

October 2014

# Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



**On the cover:** D-Day veteran and Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur Les Eastwood. Back page Harry Beevers speaking at our recent Parliamentary event.

# Review



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## Patron: Her Majesty the Queen.

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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 in October.

Amateur Radio Week 3rd to 11th.

The Golf Club 18th to 19th.

Writers' Forum 20th.

Music Week 12th to 18th.

Bowling Club 19th Oct to 1st Nov.

Great South Run 26th.

### November.

Cenotaph 8th to 9th.

Writers' Forum 15th.

Dance Week 23rd to 29th.

### December.

Turkey and Tinsel Week 14th to 20th.

### January 2015.

Winter Warmer Week 4th to 10th.

Ski Club 17th to 24th.

### February 2015.

Computer Club 10th to 13th

Sports & Fitness Week 8th to 14th.

Arts Week 22nd to 28th.

### March 2015.

Archery Week 6th to 14th.

Bowling Club 15th to 28th.

### Activities from the Llandudno centre in October.

Walking/Photography Week 12th to 18th. Computer Club 22nd to 24th.

### November.

Military Week 2nd to 10th.

G.O.A.L. Group 17th to 21st

Christmas Crafts 23rd to 6th December.

### December.

Christmas Crafts 14th to 31st.

### Activities from the Sheffield centre in October.

The Big Draw 6th to 10th.

### December.

Christmas Theme Week 15th to 19th.

**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.

# From the Chairman.

## Your message from Tim Davis.

This summer has been a busy time for me personally, but I managed to take some time off with my family. Particularly pleasing was the fact that my three sons, who are aged 18, 20 and 22, still wanted to go on holiday with my wife Lyn and I! I'm not sure how long this will continue, but I'm very happy they still remain interested for now. I also managed to spend a few days with my mother visiting Verona and Lyn's parents, taking a short cruise.

As I reflect on the good times we had, it reminds me that effort spent nurturing family relationships and supporting each other when needed, is very important and rewarding. Particularly in the ever busy times we all seem to live in these days. I very much hope you also got a chance to enjoy some time to connect with family and friends at some point, or perhaps with your fellow members on a stay at one of our centres.

Over the summer Blind Veterans UK has been busy and I'm delighted to tell you that we have been granted £1.25 million from Libor funds, which we will use to renovate five cottages on the site of our Llandudno centre. The cottages will principally provide longer term accommodation for our members and other injured Service-men and women, who may need temporary support to get 'back on their feet'. We know from our research this is an important need to address and having the opportunity to provide this facility within the grounds of our centre, also means support and activity is immediately on hand. My congratulations to our team for preparing the successful bid.

I'd also like to report on an event that we held in the House of Commons in September when we hosted an impressive number of MPs and public officials. Our goal was to gain the necessary support to more easily reach veterans who have a vision impairment. Unfortunately there is no guaranteed way of making this happen. This event brought the issue into sharp focus with those who can help us put the necessary mechanisms in place. Building the awareness, interest and support is critical to helping us with this aim.

With all the activities our team initiates under the 'No One Alone' campaign, we are now admitting more new members than we have ever done in our history. Well done indeed to all those involved.



**Picture:** The Chairman is pictured third from the left with the incoming Chief Executive, Major General (Rtd) Nick Caplin CB, Trustee Air Vice Marshal Paul Luker CB OBE AFC DL, Vice Patron Air Chief Marshal Sir Joe French KCB CBE, former Chairman and Vice President Captain Michael Gordon-Lennox OBE RN and President Ray Hazan OBE.

Major General (Rtd) Nick Caplin CB will begin his role as Chief Executive of Blind Veterans UK on 13th October 2014.

A highly distinguished Officer who spent more than 30 years on active service, Nick Caplin began his career as a helicopter pilot for the Army Air Corps. He went on to hold a number of high profile senior postings, including General Officer Commanding United Kingdom Support Command (Germany), Deputy Commander and Chief of Staff of the Joint Helicopter Command and Kosovo Protection Corps Co-Ordinator. In October 2012, Nick became Chief Army Instructor at the Royal College of Defence Studies. He has extensive experience of leading and managing service delivery organisations and operations.

Nick's appointment follows the death of Robert Leader DL in April 2014. Robert was Chief Executive of the charity for 13 years.

# Noticeboard.

**Dates for your diary and useful information.**

**Sheffield centre short stay holidays.**

Fancy a few days away in Sheffield?

The Sheffield centre is a fine historic house, located in a leafy suburb. The city centre is only two miles away with excellent transport links. It is also a great base for independent exploration of the nearby Peak District.

Some of our many local attractions include:

Millennium Gallery — Sheffield's landmark art gallery, housing permanent and touring exhibitions.

Winter Gardens — the largest urban glass house in Europe.

Botanical Gardens — 19 acres of plants from all around the world.

Sheffield Theatres — the largest theatre complex outside London.

Kelham Island Museum — telling the story of Sheffield's industrial past and present, housing Europe's largest working steam engine.

Chatsworth — the Palace of the Peaks — the lavish home and gardens of the Duke and Duchess of Devonshire.

We are offering all members short stay holidays which can be tailored to suit your needs. In keeping with Sir Arthur Pearson's founding principle of independence we would ask that you travel independently to the Sheffield centre. We will reimburse your travel costs on your arrival and you can be assured of a warm welcome.

Please contact the centre on 0114 267 2550 for more details.

## Sign up for the 2015 100K London to Brighton 24 hour walk.

Over the weekend of 21st and 22nd June this year 317 walkers took part in our annual London to Brighton 100K 24 hour walk, raising £122,000. The route took them through the streets of London and across the fields of Surrey and Sussex to finish at our Brighton centre.

If you would like to take part in our biggest challenge event in 2015 you can register at [www.blindveterans.org.uk/100k](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/100k) Or you can telephone Aaron Tillyer on 020 7616 7927 or email: [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk)

For those who register now there is an early bird discount. The entry fees are: 100k, walk or run, £50 — 50k, walk or run, £35 — 4 person relay team £100.

You will need to raise: 100k, walk or run, £300 — 50k, walk or run, £200 — Four person relay team £500.



**Picture:** Ned Borwell and Darren Blanks on the 2014 100K London to Brighton 24 hour walk.

# Blind Veterans UK Founder's Day Awards for 2015.

The 2015 Founder's Day Awards ceremony will be held on 26th March at our Llandudno Centre. It is an important date in our history as it celebrates the date in 1915 when our first 16 war blinded ex-Service men entered the new training centre at St Dunstan's Lodge in London's Regent's Park.

This annual ceremony celebrates the special achievements of the members, staff and volunteers of Blind Veterans UK.

The recipients of the 2014 Founder's Day Awards were featured in the May Review. Do you know any equally commendable candidates?

## The categories are:

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

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

viii) **Group/Team Volunteer of the Year** to a team or group of volunteers who have worked together to create a positive experience that benefits our members — registered volunteer only.

vix) Chairman's nominations for exceptional staff achievement. Nominated by line managers.

For guidelines and a proposal form, please contact Barbara Sweeney, PA to Welfare Services, Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt Street, London, W1H 4HD. Telephone: 020 7616 7922 or email: [barbara.sweeney@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:barbara.sweeney@blindveterans.org.uk)

Nominations are treated in confidence and discussed by Selection Committees in January 2015. Nominees are not informed that they have been nominated until the Selection Committee have reached their decision.

## Brighton Bowling Club.

If you would like to take up or return to the wonderful sport of bowls, Joan Osborne and the Brighton Bowling Club have extended an invitation to any members of Blind Veterans UK to join them.

All bowlers, of any level, are welcome to attend the bowling weeks at our Brighton centre when you can take part in singles, pairs and triples round robin competitions.

On the final evening there's a VIP bowls club dinner. It's a wonderful social week with a friendly club when you can learn to play bowls, or rediscover your skills as a bowler and enjoy plenty of laughter and make new friends while taking part.

If you would like more information please contact Joan Osborne on telephone: 01273 302115. If you have care needs please first contact your Welfare Officer.

## Blind Veterans UK London Christmas concert.

The first tickets for our London Christmas concert have been released. The concert will take place at St Marylebone Parish Church on Tuesday 2nd December from 7pm. Tickets, which cost £55 for the concert and post concert champagne reception or £15 for the concert only, are available online at [www.blindveterans.org.uk/carolconcert](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/carolconcert) or you can contact Blind Veterans UK on telephone: 020 7616 7927 to request a ticket order form to pay by cheque, or, if you prefer, to buy tickets over the phone.

Music will come from PHILSAVONIA, The Savage Club Brass Ensemble, directed by Stephen Henderson.

The readers are: Blind Veterans UK Chief Executive Major General (Rtd) Nick Caplin CB, Vice Patron Air Chief Marshal Sir Joe French KCB CBE, actors Rupert Evans and Damian Lewis, Blind Veterans UK Director of Finance & IS Ian Whitehead and Communications Officer and blind veteran Colin Williamson.

## Blind Veterans UK Brighton Christmas concerts.

To celebrate the joy of Christmas there will be two concerts at St Dunstan's Chapel at the Brighton centre. The first concert, which is exclusively for members, their families, escorts or carers and staff, will take place on Friday 12th December when there will be mulled wine and mince pies in the lounge from 3pm, ahead of the 4pm hour long carol concert. One of the readings will be by The Mayor of Telscombe, Councillor Wayne Botting.

A carol concert will also take place on Saturday 13th December from 4pm to 6pm that is also open to members of the public. The reading is by the Mayor of Brighton Councillor Brian Finch.

Both concerts are free to attend. If you would like to reserve tickets please telephone Rachel Chitty, Regional Fundraiser, on telephone 01273 391455 or email: [rachel.chitty@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:rachel.chitty@blindveterans.org.uk)

## Talking Book machines.

When you stay at the Brighton and Llandudno centres please do take your talking book machine with you to listen to your audio books, as the centres do not hold sufficient numbers of loan machines. The Brighton centre holds a selection of audio books in its small library that are all on CD only.

## Would you like to join the Acoustic Rifle Club at the Brighton centre?

The Acoustic Rifle Club shoot takes place every Wednesday and Thursday morning at the Brighton centre. They are looking for members with good hearing and a steady hand to shoot out the centre of the target.

You need not have tried this before as the club will hone your skills and offer guidance on every shoot. The club compete in a postal league against others across the country and themselves.

If you would like further information please contact the Sports and Recreation department at the Brighton centre on telephone: 01273 391463.

## Buy your 2015 VIP diaries.

You can now order your 2015 VIP large print diary, address book and calendar.

An A4 VIP address book is priced at £9.25

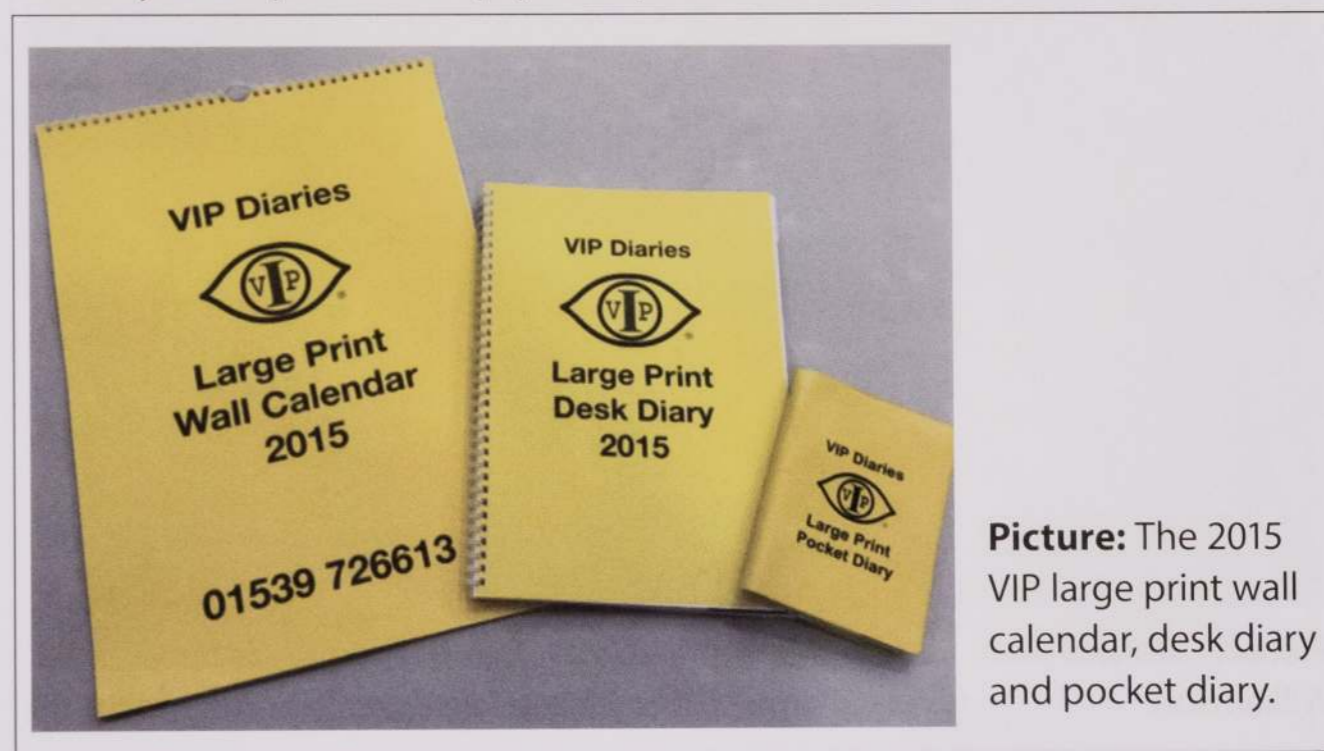
An A4 VIP telephone book is priced £9.25

An A3 VIP 2015 wall calendar is priced at £5.25

An A6 VIP 2015 pocket diary is priced at £5.00

An A4 VIP 2015 desk diary is priced at £8.50

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



**Picture:** The 2015 VIP large print wall calendar, desk diary and pocket diary.

## Join Blind Veterans UK ski club in Italy in 2015.

If you are bar fit and match fit and fancy adding a new winter sport to your 'bucket list' or CV then contact Mark Brewin of the Blind Veterans UK Ski Club on telephone: 07733 313 732 or email: [bvuk\\_skiclub@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bvuk_skiclub@yahoo.co.uk)

The Ski Club is run by Blind Veterans UK members Mark Brewin, Jamie Weller and Carl Williamson.

Last minute places are available for the annual ski week from 17th to 24th January 2015 in the Italian ski resort of Canazai that's set in the Dolomites. The acceptance criteria is: Good balance, an appetite for banter and an overall all round good egg and snappy dresser!



**Picture:** Strike a pose. From left to right: Vicky (guide), Jamie Weller and Carl Williamson.

## Team Admin from Llandudno to take part in a sponsored Fire Walk.

Jane Keane, Suzanne Evanson and Annie Gillam — 'Team Admin' — at the Llandudno centre are taking on the Blind Veterans UK Fire Walk Challenge on 8th November 2014. They will strip off their office heels and pop socks to brave a 15ft bed of smouldering hot coals to raise funds for the Llandudno centre where they work in the Administration Office.

They will walk over hot coals for a charity they believe in and you, its members, as you inspire them daily when you visit the Llandudno centre. All money raised from the Fire Walk will go towards work at the Llandudno centre.

If you would like to sponsor them go to: [www.justgiving.com/adminsfirewalk](http://www.justgiving.com/adminsfirewalk)



**Picture:** Annie Gillam, Jane Keane and Suzanne Evanson.

## Blind Veterans UK to receive £1.25 million Armed Forces Covenant Fund award for new accommodation unit.

We have been awarded a further £1.25 million from the Armed Forces Covenant (Libor) Fund. The new award will go towards the funding of the development of a £1.65 million accommodation, rehabilitation and training unit at our Llandudno centre.

The new unit will enable us to provide members who meet our criteria with medium-length stays of between six weeks to six months to access our life skills for independent living programme. During their stay, members will be offered individually tailored programmes that enables you to address their specific situations and challenges. The new unit will particularly seek to help those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless, with the aim of providing the skills they need to live independently. It will also accommodate beneficiaries from another military charity, BLESMA – The Limbless Veterans.

Barry Porter, Interim Chief Executive of Blind Veterans UK, said: "We are delighted that our members will benefit from this latest award from the Armed Forces Covenant Fund. Following our successful bid, we will invest the money into the development of a new unit at the Llandudno centre. This new unit will provide medium-term accommodation and training.

"We are very proud that our new unit will also provide accommodation to veterans from another military charity, BLESMA – The Limbless Veterans. This is the latest project that we are delivering in collaboration with other military charities and we look forward to welcoming a range of veterans to our first-class facility, where they will receive life-transforming care and support."

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund Award will go towards funding the conversion of an adjacent stable block at our Llandudno centre into a five-unit accommodation facility. Work is set to begin in April 2015 and construction is estimated to take 12 months. The facility is aimed to be ready for occupation from May 2016. Following construction, we will need to raise approximately £200,000 per year to fund the unit's operating costs.

The Armed Forces Covenant Fund was launched in 2012, when the Chancellor allocated £35 million to the Ministry of Defence from fines levied on banks for attempting to manipulate the London Interbank Offered Rate (Libor) benchmark for interest rates.

The intention of the Libor fund is to support the two key principles of the Armed Forces Covenant, which are that the Armed Forces Community should not face disadvantage in the provision of public and commercial services, and that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most, such as the injured and the bereaved.

For more information go to:

[www.gov.uk/the-armed-forces-covenant-libor-fund](http://www.gov.uk/the-armed-forces-covenant-libor-fund)



**Picture:** Barry Porter, Interim Chief Executive & Director of Welfare Services, formally signs the Armed Forces Covenant (Libor) Fund at the recent Band of HM Royal Marines concert at the Brighton centre. Blind Veterans UK President Ray Hazan OBE is third from the left.



## Parliamentary event receives backing from top political, NHS and military figures.

We recently held a special Parliamentary reception at Portcullis House in Westminster on 2 September 2014. This was to raise awareness of the life changing services and support offered by Blind Veterans UK amongst MPs, local authorities and people from within the NHS, to encourage them to signpost more vision impaired veterans to the charity for support.

We already help over 5,000 ex-Service men and women with sight loss and their families, but we know that there are many more who need our support. According to independent research carried out by the Centre for Future Studies on behalf of Blind Veterans UK, there are over 68,000 veterans with vision impairment in the UK who could be eligible for support, but are not currently aware of it. Blind Veterans UK's No One Alone campaign is reaching out to these, as the charity believes that no one who has served our country should battle blindness alone.

The parliamentary event served to highlight the need to improve the current referral pathways to Blind Veterans UK for ex-Service men and women, once they have been certified as blind or severely vision impaired. Over 30 MPs attended the event, including Dr Daniel Poulter, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Health, Vernon Coaker, Shadow Defence Secretary, and Sir Bob Russell MP, who joined key representatives from the NHS and related charities, to meet a number of Blind Veterans UK beneficiaries and back the charity's campaign.

The event also received support from its senior military ambassadors, including former Chief of the Defence Staff and Vice-Patron of Blind Veteran UK, General The Lord Richards of Herstmonceux GCB CBE DSO. Lord Richards said: "I'm extremely proud to be a Vice Patron of Blind Veterans UK, which does outstanding work supporting vision impaired ex-Service men and women. This event is crucial in helping us spread the word about Blind Veterans UK's vital work. We want every MP, health networks and local authorities in the UK to consider what can be done to improve the way veterans are referred to the charity, so that we can ensure every vision impaired veteran gets the support they need and deserve."

We were also delighted to welcome several Blind Veterans UK members on the night, including Harry Beevers who also spoke at the event about the difference

Blind Veterans UK had made to his life through the independent living skills and computer training he had received at the Sheffield centre.

Lara King, No One Alone Campaign Group Manager, said: "The purpose of the Parliamentary event was to raise awareness of Blind Veterans UK among the health and local authority sectors. We want MPs to encourage health and local authority workers to do everything they can to refer potential beneficiaries to us, for our free and lifelong support. The event was extremely well received by everyone who attended, and we have since arranged several follow-up meetings with MPs to help maintain momentum and keep our message out there."

David Bassom, Head of Marketing and Communications, added: "In the past financial year, Blind Veterans UK successfully recruited 708 new members, which is the highest number since we were founded in 1915. We would like to thank all of Blind Veterans UK's existing members for helping us reach out and recruit more veterans, especially those of you who have displayed a No One Alone poster in your local community."



**Picture:** Dr Dan Poulter Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of Health and Conservative MP for Central Suffolk and North Ipswich.



**Picture:** Simon Brown blind veteran and No One Alone Communications & Engagement Officer, Yvette Cooper Shadow Home Secretary, blind veteran Harry Beevers and Ed Balls Shadow Chancellor.



**Picture:** Brighton centre manager Lesley Garven with Simon Kirby MP for Brighton, Kemptown and Peacehaven.



**Picture:** Daphne and Graham Richards with Damian Hinds MP for East Hampshire.



**Picture:** David TC Davies MP for Monmouth who has previously visited the Llandudno centre.

## Les Eastwood, Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur. By Catherine Goodier.

As I sit opposite Les Eastwood and he speaks of his time as a Royal Navy Wireman on Landing Craft during the Second World War he smiles his disarming smile and I see the Les who as a lad played the dots in two pubs on Wells Street in Hackney before and after the war. It's the smile of someone who is at ease with people and I get the feeling that Les has spent most of his life laughing.

Although he was registered blind in 2004 the D-Day veteran only joined Blind Veterans UK in 2012, as like so many he didn't realise he was eligible to become a member. It wasn't until a stranger asked if he was a St Dunstaner when they saw him wearing dark glasses and holding a white cane as he stood on Parade at the Cenotaph in 2011 that he applied.

Les said: "If that person hadn't mentioned it to me I wouldn't even have thought of applying. It wasn't mentioned when I was registered blind or by my doctor or any of the medical staff I've seen over the years. There's definitely a need for the No One Alone campaign as my partner Jean and I have both benefited from joining Blind Veterans UK. We did the Intro Week at the Brighton centre and all of the training was useful and I now use a CCTV scanner at home each day to read the post, deal with bills and write notes.

"Jean found it useful when she watched the film with another spouse during the week as it showed family members how to adapt to live with someone with a vision impairment. Jean would leave cupboard doors open that I would walk into and move things around and then I couldn't find them. She stopped doing that after she watched the film. She was also a terror for saying 'Look at that' as we walked past a shop and I'd constantly tell her that I couldn't see it! That was in the film too. We laugh about it of course. Being a member of Blind Veterans UK is great as there's so much support. Alan Hay, my Welfare Officer, has been great and we're booked in for holidays at the Brighton and Llandudno centres."

Les, who was 14 when war broke out, continued: "I joined the 8th Battalion City of London Home Guard Hackney with a lot of the lads in 1940 when I turned 15 and we were being knocked about a bit. They call it Dad's Army, but so many of us were pre-enlistment age, although the First World War men were in charge and our Sergeant Major Morley was a veteran of the First World War."

Les was already in full time employment as a messenger at the Exchange Telegraph company, a news agency headquartered in London's Cannon Street. Part of the Press Association it supplied bookmakers with the racing results, ticker tape to stockbrokers and a Parliamentary service. He also had a reputation as a pianist, something that continued during the war when he would play when they were ashore.

Speaking of a chance meeting that made him chose the trade of Landing Craft Wireman Les said: "I joined the Royal Navy in April 1943 and went down to HMS Collingwood for my initial training where they were recruiting in three categories: Submarine ratings, which I didn't want to do. They said RDF so I asked 'What is RDF?' and they said that I'd sit in a cabin wearing earphones all day long listening to ping, ping, ping. I said I don't like the sound of that. Then they said they were looking for Landing Craft Wireman.

"Anyhow on the Saturday I was ashore in Fareham and I saw one of my oppos from Hackney coming along and he had his tiddley suit and everything on. I said hello Len and he asked if I was training and what I was going into. I said I didn't know, but I didn't half like the uniform of combined operations so I opted to be a Landing Craft Wireman and transferred into Combined Operations as I'd always been interested in electrics. We did 10 weeks training at Letchworth and then we were qualified as a Wireman.

"There was more training in Scotland when we would take part in manoeuvres with the Royal Marine Commandoes and then in April 1944 I went to Sunderland to pick up LCT Mark III Star 7057, which had just been built. It was manned by a crew of 10, two officers — a Skipper and a Jimmy — and four in the engine room crew and the Motor Mechanic, two Stokers and the Wireman [Les]. That's where I met John Farnham, my mate who passed away recently, as he was the Motor Mechanic.

"We took it over and did sea trials before we sailed down the coast to Lowestoft where we did beaching exercises from Lowestoft Harbour. The only time we had troops onboard was when we went on a big night time manoeuvre and loaded up fully for a job. We went under the bridge at Lowestoft to get on to the sea and of course people were watching us as we set off. We didn't know what the manoeuvres were for and when dawn broke we returned to our mooring stations in Lowestoft.

"It was a big exercise that coincided with the Slapton Sands disaster. It could even have been the same night I don't know, but there were so many landing craft involved all round the coast. So whether it was a bit of a faint to see if Gerry picked up what we were doing I don't know. We hadn't been told we were going to do a job so we just assumed that it was a big manoeuvre."

It was also the night Les trialled a new piece of equipment: "Before we went out they said to me 'Wires we're going to put this up forward, it's a F.A.M. gun'. I asked what that was and what would happen, only to be given the reassuring response 'We're not sure yet!'. Anyhow when the time came to fire this thing it went up in the air and a lot of streamers came out. I suppose the idea was to muck up the enemy's radar systems. It couldn't have been all that good because we weren't issued anymore, we didn't have them onboard for Normandy.

"Towards the end of May 1944 we moved down the coast and pulled into the River Orwell which goes up to Ipswich. We were moored off a place called Wolverton Manor and gradually more landing craft joined us and we were moored in trots of three. You could feel that something was brewing. We were all ashore at the end of May and on Thursday 1st June our Skipper called us all together for a chat when he said 'It's coming off and from now on no-one will be allowed ashore. If you're ill you'll be put on a hospital ship as there's no going ashore again, the ship is sealed.'

"We were part of L Force, 16 Flotilla; we were what they call a follow up Force. On the afternoon of that day we loaded up at Felixstowe when ex Desert Rats and the 7th Armoured Division came onboard. The Skipper got us all together and told us that we were going to Normandy, and a lot of us didn't know where Normandy was, we only knew Southend! He told us we would land on King's Sector Gold Beach, which didn't mean a lot to us. We slipped anchor on the Sunday morning intending to do the job the following day, but as you know it was put off for 24 hours and we anchored off Southend Pier. It was very annoying for a lot of us Londoners as we knew a lot of the pubs along the front at Southend, but we couldn't get to them!

"As the troops had been onboard since 1st June we had an affinity between us and we tried to look at the funny side of things as we accepted that we had to wait. I don't remember being worried as we crossed the Channel as at the age of 19 you have a different outlook on life. I suppose we were more excited than anything.

"I can still remember the crossing. It's something you never forget. I was never a good sailor, but we were all in the same boat, we were all really sick. Our Coxon was a hardened Matloe and obviously being the Coxon he was on the wheel nearly all night, but even he had a spew bucket alongside him. You had no idea what it would be like and you had thousands of craft round you and I can still see these old Merchant men waving us in saying 'Go on lads get in' and we gave them the appropriate V sign! There was so much going on. You obviously had the guns firing over your head, but as you had your own jobs to do you didn't take a lot of interest in everything that was going on around. I was the Wireman and I was also responsible for the Number Two Orlican gunner, although I'd never fired a gun!

"We went into battle formation and when it was our turn the Beach Master called us in and we landed at 0730 or 0800 and we gave our troops a dry landing. Saying cheerio to them was the hardest part as we'd shared watches going over and got to know them so when the time came to get ready to land we shook hands and we didn't know who was going to come out of it alive.

"Our skipper was very gung ho and when we were called in he said 'Right ho lads we're going in. Bunce strike up the battle ensign!' So the Bunce said to me 'Battle Ensign. We haven't got a battle ensign onboard'. He told the Skipper who said to put up the biggest flag we had and he put up a paying off pennant that you use if you're going to shut the ship down, so it did have its funny moments.

"When we pulled off we got into a convoy and made our way back to Southampton, which took about eight hours. As soon as we got back we had to load up with American troops because they had suffered severe losses at Omaha Beach, so we had to get them back ready for landing on the Wednesday morning, D-Day+1. Although at the time we didn't know that things hadn't gone well for the Americans at Omaha Beach.

"When we reached Omaha there were so many corpses and we saw that at the base of the cliff they'd bulldozed a big trench and just put them in it. Obviously since then they've been moved to the CWGC's American cemetery.

"In total I did four trips to Omaha Beach in the next 10 days. One day we had to ferry lots of American wounded from there to a hospital ship. They were just

putting the stretchers down in the hold and all we could do was go round and pacify the men. One chap asked me for a fag and when I told him that I didn't smoke he said that he had some in his pocket. I rolled his blanket back and saw that he had lost his leg. We'd take our landing craft out so far to the big LSTs that they used as hospital ships, they would lower their ramp and we'd stick our ramp on and transfer the wounded men. We went ashore a couple of times and sometimes we would have a couple of hours on the beach as the fighting had gone inland by then.

"My final day going over was on D+10 as I fractured my hand and I was transferred to an American hospital in the New Forest. The next time I saw some of the crew was in Westcliff. They were dressed in rags and I asked what had happened. I had a lucky escape as they had gone back the same night and got smashed up and had to be towed back to England."

After that Les moved around the country until he was sent to Scotland. He was in dry dock the day war ended when they celebrated with some Pussers they had onboard. From Scotland he sailed on LCI176 to the Far East. When they walked down the jetty to go ashore at Singapore they passed Japanese prisoners who had been put to work. As they walked past a Sergeant said: "Hang on lads. Did they salute you?" They asked why they should be saluted and he shouted at the prisoners who bowed. Les and his crew said that's a bit naughty isn't it to be told "You didn't see what they did to our blokes in Changi Gaol."

When Les was demobbed in 1946 he rejoined his old firm, using the skills he had learned in the Royal Navy to become a Linesman working on the extensive network of overhead wires and underground cables all over London. He remained there until 1972 when he set up his own building and maintenance company in Ilford.

"You name it I did it, electrical work, painting, decorating and roofing. With my eyesight it's very frustrating when something goes wrong and I can no longer fix it. The only thing my sight loss hasn't affected is my piano playing. In the 1930s it cost my father 12s and 6d for 24 half hour lessons. When I was in the Home Guard uniform I would go into pubs when I was 15 or 16 and one or two of my mates who were a year or so older would tell everyone that I was a pianist and they got me on the dots. So I was playing the piano in pubs before I went into the Navy. Playing in pubs you would get people come up to sing who wouldn't use the black notes or the white notes, they would use the grey notes,

so I had to adlib on the piano to accompany them. When they were singing I had to watch their lips so I learnt to play without sheet music and that's how I play today. People wanted to sing all the wartime numbers, Who's Sorry Now? Melancholy Baby. We'll Meet Again.

"I got a reputation as a pianist in the Navy and was always asked to play when we went ashore and I would go on the old dots. One thing you noticed in Civvie Street after the war was the people who weren't in our local pubs anymore as they hadn't made it. That was sobering."

A member of the Normandy Veterans Association and the Landing Craft Association Les was awarded the prestigious Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur in 2009 during an official ceremony at the French Embassy in London that he attended with Jean.

This year the French government announced it will recognise D-Day veterans with the Légion d'Honneur, the country's highest honour to recognise the selfless acts of heroism and determination displayed by all surviving veterans of the Normandy Landings, and of the wider campaigns to liberate France in 1944. An application form was published in the September Review.



**Picture:** Les Eastwood at home on the dots on his piano.

# The G.O.A.L. Group in Sheffield.

## By Chris Humphrey.

On Tuesday 26th August having made their own way to Sheffield, the participants of this G.O.A.L. Group event, David Hazelgrove, Peter King, Diane Mountford, David Williams, Roger Williams, Ian Wynne and myself Chris Humphrey all enjoyed a lunch at the Sheffield centre before Support Worker Tony Wilcox, the mini bus driver for the event, drove us down to Sheffield Boats at Victoria Quay where we boarded the 72 seater narrow boat LB Hardfeet for a heritage tour along the Sheffield and Tinsley Canal to Tinsley Lock. As well as listening to a very informative commentary about the surroundings and the history of the canal, which first opened in 1819, it gave us all the chance to renew acquaintances and welcome members who had not been on an event before. By the time the boat had returned to the Sheffield canal basin, we were a happy team and the banter and camaraderie had started.

As some of us had set off early, nothing had been planned for the evening so after dinner we all settled down to enjoy one of Roger's infamous quizzes. The next day Wednesday was our 'Air Day' which commenced with a visit to the South Yorkshire Aircraft Museum based in the buildings of the old RAF Doncaster. Volunteer David Woods showed us round and answered our many questions in this very large and varied collection of military and civilian aircraft and other aviation artefacts. There were far too many aircraft to list, but they included a Harrier, Lightning, Nimrod, Cessna, various Whirlwinds, Wessex, and Sea King as well as sections of aircraft such as a Lancaster in different states of repair, including some cockpits that you could sit in if you wished.

After lunch we headed for some people's highlight of the week, a hangar tour and briefing on XH558 the last airworthy Avro Vulcan bomber and the only example of Britain's V Force Jets developed for the cold war that is still flying. We all knew Diane and the two Davids were keen and eager to see it but without doubt it was a magnificent beast that impressed us all. The guides were themselves very enthusiastic volunteers proud to be part of the team. They explained that we were at what had been RAF Finingley where the Vulcans had been operational and that due to airframe and engine hours this was likely to be the Vulcan's penultimate flying season. They went to great lengths to explain everything and answer all our queries, so much so that



**Picture:** Standing in front of the Avro Vulcan bomber at the South Yorkshire Aircraft Museum.



**Picture:** David Hazelgrove in a cockpit at the South Yorkshire Aircraft Museum.

although the one and a half hour tour which started at 1500 was timed to have us clear so they could close at 1700, it was well after 1730 before we left the hangar and they were still happy to talk about their Vulcan. On our return to Sheffield we visited a local carvery for some dinner and were then ready for a relaxing evening after a long and full but very enjoyable day.

Thursday started with a guided tour of Kelham Island Museum, one of Sheffield's Industrial museums that tells the tale of Sheffield's industrial past. It is based in an old building that during one era of its varied life had been the power source for Sheffield's past tram system that was taken out in the 1960s. It was explained to us that the reason the steel trade was in Sheffield was because it had the coal for the furnaces and originally the water to provide the power, the ore had to be imported. We were shown how various parts of the old trades worked and how tools were made. Our tour ended with a visit to see the very impressive rolling press working, it's the largest working steam machine in Europe.

Although there was plenty more to see we had to leave to go to our next venue, The National Coal Mining Museum at Capstone Colliery where we undertook an underground tour 140 metres below the surface. For this event we were joined by more staff and volunteers from Sheffield, and after donning helmets and lights our guide Eric took us below, and showed us how air traps were used to keep the mines safe, and how the pit props and supports changed over time, together with the various methods and practices used in mining and recovering the coal since the 1800s. Eric showed us the roles undertaken by children, women and later pit ponies as well as the miners themselves, and how they changed over the years with the new equipment that is now used. As well as being different and informative the experience was enjoyable and fascinating and something everyone was pleased and proud they had done, and obviously there was only one thing we could do after an afternoon down the pit, we went for a fish and chip supper before returning to the Sheffield centre.

Except for the feedback and wash up on the Friday morning, that was the end of the event. Although it had been a day less than other events everyone said it had been a full and enjoyable G.O.A.L. event and they all wanted to go on another in the near future. If you would like to join the G.O.A.L. Group please contact either Carol Davies on 01754 450232 or Chris Humphrey on 01603 701402.

## **From the Sheffield centre — Microwave cookery for vision impaired people — Mediterranean fish.**

This month we bring you a healthy recipe for Mediterranean fish from the Sheffield centre that is easy to prepare and cooks in just under 10 minutes in a microwave cooker. The timings are based on a 650W microwave, but you can adjust them to suit your microwave.

Mediterranean fish - makes two portions.

Ingredients.

Two stakelets or cutlets of haddock, cod or coley.

1 small onion grated or a little dried onion.

1 small courgette or a small amount leek.

1 tablespoon of fresh parsley chopped or a pinch of dried parsley.

A squeeze of lemon juice.

Pepper.

1 carrot thinly sliced.

Knob of margarine.

Method.

1. Arrange the fish in a round dish.
2. Mix the vegetables together with a sprinkling of pepper.
3. Top the fish with the vegetables and a knob of margarine and lemon juice.
4. Cover the dish with a lid or double layer of greaseproof paper. Cook on high for 7 to 8 minutes.
5. Leave the fish to stand for 2 to 3 minutes.
6. Enjoy!

Unless stated otherwise, when cooking fresh vegetables use only a few tablespoons of water or a little butter or spread for extra moisture, as they will cook in their own steam. Add a little pepper.

We will bring you further recipes from the Sheffield centre in the November Review.

## Photography Week at the Sheffield centre 28th July to 1st August. By Keith Harness.

"A picture is the expression of an impression. If the beautiful were not in us, how would we ever recognise it?" Ernst Haas.

The summer Photography Week took place from the Sheffield centre from 28th July to 1st August when members of varying photographic levels from beginner to professional came together, some for the first time with each person expressing and sharing their passion for photography. They were me, Keith Harness, Chris Nowell, Mark Pile, Nick Barber and Eddie Taylor, John English, Bob Beck and Win Amos.

Monday saw the members arrive, enthusiastic and keen to begin the week's activities. Following lunch we started the week with a group discussion, led by Kate Taylor, ROVI Sheffield, who talked to the group about a number of visual aids that members could use when taking part in their photographic activities.

Throughout the week the group had a range of opportunities including an IT based discussion led by David Tatlow (IT Instructor Sheffield), looking at the various methods of transferring images between a camera and computer, labelling and storing these files using different methods of sharing image files, using social media and more. Several members chose to have a one to one session afterwards with David to look into each of these areas in more detail and assess help they may need in the future.

We then set off on our first field trip of the week to Sheffield city centre. We explored the Winter Gardens with its array of tropical plants, small galleries, with an abundance of sculptures and paintings on display, cafes and shops. These offered a wide range of images the group could capture. We also discovered the Peace Gardens, with its small summer fair to the bus and train stations. Along the route we took in a number of architecturally interesting buildings that included the city hall with its clock tower and vast open staircase. This afforded the group not only the opportunity to capture images of Sheffield's architecture but also the chance to take part in street photography capturing images of people as they relaxed in cafes, or went about their everyday lives.

We then went onto the train station capturing images of the wall of steel — a tribute to historic Sheffield's steel industry as the metal represents the steel



**Picture:** Mark Pile's photograph of a bird of prey.



**Picture:** Photograph by Keith Harness.





**Picture:** Photograph by Win Amos.



**Picture:** The group outside the Sheffield centre.

and the water that flows over the surface the cooling systems. This gave us the opportunity to capture different effects, with water moving over the sculptures surface and the many reflections found within the surface of the neighbouring buildings and passers-by.

The group, back at the centre, took on posing for portraiture and the various ways you can ask a person to stand and sit when capturing their portrait, the various lighting techniques, tethered shooting, using a camera's built in self-timer. Then we began capturing images of each other using a studio set up indoors. We also had a brilliant model for the group and everyone produced some great images.

We had a brief set by the Sheffield centre manager, Terry Heaton called "Life in the Sheffield centre" when the group shot the architectural details of the building, staff going about their duties and members socialising in the evening.

By Thursday morning the group had all shown a level of development and improvement and we explored a new subject - capturing close up images of varying floral displays and a number of still life items against different back grounds. All before setting out on the second field trip of the week to the Botanical Gardens with its vibrant flower beds, Victorian greenhouse and vast open grassed areas. We were able to capture images of the many tropical plants and the vast trees which line the various walkways throughout the park.

The afternoon saw the highlight of the week, a display of wild birds, by 'Hawks of Steele' which included a number of different owls and hawks. We were introduced to each bird and then we held the different birds of prey whilst having the photo taken, before the display turned to the birds of prey flying away and back to the glove. We captured a range of images as the birds sat on their perch, on the glove and in flight. Each presenting a different challenge to the group!

Friday saw the week draw to a close, but started with members viewing each other's images or having an audio description, discussing these and choosing their favourite images from the week. All participants were keen to continue at home what they'd learnt throughout the week and to keep in contact with group members to keep learning and sharing tips.

Our thanks go to Esther Freeman, Member Activities Manager, at the Brighton centre for organising this event and to all of the staff members and volunteers who helped our group throughout the week.

## Castle to castle fundraising cycle ride 28th June. By Bob Hind, Sports & Recreation volunteer at the Llandudno centre.

While out on a wet winter ride with a few mates from Clwb Rasio Mona we decided to set a challenge to cycle to Cardiff in a day. We set the date for 28th June to ensure maximum daylight and we also set ourselves the additional challenge to raise funds for Blind Veterans UK's Llandudno centre and in the process awareness of the charity on the 180 miles of road between Caernarfon Castle and Cardiff Castle.

Fourteen of us set off from Caernarfon in torrential rain at 5am. We were supported by Mark Hollis, a fellow volunteer from the Llandudno centre who was our support driver. He was in his nice warm minibus that he'd loaded with bananas, flapjacks and various isotonic drinks to keep us going enroute.

It stopped raining after three hours and we had a breakfast stop once we'd cycled through Dolgellau. By this time we had warmed up and were cycling well as a group at 18mph. We had variable weather throughout mid Wales, but apart from a bit of lactic acid build up and cramp I'm pleased to report that there were no major problems. Mark did an excellent job of keeping us fuelled with food and drink and we had a quick lunch break somewhere near Builth Wells.

After lunch we were a bit stiff as we got back on the bikes with about 80 miles to go and a few Ibuprofen were needed before the Brecon Beacons. We still managed to cycle well in the form of a chain gang as we each took turns at the front and regrouped every 10 miles or so. We used the A470 for most of the day, but as we got closer to Cardiff where the roads aren't cycle friendly we took the back roads from Merthyr Tydfil. With about 20 miles to go the heavens opened again and it was time to dig in and increase the pace to 20mph before hypothermia set in.

We arrived at Cardiff Castle at around 7pm when we cracked open a large bottle of champagne to mark the end of a great day. We then had to cycle to a hostel for a quick shower followed by a well deserved Cardiff curry.

I am pleased to say that we raised over £1,000 for Blind Veterans UK and a good day was had by all. Special thanks must go to Mark Hollis who drove the support vehicle on his own and got us back safely. We were all a bit stiff for a few days, but it was well worth it!



**Picture:** The group on their bikes for the start of their castle to castle fundraising cycle ride.



**Picture:** Celebrating the end of a 180 mile cycle ride for Blind Veterans UK, Bob Hind is centre in green jersey, sixth from the left.

## Blind Veterans UK Bowmen, formerly St Dunstan's, August Archery Week. By Graham Walker.

Fifteen archers attended the August Archery Week at the Brighton centre when we were delighted to welcome Hazel Hockley and Paul Holmes, two vision impaired archers from Melbourne in Australia. They came to increase their knowledge and prowess, and see how they compared with our scores.

Saturday was set up and equipment check for archers who do not shoot away from the Brighton centre, with the opportunity for coaching and practise for those who wanted to.

Our annual match against sighted Ditchling Archery Club took place on Sunday, with us shooting a Junior Western round. Some incredible shooting on both teams saw a close result with us scoring 5988 to Ditchling's 5963. Our winning team was Carole Sharpe, Bert Nelson, John Cunnington and Kelvin Platt.

Monday and Tuesday saw us indoors due to the wonderful Bank Holiday weather! We shot a World Archery Visually impaired indoor round (WA VI Indoors) for the first time on Monday. This round is five dozen arrows at 18 metres on a 60cm face. John Cunnington was first with Sandy Donnelly second.

Tuesday was a Bray 1 which was won by Michael Foreman, with John Cunnington second and Kelvin Platt third.

Our club championship shoot took place on Wednesday, with everyone taking part in a Bristol 4 round. John Bower won the totally blind category with Leslie George second. The tactile category was won by Peter Price with Bert Nelson second.

VI Open recurve was won by John Cunnington, with Graham Walker losing out by only one point. The VI Open compound was won by Pat Sidnell. The barebow category was won by Michael Foreman and Carole Sharpe won the ladies category.

Target prizes were awarded to David Poyner, Bob Strickland, Carole Sharpe, Paul Palmer and Peter Price.

John Cunnington won the handicap medal with Leslie George second. Thursday saw us shoot a Long Metric 5 for the Spurway Cup with Leslie George the winner, John Cunnington second and Sandy Donnelly third.

In the afternoon we were visited by the Worshipful Company of Fletchers, who actively fund and support a range of disability archery events, as well as individual archers. They take a keen interest in our activities.

On Friday we shot a Burntwood Albion. This was won by Carole Sharpe, with Bert Nelson second and John Bower third.

The annual club championships presentation evening in the Winter Garden took place on Friday. Our Lord Paramount for the evening was Barry Porter, Interim Chief Executive and Director of Welfare Services. Barry gave a well-received speech and presented the trophies and medals.

The Morecambe Trophy, awarded by the coaches on effort, achievement and contribution to the club went to Graham Walker.

A special mention must go to Brian Muggridge, our Vice President, who once again won the Eeyore trophy.

We would like to thank PBK Catering for an excellent buffet.

Many of our archers went to Lilleshall, Shropshire on 12th September when they took part in the BBS National Outdoor Archery Championships.



**Picture:** Blind Veterans UK Bowmen, formerly St Dunstan's in their new archery clothing.

## Recreation taster week, the Highland Games and Guinness World Record attempts! By Colin Williamson, Contributing Editor.

The Recreation Taster Week held at the Llandudno centre during August coincided with the annual Blind Veterans UK Highland Games Festival and an attempt to break some world records with the Guinness World Records team in attendance. On the day that I joined them the Guinness World Records attempts were just about to get underway followed by the Highland Games competition in the afternoon.

It was a fun packed week for both beneficiaries and staff alike and I caught up with a few of them at the centre, where things were a bit manic to say the least!

Norman Baillie is a former National Serviceman who served with the Royal Air Force between 1946 to 1948 at RAF Manston in Kent. He has visited all three centres in the past but prefers Llandudno as its closer to his home in Liverpool. Norman attended the Recreation Taster Week with his carer and friend, Neil. I asked Norman what he enjoyed about the week.

"I really enjoy the fact that the staff here at the Llandudno centre join in with everything, it's great to see. I also enjoy the company of the other beneficiaries and sitting around in the evening in the bar just listening to their stories is a nice way to relax. I'm especially looking forward to the zip wire event in Snowdonia, the wire is the longest in the northern hemisphere and you can reach speeds of over 100 miles an hour which should be great fun! I've raised over £300 for Blind Veterans UK through people sponsoring me to ride the zip wire and I can't wait!"

Roger Williams from Barry, South Glamorgan is another beneficiary who has attended all three centres and just like Norman Baillie he prefers Llandudno as it's a relatively short journey from his home. Roger, a former Bombardier in the Royal Artillery, explained why he chose this particular week to visit the centre.

"I came on this taster week last year and thoroughly enjoyed myself so put my name down for this one as soon as I saw it advertised in the Review magazine and I'm having a brilliant time. The place is first class and I'm becoming a regular feature here at the centre. After this week I'm off to the Sheffield centre for some training and then in November I'll bring my lunch club here for a week."

Former RAF senior aircraftsman Gary Tomlinson attended the week with his wife Dawn and they both got stuck in to the activities, quite literally at times, as both Gary and Dawn attempted to create a world record by eating jelly with chopsticks! Unsuccessfully though I have to report.

"I'm going to have a go at as many activities as possible as I've been on a bit of a fitness drive and feel really good about myself," said Gary. "I'm especially keen to have a go on the zip wire as it's been a while since I've been on one. I had a fantastic time on the speed boat yesterday, which really had my heart racing, and it's going to be difficult to pace myself as there's that much going on this week." Dawn had nothing but praise for the way the centre is run and they plan to return for a holiday sometime soon.

Another Liverpool born beneficiary who was involved in the week was Joe Cousineau. Joe served with the King's Regiment and has been a member of the charity since the year 2000. He recently ran the Virgin London Marathon and is a regular on the Younger Group events which are held around the country every few months. Joe was at the centre to be interviewed by the British Forces Broadcasting Services team about his recent marathon run in aid of Blind Veterans UK. I caught up with Joe when he was out on the grassed area at the front of the building preparing to participate in the Highland Games.

He told me: "I'm always looking for something physical to do so I'm putting my name down for some of the events in this afternoon's games. I'm tempted to have a go at tossing the caber, but I'll wait and see how the other competitors do. I do a lot of running so don't want to strain anything!"

Staff and beneficiaries alike lined up to participate in the three Guinness World Record attempts which took place in the courtyard at the rear of the centre. Members of staff were dressed up in a variety of highland regalia which included kilts, homemade sporrans, ginger wigs, tartan hats and face paints.

There were quite a few Rab C Nesbitt lookalikes on parade. The smell of porridge was as thick as the Glaswegian accents and there was a fantastic Scottish themed buffet lunch on the menu which included haggis burgers with neeps. I opted for a leg of haggis which was beautiful; Steve Boswell, the R&T manager, went for the haggis breast which he said was delicious. It was strange to witness the flag of St Andrew trying to outdo the Welsh Dragon up there on the flag pole. Any visitor to the centre during the day might have thought they

had been transported to a film set where Braveheart met One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest!

The three Guinness World Record attempts were made in the following categories: The fastest time to eat 15 Ferrero Rocher chocolates. A challenge to eat 610 grams of jelly in under one minute using chopsticks. To peel and eat a kiwi fruit in under 5.35 seconds.

Billy Baxter, beneficiary and Rehab and Training Liaison Officer, is no stranger to publicity having successfully created a Guinness World Record for the fastest blind man on a motorbike. Billy, resplendent in kilt, tartan bonnet and purple leopard print underwear (which he frequently displayed to anyone within range) lined up for the first challenge, clearly anticipating victory. "I have been practising by eating large whole turnips with leaves attached and I feel confident that the record will be beaten today;" said Billy whilst casually flashing his underwear to a very surprised delivery driver.

Beaten it was, but unfortunately not by Billy, but by Steve Hughes, Operations Manager for T(n)S caterers who supply the catering at our Llandudno centre. Steve successfully ate all 15 chocolates in a staggering three minutes and four seconds!

Unfortunately the other Guinness World Record attempts were unsuccessful, despite the best efforts of beneficiaries and staff alike.

In the afternoon, following the superb buffet lunch, the Highland Games competition got underway to the backdrop of some superb bagpipe playing by Matthew Wallace who was visiting the centre as a guest of a member of staff. There were lots of events taking place that included throwing the welly, rolling the haggis, tossing the caber, dart throwing and throwing an egg between two lines of people over increasing distances.

Former Trustee and beneficiary Dave Stuttard and his wife Dot graced us with their presence and it was great to see them again. Dave participated in the games and both he and Dot gave vocal support to the Guinness World Record attempt participants.

Many thanks to everyone at the centre for making it a really great day and a fantastic Recreation Taster Week. I certainly enjoyed my time there and I'm sure I speak for everyone when I say that it was a marvellously planned, immaculately executed and a brilliantly fun day! Roll on 2015!



**Picture:** Llandudno centre R&T Manager Steve Boswell, resplendent in kilt, supervises the welly wanging.

## **HMS Sultan Summer Camp 2nd to 9th August 2014. By Sammy Dyer, Treasurer.**

The Blind Veterans UK summer camp at HMS Sultan started with a bang, literally, when the bus from the Brighton centre blew out en route. Four hours and one new tyre later eight campers finally made it safely to HMS Sultan, albeit slightly hungry and tired. Once the 20 Blind Veterans UK members and their 25 helpers (dogs) had arrived and bags were unpacked and accommodation allocated, it was time to meet old friends and welcome the new lads to camp, William Burrage, Will Phillips, Fred Taylor and Bill Savage.

After a welcome brief that was given by Dave Burrows in the Warrant Officers and Senior NCO's Mess, we quickly settled into a very friendly and excited group discussing the week ahead and shaking off the effects of the journey with a drink or two. The new lads were introduced to their dogs and any nervousness was soon removed.

Saturday began with trepidation as clouds began to form in the skies above us, but it was all taken in their stride as foul weather gear was packed for the journey down to Gosport Cruising Club. We were welcomed by Iris Davis (Secretary) and as usual the campers were allocated to various types of craft for their trip around the harbour, some of the more adventurous members were invited to have a go on a couple of fast ribs that had made the journey from Langstone Harbour. The weather stayed kind to the campers and everyone managed to get out and back before the heavens decided to open with a vengeance. Back at the clubhouse we were warmly welcomed by everyone and invited to a fabulous buffet that the club ladies had prepared. A vote of thanks was given to the Vice Commodore by Nigel Whiteley.

The afternoon was not so kind and unfortunately the Royal Navy Gliding Club had to cancel the gliding, but all was not lost as the weather was forecast to improve for the next day and they were hopeful of getting everyone airborne on Sunday afternoon.

They say that the sun always shines on the righteous and the following day it certainly did, many of the Blind Veterans UK members went to Church and several were interviewed in addition to the live radio broadcast (over the internet) of the service. Church isn't compulsory and those who didn't attend went for a brisk walk to Stokes Bay with their dogs, those with some vision

experienced the Solent alive with yachts as 'Cowes Week' was in full flow. The afternoon proved very busy as 15 members and several helpers visited the former HMS Daedalus airfield and were hosted by Dave Howell of the RN Gliding Club. They were treated with some superb flights over the Solent, Gosport and Fareham areas and as promised, Dave and his team worked tirelessly to ensure everyone got a flight. All who went up marvelled at the gliding in a beautiful blue sky and didn't stop talking about it all evening.

Those who chose not to go gliding decided to have a go at archery, sponsored and officiated by Hayling and Havant Archers. A keenly fought match in quite windy conditions produced some remarkable scores. The day was rounded off with a quiz compiled and presented by me, Sammy Dyer.

Monday morning started with a walk to the gym in preparation for the sports morning when the competitive streak comes out in many campers. The Executive Officer, Commander Mike Robertson, officially welcomed the campers and then the sports began. Our PTI Martyn Webb designed the event, the dogs acted as judges and a class of young trainees come over to see what all the shouting was about! The press duly arrived to cover the event with Portsmouth Evening News and Radio Haslar conducting many interviews. Footballs were kicked, basket balls thrown, pucks were hit and the finale was the closely fought battle of the walk around the playing fields which saw the closest competition in many a season, but was narrowly won by Charlie Eastwood with Dave Cole coming a very close second. Although Charlie had been given a handicap to stop him winning when his shoelaces were tied together, it obviously didn't work.

The afternoon saw a visit to the Gosport and Fareham Inshore Rescue Station where they hosted the campers to tea and a tour of the facilities. They are operational and with Cowes week they are on standby for a busy week. Sadly, due to recent changes in legislation they are no longer able to give rides on the rescue craft, but it has taken many years to get to this point and we thank them for the memories!

The day ended with entertainment at the Court Barton Conservative Club in Lee-on-Solent. The evening started well with a quiz which was won by a Blind Veterans UK team followed by a good old sing song. An exceptional buffet was provided making it a highly enjoyable evening for campers and locals alike. Dave Burrows gave a vote of thanks to The Chairman and members for another great evening.

Tuesday was planned to be a fairly relaxing day after the past busy few days, but even so, trips were arranged for campers to visit the historic dockyard or participate in some retail therapy in Gunwharf Quays. A few others ventured up onto Portsdown Hill to visit Fort Nelson and the Armouries, view the WWI exhibition and enjoy the daily 1pm gun salute from the Fort.

That evening we were invited to join serving Warrant Officers and Chief/Petty Officers for a BBQ in the mess to mourn the passing of the 'Tot' on 31st July 1970 by having one! The food was excellent with plenty of time for some relaxation and to catch up with friends and talk about the past and present activities.

Wednesday's forecast was for heavy rain all day and despite a heavy downpour during the night, conditions improved for those who were off canoeing at Queen Elizabeth II Activity Centre. We were assisted by Fleet Air Arm Officers who had escaped from training for the day to navigate a course down the River Hamble followed by a quick lunch before canoeing back up the river. Another group went fly fishing, apparently proving slightly problematic for some of the fishermen as hooks got caught in arms and hands! Four fish were caught, but Dave Cole managed to have the biggest catch of the day by getting the hook in himself — the fish seem relieved! Assistance was provided by a number of young officers who volunteered to help during the day and also enjoyed the opportunity to do a little bit of fishing themselves. Further entertainment was provided at the Pitch and Putt at Stokes Bay and the campers enjoyed a bit of healthy competition. Of course no cheating went on!

The evening was spent in the Wardroom where we were invited to supper and the traditional quiz. This was an excellent evening where we were joined by officers who had also helped during the day; it was good to reflect on the day's events over a drink. The Commander did a great job of ensuring the teams had a good blend of youth and experience and I suspect many campers were grateful of a younger input to answer the quiz questions.

The campers woke to lovely sunshine and the morning was a day to catch up with lost sleep after the night before. The morning was a free morning and many enjoyed a cup of tea in the sunshine or took advantage of offers by the dogs to visit Gosport, Fareham and Gunwharf in Portsmouth.

The afternoon provided more competition as many of the campers went to 'Go Bowling' at Fareham. The event proved very popular with a chance to laugh at everyone's attempts to hit the pins. Some even managed to do the impossible

and bowl down into the next lane! A huge amount of fun was had and once again some very creditable scores produced.

The Presentation Evening was an opportunity to say thank you to many of the organisations who have generously supported the summer camp as well as giving prizes to the campers for their activities during the week. Captain Trevor Gulley, Commanding Officer of HMS Sultan, presented the prizes and showed his admiration for the campers and their efforts during the week. We welcomed Mike Purse, Membership Manager at Blind Veterans UK in Harcourt Street on his first visit to camp. The evening finished off with a raffle, buffet and dancing and it can be safely said that a good time was had by all.

Friday started off with the AGM and gave an opportunity to pass on the many thanks to all those who have helped make the camp a resounding success. We welcomed newly elected Charlie Eastwood to the committee to join Billy Miller as the Blind Veterans UK representatives.

The afternoon consisted of a visit to Portsmouth Guildhall where the Royal Marines School of Music have a Passing Out Ceremony this was followed by 'Beat the Retreat'. The campers especially enjoy this part of the week as it is a time to relax and to listen to some fantastic music which brings back many memories.

Friday night is traditionally a time to enjoy the company of friends and reflect on the week, before camp comes to an end for another year. For a special treat, Tasty Smith had arranged for his friends from 'The Rose and Thistle Pipe Band' of Gosport to come along and play for us. What a reception they had, thoroughly entertaining and appreciated by everyone, they have already offered to come back next year!

#### **Day of Departure (by Dave Burrows).**

Following an early breakfast at 0700, all campers and dogs said their farewells and departed HMS Sultan. A vote of thanks must go to Blind Veterans UK Transport for once again bringing members from Harcourt Street and the Brighton centre and collecting them on time, well done. My gratitude is also extended to Barbara Sweeney who has become my first point of contact in HQ, she directs my questions and requests to the appropriate department who then quickly respond and offer guidance where necessary.

## Presentation Evening – Results

Archery – Brian Lang (TB) & John Gasston (PS). Novice winner – William Burrage.

Walking Race – Charlie Eastwood

Penalty Goals – William Burrage (TB) & John Gasston (PS).

Best Beginner – William Burrage.

Best overall score – Brian Lang (TB) & Charlie Eastwood (PS)

Team result – Charlie's Angels – Charlie Eastwood, William Burrage, Gerry Jackson & Bill Goddon.

Best team effort – The Gentlemen's Club – Graham Draycott, John Gasston, Billy Miller & Kevin Beahan

Fly Fishing – Jack Hadnum.

Ten Pin Bowling – Dave Cole.

Pitch & Putt – Will Phillips (hole in one).

## The Don Minter Memorial Award

Awarded to the blind veteran, who has without question, entered fully into the spirit of the camp and contributed to its success, both on and off the sports field. This year for his outstanding contribution, the trophy was awarded to Bill Goddon.

Well done to everyone, another great camp. I'm looking forward to next year already.



**Picture:** Steve Mills, Sports & Recreation Manager at the Brighton centre watches as Charlie Eastwood's laces are tied together in an attempt to slow him down. It failed and he won the Walking Race.

# Family News.

## Congratulations to:

**Rhinon and Emily Jones.** Rhinon has just passed her first degree black belt at the age of 16 and her younger sister Emily (14) is about to become a black belt. The granddaughters of blind veteran Ron Jones from Nuneaton attribute their success to the positive example he sets with his drive and enthusiasm.

## Birthdays:

**William Forshaw** who celebrated his 101st birthday on 25th September.

## Anniversaries:

### Platinum (70th):

**Bob & Muriel Treasure** of Exeter, Devon on 27th September.

### Blue Sapphire (65th):

**Jack & Pamela Netherstreet** of Bromley, Kent on 3rd September.

**William & Irene Barker** of Darlington, County Durham on 10th September.

**Philip & Dorothy Andrews** of Plymouth on 15th September.

**Roy & Doreen Thornber** of Blackpool, Lancashire on 15th September.

**Leslie & Jean Simpson** of Brighton, East Sussex on 17th September.

**Laurence & Peggy Wrigton** of Rushden, Northants on 17th September.

**Denis & Joan Lewis** of Taunton, Somerset on 24th September.

### Diamond (60th):

**Alistair & Deania Reid** of Banstead, Surrey on 4th September.

**Matthew & Pat Brown** of Swindon, Wiltshire on 4th September.

**John & Sue Mannion** of Rotherham, South Yorkshire on 11th September.

**Pat & Mary Bune** of Camberley, Surrey on 11th September.

**John & Margaret Matthews** of Lymington, Hampshire on 11th September.

**Laurence & Ruth Firth** of Newtown, Powys on 14th September.



**Golden Anniversary (50th):**

**Robert & Kathleen Kinghorn** of Preston, Lancashire on 5th September.

**Bob & Pat Simpson** of Bingham, Nottingham on 12th September.

**Gerald & Dru Hancock** of Bedworth, Warwickshire on 19th September.

**Jeffrey & Gloria Gronow** of Carmarthen, Dyfed on 28th September.

**Ruby (40th):**

**David & Ann James** of Thurston, Bury St Edmunds on 14th September.

**Pearl (30th):**

**Stephen & Karen Davison** of Blyth, Northumberland on 22nd September.

**Silver (25th):**

**Tirtha & Bishnu Ghale** of Farnborough, Hampshire on 28th September.

**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.**

**Gwyneth Birchall** who died on 7th August 2014. She was the widow of the late Robert Birchall.

**Kitty Blane** who died on 5th September 2014. She was the widow of Jack Blane.

**Mary Fraser** who died on 26th March 2014. She was the wife of Ronald Fraser.

**Elsie Houston** who died on 30th July 2014. She was the wife of Peter Houston.

**Pat Lewis** who died on 1st July 2014. She was the wife of John Lewis.

**Eric 'Neville' Randall** who died on 16th August 2014. He was the husband of Gladys Randall.

**Betty Stead** who died on 16th September 2014. She was the wife of Derek Stead.

# Welcome to Blind Veterans UK.

**Kathleen Beard (nee Morris)** of Newhaven, East Sussex served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1945.

**John Benton** of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands served in the General Service Corps and the North Staffordshire Regiment from 1946 to 1948.

**Eric Billington** of Birmingham, West Midlands served in the Royal Navy from 1946 to 1948.

**Florence 'Joan' Bowles (nee Eastaugh)** of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1946.

**Gerald Brook** of Uckfield, East Sussex served in the Royal Engineers from 1949 to 1954.

**George Brown** of Bradford, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Artillery from 1940 to 1946.

**Peter Brown** of Glastonbury, Somerset served in the Royal Air Force from 1946 to 1949.

**Arthur Buckley** of Stoke-On-Trent, Staffordshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

**David Chandler** of Maidstone, Kent served in the Royal Air Force from 1984 to 1996.

**Lillian Cronshaw (nee Albery)** of Scunthorpe, South Humberside served in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps from 1953 to 1954.

**Ivan Downer** of Locks Heath, Southampton served in the Royal Tank Regiment from 1949 to 1954.

**Ronald Eden** of Westbury, Wiltshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

**Steven Evans** of Camberley, Surrey served in the Royal Navy from 1981 to 1986.

**Leslie Fidler** of Rotherham, South Yorkshire served in the Royal Navy from 1945 to 1947.

**Albert Giliker** of Leeds served in the Royal Navy from 1955 to 1977.

**Donald Hall** of Great Yarmouth, Norfolk served in the General Service Corps, the Royal Norfolk Regiment and the Royal Leicestershire Regiment from 1944 to 1948.

**Maureen Hammond (nee Croston)** served in the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1954 to 1956.

**William Hancox** of Birmingham, West Midlands served in the Royal Engineers from 1956 to 1958.

**George Harper** of Tamworth, Staffordshire served in the Royal Marines from 1945 to 1947.

**William Harvey** of Birmingham served in the General Service Corps, the King's Own Scottish Borderers and the Royal Engineers.

**Eric Hodgkinson** of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire served in the Royal Armoured Corps Nottinghamshire Yeomanry from 1937 to 1946.

**Cicely Holman (nee Ponder)** of Edinburgh served in the South African Army from 1942 to 1944.

**Jackie Irvine** of Kilmarnock, Ayrshire served in the Royal Navy from 1951 to 1954.

**Mark Lucitt** of Worcester served in the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment from 1977 to 1980.

**John Marsh** of Atherton, Manchester served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1948 to 1949.

**Donald Moon** of Luton, Bedfordshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1954 to 1967.

**John Morris** of Wigan, Lancashire served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1951 to 1956.

**Herbert Norris** of Abergele, Clwyd served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

**Anne Palionis (nee Atkinson)** of Newburn, Newcastle served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1944 to 1947.

**Alfred Pears** of Honiton, Devon served in the Royal Navy from 1950 to 1962.

**George Pither** of Erdington, Birmingham served in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Pioneer Corps from 1951 to 1961.

**David Roddis** of Cromer, Norfolk served in the Royal Navy from 1942 to 1946.

**Percival Saunders** of Barnstaple, Devon served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1947.

**Charles Shipley** of Selby, North Yorkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.

**Geoffrey Simpson** of Dover, Kent served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1953 to 1958.

**Stanley Skinner** of Ipswich served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1943 to 1948.

**Edwin Small** of Willenhall, West Midlands served in the Worcester Regiment from 1950 to 1956.

**Jean Standing (nee Birrell)** of Preston, Lancashire served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1952.

**John Stephenson** of Keighley, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Artillery and the Royal Military Police from 1953 to 1956.

**John Storey** of Rainham, Essex served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1945 to 1957.

**José Verbist (nee Langton)** of Hull served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1941 to 1944.

**Frederick Warwick** of Sherburn In Elmet, Leeds served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

**Frank Wilson** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1946 to 1948.

**William Wolfe** of North London served in the Royal Air Force from 1946 to 1948.

**Helen Wright** of Blackpool, Lancashire served in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service from 1959 to 1963.

# 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.**

**Arthur 'Jim' Adderley** of Sidmouth, Devon died on 23rd August 2014, aged 90. He joined the Royal Marines in 1943 and served in Iceland and later at Dalditch Camp in Devon. He was demobilised in 1946.

**Daniel 'Danny' Barker** of Epping, Essex died on 13th May 2014, aged 85. He joined the Royal Navy in 1946 and trained at HMS Raleigh. He did an electrical course at Chatham and served in HMS Boxer, a converted landing craft used for training radar operators. He was discharged in 1948 as a Mechanic Second Class.

**Cyril Bowers** of Bicester, Oxfordshire died on 9th September 2014, aged 98. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1940 and specialised as a searchlight team member stationed in Kent. After the Blitz he served all over the UK before he was sent to France with 336 Searchlight Regiment, moving through Belgium, Holland and into Germany. He was discharged as a Bombardier in 1946.

**Howard Buck** of Tadworth, Surrey died on 2nd September 2014, aged 88. He joined the General Service Corps in 1945, transferring to the Royal Engineers. He was posted to Germany; where he was involved with rebuilding bridges and communications after the war had ended. He was discharged in 1948 as a Sergeant.

**Doreen Drake** of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 6th August 2014, aged 93. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service Dental Corps in 1941 and became a Dental Assistant, training in Aldershot. She then worked at the Guards Depot in Caterham before being posted to Aldershot and Scotland. She was demobilised in 1945 as a Lance Corporal.

**Paul Griffiths** of Newport, Gwent died on 4th September 2014, aged 85. He served in the South Wales Borderers from 1948 for National Service when he was posted to the Middle East and served in the Sudan, Egypt and Cyprus. He was demobilised in 1950 as a Private.

**Dorothy Harper** of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 5th September 2014, aged 93. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1939 and served at Bulford Camp in Wiltshire. She was discharged in 1941 as a Corporal.

**Albert Haynes** of Immingham, Lincolnshire died on 25th August 2014, aged 90. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1942 and served as a motor mechanic in the UK and Norway until discharge as a Leading Aircraftman in 1947.

**Mabel Haynes** of Brighton, East Sussex died on 26th August 2014, aged 93. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1944 until 1947 as a private. She served in Brussels and in Hamburg working in the accounts section. A keen writer she enjoyed attending the Writers' Forum at the Brighton centre.

**Anthony 'Tony' Howarth** of Plymouth, Devon died on 2nd September 2014, aged 68. He served in the Royal Navy from 1964 to 1986. He trained at HMS Raleigh as a mine warfare and bomb disposal expert and was based in Devonport. He was on a variety of ships and served in Hong Kong, Singapore, Australia, Gibraltar and Malta. He was discharged as a Petty Officer in 1986.

**Gordon Jackson** of Hartlepool, Cleveland died on 19th August 2014, aged 86. He enlisted into the Merchant Navy in 1945 as a steward. He worked for a Norwegian shipping line on coastal routes and served in Arctic convoys towards the end of the war. Later he moved to Stanhope Lines before leaving the Merchant Navy in 1952.

**John Jones** of Oswestry, Shropshire died on 27th August 2014, aged 94. He joined the RAF in 1938 and trained at RAF Cranwell as a wireless engineer. He then took a succession of training courses leading up to pilot training in Canada. He flew Boeing PT27s followed by Anson 2s. He was posted within Canada followed by Morocco and spent time in Algiers flying Wellington Bombers. He subsequently spent time in Egypt and Libya and in 1944 in Greece during their civil war. He was then posted to Italy briefly returning to Egypt followed by Aden, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somaliland and lastly Yemen before discharge as a Warrant Officer in 1946.

**Peter Kendall** of St Peter Port, Guernsey died on 20th August 2014, aged 77. He joined the Sherwood Foresters in 1956 and served in Northern Ireland and Malaya during the confrontation. He was discharged as a Private in 1965.

**Joan Keys** of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 16th August 2014, aged 93. She joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1942, serving in Oswestry. She was discharged as a Lance Corporal in 1946.

**Roderick 'Rod' MacDonald** of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire died on 2nd September 2014, aged 79. Called up for National Service in 1957 with the Scots Guards he served in Cyprus and Kenya where, following a rifle incident, a bullet lodged in his head. Having signed on for an extra year's service, he was eventually discharged as a Lance Sergeant in 1960.

**Frederick 'Fred' May** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 29th August 2014, aged 101. Joining the Middlesex Yeomanry in 1938 he served in Palestine, the Western Desert, Egypt and India before applying for a commission in the Royal Signals. He was demobilised in 1946 in the rank of Lieutenant.

**Charles 'Charlie' McKinnon** of Deeside, Clwyd died on 2nd September 2014, aged 86. He completed National Service from 1946 to 1948 in the Royal Artillery, completing driving and parachute training. He served in Palestine and was discharged as a Gunner in 1948.

**Norman Middleton** of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire died on 22nd August 2014, aged 93. He joined the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers in 1939 and was discharged from full service in 1946 having been a FEPOW of the Japanese. He re-enlisted in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (TA) in 1947 and transferred to the Parachute Regiment in 1954, returning to the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers in 1955. He was commissioned in 1962 and discharged in 1967.

**Reginald Mills** of Sudbury, Suffolk died on 10th August 2014, aged 90. He joined the Royal Air Force in 1942, serving in the General Duties flight as a clerk in the UK and Iceland before being discharged as a Leading Aircraftman in 1946.

**William 'Bill' Routledge** of Chelmsford, Essex died on 1st June 2014, aged 95. He served in the Royal Artillery from 1939 to 1949 as a Bombardier. He was a FEPOW in Singapore and in Thailand after he was captured at the fall of Singapore. He was placed in Changi Prison and was later moved to Thailand where he was put to work on the railway line to Burma.

**Thomas 'Les' Seaton** of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 8th September 2014, aged 94. He joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry in 1940 and trained at Strensall before being transferred to an Ack Ack Artillery Unit, serving in the UK. He was discharged as a Sergeant in 1943.

**Derrick Smith** of Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire died on 6th September 2014, aged 87. He joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1944 and served in the UK and Burma as a Corporal until 1948.

**Joseph Tapper** of Thornton Cleveleys, Lancashire died on 2nd September 2014, aged 87. He joined the Royal Engineers in 1945, posted within the UK and Ireland when he was involved loading ships in London in 1945 during the Dockers' strike. He transferred to the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in 1946 and was discharged in 1948 as a Private.

**Stanley Thomas** of Pudsey, West Yorkshire died on 15th August 2014, aged 82. He joined the Royal Air Force for National Service in 1950, he trained at RAF Padgate and served in various UK air stations before discharge as a Leading Aircraftman in 1952.

**Albert Thornton** of Bingley, West Yorkshire died on 8th September 2014, aged 97. He joined the Royal Army Medical Corps in 1940. He served over two years on the Atlantic convoys and in North-West Europe, including Normandy and Norway. He was demobilised as a Sergeant in 1946.

**Davina Valentine** of Edinburgh died on 6th September 2014, aged 90. She joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force in 1943 and carried out her initial training at Yatesbury. Thereafter she became a RADAR operator, based at St Cyrus and Dannet Head. At the end of the war she completed her service at East Fortune before leaving the RAF in 1947 as a Leading Aircraftwoman.

**William Whiteside** of Liverpool died on 28th August 2014, aged 85. He joined the General Service Corps in 1947, transferring to the Royal Army Medical Corps. He served in the 23rd Parachute Field Ambulance in Germany before leaving the services in 1949 as a Private.

**Digby Wills** of Hindhead, Surrey died on 31st August 2014, aged 95. He joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1939 and was evacuated from Dunkirk in May 1940. He was commissioned and transferred to the Royal Berkshire Regiment in 1941 and he fought in North Africa at El Alamein. He later landed at Sicily and fought through Italy after the Anzio landing. He later specialised in interpretation, did a staff job in Cairo and went to Crete on an intelligence mission in 1945 after VE Day. He was demobilised in 1946 as a Captain.

**Thomas Wood** of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 5th September 2014, aged 92. He joined the Royal Artillery in 1941 and after training in Yeovil was put on gun sites in Shotley, Suffolk. He landed in Normandy on D-Day+2 and was then sent to Egypt for six months. He was demobilised in 1946 as a Gunner.

