

June 2014

Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



On the cover: Blind Veterans UK member Philip Broomhead, who speaks about his part in the D-Day Landings.

Review



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Contact telephone numbers.

The Brighton centre 01273 307811.

The Llandudno centre 01492 868700.

The Sheffield centre 0114 2672550.

The Booking Office: To book accommodation please contact the Booking Office on 01273 391500. If you have care needs please first contact your Welfare Officer.

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

IT Training Support: If you need to speak with the IT Instructor on support please telephone: 01273 391432.

New members: If you know someone who could be eligible to join Blind Veterans UK they can phone our Membership Department on freephone: 0800 389 7979.

Blind Veterans UK Calendar

Activities from the Brighton centre. June.

Sports & Fitness Week 1st – 7th. Writers' Forum 21st.
The Golf Club 21st – 22nd. Gardening Week 22nd – 28th (full).
Paddle Round the Pier 29th June – 7th July.

July.

Writers' Forum 3rd – 5th. Planes, Trains and Automobiles 6th – 12th (full).
Ladies Week 13th – 19th. The Golf Club 19th – 20th.
Geocaching/Treasure Hunt Week 27th July – 2nd Aug.

August.

London Triathlon 3rd (full). Race Week 3rd – 9th (full).
Activities Week 17th – 23rd. The Golf Club dates TBC.

September.

Walking/Exploring 7th – 13th. Pamper Week 14th – 20th (full).
Fishing Week 14th – 20th. Writers' Forum - 20th
The Golf Club 20th – 21st. History Week 21st – 27th (full).

Activities from the Llandudno centre. June.

Welsh Water Week 8th – 14th. Next Level Fishing Week 29th – 5th July (full).

July.

Music Week 6th – 12th (full). Fishing Taster/Beginners Week 20th – 26th (full).

August.

Amateur Radio Club 1st – 9th. Recreation Taster Week 10th – 16th (full).
Family Weekend 22nd – 25th (full).

September.

Canal Boat/Cycling Week 21st - 27th. Mostyn Arts Week 21st - 27th.

Activities from the Sheffield centre. May/June.

Gardens Week 30th – 4th June.

July.

Photography Week 28th – 31st.

August.

Luncheon Club 18th – 22nd. G.O.A.L Group 26th - 29th.

September.

Culture Week 8th - 12th.

From the Chairman.

Your message from Tim Davis.

June is a month when lots of events will take place up and down the country. Amongst them will be the celebrations in London of the 350th Anniversary of the Royal Marines, beating the retreat, as well as Trooping the Colour.

For Blind Veterans UK I will attend a celebration of the life of Chief Executive Robert Leader and later the same month the annual gathering at Church Stretton that recognises those of Blind Veterans UK who have been members for over 50 years. I will also represent the organisation at Buckingham Palace at the Not Forgotten Association Garden Party.

On 21st and 22nd June, I will team up with Woppy Keeling (the former Chairman, Major General Andrew Keeling's wife) to complete the London to Brighton 100K yomp to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK. We would really welcome your support, and if you would be willing, please go onto our donation page at www.justgiving.com/TheStriders

This month will also commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings, an iconic and turning moment in World War II, that saw the largest seaborne invasion in history, and from which the Allies took back Western Europe and won the war.

I'm always amazed about the scale of the operation, the planning of logistics, deception and contingency, as well as the sheer number of men, ships, aircraft, and equipment, involved from all Armed Forces and several countries to invade a 50 mile stretch of the Normandy coast.

From a very difficult start on Day One and a tenuous foothold, the Allies achieved so much, but alas not without significant losses. Apart from the scale of the operation, what I find more memorable though, is the individual achievements and stories of those who participated; their valour, spirit, incredible bravery and sometimes loss. As someone who was not alive then, the stories of individuals, brings it to life and helps me better understand what was involved. It also makes me realise just how much we all owe to the men and women of that generation, for what we enjoy today.

In this edition, you can read some of the individual stories of members who were part of D-Day and what they did. These acts and so much of what our Armed Forces have done over many generations, is why organisations like Blind Veterans UK are so important; giving back and helping those who did so much for so many.

Remembering, recognising and giving back is in part why the organisation has managed to attract so many volunteers. In the first week of June, we celebrate Volunteers' Week and showcase the importance and tremendous range of work they do. I'd like to say a special thank you to all our volunteers; giving of your time in the way you do, is very greatly appreciated.



Picture: The Striders. Chairman Tim Davis and Woppy Keeling, who will take part in the 100K London to Brighton Walk on 21st and 22nd June 2014.

Noticeboard.

Dates for your diary and useful information.

1Touch™ Coaching & Certification Course at the Brighton centre from 26th – 28th September 2014.

This is an opportunity for members to learn the 1Touch™ self defence programme and become certified instructors. As places are limited please contact Louise Timms in the Sports & Recreation Dept at the Brighton centre for further details on telephone: 01273 391463 or email: louise.timms@blindveterans.org.uk

blindveterans.org.uk

The mission of the 1Touch™ Project is to provide ongoing self-development and rehabilitation courses specifically for the vision impaired. The 1Touch™ is the first comprehensive descriptive self-defence program designed specifically for the blind. The program is a hands-on self-defence technique for dealing with assaults, aggressive behaviour, and bullying. 1Touch™ explores participant's hidden assumptions regarding their own disability — their personal perception of their blindness and insecurities built upon that perception. The 1Touch™ Project is primarily a method of personal development.

1Touch™ addresses the physical and psychological causes of insecurity and vulnerability through the empowering practice of hands-on, active, self-defence methods, self-defence theory, and discussions examining what makes one insecure and why. The 1Touch™ Project's core values are minimising risk, maximizing independence, and increasing life chances. The self-defence systems are fully accessible and designed for practicality. There is no age limit, no physical strength needed or prior martial arts background necessary.

Learning these techniques has proven highly effective in the development of: independence, self-confidence, spatial orientation, mobility and dexterity, tactile sensitivity, social interaction, communication skills, enthusiasm/self-worth and greater health physically and psychologically. The Instructors course enables others to teach the 1Touch™ syllabus in their constituency. This course is presented in the form of seminar training with an amount of hours required for completion and a final examination. Once the participants have successfully shown competency they will be certified through the 1Touch™ Project, to operate 1Touch™ Self Defence for the blind in their constituency.

Blind Veterans UK events in 2014.

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

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 the charity. You can take part as an individual and tackle the whole 100K 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.

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 would like to find out how to apply for a place on any of the events, please email fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk or telephone Aaron Tillyer, Community & Events Assistant at Blind Veterans UK on 020 7616 7927.

Blind Veterans UK Golf Club. By Pam Crossan.

The play went well for the opening of the 2014 season of Blind Veterans UK Golf Club at our usual stomping ground at Rusper in Surrey.

We welcomed new members Alan Carter from Droitwich who was guided by one of our new volunteers Paul Cordery and member Nick Barbar of Suffolk, whose guide was Chris Butler. We were also pleased to welcome Blind Veterans UK Sports & Recreation Instructor Craig Brindley, who works at the Brighton centre, who escorted Derek Roden.

We of course welcomed back our existing members who we were glad to meet again and find that they were all well and ready to get on to the golf course after the long wet winter.

The course itself was in excellent condition as the ground workers had obviously been hard at work over the winter months to keep the greens and fairways drained.

We managed to get out both days but as Sunday was very wet we decided to just try to get round the course so that all of the new members could start to get a feel for it. Everyone enjoyed the weekend and we are all looking forward to the next meeting in June.

We welcome any Blind Veterans UK members who would like to try out a new skill or take up an old one. Please feel free to contact me for details. We will meet over seven weekends at the Brighton centre from April to October. The dates are 21st to 22nd June, 19th to 20th July, 20th to 21st September and 18th to 19th October. The dates for August are still to be confirmed.

Please do contact me on telephone: 02381 787636 or email me at: pcrossan@talktalk.net

Jo Nesbo's The Son. Book Review by Deb Ryan, RNIB.

I'd never read a Jo Nesbo before, who is best known as the creator of Inspector Harry Hole, however this is a standalone novel. It's a big book at 487 pages so I did approach it with a bit of trepidation. I picked it up because I heard the author talking about it on the Simon Mayo book club and it sounded intriguing.

Sonny is a drug addict in a prison who's in there for crimes the drug cartel have committed, but as payment he receives drugs and hot meals so he's happy to stay there. He is seen by the other prisoners in a confessor role — someone they can confide in and feel absolved of their sins. Sonny is an extraordinary enigmatic character; when people meet him they feel better, even blessed. One day a prisoner tells him a story of a police man who was murdered but the assailants made the officer write a suicide note and it turned out that he was Sonny's father. Sonny has always believed his disgraced father committed suicide and this has lead him down the path he finds himself on and now, all of a sudden, his whole view of the world has changed. This is the turning point of the story as Sonny escapes from prison to try and find out the truth.

Sonny is an unusual hero, maybe even an antihero as he does carry out some violent acts. You never see the world through his eyes; he is always described by the people around him. So as each person encounters him you see him from their perspective and how his character changes throughout the action.

Although Nesbo takes his time to develop each character and their back story, particularly the two main characters who are flawed but likeable characters, Nesbo's style is concise and clear and he takes the reader on an intriguing and gripping journey through Oslo. This is a real page turner and also a book that you need to concentrate on, with plot twists and turns and a whole host of characters.

If you want to know more about the RNIB National Library Service or find more reviews and suggestions for books to read go to web pages www.rnib.org.uk/reading or call 0303 123 9999.

Volunteers' Week by Victoria Dickinson, Head of Volunteering.



This month we will celebrate volunteering at Blind Veterans UK during Volunteers' Week, which runs from 1st to 7th June. We will celebrate through various events that will include quizzes, afternoon tea and the presentation of certificates and sending out of thank you cards to our wonderful volunteers.

We are always surprised and delighted by the generosity of our volunteers in gifting their time. We have many volunteers who do more than one role and just in the month of March alone we calculated that volunteers had donated 1,400 hours of their time in our centres alone.

There are over 350 volunteers who contribute to our vision that no one who has served our country should have to battle blindness alone. This takes on many forms that include supporting our members to take on a range of activities that include white water rafting or tandem bike riding, to climbing Snowdon. While everyday support can be provided through helping a member sort through old photographs and cataloguing much treasured music collections.

If you are listening to this on the Talking Review the voice you hear is that of a volunteer. David Castleton worked for Blind Veterans UK for 33 years and has volunteered for the last 20 years and Valerie Tomalin has volunteered for 10 years. Our members really do appreciate the added support that volunteers add to their lives.

One testimonial came from a member who needed assistance with their paperwork. They said: "June is a tremendous help. I want to express my gratitude; it has been a great weight off my mind."

Another comment came from a member about his volunteer escort. He said: "We had a very good time, he is such good company."

Many volunteers also help us with fundraising across the country as they get involved in a wide range of events from baking cakes, attending events and welcoming our guests.

Rachel Chitty, Regional Fundraiser at the Brighton centre, said: "I would like to say a big thank you to all the volunteers who have helped me in my first year as fundraiser at the Brighton centre. I have tried to put together a wide variety of events to involve the local community that has ranged from a sponsored knit to a motorcycle ride. If you would like to be involved with our fundraising in the area you may be surprised how much fun it can be! If you want to get involved please telephone me on: 01273 391455."

Viccie Beech, Regional Fundraiser at the Llandudno centre, said: "Without the support of our volunteers we wouldn't have been able to stage many of the events that we have, such activities as coffee mornings, garden parties, collections, cheese and wine tastings, family fun days — the list goes on. Our volunteers have not only facilitated these events, but also provided members of the public with vital information about the work of our organisation that has led to generous donations and also to the recruitment of new members. A massive thank you to you all!"

If you want to get involved in supporting the Llandudno area please contact Viccie Beech on 01492 864574. To find out more about volunteering at Blind Veterans UK go to our website: www.blindveterans.org.uk/volunteering



Picture: Blind Veterans UK member John Griffiths and Tony Bradley.

Forces' Sweetheart Dame Vera Lynn to release her new album on 2nd June to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings.

Dame Vera Lynn was the first person to have a UK chart topping single, and today she is still breaking records again with the release of a new album to celebrate her 90th year in showbusiness.

Dame Vera announced the release of the record, Vera Lynn: National Treasure - The Ultimate Collection, to mark her 97th birthday. The collection will include recently discovered tracks which are yet to be released, as well as some of her most memorable and morale-boosting songs as the Forces' Sweetheart.

The Ultimate Collection will be released on 2nd June to commemorate the 6th June 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings.

Speaking of her album she told the Review: "I think it's wonderful that my songs are still enjoyed, especially if it encourages people to commemorate what happened 70 years ago.

"It's moving for me to relive those days, and humbling to know that people still think of me — after all, it was simply my duty to keep singing."

The tracklisting includes more than 40 of her wartime songs, including We'll Meet Again, The White Cliffs Of Dover and You'll Never Know among the five number one hits on the record. Dame Vera's daughter, Virginia, is responsible for uncovering the unreleased tracks. All of the tracks have been remastered for the commemorative record; with many taking recordings from the original resource as some tracks have only ever been available on the original 78rpm.

After making her stage debut at the age of seven, 2014 sees Dame Vera's ninth decade in the business, a feat that will be difficult to match.

Last year a book was published that showed analysed sales data before official UK record charts were launched in 1952. It showed that Dame Vera had a string of chart-toppers, including her first number one with We'll Meet Again in 1940 on Decca Records.

Dame Vera has recorded a message to all the blind veterans at the Brighton centre, a place she has visited and performed at many times, that is included in the Talking Review. It will be played at the Brighton centre on 2nd June to celebrate the launch of her new album.



Picture: Dame Vera Lynn with the St Dunstan's band at the Brighton centre.



Picture: Blind veteran Matt Rhodes with Dame Vera Lynn. Matt painted a portrait of Dame Vera that was sold at her charity auction.

70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings. By Catherine Goodier.

The Normandy landings were the largest seaborne invasion in history, with nearly 5,000 landing and assault craft, 289 escort vessels, and 277 minesweepers participating. Nearly 160,000 troops crossed the English Channel on D-Day, with 875,000 men disembarking by the end of June. Allied casualties on the first day were at least 12,000, with 4,414 confirmed dead.

Victory in Normandy stemmed from several factors. German preparations along the Atlantic Wall were only partially finished; shortly before D-Day Rommel reported that construction was only 18 per cent complete in some areas as resources were diverted elsewhere. The deceptions undertaken in Operation Fortitude were successful, leaving the Germans obligated to defend a huge stretch of coastline. The Allies achieved and maintained air superiority, which meant that the Germans were unable to make observations of the preparations underway in Britain and were unable to interfere via bomber attacks. Transportation infrastructure in France was severely disrupted by Allied bombers and the French Resistance, making it difficult for the Germans to bring up reinforcements and supplies. Some of the opening bombardment was off-target or not concentrated enough to have any impact, but the specialised armour worked well except on Omaha, providing close artillery support for the troops as they disembarked onto the beaches. Indecisiveness and an overly complicated command structure on the part of the German high command was also a factor in the Allied success.

History books give me the cold hard facts about D-Day, but when I listen to you (blind veterans) I hear the human side of D-Day as you recall your experiences after you landed on 6th June 1944.

To mark the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings there are interviews and accounts by some of Blind Veterans UK's members who took part in the D-Day Landings on pages 15 to 32.

We begin with an account that was written by Douglas Parker from Sheffield. Douglas joined Blind Veterans UK in 2010. From 1941 to 1943 he served in the

West Yorkshire Regiment (The Prince of Wales's Own) and from 1943 to 1946 in the East Yorkshire Regiment (The Duke of Yorks Own).

'I was 21 when I took part in the Normandy Landings on 6th June 1944. I landed on Sword Beach with B Company, 2nd Battalion, East Yorks Regiment. I landed from a Landing Craft Assault at 'H' Hour 7.25am.

'It was low tide and there were obstacles on the beach with mines on top to stop boats landing at high tide. As the ramp went down we ran up the beach and were met with heavy machine gun fire. There were many casualties as it was heavily defended. We fought our way up the beach as our object was to make it safe for the Division to land and move inland.

'I recall running out of the landing craft assault. I saw the machine gun bullets hitting the sand in front of me. I threw myself down behind an obstacle as they got nearer until they were about a yard away. Suddenly the machine gun bullets were spraying along the beach, but fortunately for me they were sprayed to the right and left of me.

'I ran up the beach and saw a wounded comrade who said 'Help me Doug.'" He was in a bad way. I dragged him up the beach and laid him behind a small wall on the promenade and called to the medics to attend to him.

'His name was Corporal Wilkinson and sadly he died. He is buried at Hermanville War Cemetery with other East Yorks comrades who were killed in the landing. I have visited the cemetery many times.

'We fought our way off the beach moving forward all day until late at night. The struggle across the beach, the noise and the casualties were indescribable and something I will never forget.

'It was the longest day of my life.'

Philip Broomhead was a gardener before the war and it was the profession he returned to after he was demobbed in 1946, laying aside his gun to once again work with the land after years of fighting. Realising the threat of war he joined the West Yorks (TA) in April 1939 and was called up a few days before war was declared. Landing on Gold Beach on D-Day he fought through France and Holland to Germany.

Sitting in the living room of the house he shares with his wife Betty, who he has been married to for 72 years, Philip said: "When orders came through for D-Day my first thought was, thank goodness that we're actually doing it, as there was a big build up as we waited for everything to happen. You spend an awful lot of time in the Forces just waiting. I remember that a quarter of an hour before we landed we were all given a tot of rum, just to liven us up I should imagine."

Philip has written his account of 5th and 6th June 1944, which is reproduced below.

'The waterproofing of the engine was complete. High sides had been opened to the open top Bren carrier, I was the driver, one member of three. We trundled out of the woods somewhere in Southern England to be loaded onto our LCT. Everywhere we moved there was a conglomeration of troops and vehicles of all shapes and sizes, tanks and half tracks, self propelled guns all draped in camouflage netting. Separated from the infantry of our unit The Green Howard's, part of 50 Division, into staging camps. Infantry for loading into landing craft and transport of all kinds for loading into LCTs of landing craft tanks. On all sides there was feverish activity with the issuing of ammo and emergency rations, which included self heating cans of soup and coco. It was the giant logistic operation of Overlord. We were just one small part of it. Our carrier was full of equipment: packs and haversacks, rifles and Bren guns, magazines of ammos, hand grenades and smoke grenades. Packs of tinned food all loaded into the three compartments of the carrier along with the spares and water containers and petrol cans.

'The floor had been packed with sandbags as a hopeful precaution against mines. We waited for the off of the balloon going up as the start of the operation was generally known by. Finally we embarked on to an LCT. Onboard the LCT our carrier was behind a Sherman tank, which looked very comforting with its white painted star for identification. The tank was fitted with flail chains

on a big revolving drum that was meant to detonate the mines and so clear a path through the minefield for us to follow when we landed.

'The weather was cold and cloudy. There was much speculation and word trickled down that it was cancelled for 24 hours. It was a relief but we couldn't disembark. So although it was a relief it was hardly comfortable. The sea all round was choc a block with craft like ours. Suppose Jerry came over — we were sitting ducks that he couldn't miss. Although there were barrage balloons overhead.

'The hours dragged on until at last it was dark again and the feverish activity and the throb of diesel engines were constant. At last we were on the move. It would soon be all over one way or another.

'The sea wasn't too rough, but our flat bottomed craft didn't travel too well. As we crossed the seas we talked about anything and nothing, but only in whispers as sound carries at night. Some took their seasick pills, I didn't.

'The only sound was the throb of the engines and the swish of the sea against the sides of the craft. So the night passed.

'As the dawn arrived we looked around in the half light and were amazed as we made out the number of craft on all sides. The sea was alive with ships of all sizes. Through the dim light we could see dozens of craft like ours, as well as the destroyers, some with balloons overhead, which were there to give us covering fire.

'Soon the bigger ships were belching fire towards the shore, which we couldn't yet make out. D-Day was on.

'The blunt nosed landing craft with their ramps stuck up ploughed on. Planes were skimming back just over our heads, as they headed back to England after fulfilling their part of softening up the landing beaches, some after dropping parachutists.

'Gradually we kept towards the shore which seemed a long way off. It was cold and cloudy. We passed by larger craft which were off-loading troops onto smaller craft. Rockets were being fired from Z Crafts as we passed them.

'Overhead there was a deafening whoosh. The shore kept closer and we could make out our beach — it didn't look inviting, with all sorts of barricades of ironwork with sinister looking packages on them.

'Behind the beach we could see the minefields, acres of them. 'Get Ready, prime hand grenades!' someone shouted. We checked our guns and spare magazines. The noise became deafening the nearer we got. The craft on our right suddenly went up in flames. They'd never land.

'At last we crunched onto the beach, Gold Beach. The ramp went down and off went the tank into the sea. Was it too deep? No it's ok I thought as I saw the flails on the Sherman tank whizz round as it went on the beach and straight onto the minefield. We followed. The water came nearly to the top of our waterproof sides, but we made it following the tank.

'Other craft were landing either side of us. They gave us confidence which soon evaporated as the tank we were following was disabled and it came to a stop. It was either hit or a mine had damaged the track. We couldn't go forward we just had to back out of the minefield. Somehow we managed it. We then had to join a queue up to another cleared path into Arromanches. Our infantry had landed further along at La Rivieria. The beach was crowded. What if Jerry planes came over? He did soon after we got into the village. We passed some casualties of the bombardment and soon faced soldiers in grey uniform — so that's what the enemy looked like.

'My initiation as a young soldier was sobering, but we landed to open the second front and liberate it, but sadly some must die to accomplish this. The rest of D-Day was spent pushing inland. As much ground as possible must be covered and as soon as possible. We'd been told to get to the beaches out of range of enemy fire. Our typhoons and mosquitoes, often at treetop height, gave us great confidence as they roared black and white stripes easily identifiable. We kept strictly to the roads as the verges were mined, stopping now and then as the firing grew intense. Keep clear of any bridges, they're boobytrapped. We didn't need telling twice after we'd seen a number of stretcher cases being carried back towards the beaches.

'On one farm road we had to shift mines encased in wood to try and form mine detectors. In some cases minefields were not marked, but dummy ones were

set up nearby. The countryside was lush and green with many small orchards, it is the calvados district of Normandy. We came to know the drink by that name later on. It's also known as Bocage country. One of our objectives was Villers Bocage, which was bombed and taken some weeks later.

'The weather improved as the day lengthened. I suppose it must be the afternoon by now. I thought of my wife Betty at home as we were expecting our first baby. Our son was born seven weeks later. At some point we stopped for our meal of emergency rations as tracers flashed across the front joining the din of bombardment ahead. After refuelling our carrier and topping up our personal water bottles, guards were posted and our first day in France had ended.

'The breakout. The dash through Belgium and Holland on to Arnhem lay ahead, but this we didn't know at the time. We only knew we were tired. Sleep came naturally in spite of the din and the danger. We were happy to be alive.'



Picture: Blind Veterans UK and D-Day veteran Philip Broomhead outside his house in Morecambe.

Ron Cross MBE from Gosport in Hampshire joined Blind Veterans UK in 2012 and he has written his account of D-Day using the computer skills he learnt at the Brighton centre.

'In August 1943 the unit I was in changed its name from 26 Field Company R.E. to 26 Armoured Assault Squadron R.E. We were under the command of 79 Armoured Division, sometimes known as Hobart's Funnies. It was formed to break through sea defences so that fighting tanks could get off the beach as soon as possible to support the infantry. My unit played a big part in this. We moved to a battle ground in Suffolk where replicas of sea defences were built and we had Churchill tanks.

'As the tanks were old we adapted them to suit our needs, they were called Assault Vehicle Royal Engineer (AVRE). The gun was removed and replaced by a petard that could blow away a concrete obstacle that was accurate over 80 yards. The AVRE could also carry a bridge on the front and could lower it over a 30ft wide gap while under fire. The bridge was already a piece of RE equipment. Another funny was the fascine, this was a large bundle, made up of bundles of chestnut fencing. This was a little wider than the tank and 8ft across. It was carried on the front of the tank as it could be dropped into an anti tank ditch so that a crossing could be made under fire. We trained with these two gadgets and then made improvements.

'In the Squadron were four troops and in each troop were six AVRES (A,B,C,D,E and F). In each AVRE was a crew of six the Commander, Driver, Gunner, Radio Op, Co Driver and Demolition NCO — that was my job. My tank was Three Charlie. Many things were tried to help us break down the beach defences. After a lot of time spent on training and exercises we moved to Stokes Bay in Gosport. As it was about a 15 minute walk from my home I was initially allowed to go home, but as the day got closer to the moving off day, the place shut up as we stayed under guard as the maps were handed out.

'We were now formed into teams and were told what our target was. The map did not tell us the name of the landing place, only that it was called Juno Nan Green. The coast where we were to land had a river that entered the sea and it was decided that three and four troops would land on the left of the river and one and two troops to the right. In our team we had two flail tanks that would beat the ground in front of them to explode mines. We were also given aerial

photos that were great as they showed all the obstacles. We saw a ditch that ran off the beach that would have to be filled in.

'It was decided that Three Charlie (3C) would carry a fascine that we would drop in the ditch to cross it. Another tank would carry a bridge in case 3C was knocked out. So it was now the job of the troop to build the fascine and mount it on 3C. We knew that we were landing with the Canadian Infantry.

'On Saturday 3rd June we moved to the beach at Stokes Bay and were loaded onto landing crafts. We had three AVREs, a flail tank and an armoured bulldozer, which meant our landing craft was well packed. We anchored in Southampton waters until it was time to move off. There were a great many ships gathered and it was lucky that the RAF had control of the skies, as a few bombers would have caused a lot of damage. We eventually set sail in very poor conditions and the landing craft did not like the rough seas. It was a terrible trip as everyone was sea sick. It was not a good way to prepare for the task we were about to undertake. As we neared the coast guns started to fire at us. According to the official report we were dropped 100 yards to the left of our target and 30 minutes late. It also states that the flail tank in front of us put a large gun out of action.

'We were dropped in six foot of water. We were OK against small armed fire and mortars and our progress to the beach went well as the driver got us through obstacles before he told us that there were bodies on the beach. He was told to miss them as best he could, which we hope he did. As the beach ran straight onto sand dunes, which had very little rise, we reached the ditch and the fascine was dropped as we had done so many times before in training. We crossed the fascine and made room for the flail tank to follow us and beat the lane to clear it of any mines.

'It was then something happened that we did not expect. A few strong words from the Commander told us that the flail tank had got stuck and we would have to tow it, which we did. We improved the crossing by putting lengths of tree trunk into the ditch that the Germans had used to make obstacles on the beach. As we did this 12 men came out of the sand dunes with their hands above their heads. They were Polish and Russian, forced volunteers. We put them to work moving the bodies of the dead men from the beach and laying them on the sand dunes and also looking after the wounded from both sides, which they were pleased to do.

'By 9 o'clock a blue windsock was hoisted to say that the gap was open and could be used by the next wave. We continued to clear the beach and by midday it was clear and our job was to help any vehicle that had become stuck. Our task went well as did the rest of the Squadron. We were told that the expected loss would be 75%, but we only lost one tank and three men were killed and a dozen wounded.

'We landed at Gourseulles sur Mer and it is a place that is now very familiar to me as I have visited it many times over the last 70 years. One of our AVREs is now mounted near the Memorial there.'



CPL. R. CROSS, youngest son of Mr. and Mrs. Cross, of 4, Newport Road, Gosport, who has twice been mentioned in dispatches for "courage and devotion to duty" while serving with the 79th Armoured Division in Germany

Picture: A cutting from a newspaper that mentioned Ron's courage and devotion to duty when he was twice mentioned in Dispatches.

In his book, *Living for the Moment*, Charles Hanaway begins with his childhood spent in Fulham, West London and goes into his time during WWII. He writes of landing on D+6 and the bitter fighting that ensued through The Scottish Corridor as they took on the 12 SS Hitlerjugend. From 1st June 2014 Charles will spend a week in Austrum to mark the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings, a place he has visited many times over the years. Charles was transferred to the 6th Battalion of Royal Scots Fusiliers, which was a part of the 15th Scottish Division that had been trained solely to break out of the bridge-head once they landed in Normandy. Charles who joined the Royal Scots Fusiliers when he was 17½ relives those days of bitter fighting.

He begins: "In the run up to D-Day I was stationed at Worthing where we waterproofed all the vehicles. I visited Brighton in June of 1944 and my memory of that is that all the Policemen were at least six foot tall and they all wore white helmets. On the 11th June we entrained to London where we marched through the East End and that was an unforgettable scene with all the people cheering us. It's very difficult to describe the emotion at that time. Of course they really suffered in the East End from the extensive bombing and they were deliriously happy when they saw us march through."

Recalling the mood in the build up to D-Day Charles said: "Our mood was to get at them [the Germans] as there were so many pent up feelings amongst us. We sailed to France on the night of 13th June where we saw an amazing scene that we will never forget. There were thousands of ships of all sizes and aircraft flying above us. It was an unbelievable sight. When we landed the bridge-head was about six miles deep at that stage and was static.

"My personal memory was marching with the Platoon off the beach and marching into the first village. It was about 3 o'clock in the morning and we were dog tired and when we were halted we just slumped down on the pavement with our back resting against the walls of the houses. In the house I was slumped against a window above me opened up and a little girl's head popped out and she said 'bonjour' and sang chantandré. I shall never forget it and as she finished the song I heard her mother in the background telling her to come in and close the window and get back into bed, and that was the first memory I had after landing.

"We first went into action on 26th June, which became known as the Battle of the Scottish Corridor.

"On the eve of battle we were addressed by our Commanding Officer. We were in a field sitting around in beautiful sunshine playing football. And then we could hear the guns in the distance. There were about 800 men all around the field when we were called to be addressed by the Commanding Officer who was standing up on the bonnet of a jeep. He said 'Tomorrow we are going into action at 7.30am for which we have been training for three years. You will be meeting the 12 SS Hitlerjugend Division, which is the cream of the German Army, all 17½ year old fanatical Hitler worshippers. You are the pick of the British Army and so it's going to be some little party'.

"That was it. The address finished and then another unbelievable act occurred when many of the guys started going crazy, they started to dance, the pipers played the bagpipes and men were singing. It was all emotion you see. And then we just moved up as it became darker, we moved up to the front line, which was still quiet. And we stood from about 7.30pm in the evening just smoking and we stood all night deathly quiet for 12 hours.

"At 7.30am all hell broke loose and we started to move forward in line abreast through the cornfield — 800 guns were firing, including shells from battleships in the Channel which were delivering 16" shells, which were falling about 100 yards in front of us as we advanced. Within minutes we had casualties and stretcher bearers were employed all the time.

"We sustained so many casualties that we were relieved about 4 o'clock in the afternoon by another Battalion of the Division and we went back to dig graves for the guys who had fallen. We just slept in the village on the pavement. At 7am the following morning we went forward again to continue the battle because it was attack, counter attack, which was to last for four days of bitter fighting. At the end of the four days reinforcements came in and we rested for 24 hours. Then we went into action again until finally we were pulled out on 30th June, but we had advanced some eight miles into the enemy territory. If you go into that area today the streets all have Scottish names.

"General Montgomery pulled the Division out on 30th June as the Division had lost over 2,000 men who were killed or wounded. The Battalion had lost 30 men who were killed and 126 wounded and at the culmination of the Battle the Battalion had lost 25% of its strength. We had not washed, shaved or taken our clothing and boots off for two months until the end of the battle in Normandy.

"We finished up in a town called Estree, which is about 40 miles inland. We had a bitter fight at Estree and it was our last. We lost our Colonel there when he was wounded, but our war in Normandy had finished after two months of bitter fighting on and off. The toughest was in the first days. We never had a battle like the battle of the Scottish Corridor.

"I wrote my book in the hope that I might be contacted by the guys in the Battalion and to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK."

Charles was wounded in the Battle of the Rhine on 24th March 1945, some nine months after he had landed in Normandy, when he stood on a shoe mine on the bank of the river, he was in the first wave of the attack across the Rhine, just minutes after the attack went in.

He continued: "It was just like daylight as all the front was ablaze with fire. I could see the mines as the prongs stood above the ground, but you could do nothing about it, you had to move forward. I was dancing around between prongs and I just caught one and I went up in the air and then within minutes I was back on the other side where I started. My next memory is broad daylight as I travelled in an ambulance and I was pulled out and laid on the street and all these civilians were standing looking down on me. The reason the ambulance had stopped was because at that precise moment the sky was full of the First Airborne Division parachutists planes who were to land in front of our attack across the Rhine."

Charles' foot was saved and he served in the Royal Scots Fusiliers until he was discharged in December 1945.

Charles finished: "When I go back I visit the little villages where we fought and the cemeteries there and our memorial in Trueville, which I will visit in June when I return for the 70th Anniversary. There is a plaque to our Divisional Commander, General Barber in a churchyard there. It's always very emotional when I return."

Charles joined Blind Veterans UK in 2004 and he goes to the Brighton centre three times a week where he works out in the gym. He also enjoys meeting his fellow blind veterans there and would like anyone he served with to contact him.

You can buy Charles' book Living for the Moment online at Amazon, Waterstones, Love Reading and other websites.

Arthur Hollands joined the Royal Navy in 1943, following in the footsteps of his father and brother as he lived close to the naval town of Chatham in Kent.

Speaking of those days, Arthur who lives in Halifax with his wife Mildred, said: "When my brother was home on leave we went into Chatham and into the Recruiting Office that was over the top of Burton's building. I told my brother I wouldn't be long, but I was in there for three hours as I had my medical and signed up for the Navy. I went into the Navy in January 1943 and did my initial six week training at Gosport in Hampshire. I'd served my time as a mechanic when I left school and the Navy needed people who knew how to service the petrol and diesel engines that were in the landing craft. After Gosport I was drafted to Spean Bridge, a Royal Marine training camp in Scotland, to prepare for D-Day, although of course we didn't know it at the time. We got used to the landing craft that were hoisted at the Port and Starboard of each ship as we were the maintenance on the landing craft. Our team included a mechanic (that was my job), a joiner and an electrician. There were four of us attached to the Royal Marine Commando basic training camp and we lived on our own in a hut that was a bit removed from the Marines. We made sure the landing craft were in good working order and we trained the Marines to get on and off the craft.

"After that we were shipped down to Southampton where there were hundreds of troops camped in tents everywhere, they were in parks and even in green avenues up the road, wherever there was a bit of green grass there was a tent. The troops came onboard on 5th June during the night and we crossed on a ship that had been converted to a troop carrier to carry hoisted landing craft. We travelled over with the Americans, leaving Southampton at about 0500 hours on 6th June as part of the flotilla crossing to France. On the way over I remember the American troops were gambling, throwing dice and taking each other's money and holding big wedges of dollars in their hands and laughing and having a good time. To look at them you wouldn't think anything was happening. Our job was to lower the landing craft off the ship into the water off Omaha Beach. The landing craft were manned by Royal Marines, a Coxon, a man in the Engine Room and a couple of Seamen. We lowered the craft and made sure the troops, about two or three dozen were down on their haunches and the Royal Marines onboard landed the troops on the beaches.

"The seas were rough and the craft was bobbing about all over the place. As we lowered one of the craft someone unhooked the davit and it smashed into the steering of the craft, breaking it. A Royal Marine Corporal, who was the Coxon,

I think his name was Tandy, but I can't remember, jumped over the stern of the craft and put his feet on each rudder and gave orders to the Marine in the Engine Room. That Corporal guided the craft into the beach landed the troops and came back to the ship. If he hadn't done that the joiner would have gone to work on the craft. He received a medal for his actions I think it was the DCM.

"There was a lot of shelling and rockets being fired and the noise just went on all around us, but our concern was to get the troops onto the beach. It's amazing when you're on the job you don't fill up, we just thought about what we had to do. We were too far away to see what happened when the troops landed on the beach. It's so long ago that sometimes I wonder if I dreamed it.

"On the way back to Southampton we buried three Frogmen who had gone onto the beaches to clear the mines ahead of the troops going in. On the second day, D+1, we took Green Howards over, but in between a Mulberry harbour had been towed across so that the ship could tie up alongside. It was interesting on the way back as we almost hit a vibration mine. We heard the explosion and had to go into Falmouth where the divers went down to see if there was any damage to the ship. After that we went up to Scotland and on to New York in convoy in a journey that took over 12 days where we picked up more troops and took them on to the South Pacific. We dropped them in New Guinea and another island and then carried on to Australia to collect Australian troops in Sydney and Brisbane to take them to the Philippines."

Arthur was demobbed as a Petty Officer Motor Mechanic on 25th December 1946. He had served in Normandy and the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean and had travelled the world before his 21st birthday.



Picture: Arthur and Mildred Hollands at their home in Halifax.

Les Hammond, D-Day veteran.

By Colin Williamson.

On June 29th 1613 The Globe Theatre in London burnt to the ground. On that same day in 1644 Charles the First of England defeats a Parliamentarian detachment at the Battle of Cropredy Bridge, the last battle won by an English King on English soil. Now fast track to June 29th 1659 when at the Battle of Konotop the Ukrainian armies of Ivan Vyhovsky defeat the Russians led by Prince Trubetskoy. Jump a couple of hundred years or so and on that day in 1916 the Irish Nationalist and British diplomat Sir Roger Casement was sentenced to death for his part in the Easter Rising whilst on that very same day in 1922 France granted one square kilometre of land at Vimy Ridge "freely, and for all time, to the government of Canada, the free use of the land exempt from all taxes". All very interesting historical facts you may say but that day in 1944 was a very significant one indeed for 19 years old Sapper Leslie Hammond for that is the day when he motored off the LST (Landing Ship Tank) onto Juno Beach in his Firefly tank to take part in what would be the biggest adventure of his young life.

Born in Northampton in 1924 Les started his working life as a clerk with the Inland Revenue, but soon realised it wasn't the life for him so on his 18th he went to the local recruiting office to enlist in the Royal Air Force, along with one of his old classmates. Much to young Les's disappointment and despite passing all of the physical and psychological tests, he was refused on the grounds of his poor eyesight, having failed to read the letters on the Snelling chart when asked to remove his glasses. "I was devastated" said Les, "I'd really set my heart on joining the RAF. I was later to learn that my classmate, who had successfully managed to join up and was flying with Bomber Command, had been killed on a bombing mission over Germany."

Not long after, in the late summer/early autumn of 1943, Les received his call up papers and was told to report to the newly formed Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers depot to undergo trade training. Before REME's formation in 1942, the maintenance and repair of the Army's equipment was down to several different corps and individual Regiments, such as the Royal Engineers, Royal Army Service Corps and the Royal Ordnance Corps. World War Two's

increase in the quantity, quality and complexity of equipment exposed the flaws in this system and a committee was set up, chaired by William Beveridge, to address these problems and, as a result, the Corps of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers was formed in October 1942. After trade training, Les joined the Corps as a Technical Clerk ("I was deadly with a typewriter!") and was posted to a LAD (Light Aid Detachment) attached to 86 Anti Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery. The Regiment had only recently converted to armour having once had an infantry role as the 5th Battalion, The Devonshire Regiment, and was equipped with 17 pounder guns distributed between its four batteries. Two of the batteries towed the guns behind their vehicles and the other two had them mounted on M10 Tank Destroyers which were based on the chassis of an M4 Sherman tank. The M10's had been up-gunned to match the German 88's but were no match for the enemies Tiger tanks.

Just before D-Day, the 86th were billeted in a sealed camp in Essex, eagerly waiting to join the fray over in France. Les recalls "I was on guard duty one evening and could see the V1 buzz bombs flying overhead quite clearly and I said to myself I'd better get over to France pretty damn quick, it'll be a lot safer over there!" His wish was granted and on the 29th June 1944 when he found himself on Juno Beach, near Courseulles-sur-Mer in northern France.

"Rations were very poor and we were constantly hungry and after a week or so as we were fed up with eating hard tack biscuits one night myself and a pal of mine went looking for some fresh grub. Not far from where we were dug in we came across a potato field which we went into and pulled up a few spuds. It wasn't until morning that we spotted signs dotted around the field saying that it hadn't been cleared of mines!

Soon the order was given to move and the regiment pushed on to the outskirts of Caen where they were told once again to 'dig in'. Les spotted a drainage ditch running alongside a field which would offer ideal cover and save him the job of digging a trench. He takes up the story.

"I jumped down into the ditch and started clearing it of leaves and general debris. It was then that I noticed something sticking up out of the ground. When I went up to have a close look I realised that it was a leg, with a jackboot attached to it! This was my first encounter with death, but to be perfectly honest, it didn't bother me in the slightest. It if had been a British boot attached

to the foot then perhaps my attitude would have been different, but the fact that it was a German boot caused me no concern whatsoever.

Les got on particularly well with one of the tank commanders, a Sergeant in the Royal Artillery and would often spend some time with him having a brew and chatting about family and how things were going back home in Blighty. The Sergeant had confided in Les that he was an orphan and had been adopted when he was very young so didn't know his biological parents. His adoptive parents had died and he had no other siblings and wasn't married and didn't even have a girlfriend back home. He was subsequently killed in the fighting around Caen and Carpiquet airfield and is buried at St Manvieu War Cemetery in the village of Cheux, 10 kilometres west of Caen. Les often visits his friend's grave and as far as he's aware, he is the only person, probably in the world, to actually grieve over his death, a statistic which Les thinks is rather sad.

The Regiment was ordered to move once again, this time to an area between the villages of Eterville and Maltot, in Calvados. Their objective was to try and capture Hill 112, which was on the high ground overlooking the valleys of the Orne and Odon, an unimpressive stretch of country covered in wheat fields and wooded copses and a few scattered small villages. Rommel himself is credited with the words, "He who controls Hill 112, controls Normandy" such was the value of commanding that vital piece of terrain. The hill was defended by the 9th and 10th SS Panzer Divisions, a determined, ruthless enemy supplemented by the addition of a cadre of experienced tank men from the infamous Leibstandarte SS Adolf Hitler, Hitler's own personal bodyguard.

"The fighting was intense," said Les, "the barrage started before first light but Jerry was a stubborn enemy and dug in well. They refused to give an inch of territory and for several hours they kept the infantry pegged back as they had concealed machine gun positions and even when wounded they refused to surrender. I remember seeing one captured SS officer, despite the fact that he was a prisoner of war, he looked down at us with contempt. The look of sheer arrogance on his face, that's what I recall."

Les remembers one particular incident when two men from his detachment were ordered to go and recover a Sherman tank that had been hit by a mortar bomb which had fallen into the open turret hatch.

"A lot of the tanks had open turrets where the hatches had been taken off, this mortar round had dropped inside the tank and detonated. They brought the tank, or what was left of it, back to our position and a couple of the lads had to go inside and bring out bits of bodies on a poncho; things like that you never forget".

He recalls being on duty when news of the German surrender filtered down the lines. "I was on stag guarding a biscuit factory" he says. "There were lots of German civilians around but we weren't allowed to talk to them, in fact one of our sergeants was court martialed for talking to a German".

Not long after the surrender, the regiment found themselves billeted outside Hamburg and Les recalls going into the city to buy a new pair of glasses. "It was total devastation, not one building remained intact. It must have been hell for people living in those conditions". The glasses cost him 12 shillings and sixpence, the equivalent of two days pay! During that time, he remembers going to see his first opera, Madame Butterfly, and was amazed that life seemed to go on amidst the devastation.

After the war ended, he was given embarkation leave and then posted to Cairo, in Egypt. It was the first time that he had ever flown, and remembers the aircraft, an Avro York, which was a converted Lancaster bomber, used to transport both military and civilian personnel, and how cold and noisy the flight was.

After his stint in Cairo Les came back to Blighty and was sent to Number 1 Physical Development Centre in Hereford to try and build him up a bit. "I was small and wiry and quite fit but the Army wanted to put a bit of meat on my bones. I really enjoyed my time at Hereford and whilst I was there I began to seriously consider a career in the Army; the thought of going for a commission passed through my mind". Ironically, when he returned from Hereford he found he had lost a pound and a half in weight; not quite what the army had in mind!

He was dissuaded by his family from signing on again and was asked to join the family shoe business in Northampton instead, which he eventually did and started work in 1947, retiring in 1997.

His father had served with distinction in the First World War and lost a leg, returning home to work in the shoe trade. His uncle, Rene Leslie Hammond, was killed at the Somme in 1917 and is buried in Outtersteene Communal Cemetery Extension in Bailleul, France.



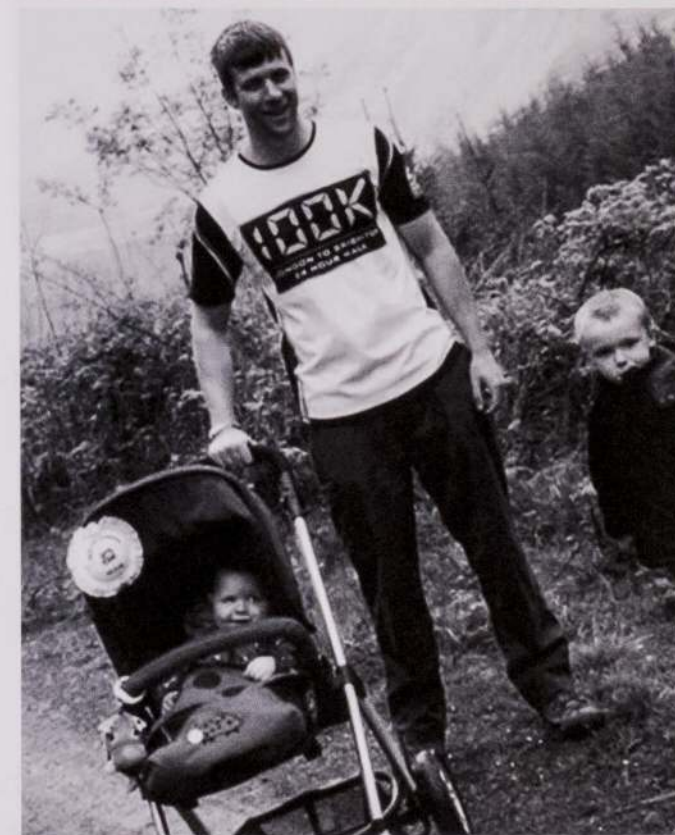
Picture: Les Hammond during World War II.

Darren Blanks and Ned Borwell to take part in Blind Veterans UK's 100K London to Brighton Walk.

Darren Blanks, a 27 year old member of Blind Veterans UK from Cumbria, is yomping across the hills where he lives with former school friend Ned Borwell as they train for this year's 100K London to Brighton challenge walk. Darren is no stranger to physical challenges as he has completed marathons and half marathons and Cadet Challenges to raise money and awareness for the charity that means so much to him.

Speaking of their training regime Darren said: "Ned and I have been walking in Ennerdale and are now training in Keswick and the surrounding areas. It's going well and we wear our Blind Veterans UK tops to spread the word of the charity. Ned will navigate during the 100K London to Brighton walk, but what's also really important is that as we do a lot of walking to train he knows when to tell me about footing as we cover different terrain. We're both looking forward to the challenge and hopefully the weather will be good. It's something new and it's what we like doing. We're already thinking ahead and the plan is to enter next year's 100K with a team from Cumbria!"

If you would like to sponsor Darren and Ned their Justgiving page is at: www.justgiving.com/darren-blanks1



Picture: Darren Blanks takes a break during a training walk through Lowther Forest with his family. His son Austin is in the buggy and he is with his nephew Kian.

Blind Veterans UK Masonic Group weekend, 25th to 27th April 2014. By W.Bro. Bob Strickland.

Eleven Brethren from various parts of the UK met up for our Masonic weekend when we stayed at the Brighton centre. Those in attendance were John Barry, Nick Chambers, John Cross, Doug Gregor, Clive Jones, Billy Miller, Michael Saunders, Bob Strickland, Colin West and Don Oliver.

Ernie Bignell was due to be with us, but unfortunately due to illness he had to call off at the last minute. Of the 11 Brethren, two of the Brothers were with us for the first time, John Barry and Ron Cross MBE. Both were made most welcome.

Most of us arrived on Friday 25th when we gathered in the lounge for welcome drinks.

On Saturday morning we gathered in the Ballroom for our AGM. I opened by greeting everyone before I gave a full report on the events of the past year. I was then reaffirmed as the group's Secretary.

During the afternoon, Catherine Goodier, Editor of the Review, gathered us all together and several group photographs were taken for the magazine.

It had been planned at last year's AGM that W.Bro. Ernie Bignell would carry out the Second Degree ceremony at this year's visit to the Temple Lodge in Brighton, but due to his illness, W.Bro Clive Jones and I agreed to share the ceremony between us.

At the meeting, the other officers were shared by W.Bro Nick Chambers as S.W., W.Bro. Billy Miller as J.W., Bro. Ron Cross MBE as Chaplain, W.Bro. Colin West as S.D and W.Bro. as I.G. I finished the ceremony by doing the lodge working tools and the 2nd Degree Tracing Board. In all it turned out to be an excellent evening.

At the Brighton centre on Sunday we had 37 seated for the Sunday lunch. This included the Brethren with their partners and guest, plus our special invited guests who were W.Bro. Martin Mitten Dep. Provincial Grand Master Elect of the Sussex Province and his wife Wendy. Lesley Garven, Manager of Blind Veterans

UK Brighton centre, plus the Worshipful Master and two senior Brethren from the Temple Lodge, together with their wives.

It was a great lunch and a great way to finish the weekend. And in a future edition of the Review there will be more details of a very significant donation that was made to Blind Veterans UK.

If you are a Freemason why not join us next year. You can contact me on email: robert.strickland1@btinternet.com or call me on telephone number: 01329 841022.



Picture: Blind Veterans UK Masonic group at the Brighton centre. From left to right: John Barry, Don Oliver, Clive Jones, Bob Strickland, Michael Saunders, Colin West, Billy Miller, Ron Cross MBE and Nick Chambers.

Llandudno Adventure Week 13th to 19th April 2014. By Colin Williamson.

Some of the greatest adventurers that the world has ever seen were driven by sheer curiosity and the desire to step outside their comfort zone and discover great things. Nothing can beat that rush of adrenaline fuelled excitement when doing something that makes the heart race and the body tingle with elation. Whether it's climbing mountains, exploring remote jungles, sailing the world's oceans or jumping out of a balloon 24 miles above the earth, that intense feeling of exhilaration has got some of us hooked.

Men like Marco Polo, Sir Walter Raleigh, Christopher Columbus, Sir Ernest Shackleton, Sir Edmund Hilary, Ranulph Fiennes, Thor Heyerdahl and the like had it in abundance. Ladies like Nellie Bly, Freya Stark and Harriet Chalmers Adams also had what it takes. Now we have a new breed of Blind Veterans UK adventurers, step up Carl Adamson, Chris Francis, Chris Gallagher, Mark Heaume, David Greenwood, Sandy Donnelly and Carol Sadler and take a bow! Adventure Week at the Llandudno centre came calling for these magnificent seven and what a week they all enjoyed.

On the day that I visited, the group were being instructed by staff members Steve Boswell, Matthew Lee and Dewi Roberts with volunteers Bob Hind, Hayley Goldsmith-Williams (who is the bookings coordinator at Llandudno), Facilities manager Paul Wynne-Williams and Mark Hollis, a former member of the Royal Corps of Transport. I joined them in the wooded area set in the magnificent grounds of our Llandudno centre.

Former WRAF supplier Carol Sadler told me "This was my first ever adventure week and I've definitely exceeded my boundaries! I've really been out of my comfort zone but I've thoroughly enjoyed myself. This week I have proved to myself that I can still be an active member of society and Blind Veterans UK has allowed me to take part in so many activities that I'd probably never had contemplated had I been sighted and I'm so grateful. I've even acquired a tandem bicycle after I had such a splendid time on a cycle week that I attended and I'm really looking forward to using it".

Mark Heaume, a former Challenger Two tank crewman from West Yorkshire is on his first adventure week and is really enjoying the company and the

activities. "I really fancied coming along on this themed week as I'd enjoyed the canoeing week that I'd done previously with Blind Veterans UK and wanted more of the same. It sounded exciting and just up my street. The lads are great fun and I'm having a great time!"

The group visited the artificial ski slope at the Great Orme and I took the opportunity to speak with ex RAF parachute display team member Chris Francis and asked him if he was enjoying the week. "Absolutely," he said, "I'm really having a fantastic time and it's great to be back on the ski's again as I love skiing and always attend the Blind Veterans UK ski week over in Italy each year. This adventure week has wet my appetite and I'll definitely be looking at attending other events this year and hopefully for years to come."

Dave Greenwood was busy brewing up using ingredients from an army ration pack when I chanced by and scrounged a cup of tea. "The last time I brewed up in the woods was 58 years ago and it's a lot easier now than it was then" said Dave, an ex Royal Corps of Transport driver. "It also tastes a lot better too" he joked.

When I joined them in the bar in the evening they were a tired but happy bunch. Chris Gallagher was entertaining the crowd with his version of "You'll Never Walk Alone" that would have brought a tear to a prosthetic eye and Carl Adamson was doing his best to keep everyone amused by telling some of the worst jokes I've ever had the misfortune to hear. Sandy Donnelly was having a great time listening to the banter and is really looking forward to participating in a tandem skydive with the Red Devils later this year to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK.

There was a lot of leg pulling going on, some great put downs and a great feeling of camaraderie in the bar that night. I've got a sneaky feeling that this group will want to get involved in a lot more activities together.

Dewi Roberts, Llandudno centre's Sports and Recreation Instructor's report of the week.

Day 1:

With a positive push and a dose of self-motivation, members left their home comforts behind and decided to go on an Adventure! Outdoor expeditions and

activities don't come much bigger, wetter and wilder than here in Snowdonia, North Wales. We can easily say there were a few apprehensive faces turning up to the Monday morning brief!

The first day offered a chance to get to know each other and also the instructors for the week. During the brief, members were asked to think about two different things they would like to achieve by the end of the week. The most popular answer was 'completion', meaning our adventurers were ambitious.

Monday afternoon was full of sunshine, and we set out for Union Rock (a historic site where miners initially met to form the union) for a mountain climbing session. This was great as it helped members get used to the equipment; the harness, helmets and ropes which will be used again during the week.

Day 2:

The second day promised even better weather, and we were treated with glorious sunshine as we set off for Cwm Penmachno (Cwm meaning small valley). The only problem was we spent most of the day underground in the mines of Rhiwbach slate quarry, where there was no sign of daylight whatsoever! Our instructor, Jonah, an adventurous training instructor for the Army, was brilliant and knew everything there is to know about the way people, including children as young as eight, worked underground in extreme cases. I think it's safe to say we thoroughly enjoyed the experience and the blast of warmth and fresh air on our faces as we exited was amazing! A big well done goes to all members for completing the activity; especially the climbing part where we had to manoeuvre across a vertical rock face that fell down towards a deep lake! Chris Gallagher was absolutely superb throughout the day, he always gave everything a go — even his rubbish jokes!

Day 3:

Our third day comprised of a bush craft activities/survival techniques session in the woodland area of the Llandudno centre. An hour's walk from the centre was followed by a delicious BBQ in our woodland trail, kindly prepared by our main chef Shandy! An afternoon of dry slope skiing was the course of action and the most fatiguing activity so far! Congratulations to David Greenwood for just

about staying up on his feet more often than falling on his bottom!

Day 4:

A very interesting and relevant talk was given by Diane Mountford and her husband Richard on Thursday morning; as they looked back at pictures and stories of their Antarctica Adventure that inspired our members and gave us a boost of energy! We were kindly invited by the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre at Indefatigable for a tour of the facility followed by lunch. We saw the indoor climbing walls where current military personnel were training and instructing, and also learnt where the RAF Sea King lands in an emergency returning from the mountains.

This military camp looked over the Menai Straits, and in fitting fashion we went on a Rib Ride Speedboat ride from Caernarfon Castle down the straits, under the bridges and around Puffin Island. This was a fantastic adrenaline rush! As we were mainly on the Isle of Anglesey throughout the day, we thought a nice meal at the Tafarn-Y-Bont (Bridge Inn, which is located on Menai Bridge) would finish the day suitably.

Day 5:

The finale! What a rush, and what a tiring week. However, members, guides, and staff were all up for a last splash! Tryweryn, Bala was the location and the activity choice — white water rafting! This was the site of the National white water rafting centre and they had just released the water from the controlling dam. This meant we were in for a rough ride! All members thoroughly enjoyed and accomplished everything thrown at them. A special mention must be in order for Carol Sadler, who had been nervous and worried about this final day since she saw the programme. However, she managed to conquer the river as well as her fear.

Similarly, members gave great feedback on how they felt the week went and how much they had achieved. This week couldn't have happened without the unfailing help from our volunteers, who came from many different teams across Blind Veterans UK. The week ended with an awards ceremony, for both serious and comical values, and the members, staff and volunteers had an unforgettable week.



Picture: Team work to go through the Rhwback slate quarry.



Picture: Going native at the Llandudno centre. Carol Sadler and husband Alan, Mark Heaume, Chris Francis, Carl Adamson, David Greenwood, Chris Gallagher, Alexander 'Sandy' Donnelly. Volunteers for the week were: Mark Hollis, Bob Hind, Lisa Marie (Care), Andy Gillam (Maintenance), Chris Arundel (Reception/Security), Hayley Goldsmith-Williams (Bookings) and Andy Warburton (Head Chef).



Picture: Going through the mines of Rhiwbach slate quarry.



Picture: Keeping it together in the fast moving white water rapids.

Bowling Club report by Alan Gibson, Chairman.

It was another successful meeting at the Brighton centre, although we were sorry several members had to cancel this year for various reasons, which included Jim 'Jimbo' Booth, our 102 year old bowler and Ted and Joan Arnold. Joan had to have an op on her knee and we wish her well. It is with heavy hearts that we announce the sad passing of Ron Croxton who died on 4th May 2014. A gentle man with a great sense of humour he will be dearly missed.

We were pleased to welcome Len and Daphne Pugsley from Potters Bar and Harry Murray from Scotland, making 22 bowlers taking part. After some excellent bowling the winners are as follows:

Singles.

Graham Johnson and runner up Pete Bradshaw.

Group winners.

Brian Taylor and Pete Rolfe.

Pairs

Nadia Boys and Pete Bradshaw. Runners Up Alan Cade and Graham Johnson.

Triples

Winners Brian Taylor, John Russell and Robbie Roberts.
Runners up Connie Apletree, James Poole and Graham Johnson.

Again I must thank our ladies Daphne, Iris, Shirley, Kathy and Ann for all their help in various 'departments', together with members of staff.

We are looking forward to our October Tournament, which is fully booked and has a waiting list. The March one is already filling up so if you would like to join us book now and get on the waiting list. Please telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391500.

So until October I wish you goodbye and good bowling for the summer.

Family News.

Congratulations to:

Birthdays:

Joe Burgess on his 103rd birthday on 1st May

Ronald Tipple on his 100th birthday on 13th May.

Anniversaries:

Platinum (70th):

Roy & Joy Weighell of Buckingham, Buckinghamshire on 13th May.

Audrey & Cyril Mathews of Isle Of Anglesey on 15th May.

Blue Sapphire (65th):

Alek & Katie Tarwid of Alton, Hampshire on 21st May.

Dorothy & William Thompson of Blackpool, Lancashire on 28th May.

Diamond (60th):

Margaret & Eddy Dixon of Saltdean, East Sussex on 1st May.

Tom & Mary Thaxter of Blackpool, Lancashire on 1st May.

Reg & Moira Milburn of Durham, County Durham on 27th May.

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.

Joyce Amos who died on 23rd December 2013. She was the wife of Charles Amos.

Jim Kirkwood who died on 6th April 2014. He was the husband of Rita Kirkwood.

Jean Mason who died on 14th April 2014. She was the widow of the late Reginald Mason.

Welcome to Blind Veterans UK.

Joseph Ambrose of Leigh-On-Sea, Essex served in the Royal Artillery from 1950 to 1965.

Joy Balmain of Leamington Spa served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1944 to 1947.

Alan Barker of Felixstowe, Suffolk served in the Royal Armoured Corps, the Royal Tank Regiment, the Staffordshire Regiment and the Inns of Court Regiment from 1941 to 1948.

John Batty of Leyland, Lancashire served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1953.

George Bell of Liverpool served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1958 to 1960.

Louis Bell of Consett, County Durham served in the Royal Navy from 1949 to 1953.

Joseph Bennett of Poole, Dorset served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

Ronald Bond of Poulton-Le-Fylde, Lancashire served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1949.

George Boothroyd of Doncaster, South Yorkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

Thomas Brindley of Newcastle Upon Tyne served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1953 to 1959.

Roy Bryning of Salford served in the Royal Army Medical Corps and the Royal Artillery from 1964 to 1993.

Brian Burrows of Ellesmere Port served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1956 to 1962.

Leslie Carless of Ipswich, Suffolk served in the Royal Air Force from 1948 to 1950.

Ernest Carver of Newhaven, East Sussex served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1947.

Arthur Chambers of Clacton-On-Sea, Essex served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve from 1942 to 1946.

Ronald Clark of Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946.

Nancy Cole of Sudbury, Suffolk served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1945.

Bernard Conlin of Sheffield, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1951.

Edgar Cowperthwaite of Lancaster served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946.

Andrew Davidson of East Kilbride, Glasgow served in the Royal Air Force from 1939 to 1965.

Margaret Dewar of Witney, Oxfordshire served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1946 to 1947.

George Donaghy of Cambridge served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1947.

Alan Fellowes of Ashford, Kent served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers from 1945 to 1948.

John Fifer of Edinburgh served in the East Surrey Regiment, the Royal Army Educational Corps and the Honourable Artillery Company from 1949 to 1955.

Owen Fisher of Alfreton, Derbyshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1948 to 1950.

Arthur 'Steve' Funnell of Polegate, East Sussex served in the General Service Corps, the Royal Sussex Regiment, the Royal Armoured Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1946 to 1970.

David Gant of Stowmarket, Suffolk served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1960 to 1965.

John Grosset of Ilkley, Yorkshire served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1954 to 1956.

Thomas Haspey of Neston, Lincolnshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

Thomas Hemsley of Newcastle Upon Tyne served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Armoured Corps from 1945 to 1948.

John Henry of Stocksfield, Northumberland served in the Royal Navy from 1948 to 1950.

Donald Higham of Bognor Regis, West Sussex served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Signals from 1945 to 1948.

Orvin Hill of Malvern, Worcestershire served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

John Holmes of Stockton-On-Tees, Cleveland served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1957 to 1963.

Elsie Horsley of Billingham, Cleveland served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1944.

John Hortop of Carlisle Royal Army Service Corps, the Royal Corps of Transport and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1958 to 1993.

Ernest Hosick of Lisburn, County Antrim served in the Irish Guards from 1976 to 1979.

Gerald Hughes of Maesteg, Mid Glamorgan served in the Royal Armoured Corps Life Guards from 1952 to 1959.

Joan Jackson of St. Helens, Merseyside served in the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1949 to 1953.

Joan Keys of Peacehaven, East Sussex served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1946.

Kenneth Lampard of Folkestone, Kent served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

Daniel Lee of Solihull, West Midlands served in the Royal Armoured Corps, the Royal Army Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1949 to 1979.

Dennis Lyne of Fleetwood, Lancashire served in the Royal Navy from 1941 to 1946.

Ronald MacBrayne of Lennoxton, Glasgow served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1946 to 1948.

George Mordaunt of Ormskirk, Lancashire served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers from 1944 to 1946.

Gerald McCormack of Maesteg, Mid Glamorgan served in the Coldstream Guards from 1947 to 1959.

Ian McIvor of York, North Yorkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1938 to 1949.

Cynthia Miller of Nottingham served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1945.

Edward Mills of Gravesend, Kent served in the Royal Air Force from 1937 to 1947.

Ernest Moore of Llandudno, Gwynedd served in the Royal Air Force from 1955 to 1957.

Clive Morgan of Abertillery, Gwent served in the South Wales Borderers and the Royal Welsh Fusiliers from 1961 to 1983.

Ronald Morris of Crawley, West Sussex served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Signals from 1947 to 1949.

John Myerscough of Clitheroe, Lancashire served in the Royal Navy from 1947 to 1949.

Mercia 'Griff' Nesbitt of Prestatyn, Clwyd served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1942 to 1956.

Peter Norton of Brighouse, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946.

Marie O'Donnell of Rayleigh, Essex served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1945 to 1948.

Nathaniel Ogayemi of Southwark, London served in the Staffordshire Regiment from 1967 to 1979.

Edmund Parker of Holyhead, Gwynedd served in the Royal Engineers from 1955 to 1957.

Alfred Payton of Honiton, Devon served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1947.

Dennis Peel of Worthing, West Sussex served in the Royal Navy from 1945 to 1948.

Alan Phoenix of Preston, Lancashire served in the General Service Corps, the King's Own Scottish Borderers, the Wiltshire Regiment, the Cheshire Regiment and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1945 to 1948.

Graham Poole of Watlington, Oxfordshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1958 to 1972.

Walter Poole of Bristol served in the Royal Air Force from 1960 to 1965.

Leonard Prigg of Thetford, Norfolk served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1945 to 1948.

William Proctor of Leyland served in the Royal Engineers from 1955 to 1960.

William Pullen of Salisbury, Wiltshire served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1948.

Daniel Queen of Manchester served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1950 to 1956.

Edwin Robins of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire served in the Royal Air Force from 1946 to 1948.

Anthony Rood of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire served in the Royal Artillery from 1953 to 1959.

Evelyn 'Louise' Sarvis of Bognor Regis, West Sussex served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1946.

Mary Savage of Lincoln served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1945.

David Simmons of Leeds served in the Royal Artillery from 1974 to 1977.

Godfrey Skinner of Bath, Wiltshire served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1949 to 1955.

Harold Slack of Warrington, Cheshire served in the Royal Navy from 1945 to 1948.

Ralph Soppitt of Chester Le Street, County Durham served in the Durham Light Infantry from 1958 to 1967.

Kenneth Stotesbury of Steyning, West Sussex served in the Royal Signals from 1940 to 1946.

Leonard Straughair of Rochdale, Lancashire served in the Lancashire Fusiliers from 1955 to 1959.

Margaret Swain of Ferndown, Dorset served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1942 to 1946.

Richard Tetlow of Wilford, Nottingham served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1940 to 1946.

David Yeomans of Heathfield, East Sussex served in the Royal Air Force from 1953 to 1959.

Joan Warr of Reigate, Surrey served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1951.

Barry Whitman of Bristol served in the Royal Air Force from 1957 to 1959.

Winifred Wild of Burton-On-Trent, Staffordshire served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1942 to 1943.

Ronald Wildman of Cullompton, Devon served in the Royal Signals from 1953 to 1964.

Jonathan Williams of Rhayader, Powys served in the Royal Corps of Transport and the Welsh Guards from 1969 to 1979.

Gerald Woodard of Halstead, Essex served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1954 to 1956.

Ivan Wright of Consett, County Durham served in the Royal Air Force from 1954 to 1956.

Leonard Wright of Ilkeston, Derbyshire served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1940 to 1946.

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.

John Abrahams of Bearsted, Maidstone died on 15th April 2014, aged 89. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1943. Due to his poor eyesight he was restricted to ground work as an aircraft fitter. He was deployed to France to one of the first allied fighter aerodromes where the Typhoon aircraft were located. He also served in Germany and was eventually discharged as an Aircraftsman in 1947.

Edward 'Ted' Ansell of Stevenage, Hertfordshire died on 8th December 2013, aged 93. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1943, training as an airframe fitter in Dalcross, Scotland. He was posted to the Far East and India. He was discharged in 1946 as an Aircraftman First Class.

William 'Bill' Appleton of St Helens, Merseyside died on 26th April 2014, aged 86. He was called up in 1946 for National Service and joined the General Service Corps, training at Omagh. He was transferred to the Royal Signals as a driver and was posted to Bremerhaven, Bielefeld and Herford in Germany. He was discharged in 1948.

Arnold Ayres of Scarborough, North Yorkshire died on 15th April 2014, aged 87. At 17 he volunteered for Boy's Service in the Army. He began his training with the General Service Corps in 1944 and transferred to the Royal Engineers in 1945. He served in France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Germany and Austria in bomb and mine disposal. During his Service in Belgium he was blown up by an anti-tank mine which caused him to lose the sight in his right eye and affected his hearing. He was discharged as an Acting Sergeant in 1948.

Michael Clyburn of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear died on 16th April 2014, aged 65. He joined the RAF medical branch in 1965. Qualified as a nurse he served at RAF Halton and RAF Cosford. He was discharged as a Senior Aircraftman in 1967.

Arthur Cox of Bridgend, Mid Glamorgan died on 23rd April 2014, aged 86. He was called up in 1946 for National Service with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, training at Derring Lines, Hereford. He specialised as a driver and spent his service in UK. He later trained as a mechanic before discharge in 1948.

Thomas 'Ron' Croxton of Boston, Lincolnshire died on 4th May 2014, aged 95. He joined the RAF in 1935 as a boy entrant for a full career. He was posted in the UK, Middle East, Crete and India during WWII and after the war he served in Crete, Gibraltar, Cyprus and Northern Ireland. He was also onboard HMS Laconia when she was sunk and he survived onboard a lifeboat until they landed in Sierra Leone. He retired from the RAF as a Flight Sergeant in 1965.

Frank Cureton of Llandudno, Gwynedd died on 11th April 2014, aged 92. He joined the RAF in 1940, and specialised as a Wireless Operator/Air Gunner. He served in a variety of UK RAF stations including RAF Hawking during the Battle of Britain. He was discharged as a Temporary Corporal in 1945.

John Dalley of Perth, Perthshire died on 8th April 2014, aged 83. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1948 to 1950, leaving as an Aircraftman Second Class.

Dr Lloyd Divers of Horley, Surrey died on 23rd April 2014, aged 95. He joined the York and Lancaster Regiment on a supplementary commission and then took up medical training, joining the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1943. He moved into Europe via Arromanches Beach on D-Day with the Royal Scots and remained with them until they reached Hamburg. He was discharged as a Major in 1948.

Leonard Dougherty of Halifax, West Yorkshire died on 22nd March 2014, aged 94. Educated in the training ship HMS Indefatigable, a joint venture between the Liverpool Shipping Association, the Admiralty and the Department of Education. He subsequently went to sea with the Merchant Navy and joined the Royal Naval Reserve in 1937. A navigation specialist he served in ships all over the world, mainly destroyers and was involved with the defence of Malta during WWII. After the war he remained in the Royal Naval Reserve until his retirement as a Lieutenant Commander in 1969.

Ronald 'Ron' Gard of Hereford, Herefordshire died on 1st April 2014, aged 93. He joined the RAF in 1939 and tested wireless apparatus installed in aircraft and trained wireless operators. He was seconded to the Fleet Air Arm later in the war, serving in Northern Ireland. He was discharged as a Flight Sergeant in 1946.

Leslie Gawan of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 12th April 2014, aged 92. He served in the Royal Navy from 1941 to 1946, leaving as a Leading Seaman. He served onboard HMS Valkarie in the Isle of Man. He then joined HMS Scott, a hydrographical sloop in the Atlantic, taking part in the Lofoten and Vaagso raid in Norway in 1941. He was then involved in mine laying and took part in D-Day.

Arthur Hardy of Houghton Le Spring, Tyne and Wear died on 22nd April 2014, aged 93. He served in the Royal Navy from 1937 to 1952, leaving as a Leading Electrician 1st Class.

Edna Harris of Wantage, Oxfordshire died on 2nd May 2014, aged 88. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1942, training at RAF Innsworth as a wireless operator. She served at RAF Wittering and was discharged as an Aircraftwoman 1st Class in 1944.

Leslie Hatton of Poulton Le Fylde, Lancashire died on 4th April 2014, aged 90. He joined the General Service Corps in 1942 and a month later was transferred to the Royal Artillery. In Oct 1943 he transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps and served in East Africa. He was discharged as an Acting Sergeant in 1947.

Lionel Hiatt of Bournemouth died on 2nd April 2014, aged 98. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1940 and served as a medical instructor teaching anatomy, physiology and first aid until discharge as a Flight Sergeant in 1946.

Geoffrey Hill of Guildford, Surrey died on 11th April 2014, aged 89. He joined the Middlesex Regiment in 1943 before transferring to the Leicestershire Regiment in 1944. He served in Italy and then transferred to the Sussex Regiment in 1946 before discharge in August that year as a Private.

Phillip 'Phil' Hill of Stafford, Staffordshire died on 18th April 2014, aged 77. He served in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry from 1957 to 1959 and thereafter on reserve until 1961 leaving as a Corporal. He served at home as well as in Kenya and Aden.

Arthur Hodge of Waltham Abbey, Essex died on 15th April 2014, aged 91. He joined the RAF in 1941 and served as a medic in North Africa, Iraq, Sicily, Italy, Greece and Egypt until 1949 when he was demobbed as a Corporal.

Madge Howe of Lichfield, Staffordshire died on 9th April 2014, aged 92. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1939 and served as a plotter in Essex until discharge as a Corporal in May 1946.

Norman Jones of Luton, Bedfordshire died on 12th February 2014, aged 91. He served in the Royal Air Force in the UK, India in the Calcutta area and Burma in the Rangoon and Imphal area (SEAC) from 1942 to 1946 and was demobilised as a Leading Aircraftman.

Reginald King of Oadby, Leicestershire died on 26th April 2014, aged 94. He joined the Middlesex Regiment (TA) in 1939 and was mobilised when the war started. He served in Cairo, Cyprus and Libya. In 1942 he joined the Military Provost Staff Corps which ran military prisons. He was discharged as a Warrant Officer 2nd Class in 1946.

Jan Krawczyk of Blackpool, Lancashire died on 22nd February 2014, aged 100. He joined the Polish Air Force in 1939, later moving to the UK where he joined the RAF in August 1940. He trained at RAF Henlow as an aircraft engineer and served at RAF Bramlett, RAF Cottishall and RAF Heston. He was demobilised as a Corporal in 1949.

Dr Stanley Ludkin OBE of Sherburn, County Durham died on 28th April 2014, aged 95. He went to the Newcastle School of Medicine and was the Resident House Surgeon for about 18 months before joining the 1st Army in the 99th General Hospital in 1942. He then joined the 8th Army in North Africa and went on into Italy, then moved up the Adriatic coast as far as Austria. He left the Royal Army Medical Corps as a Captain in 1946.

Ronald Monkley of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 17th April 2014, aged 89. He joined the General Service Corps in 1943. Following basic training in Canterbury he transferred to the Royal Army Service Corps in the Air Dispatch Unit based around the UK and later in Germany attached to 7 Armoured Brigade. He was discharged in 1947 as a Driver.

Rev John Moore of Hindhead, Surrey died on 19th April 2014, aged 87. He served in the Royal Navy at home and in the West Indies from 1944 to 1948. He was recommended for a commission but turned it down. He joined HMS Bridlington, a Bangor Class Minesweeper operating in home waters and later on convoy escort duties to Murmansk. He subsequently worked as a Navigator's Yeoman until leaving the service in 1948.

John Morgan of Littlehampton, West Sussex died on 1st May 2014, aged 93. He joined the Royal Armoured Corps, 61 Tank Regiment in 1943 and was commissioned into the Royal Fusiliers in 1945. He served in Germany and was discharged as a Lieutenant in 1947.

Geoffrey Nuttall of Ivybridge, Devon died on 1st May 2014, aged 87. He served in the General Service Corps from April to August 1945 and in the Royal Army Medical Corps until 1948, leaving as a Private. He served at home.

John Phillips of Preston, Lancashire died on 26th April 2014 aged 95. He joined the Royal Navy in March 1939 and trained as a stoker at HMS Pembroke. He served in a full range of ships from repair ships up to aircraft carriers. He completed his service in 1952.

Douglas Rutter of Whitchurch, Shropshire died on 24th April 2014, aged 96. He joined the Royal Navy in 1937 and specialised as a Writer. At the end of the war he signed on for an additional 10 year spell of duty and served in a variety of ships including HMS Maidstone and Ausonia. He completed his service in 1963 as a Chief Petty Officer.

Arthur Sale of Thamesmead, London died on 12th January 2014, aged 86. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1945 and served as a driver in the UK and Middle East before being discharged in 1948 in the rank of Aircraftman First Class.

Jack Shorthouse of Blackpool, Lancashire died on 21st April 2014, aged 93. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1940. He was posted to the Middle East, briefly with the Long Range Desert Group in North Africa, and then did 2½ years in Malta after which he was sent to Italy, landing in Naples and moving up the east coast to Venice. He then transferred to the Royal Armoured Corps and the 48 Royal Tank Regt in 1944, eventually being discharged as a Trooper in 1946.

Bernard Smith of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 10th April 2014, aged 87. He joined the Royal Air Force for National Service in 1946. After training he was posted to RAF Stadishall in Suffolk where he worked on Lancaster Bombers and was discharged in 1948 as an Aircraftman First Class.

Michael Tighe of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 23rd April 2014, aged 81. He joined the Royal Navy in 1950 and trained at HMS Collingwood, Fareham,

as an electrician. He served in HMS Mont Claire, a submarine depot ship, and later HMS Hornet, the MTB base in Gosport. He was finally in the cruiser HMS Newfoundland before discharge as a Petty Officer Electrician in 1957.

Albert Vincent of Birmingham died on 30th April 2014, aged 99. He joined the Royal Warwickshire Regiment in 1936, transferred to the Royal Artillery in 1940, and then transferred again to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in 1943. He served in the UK and was eventually discharged as a Craftsman in 1946.

Peter Walder of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 25th April 2014, aged 93. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1941 and trained at Cardington and Skegness, serving in a variety of locations around the UK as a storeman. He was then transferred to Kankinara just outside Calcutta where he remained until the end of the war. He was discharged in 1946, leaving as a Corporal.

William Wappett MM of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk died on 13th April 2014, aged 86. He joined the Black Watch in 1945 and transferred to the Yorkshire and Lancashire Regiment in 1946. He fought in the Korean War, winning a Military Medal. He was later in Gibraltar and Suez before being discharged in 1953 as a Private.

Frederick 'Fred' Watts of South Croydon, Surrey died on 20th January 2014, aged 78. He joined the Royal Air Force as a boy in 1952 and served in the UK and Borneo before discharging as a Senior Aircraftman in 1970. After the RAF he joined the Merchant Navy.

George Weatherley of Burnham, Slough died on 27th April 2014, aged 92. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1941 and qualified as a radio mechanic. He served in Sudan and Italy before discharge in 1946 as a Corporal.

John Wells of Preston, Lancashire died on 23rd December 2013, aged 84. He joined the RAF in 1947 and served in General Duties in the UK. He was discharged as a Leading Aircraftman in 1952.

Florence 'Kay' Willis of Burgess Hill, West Sussex died on 8th April 2014, aged 96. She served at home in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1943 to 1946 leaving as a Leading WREN.



Picture: White water rafting Tryweryn, Bala, during activity week at the Llandudno centre.