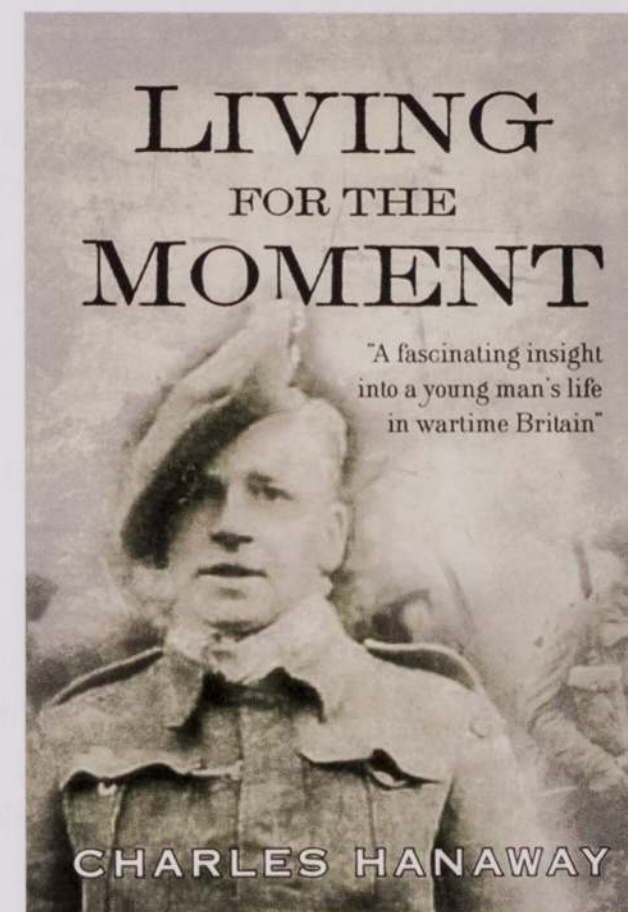


**Pictures:** Alf Jones at home in Borehamwood and in 1940 Warrant Officer Alf Jones 846540, 254 Battery Royal Artillery, 64th Field Regiment with his Regiment.

## Living for the Moment. By Charles Hanaway.

Charles Hanaway was brought up in the 1920s and 1930s in a poor area of London. On leaving school at the age of 13 he worked in a variety of jobs until the outbreak of World War II. In this memoir he vividly describes living in London at that time, and how he witnessed the almost daily air battles over the city and the devastation caused by enemy bombing. Having enlisted in the army at the age of 17, Charles took part in the invasion of Normandy, and gives a first-hand account of the bitter fighting. He was wounded in the attack across the River Rhine. Charles' recollections give us a true and fascinating insight into the life of a young working-class man during an important period in Britain's history.

Charles Hanaway became a member of Blind Veterans UK in 2004. Charles said: "The proceeds of the book will go to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK. I'm very happy to be a member of this very unique organisation and every member that I've spoken to has nothing but the highest admiration for the charity. I'm lucky to live close to the Brighton centre where I use the gym when I can. I spent seven days at the centre at Christmas and had a wonderful time." You can buy the book online at Amazon, Waterstones, Love Reading and other websites.



**Picture:** Charles Hanaway in the uniform of the Royal Scots Fusiliers.



## Support our Virgin London Marathon runners.

The Virgin London Marathon started in 1981 with just 7,747 runners and each year it has grown in size. In 2013 37,227 runners took part. This year on Sunday 13th April 2014 four of our members will take part in this world famous race. They are Steve 'Sparky' Sparkes, Alan Lock, Karl 'Charlie' Parkinson and Joe Cousineau. If you would like to sponsor any of them you can phone the Events team at Harcourt Street in London. The telephone number is: 020 7723 5021. If you prefer to send a cheque please make it payable to Blind Veterans UK and send it to Events, Blind Veterans UK, 12 - 14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD, please state who you wish to sponsor.

Sparky and Alan Lock are no virgins to marathons. Sparky had a distinguished career in the Royal Marines when he was awarded Field Promotion during the Falklands war, the first person since the Second World War. Since he joined Blind Veterans UK in 1992 he has distinguished himself in sporting events and has run a number of marathons to raise money for us.

It will be Alan Lock's 16th Marathon. The 34 year old former Royal Navy Lieutenant will run it with his former Royal Navy comrade Gavin. Like Sparky, Alan constantly challenges himself. He has also completed the extreme Marathon de Sables, a six day 156 mile ultramarathon across the Sahara, which only the super fit complete. Alan is also training to swim the Channel as part of a relay team of two or three people in September 2014.

Alan explained the appeal of these challenges. "It's the same as the other members of Blind Veterans UK. When I had to leave the Royal Navy I didn't want to end up sitting behind a desk. It's frustrating because of the eyesight, but I still wanted that challenge and I can do these for myself and also for Blind Veterans UK and other charities to raise money for them. When I first lost my sight, reading about other blind veterans who went skiing and were still active in sport inspired me. Also at the end of the day I enjoy it!

"There are a lot of people within Blind Veterans UK who have much worse sight issues than me and it's great to carry that camaraderie and spirit that comes from the military into an organisation that really supports people through work and their day to day life and rehabilitation and sporting activities. It's fantastic. The charity has a very solid remit that it fulfils very well."

The first time marathon runners include Joe Cousineau from Liverpool who said: "This is something I've wanted to do for a very long time. I'll be training five days a week for it and I want to thank all the staff who are working with me on this."

Another first time entrant is 37 year old Charlie Parkinson from Gwent. Charlie said: "Words can't express what Blind Veterans UK has done for me, as they saved my life, and I want to put something back. I will run the London Marathon with my guide Bob Hind, a volunteer at the Llandudno centre, and I want to thank him for acting as my sighted guide. This is my first marathon, but not Bob's as he's an Iron Man who usually takes three hours 28 minutes to complete a Marathon. I hope with his encouragement to complete the Marathon in under four hours. I'm doing the miles to train for the London Marathon, but the real test was on Sunday 16th February when we completed the Brighton half marathon in two hours and 58 seconds. I want to thank Bob and all staff at the Llandudno and Brighton centres and my fellow veterans for all their support."

If you would like to sponsor Sparky, Alan, Charlie or Joe please telephone Aaron Tillyer on 020 7616 7927 or email: [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk)



**Picture:** Charlie Parkinson and Bob Hind train at the Llandudno centre for the Virgin London Marathon.



# Family News.

## Congratulations to:

### Births:

Jamie and Lucie Planner on the birth of their daughter Amélie on 16th August 2013. Amélie is the granddaughter of Don and Sharon Planner.

### Birthdays:

**Albert Goudge** from Bungay who celebrated his 100th birthday on 15th February.

**John Scott** from Hebburn who celebrated his 100th birthday on 20th February.

**Doris Adams** from Kingsteignton who celebrated her 100th birthday on 26th February.

### Anniversaries:

#### Platinum (70th):

**William & Muriel Reginald** of Bristol on 12th February.

#### Blue Sapphire (65th):

**Ted & Kath Heasman** of Shoreham By Sea, West Sussex on 12th February.

**Jim & Vi Haden** of Brighton, East Sussex on 19th February.

#### Diamond (60th):

**Jack & Ingeborg Britton** of Colchester, Essex on 27th February.

#### Golden (50th):

**Jack & Hilda Hollinshead** of Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire on 8th February.

**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.**

**Doreen Bainbridge** who died on 17th July 2013. She was the widow of the late William Bainbridge.

**Pat Beecher** who died on 4th February 2014. She was the wife of William Beecher.

**Mary Christie** who died on 9th January 2014. She was the widow of the late Thomas Christie.

**Peggy Dodd** who died on 15th August 2013. She was the widow of the late Reginald Dodd.

**June Gillies** who died on 30th January 2014. She was the widow of the late Emmanuel Gillies.

**Kathleen Goodwin** who died on 11th November 2013. She was the wife of Eric Goodwin.

**Anne Hunter** who died on 7th January 2014. She was the wife of Michael Hunter.

**Margaret 'Peggy' Jarman** who died on 23rd January 2014. She was the widow of the late Geoffrey Jarman.

**Eileen Jones** who died on 23rd January 2014. She was the widow of the late Peter Jones.

**Robert Pawley** who died on 21st January 2014. He was the widower of the late Barbara Pawley.

**Margaret Purves** who died on 1st November 2013. She was the widow of the late William Purves.



# Welcome to Blind Veterans UK.

**Raymond Andrews** of Brighton, East Sussex Served in the Royal Sussex Regiment from 1939 to 1946.

**Ralph Baines** of Chester Le Street, Co Durham Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1955 to 1960.

**Ronald Banyard** of Colchester, Essex Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1947 to 1949.

**Margaret Barber** of Pwllheli, Gwynedd Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1940 to 1943.

**James Barrett** of Weston-Super-Mare, Avon Served in the Royal Artillery from 1947 to 1949.

**John Barry** of Sidmouth, Devon Served in the Royal Engineers from 1940 to 1946.

**Hazel Baxter** of Southsea, Hampshire Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1944 to 1948.

**Ronald Beamish** of Harwich, Essex Served in the Royal Sussex Regiment and the Royal Engineers from 1941 to 1946.

**George Bennett** of Allerton, Liverpool Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1946 to 1954.

**Gordon Bowman** of Chorley, Lancashire Served in the Royal Artillery from 1947 to 1949.

**John Boyd** of Irvine, Ayrshire Served in the Royal Artillery in 1960.

**Mary Bradshaw** of Coalville, Leicestershire Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1946.

**Alfred Burrows** of Sutton, Surrey Served in the Intelligence Corps from 1940 and the King's Own Scottish Borderers from 1940 to 1946.

**Keith Clegg** of Colne, Lancashire Served in the Kings Own, the South Lancashire Regiment and the East Lancashire Regiment from 1953 to 1958.

**William Clodd** of Norwich Served in the Royal Navy and the Duke of Wellington's from 1943 to 1947.

**Eugene Coffey** of St. Helens, Merseyside Served in the Royal Artillery from 1942 to 1946.

**Cecil Colley** of Kingswinford, West Midlands Served in the Royal Engineers from 1945 to 1946.

**Helen Corser** of Clacton-On-Sea, Essex Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1943 to 1944.

**Ian Corsie** of Glenrothes, Fife Served in the Royal Air Force from 1938 to 1973.

**Thomas Cull** of Allenton, Derbyshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946.

**Jeanne Cunliffe** of Clitheroe, Lancashire Served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

**John Davies** of St. Helens, Merseyside Served in the Royal Artillery from 1954 to 1955.

**John Davies** of Fleetwood, Lancashire Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1947 to 1949.

**Colin Deacon** of Hunstanton, Norfolk Served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1950.

**Thomas Eastham** of Blackpool, Lancashire Served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1946.

**Ivor Evans** of Stowmarket, Suffolk Served in the Royal Engineers from 1956 to 1961.

**Thomas 'Tom' Gardiner** of Colchester, Essex Served in the General Service Corps and the Army Catering Corps from 1945 to 1948.

**Brian Gardner** of Mestham, Redhill Served in the Royal Air Force from 1955 to 1960.



**Douglas Gibson** of Rottingdean, East Sussex Served in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1940 to 1946.

**Joshua Goodlad** of Penistone, Sheffield Served in the Duke of Wellington's and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1945 to 1953.

**Joseph Goodman** of Hornchurch, Essex Served in the Royal Corps of Transport from 1965 to 1967.

**Audrey Gormley** of St. Helens, Merseyside Served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

**Ernest Hearnden** of Deal, Kent Served in the Royal Engineers from 1945 to 1946.

**Roy Heginbotham** of Southport, Merseyside Served in the Merchant Navy from 1942 to 1946.

**Lionel Hiatt** of Bournemouth Served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

**William Hollaway** of Broadstairs, Kent Served in the Royal Sussex Regiment and the Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) from 1951 to 1957.

**Peter Houston** of Glasgow Served in the Scots Guards from 1953 to 1955.

**Grace Hughes** of Croydon, Surrey Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1943 to 1946.

**John Jackson** of Seaford, East Sussex Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Signals from 1945 to 1948.

**Dennis Jones** of Newport, Gwent Served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

**Thomas Jones** of Bracknell, Berkshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

**Dorothy Jones** of Prestatyn, Clwyd Served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1945.

**Thomas Jones** of Liverpool Served in the Merchant Navy from 1943 to 1956.

**Peter Labram** of Bristol Served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1954.

**Graham Leggett** of Guildford, Surrey Served in the Royal Air Force Police from 1956 to 1960.

**Robert Little** of Crowborough, East Sussex Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1954 to 1956.

**Alan Manning** of North West London Served in the Royal Air Force in 1950.

**Norbert Marshall** of Llandudno, Gwynedd Served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

**Robert Mason** of Bootle, Merseyside Served in the King's Regiment, the Loyal Regiment and the Liverpool Scottish from 1950 to 1962.

**Alan Matthews** of Ruthin, Clwyd Served in the Royal Air Force from 1953 to 1955.

**Richard Merrill** of Lewes, East Sussex Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers from 1947 to 1949.

**Norman Middleton** of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire Served in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers from 1939 to 1962.

**Dorothy Miller** of South West London Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1942 to 1945.

**Reginald Mills** of Sudbury, Suffolk Served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

**Robin Mills** of Plymouth Served in the Royal Artillery from 1950 to 1974.

**John Morris** of Penarth, South Glamorgan Served in the Welch Regiment and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1944 to 1946.

**Donald Mulryan** of Wirral, Merseyside Served in the Green Howard's, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Intelligence Corps from 1952 to 1958.

**Peter Murley** of Yate, Bristol Served in the Primary Training Wing and the Hampshire Regiment from 1942 to 1947.

**George Newcombe** of Farnborough, Hampshire Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1946 to 1948.

**John Nicholls** of Barry, South Glamorgan Served in the Middlesex Regiment (Duke of Cambridge's Own) from 1951 to 1957.

**Wilfred Parish** of Penarth, South Glamorgan Served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1940 to 1946.



**Stuart Pascoe** of Salisbury, Wiltshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1939 to 1945.

**Edward Phipps** of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire Served in the Royal Signals from 1948 to 1959.

**Harvey Powell** of Clacton-On-Sea, Essex Served in the Royal Navy and the Royal Welch Fusiliers from 1944 to 1948.

**John Poyner** of Borehamwood, Hertfordshire Served in the Highland Brigade and the Black Watch from 1947 to 1952.

**Patrick Rayner** of Colchester, Essex Served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1946 to 1948.

**Geoffrey Renvoize** of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex Served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1947.

**James 'Roy' Robinson** of Ashbourne, Derbyshire Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

**Deryk Rouse** of Bradford, West Yorkshire Served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1953 to 1955.

**Kenneth Sabin** of Merstham, Surrey Served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946 and in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1957.

**Joan Savage** of Basingstoke, Hampshire Served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1942 to 1945.

**Eileen Scott** of Leatherhead, Surrey Served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1942 to 1945.

**Thomas Sheridan** of Flixton, Manchester Served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1953 to 1958.

**David Smith** of Luton, Bedfordshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1960 to 1962.

**Frederick Smith** of Stroud, Gloucestershire Served in the Royal Artillery from 1939 to 1946.

**John 'Ben' Smith** of Whitby, North Yorkshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1955 to 1958.

**Frederick Stallard** of Haywards Heath, West Sussex Served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers from 1945 to 1948.

**Eric Stringwell** of Pudsey, West Yorkshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1945 to 1948.

**Peter Thatcher** of Penzance, Cornwall Served in the Royal Army Pay Corps from 1952 to 1957.

**William Tristram** of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire Served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

**William Turner** of Malvern, Worcestershire Served in the Royal Navy, the Special Air Service Regiment and the Parachute Regiment from 1965 to 1983.

**Arthur Vickers** of Colchester, Essex Served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

**Barbara Watson** of Salisbury, Wiltshire Served in the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service from 1953 to 1956.

**John Westlake** of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands Served in the Royal Signals from 1957 to 1963.

**James Whiting** of Accrington, Lancashire Served in the Royal Navy from 1936 to 1949.

**Sidney Wilkins** of Denbigh, Clwyd Served in the Royal Armoured Corps and the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1942 to 1946.

**Arthur 'Ken' Wilson** of Hitchin, Hertfordshire Served in the Royal Artillery from 1950 to 1955.

**Raymond Wilson** of Churchdown, Gloucester Served in the Royal Signals from 1951 to 1956.

**Reginald Wiseman** of Harpenden, Hertfordshire Served in the King's Royal Hussars and the Royal Tank Regiment from 1949 to 1954.

**William Woods** of Preston, Lancashire Served in the Royal Navy, the Lancashire Fusiliers and the South Lancashire Regiment from 1941 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.**

**Raymond 'Ray' Bell** of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 11th January 2014, aged 85. He joined the RAF in 1946 and trained at Padgate and Melton Mowbray and qualified as a Signaller. He served at RAF Cranwell and RAF Innsworth, Gloucestershire. He was discharged as a Corporal in 1948.

**Leonard 'Len' Blackmore** of Nuneaton, Warwickshire died on 14th January 2014, aged 92. He joined the Local Defence Force and Home Guard early in the war, later joining the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in 1941. He was posted to Delhi for 15 months and then Meerat, maintaining vehicles. He was discharged as a Warrant Officer First Class in 1946.

**William Clarke** of Thetford, Norfolk died on 1st February 2014, aged 96. He joined the Pioneer Corps in 1940, obtaining a commission. He was deployed to Normandy just after D-Day and worked on airfield construction. He carried out airfield repairs in Caen, Brussels and Hamburg. He was discharged in 1946 as a Captain.

**Michael Clover** of Chichester, West Sussex died on 26th January 2014, aged 87. He joined Dartmouth Naval College in 1940 and went to sea with the Pacific Fleet in 1944. After the war he took part in the Korean War. He commanded the minesweepers HMS Appleton and HMS Darlaston from Harwich. He was discharged as a Lieutenant Commander in 1955.

**Barbara Collier** of Truro, Cornwall died on 24th January 2014, aged 91. She joined the Women's Royal Naval Service in 1943 and served at Bletchley Park, Stanmore and Culham. She was discharged in 1946.

**Ernest Cook** of Fleet, Hampshire died on 31st January 2014, aged 86. He joined the Royal Navy in 1944, training at HMS Royal Arthur as a Stoker. He served in various minesweepers including HMS Rebound, HMS Nacrook and HMS Simbang which were all coal fired. He was discharged in 1948.

**Cyril 'Bill' Cotton** died on 31st January 2014, aged 94. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1940. He later embarked on a troop ship bound for the Middle East via South Africa to Egypt. He moved to Libya as the German Africa Corps was being pushed back out of North Africa and was deployed to Italy with 25pdr guns before he was redeployed to the UK for D-Day. He moved through France, Belgium, Holland and into Germany, finishing up in Berlin with the 7th Armoured Division before he was demobilised as a Bombardier in 1947.

**Ernest Dix** of Stafford, Staffordshire died on 10th January 2014, aged 85. He joined the Army Catering Corps in 1946. He trained at Norton Barracks in Worcester and then Shropshire before serving in the officer's mess at Whittington barracks in Litchfield. He was demobilised in Worcester in 1949 as a Private.

**Peter Dyer** of Ulceby, South Humberside died on 23rd January 2014, aged 94. He was in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve at the outbreak of WWII. Fully mobilised in 1939 he later served in HMS Ranpura on Atlantic convoys. He was eventually discharged as a plumber in 1946.

**Dorothy Edwards** of Oldbury, West Midlands died on 1st February 2014, aged 91. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1945 and 1946. She did her military training at Dalkieth in Scotland and was posted to RAF Cosford, Lindlow and Crystal Palace and then to Italy and later Austria.

**Barbara Evans** of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 6th February 2014, aged 90. She joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment in 1943 and trained at RNH Haslar. She served in hospitals at Great Yarmouth, Blunderston and Sherborne before discharge in 1946.

**Stanley Fitzsimmons** of East London died on 2nd November 2013, aged 88. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and served in HMS Lauderdale, a Hunt class destroyer. He was discharged in 1947 as a Stoker 1st Class.

**Margaret 'Peggy' Forrest** of Alnwick, Northumberland died on 3rd December 2013, aged 98. She was commissioned in the Women's Royal Naval Service after joining in 1941. She served in Rosyth, Scotland as a Cypher Officer and was discharged as Second Officer in 1948.

**Margaret Goodworth** of Barnet, Hertfordshire died on 18th January 2014, aged 91. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1941. She carried out her initial training at RAF Innsworth in Gloucestershire, followed by RAF St



Athan. Her first posting was RAF Barrington in the accounts section. She then served in a variety of stations until 1943 when she left as a Corporal.

**Joseph Gregory** of Coventry, West Midlands died on 16th December 2013, aged 94. He served in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in India, China and UK from 1934 to 1946.

**Arthur Hales** of Braintree, Essex died on 24th January 2014, aged 94. He joined the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in 1939 and specialised as an instrument technician. He was posted to North Africa with the 7th Armoured Division then transferred to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in 1942. He was involved in the Egypt to Algiers campaign and later the Italian campaign before discharge as a Quartermaster Sergeant in 1946.

**Thomas Hallworth** of Stockport, Cheshire died on 3rd February 2014, aged 93. In 1940 he joined the Royal Engineers and was later deployed to Normandy on D+2 and spent some time in Dieppe and Ghent, Belgium before he was posted to Stranraer, Scotland where he was involved in the assembly of a new dock. He worked on the docks in Algiers and was discharged as a Private in 1946.

**Rupert Harland** of Widnes, Cheshire died on 1st December 2013, aged 92. He joined the RAF in 1940 and served in the Middle East and Northern Ireland. He was discharged in 1946 as a Leading Aircraftman.

**Edward 'Paul' Harrison** of Chislehurst, Kent died on 22nd June 2013, aged 92. He joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1941. He landed on Sword Beach on D+1 on Sword Beach and supported the advance through France, Belgium and Holland to Germany and was discharged from the Army as a Sergeant in 1946.

**Leslie Horn** of Northolt, Middlesex died on 14th January 2014, aged 89. He joined the Royal Navy in 1939. He trained at HMS Ganges, specialised as a Signaller and served in a variety of ships during WWII. He was recommended for a commission but due to a surfeit of officers in the Navy he was discharged in 1954 as a Yeoman of Signals.

**Barrington 'Barry' Horton** of Honiton, Devon died on 30th January 2014, aged 84. He joined the Royal Signals in 1944 at the age of 14½. During his career he served in North Africa, Palestine and Egypt. He was discharged as a Warrant Officer Second Class in 1968.

**Michael 'Mick' Ion** of Calne, Wiltshire died on 15th January 2014, aged 44. He joined the Royal Regiment of Fusiliers (TA) in 1988. In 1990 he joined the regular Royal Regiment of Fusiliers. He spent five years service in the infantry and carried out a range of tasks in his career ranging from Armourer, Recce Platoon and general infantry duties. He was discharged in 1995.

**Kenneth Kennedy** of Bedford, Bedfordshire died on 5th February 2014, aged 91. He joined the Merchant Navy in 1941. He was a Navigating Officer serving in the North Atlantic Convoys including the Russian Convoy. He also served on board the P&O liners and was involved in the support of the North Africa campaign. He was on board the Naskunda when she was sunk off Bougie, 100 miles east of Algiers. He was discharged in 1946 as a Releasing Master.

**Gordon Langton** of Newcastle upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear died on 15th January 2014, aged 93. He joined the Merchant Navy in 1938. After service in a variety of merchant ships during WWII he was discharged as an Able Seaman in 1947.

**Jennie Lovatt** of North Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 16th January 2014, aged 88. She joined the Women's Royal Naval Service in 1943, training in Leeds as a writer and served in Liverpool. She was later posted to Harwich before discharge in 1946 as a WREN Higher Specialised Rate.

**James Penfold** of Chichester, West Sussex died on 4th February 2014, aged 91. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1942 and served in the UK and Germany. He flew 17 ops on 90 Sqn Lancasters but was shot down on his 18th mission, hit by flak and badly injured which resulted in him being medically discharged as a temporary Flight Sergeant in 1946.

**Jack Priest** of Hatfield, Hertfordshire died on 23rd January 2014, aged 94. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946 leaving as a Corporal. He specialised as an engine fitter and served at home.

**Frederick 'Johnny' Randall** of Hatfield, Hertfordshire died on 29th December 2013, aged 91. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1941, training in Wiltshire and serving in Canada and the USA as an aero engine fitter. Posted to South East Asia he served in India, Singapore and Japan. He was discharged as an LAC Leading Aircraftman in 1946.

**Edward Richards** of Ditchling, East Sussex died on 3rd January 2014, aged 96. He joined the Northamptonshire Regiment in June 1940. In October 1942



he joined the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and after serving in Northern Ireland he fought in North Africa, Sicily and Italy. He was later involved in the Normandy landings and fought through to Germany via the Ardennes. He was discharged as a Sergeant in 1946.

**Morris 'Bob' Shrier** of West London died on 2nd January 2014, aged 91. He joined the Rifle Brigade in 1941 and fought in North Africa. He landed at Naples and fought at Monte Cassino. He was discharged in 1947 as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class.

**Charles Simmons** of Northwich, Cheshire died on 26th January 2014, aged 87. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and served in HMS Attacker, a small escort carrier in the Mediterranean which later sailed to the Far East, operating in Ceylon, the China Sea and Malaya. He was discharged as an Able Seaman in May 1946 before re-enlisting in the Royal Navy in 1948 and serving until 1951.

**Douglas Stephens** of Ivybridge, Devon died on 13th May 2013, aged 91. He joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1941 and was posted to North Africa, in Tripoli, Tunisia, Syria and Palestine as a medical orderly evacuating injured troops and was eventually medically discharged with 'Trench Feet' as a Driver in 1946.

**Fred Stevenson** of Moreton, Wirral died on 30th January 2014, aged 88. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943 aged 17. He served in the North Atlantic Convoys and was then drafted to the Far East and spent some time near Australia, India, Ceylon, Hong Kong and China on board HMS Armada. He left the Royal Navy in 1946 as an Able Seaman and joined the Merchant Navy.

**James Thrower** of Polegate, East Sussex died on 9th January 2014, aged 83. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps for National Service in 1949, serving at Crookham Barracks. He was discharged in 1950 but enlisted in the TA until July 1954.

**Derek Turner** of South East London died on 24th November 2013, aged 79. He joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1952 for National Service and served in London. Discharged from full-time National Service in 1955 he continued part-time until 1959.

**Albert Vickers** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 29th January 2014, aged 85. He was called up for National Service and joined the Royal Signals in 1947. After training at Beverley and Catterick he was posted to Singapore where he

was the company office clerk. He was later posted to Kuala Lumpur. He was demobilised in 1949.

**Victor Wainwright** of Gravesend, Kent died on 4th January 2014, aged 88. He joined the Royal Navy in 1943. He trained at HMS Collingwood, Fareham and served in the aircraft carrier HMS Victorious in the Pacific. He was there when the Far East war ended in 1945. He then joined HMS Whimbrel, a third class ship before being discharged as an Able Seaman in 1947.

**Derek Walters** of Matlock, Derbyshire died on 18th October 2013, aged 92. In 1941 he joined the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. He transferred to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in 1942 and landed in Normandy on D+2, fighting through Belgium, Holland and into Germany. He was with the 3rd Infantry Division preparing to invade Japan when the war ended and he was sent to Palestine and then Egypt before discharge in 1946.

**Peggy West** of Cambridge, Cambridgeshire died on 31st January 2014, aged 88. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1941 and 1942, leaving as an AC1 Aircraftwoman First Class.

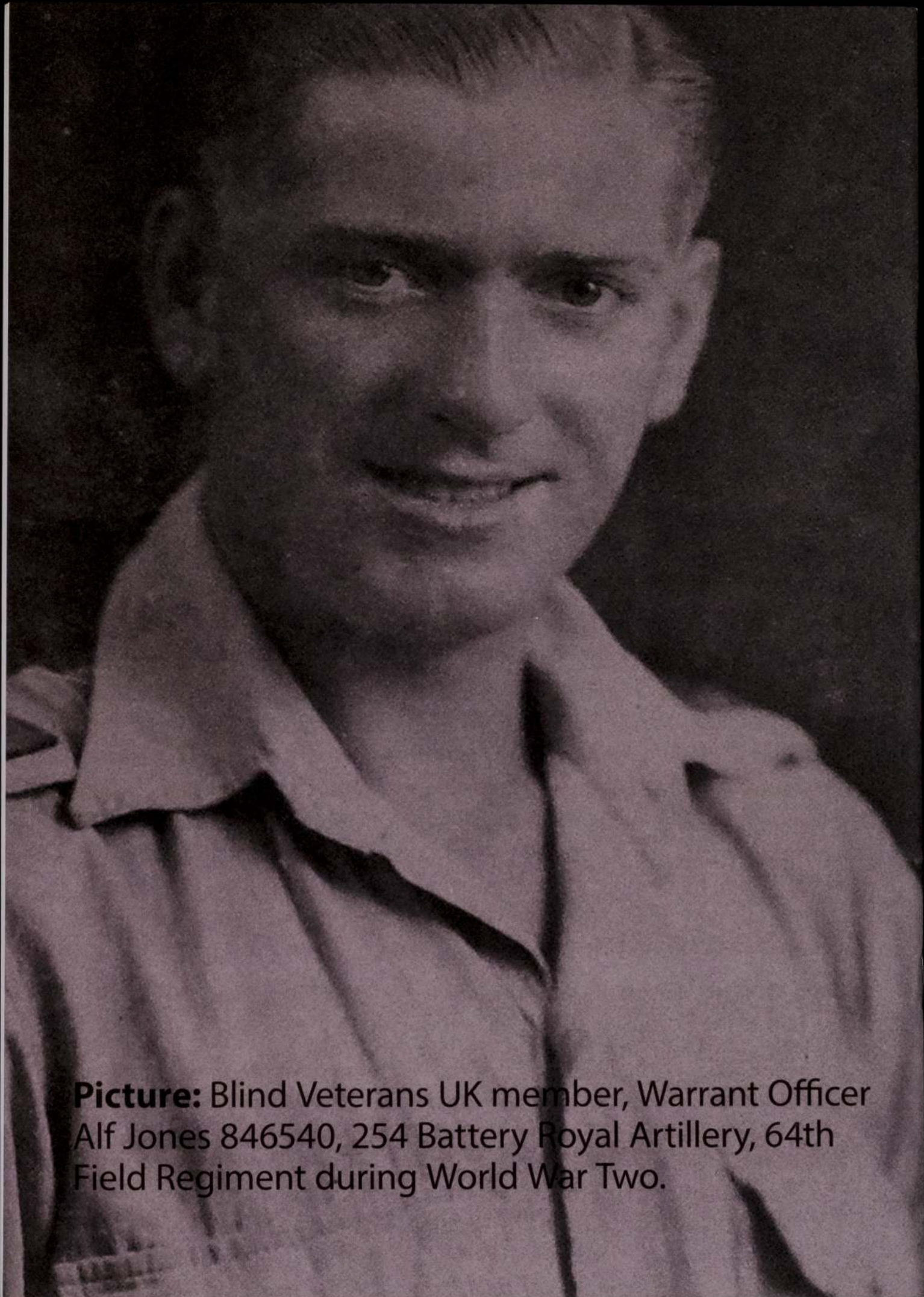
**William 'Ian' Williamson** of Marlborough, Wiltshire died on 30th October 2013, aged 79. He joined the Royal Navy in 1950 as a boy seaman. He trained at HMS Ganges at Shotley, qualified as a gunnery rating and served in three Bay Class frigates and two Battle Class destroyers. He was discharged as a Leading Seaman in 1961.

**Cyril Wilson** of South Shields, Tyne and Wear died on 7th January 2014, aged 93. He joined the RAF in 1941. He completed his flying training, and, qualifying as a pilot in Canada he was posted to the Middle East, Cairo and thereafter to Palestine where he flew Blenheim Bombers. Subsequently he was deployed to Southern Italy with 13 Squadron and later flew the Boston 'Havoc' before being discharged as a Warrant Officer in 1946.

**William 'George' Wilson** of Dalston, Carlisle died on 22nd January 2014, aged 92. He joined the Royal Signals in 1940 and served in the UK and Ceylon with South East Asia Command. He left as a Sergeant in 1946.

**Ernest Woodall** of Southport, Merseyside died on 27th January 2014, aged 93. He joined the RAF in 1942 and after training was posted to Mildenhall near Thetford as a General Duties Aircraftsman. He then moved to Dalcross in Scotland to become a motor fitter and served at a variety of UK locations, eventually being discharged as a LAC Leading Aircraftman in 1946.





**Picture:** Blind Veterans UK member, Warrant Officer Alf Jones 846540, 254 Battery Royal Artillery, 64th Field Regiment during World War Two.