

**On the cover:** Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson in The Pentagon during a Project Gemini visit to Washington DC. Pages 26 to 31.

**Back page:** Simon Brown accepts the Soldering On People's Choice Award from the Deputy Editor of the Sunday Express. Pages 32 to 47.



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### Patron Her Royal Highness The Countess of Wessex GCVO.

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### Contact telephone numbers.

**The Brighton centre** 01273 307811.

**The Llandudno centre** 01492 868700.

**Harcourt Street (HQ)** 020 7723 3392.

**The Booking Office for the Brighton centre:** To book accommodation at the Brighton centre telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391500.

**The Booking Office for the Llandudno centre:** To book accommodation at the Llandudno centre please telephone 01492 868700 and ask for the Booking Office.

**ROVI IT Helpline:** If you need to speak with the ROVI IT Helpdesk please telephone the staff at the Sheffield centre on 01273 391447 for ROVI and IT enquiries.

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

## Blind Veterans UK Calendar

### Activities from the Brighton centre.

#### June.

Archery Club (first) 4th to 10th.

#### July.

Ex-PoW Week 2nd to 8th.

Homes & Gardens Week 16th to 22nd.

#### August.

Transport Week 6th to 12th.

Archery Club (second) 13th to 19th.

Activities Week 20th to 26th.

Widows' Week 27th August to 2nd September.

#### September.

History Week 10th to 16th.

Fishing Week 17th to 23rd.

Adrenaline Weekend 29th September to 2nd October.

#### October/November.

Amateur Radio Club 1st to 7th. Technology Week (second) 8th to 14th.

Bowling Fortnight (first) 15th to 28th.

Driving Week 29th October to 4th November.

### Activities from the Llandudno centre.

#### June.

Sea Fishing Week 18th to 24th. Potting & Planting Week 25th June to 1st July.

#### July/August.

Adventure Week 2nd to 8th.

Recreation Taster Week 16th to 22nd.

Cycling Week 30th July to 5th August.

#### August.

Water Week 13th to 19th.

#### September.

Archery Week 3rd to 9th.

Photography Week 17th to 23rd.

Walking Week 24th to 30th.

### To book Themed and Club Weeks at the Brighton centre.

For further information and to book your place at the Brighton centre please telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391500.

### To book Themed and Club Weeks at the Llandudno centre.

For further information or to book your place please telephone: 01492 864590.



# From the Chairman.

## Your message from Tim Davis.

I'm sure we've all been shocked by the awful terrorist attack in Manchester. It is a huge credit to our security services that we have not suffered more. Given the nature of the attack and previously on Westminster Bridge, it's clear we will continue to face this threat and the reality of when it happens, now and for some time to come.

I'm sure I reflect the feelings of all involved with Blind Veterans UK, in expressing deep sadness at the death and injury of so many and particularly of those so young. Our hearts and thoughts go out to all those who have been affected, directly and indirectly.

The feelings of shock, sadness, sympathy, and grief for those affected, are only natural and right. We also see great acts of humanity, kindness and practical support being selflessly and instinctively carried out by so many. It is this distinct trait of character that I find encouraging to see and so prevalent across so many parts of our society.

For Blind Veterans UK, this same character is evident across our members, employees, supporters and volunteers. It is something to nurture, take example from and be inspired by. When acts of selfish and cowardly terrorism are carried out, I encourage us all to respond by looking for ways we can bring our networks and communities together, show strength and determination and focus on ways we can help and support each other more.

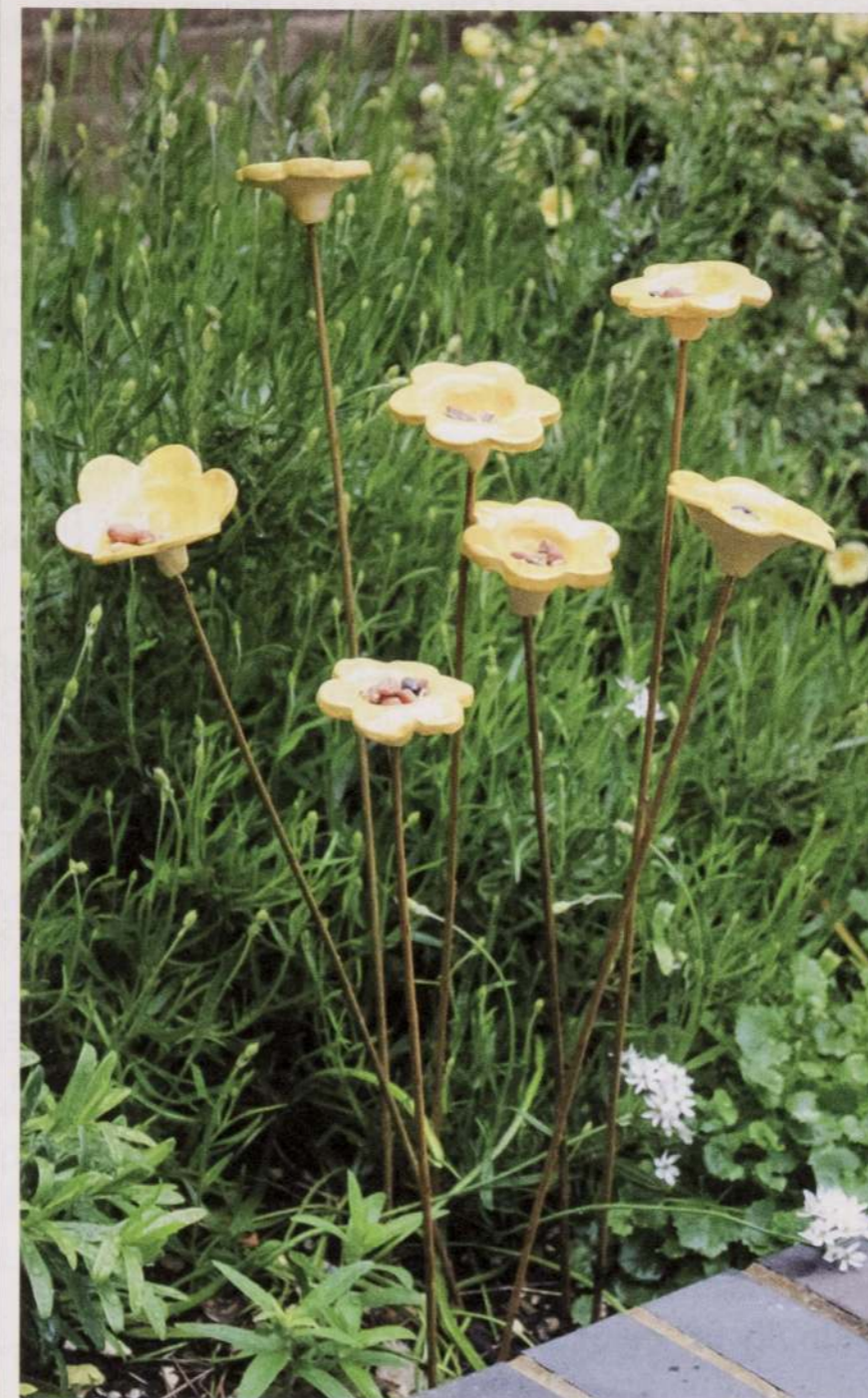
On a separate subject I'd like to celebrate some of the achievements of some of our own; Colin Williamson, our President who has just completed 10 years working for Blind Veterans UK and who continues to build on the great work of Project Gemini in fostering ideas and ways of helping blind veterans across the Atlantic and with our sister organisation in South Africa. Simon Brown who after 10 years since he was blinded in Iraq has been tirelessly inspiring and showing by example ways of helping others. Their efforts have been recognised through the Soldiering on Awards.

As an organisation we have always celebrated birthdays. This month on the 14th of June we celebrate Joan Osborne's 90th birthday and wish her well. Joan's family have been a significant part of the charity. Her father Joe Walch

was blinded in 1917, became a Braille instructor with St Dunstan's, and during the war he and Joan worked at our war time centre in Church Stretton. Joan was a music therapist and at Church Stretton met her husband Bob who was blinded at Normandy. Our very best wishes to you from all of us.

With the summer ahead of us, I'd also like to highlight the opportunity of visiting our Blind Veterans UK Show Garden at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. It takes place on the 4th to 9th of July. Aside from a symbolic and beautiful design, work from our Art & Craft Workshops will also be on display.

My very best wishes to you all for a pleasant summer ahead.



**Picture:** The yellow ceramic bird feeders that were made at our Brighton centre's Art & Craft Workshop will feature in our Show Garden at RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.

To book your tickets please telephone 0844 995 9664. If you use a wheelchair or mobility scooter please telephone 01353 653 75. Or go to [blindveterans.org.uk/showgarden](http://blindveterans.org.uk/showgarden)

**Photograph:** Louise Partridge, Art & Craft Supervisor, Brighton.



## **How the work of Kevin Alderton and Glynis Gillam has raised the profile of Working Age Members. By Catherine Goodier.**

This year Glynis Gillam, Working Age Member (WAM) Case Manager and Kevin Alderton, Working Age Member (WAM) Coordinator, delivered a hugely successful Working Age Members' conference. The two day conference showcased the latest in low vision aids and technology and provided an opportunity for peer support for blind veterans and their families. During an open forum blind veterans were able to ask Nick Caplin and members of the Senior Leadership Team questions about the charity's new strategy.

Kevin was serving as a Senior Non Commissioned Officer in the Honourable Artillery Company when he came to St Dunstan's in 2002, as the charity was then called. Speaking of the events that led to his admission, Kevin said, "I came to the charity as I was injured in a street attack in 1998 that affected my vision. I have Billy Baxter to thank for my coming to the charity, as a friend of my brother fitted a carpet in his house, he told Billy my story and Billy suggested I apply to the charity. Since I joined Billy is one of the people who continues to inspire me."

Kevin can attribute a passion for his work to the fact that he understands what working age members are going through. Kevin continued, "Before I came to work with Blind Veterans UK I had completed the Royal British Legion's Life Works as a pre-employment course. I found myself in a situation where I was extremely knowledgeable in lots of areas, but I was a jack of all trades, master of none. The problem was that I didn't know where I fitted in and where my career path should go and the Life Works course helped me to find that direction. I found myself in such a rut that I couldn't see what I was doing wrong in terms of job applications and I spent over two years trying to find meaningful employment. Within two weeks of completing the course I had three interviews lined up and two job offers and I accepted a job with Stoll, the Armed Forces charity that's based on the Fulham Road next to Chelsea Football Club. Stoll has the remit to home vulnerable ex-service personnel, people who are at risk from alcohol or drug abuse or homelessness. I took up a role as a Veterans Research Officer, which led to my being seconded to NHS England, as a lead veteran working on two major projects. One related to the pathway to health and the other was for those who were in transition from the Armed Forces into civilian life to ensure there was a continuity of health care.

"I was also involved with the 111 Triage Service to make sure that if veterans with mental health issues were identified they would be appropriately signposted to such dedicated charities as Combat Stress. That work meant that I built a massive vault of knowledge. Another part of my role at Stoll was to develop the veterans' drop in service, when each month we brought together around 25 to 30 organisations to give help and advice on everything from mental health, housing, debt management, employment, retraining and education. Again, from those contacts I built up a very large network. I really enjoyed my work, as in some respects it was working with my peers to sort them out and give them a helping hand. As someone who was helped by the Royal British Legion's Life Works course it was phenomenal to be able to do that.

"I came to work at Blind Veterans UK when my predecessor, Inderpal Kallah, moved on from what was then called the younger members' group. I was given the opportunity to take the role on part-time to use my knowledge of the Armed Forces charitable sector to see what we could bring in for our own members. That knowledge and contacts have proved extremely useful and the role has developed into something quite amazing that will continue to grow, as to date we have 367 working age blind veterans. The criteria of the group has changed, as previously the upper age limit was 60, but we raised it to 66, as we felt that was more in line with working practices.

"The role has changed immensely in the two and a half years that I've been in post, as originally it centred on setting up social events that encouraged peer support. When I started I used the King's Report that was commissioned in 2012, as it made a lot of sensible recommendations for best working practice. The King's Report highlighted what we were good at, but equally what we were weaker at delivering. I used the main recommendations from that report to provide the overall steer for the working age members' group. It's not that we've moved away from the social events, we just have a different focus. We organise around three to five social events a year, depending on calendars and availability, and availability of funds. We've moved into more substantial peer support and bespoke support. We're involved in RESET Week, which is an inspirational week when members come to the Life Skills building at the Llandudno centre.

"RESET Week gives working age members the chance to come into the Life



Skills centre where they live independently while they evaluate their lives. They focus on where they are, as they look to the future and work out what they need to help them progress to achieve their goals, to live independently and to lead a fuller life. Their goals might be to improve their IT skills, to return to work, or it could be that they need extra counselling to help deal with their sight loss. No two members are ever the same, but by having that opportunity to evaluate where they are and for us to evaluate what we can facilitate is very powerful. RESET Week has helped people to move on to take part in the Life Skills project at Llandudno, which is continuously developing. Or they might join some of the employment opportunities that we've created, as that is a focus for us.

"One of the spin offs of this work is that working age blind veterans now do the biographies. So, when a new blind veteran joins the charity they are interviewed by an established blind veteran who will write their personal biography. Some of the background work we do is to identify those who can return to work, someone who has that desire and drive and of course the transferable skills. We work in partnership with other organisations, for example Royal British Legion Industries run their Life Works course and having completed it previously I knew that it was fit for purpose. I also knew that working age blind veterans who took part would need IT support and classroom support to make the course manageable for them so they could concentrate on the content, rather than worrying about where they are in a word document.

"To combat that, where we can, we will bring people into the centres before their course to give them a refresher on their IT skills, but also to make sure there's classroom support throughout the course to enable them to complete it. The Life Works course itself is quite intensive, as it's not just a CV writing exercise, it's about the whole psychology of work. As it's also about looking at your networks, and looking at social media to find roles and opportunities, we look at LinkedIn and Facebook and such websites as Indeed. We use psychometric testing to identify peoples' skills set, their career aspirations and whether those are achievable. There's no point in someone coming into the course saying they want to be a helicopter pilot, as we know and they know that's just not achievable, but there's nothing to say they couldn't work in the aviation industry. That could be in an administrative role or a logistics role, so this helps us to manage expectations and work towards delivering what is achievable. Another example is if someone says they'd like to work in an

office, that's quite broad, but by looking at their skill set it might be they have experience in banking or financial services. That helps to narrow down the job search, but it also gives people an opportunity to start targeting their CV towards a particular sector.

"Blind veterans tell us how after RESET Week they have reprogrammed the way they think as they come away with a viable action plan they can take forward. We're also working with X Forces, an organisation for those veterans who are interested in self-employment. So again, we've brought in another specialist organisation that can deal with the wounded, injured and sick veterans. For the recent course at the Brighton centre participants had to write a business plan, to find out about tax breaks and implications and about forecasting and funding. Again, some have taken major steps forward and they're setting up their own businesses or they've gone back into employment in some way. Most of the working age members who completed the course were identified during RESET Week and invited to attend the course."

While he is very well connected Kevin also realises that a part of his role is to call on other organisations. "We're in a position now that if I don't know the answer I'd certainly know someone who would and those networks are great for us. For us to be able to bring resources in to meet people's needs on a bespoke basis is phenomenal. Going back to RESET, one of the things that we were very conscious of is that it's great for guys to come into the centre and do something amazing for the week, but we needed to ensure that continued after they left. When they go home they're enthused, they're motivated, but then, all of a sudden, the door closes, as perhaps they've have low mobility, or perhaps their friendship circle isn't very wide, or they might not have a support network to tap into. That's why when the new business model for Blind Veterans UK was announced we tried to identify what we could do to address the issues around that. We came up with the idea for the five regional reps who would sit within the five regions. They are all member volunteers and they are each responsible for advocacy for their local members. If they have an idea to feed in to the system, whether it's about a centre or about a course, something they like or something they don't like, there's somebody locally in their community who they are able to contact.

"It also helps to plug the gaps for us, as we've been quite poor at communicating with the members up until now. In part that was because



of IT issues and some people read the Review or the Working Age Member newsletter and some people don't and it's a question of how we reach everyone on a regular basis to let them know what's going on. We have a Facebook page, but out of 367 working age members, only around 60 use it regularly, so there's around 300 people we're not reaching. We want to get better at that and we're more than happy to take suggestions on-board. We're looking at different email accounts to get through people's spam filters. Or people's email addresses are out of date and they haven't told us. It's a challenge to keep on top of that, as there's only myself and Glynis Gillam and it's a big admin task, but we're plugging through it and things will improve."

Returning to the recent Working Age Members' conference "The original idea for the conference came from The King's report, as it highlighted that working age members wanted a bespoke event. Something where they could come together to share information at an event that was useful and pertinent to them. We ran the first conference in 2015 in Daventry that was attended by 52 members, along with dependents and carers. That was a great success and just trying to use some of my experience this year on the Saturday we had 15 exhibitors that included the Royal British Legion and SAFFA to Sight & Sound and Associated Optical and other companies who produce low vision aids. We set up two zones, a Technology Zone where people could try out the newest low vision aids and ask questions about their existing kit. Or to find out about updates, or new kit that was coming onto the market, and hints and tips when they're using technology.

"That was really useful and we also had a full presentation programme when the Royal British Legion Industries spoke about Life Works, which launched the employment side of the conference. There was a Q&A session with our Chief Executive Nick Caplin and members of the Senior Leadership Team. We created a forum where members could ask the people who run the charity the questions that really mattered to them. Some amazing points came out of that, as going back to the regional reps and blind veterans being employed by the charity that was one of the topics that was really highlighted by the members. That and the fact we were quite poor in terms of recognising talent amongst members who could potentially work for Blind Veterans UK, as there's a lot of talent amongst the membership.

"The conference was themed around the new strategy to show how members

will be effected by the new delivery model and this dispelled a lot of pre-conceptions and unfounded thoughts around the new model. We understood that some people weren't overly happy with the changes, but it gave the organisation an opportunity to explain the implications of the changes. It also gave the opportunity to ask for feedback. Prior to that presentation there were members within the group who were quite fired up in terms of the changes, especially about the loss of their Welfare Officer, but once they listened to the reasons they understood why these changes had been made.



**Picture:** Kevin Alderton, WAM Coordinator and Glynis Gillam, WAM Case Manager, during the open forum at this year's Working Age Members Conference at The Honourable Artillery Company.

"The one thing that I brought into the role, which I've tried to maximise on, is my own experience of being a blind veteran and the frustrations and limitations around that, but also the possibilities that come from that. The one thing, certainly around RESET, when we try to get to the bottom of what makes people tick, is that they can't turn around and say that I have no idea what it's like, as I have every idea. Just as Colin Williamson, Billy Baxter, Simon Brown and Dennis Sarginson who work for us do. And of course we all follow Ray Hazan's example. It's good to highlight these people as a source of inspiration to say, 'Look if you really want it enough it is achievable.'

"This year's conference was attended by 77 members, their partners and carers and we invited families. We had an amazing venue as we went back to The Honourable Artillery Company where I'd previously served. It was nice to have that military connection again. We had a fantastic gala dinner and one thing,



which I'd kept a secret, was that at the gala dinner I'd arranged for the Regimental Band to come in between the main and desert courses. They marched in wearing their tunics and bearskins and played for five minutes and everyone was just blown away. I think even Nick Caplin was impressed! It was good for Glynis and I to be able to deliver such an amazing event.



**Picture:** The Regimental Band. All photos by blind veteran Keith Harness.

"One important realisation for our members was that in terms of our numbers verses the overall membership, the working age membership only account for around 8% of the national membership. There was a great realisation that the organisation had previously thought more in terms of the other 92%. Even I'd overlooked that point when the strategy was first announced. But given the fact that 8% were together, seated in a conference hall, in an open forum at a bespoke event, with an investment at an all time high in the working age members' group, a lot of people felt very fortunate in terms of the service they receive as a blind veteran. With the development of RESET Week and our Life Skills centre and the employment strategy things are developing well.

"Obviously, what we do isn't all about getting people back into work, as ultimately it's about getting people to reengage in life. That could be employment, volunteering, taking part in walking week or other activities, or

using a computer. It's about giving someone the confidence to get out and about more. If that means we provide extra mobility training, which was just one of the points that was identified on RESET Week, then we will, and that's life changing for the individual. It's about trying to create that joined up thinking to look at what we do next. We try to be proactive and we're constantly asking members 'What do you need? What's next for you?' and if we find a theme we'll do something about it. A great example is that through RESET Week and being around the centres we discovered that a number of members had an interest in holistic therapies. Some who have practised for years and have an established business, others who are starting a new business and some who are going to college to study holistic therapy.

"Having identified that we created a forum where they could share information to talk about how they network their business, new therapies, or about their studies. Or CPD training. Maybe they will inspire others to show that they too can learn from someone who has an established business. That was just a little bit of joined up thinking to identify common themes to see what we could do to push it on. I'm not saying that it all comes down to cost, but it needs to be cost effective and something that we can manage in the time we have available. What we do has to be of use to the members and that's where we've been inventive in terms of our thinking and reactive and proactive towards need. It's exciting times, but it's just making it happen for people and to also give them the opportunity to make it happen for themselves. That's definitely the most rewarding part of my role."

If you would like to contact Kevin Alderton please telephone 020 7616 7914 or email [kevin.alderton@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:kevin.alderton@blindveterans.org.uk)



**Picture:** The White Stix of Andy Smith Blind Veterans UK IT on lead guitar, Kevin Alderton on drums, Mark Wheeler PR Manager on rhythm guitar, lead singer Carol Innes Housekeeping Manager Brighton and on bass guitar Claire Taylor from the Transport Dept Brighton.



# Letters to the Editor.

We love to hear from you and your letters are important to the Review. Please send your letters to Review Editor, Blind Veterans UK, 12 - 14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD. Or email [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk) or telephone Catherine Goodier on 020 7616 8367.

## An Amazing Week.

Those of us who attended the Technology Week during the last week of April, at the Brighton centre were truly spoilt. Anna Brownlie plus her team of IT and ROVI instructors had devised a programme which was the most interesting informative, varied and entertaining — making it the best week at Ovingdean that I can ever remember. All involved in designing the programme are to be heartily congratulated and thanked.

The week started with a demonstration of the Alexa system, a means of interacting with the internet by voice. It is fitted in all rooms at the Brighton centre. You can ask the Alexa the time, what the weather is likely to be, to tell you a joke, plus much more.

During the week we were told what medical research in which the charity was involved.

We enjoyed time at Drusilla's Zoo where we learnt the role of IT in the running of the zoo. There were many small animals on view and the trip culminated in us being able to feel a rat snake and a chinchilla, with its soft, smooth, luxurious pelt.

Add to the above a film show, surgeries where any computer problems were solved, updates by the ROVI's, a talk on the wind farm being currently assembled some 12 miles offshore opposite Brighton, a hands on a drone and two gastronomic delights!

Our ever grateful thanks to all involved and who made it a 'week to remember'.

Yours faithfully,

Ray Hazan.

Dear Editor,

My husband Vic and I would like to thank all of the staff and friends of Blind Veterans UK for a wonderful day at the Leeds Reunion at the Thorpe Park Hotel when the company, food and setting were all excellent.

It was lovely to meet so many friends, new and old, and I would like to thank you all once again for all of your hard work as we do appreciate it.

Yours faithfully,

Barbara and Vic Moxon.

## Ron Russell's Ology Quiz.

This month our Quiz Master Ron Russell brings you his Ology Quiz. What is the official name of the study of the subjects below? Your answers will of course need to end in ology.

The study of volcanos.

The study of earthquakes.

The study of insects.

The study of trees.

The study of weather.

The study of oceans/seas.

The study of eyes.

The study of human behaviour.

The study of birds.

The study of precious stones.

Answers on page 59.



## **Gerry Jones. Remember your senses, be a bit bold and always say yes. By Catherine Goodier.**

Rejuvenated and re-engaged after a week spent gliding down the mountains of Canazei during the annual Ski Week when the Ski Club celebrated its 40th Anniversary, Gerry Jones spoke with the Review. During our conversation to find out what makes this humble man tick we asked about his childhood, his service, what's important to him and even his irrational fear.

Of his childhood Gerry said: "I was a war time baby, born in 1941, I saw dad just before D-Day, then didn't see him again for another couple of years. When he came home I didn't have a clue who he was, bless him, and goodness knows what he thought of me. I went to a little local beginnings school and then over to Germany where we spent a couple of years until the Berlin Airlift and we all returned to the UK. Being called Gerald wasn't the best possible name, as it was shortened to Gerry and the kids would beat me up, as they thought that I was German. I had to constantly battle for a couple of years and then it all came good when I started to play sport.

"Then we were posted to Gibraltar where we stayed for three years and I had a great time when I learnt to box and play hockey and basketball. Sadly we didn't play rugby as the ground was half packed. Then it was back to the UK and into what had been a grammar school for boys, but was then the first mixed grammar school in the country in Erith. That was amazing because there were young ladies who you had known when you were all aged 10 or 11 and now they were 15. What a difference.

"So I was military born and bred and it was accepted that I'd automatically join the Forces. I initially tried to fly, but failed the scholarship. In those days it was most odd, as if you didn't get the scholarship, you didn't join up. So I ended up going to Sandhurst for two years, which was great and at that time it was the Cold War in a big way. A bit was going on in Cyprus and in Malaya, and it was kicking off in Borneo. So when it came to choosing a Regiment I chose the RASC. Now that may sound strange, as my father was Hussar, initially a horse man then a tank man, but he was commissioned in the RASC. So I'd seen a bit of it and knew there were several options, one could go around in a great big tank, transporter vehicles, or you could drive heavy vehicles. There was shipping ie landing craft or small boats. There was flying. There was a parachute attachment and air dispatch.

"After the Officer's course at Sandhurst I was selected to go to Air Despatch, which I absolutely adored. I had a lovely Sergeant who had been a boy soldier and as he had been everywhere he taught me the ropes. I had a great time until I questioned the ability of the RAF. We were on a live exercise in Northern Ireland and they couldn't sort out which way to load a C130 when my guys had loaded and unloaded it three times on a 12 hour shift. I just said to an RAF guy, who was a Flight Lieutenant while I was a lowly Lieutenant, 'Can you sort yourselves out we're trying to feed people over there?' That was fine and next morning I was told to go back to Barracks as I was off the exercise. As a result my guys sat on the runway and the exercise came to a halt for about an hour until they were told to move. It was hilarious.

"From there I went to Germany to a 10 tonne trucker where I stayed for about a year. It was very difficult as Marian and I had married when we were 21, we met at school and we'd been engaged for a long time. I was six months in Germany, living in camp in the Mess when I eventually managed to get Marian out there. She was miles from anywhere in a lowly farmhouse before we moved to Wodensdorf near Hanover, where we had a nice flat. There were quarters available with everybody else, but I was underage then, as you had to be 25 to be officially married in the Army, and you didn't get any marriage allowance as such. The OC was very sympathetic and he got me moved back to the UK where I took up a job for a short while with a youth training team in Retford and we lived in Gainsborough. From there I applied to go flying, and also for parachute attachment, as we had a company in the Parachute Regiment. Luckily I passed the flying course and went flying.

"It was still very much the cold war, Aden was there, Cyprus was there. Basically most of my military service was done in Europe, a little bit in Greece, a little bit in Cyprus, but mainly in the UK. I absolutely adored the flying. It was a good laugh with lots of nerve tangling moments. It was a superb job. Very independent and I became a VIP pilot. I had lots of fun in Northern Ireland and think we were there just as the troubles kicked off. If anyone ever shot at me it was on the border in Northern Ireland when I was playing around with Special Forces for a little bit when they were dropping them off here and there. I never knew anybody from that point of view, unlike some of our modern lads. I didn't get any damage from that, the only damage I suffered was when we were building up to go as a Squadron to take part in NATO exercises in Denmark. Before that we'd been to Norway for snow training and I had the Scout flight and Sioux flight and I'd talked them through snow and other techniques.



"When it happened I was at a camp that I knew very well just north of Tavistock. Once they'd all gone the Technical Quartermaster asked if I could whip him down to Coypool in Plymouth as he had to pick up some spares. I said yes come and get on-board the Rolls Royce, as the Scout was a Rolls Royce compared to the Sioux, which was the glass bubble seen in the television series MASH. We took off and we were in the air for about 20 seconds when we got to 150 feet, turning to go to Plymouth, when the engine stopped. I knew the camp as I'd been there several times dropping people off and knew to be careful, as it was a Royal Signals training camp with telegraph poles everywhere. There were some poles with wires and some without wires. It was a nightmare. Normally you'd go straight ahead in that situation so I tried to turn back to where I'd come from, but didn't quite get there. Got level with it, but didn't get into the same take off point, and we hit the ground extremely hard. I got a smack just below the neck, but did not know at the time. Sgt Smith had already lit me a cigarette when I reached him. His quote was, 'It's a lovely machine, but it does not seem to be able to fly for very long!'

"So that was that and from there my eyes started to go. I couldn't catch a rugby ball, couldn't spot trees, so they said 'right you're going blind' and I thought, that's great, thank you very much indeed. They moved me to the MoD and Marian and I were in quarters in Upminster for a year and from Upminster we moved down to Cornwall. Luckily I had a lovely retired Colonel at Regent's Park Barracks in the old RCT who put me in touch with Lawrie Slade who worked for St Dunstan's, as he assessed people to find out if they qualified to come in to the charity. I saw the charity's consultant at Portland Street, where everyone went at that time, and from there I was accepted into St Dunstan's. But that didn't happen until Marian and I had moved into our cottage and I was lucky enough to become a St Dunstaner. So that's the start of it all if you like. Nightmare in a way, but there we are.

"It was 1973 and while I was being accepted by St Dunstan's and we were getting everything sorted out we had two young children and I was working part time for a company that converted barrels into furniture, which was great. In that time I'd been up to Brighton and gone through the training course and it was absolutely fabulous. I met so many wonderful people, learnt Braille, which I think was very, very important, touch typing and mobility training. The long white cane had just been introduced and Jock Carnochan, the Mobility Officer at the time, was teaching that. There wasn't room to do a lot of woodwork or anything then, as they were converting the building as it is now, so we stayed

in York Town. In fact I followed Ray Hazan through the system, as I went into his room when he moved out, although I hadn't met him then.

"That was the start of my involvement with St Dunstan's and I enjoyed every second of it as I met some superb people. I remember being in the quiet room, the library as such, and two chaps were talking about being prisoners of war in Singapore when they were held by the Japanese. One said how the Japanese had done the right thing as troops were used to being mollycoddled and why should they be treated well. The other was saying what a load of nasty people they were and it ended up with two blind guys standing up and having a bit of a brawl. It was superb and I thought, this is great these boys have still got it. They must have been in their mid-50s or early 60s then and they were going at it hammer and tongs, but I liked that, as they stood up for what they thought was right.

"During mobility training Jock Carnochan taught me how to get around and use other senses, especially hearing to listen to what was going on to get my bearings from it. And to use smell. I remember Jock saying 'Right we're going down into town'. He'd shown me where the bus stop was the day before so we got to the bus stop and then he wanted me to go to the fish shop and then to Boots. He said 'Use your nose and remember that you've got speech.' So I silently kept repeating to myself 'I've got speech, I've got speech', and I got off the bus and asked someone the way to the fish shop. They gave me directions and eventually I got to the fish shop and went in and bought something. I came out and a hand grabbed me and a voice said 'I'll take that from you' and it was Jock. Then I asked someone where Boots was from the fish shop and they said over the road and down on the left. I wandered into Boots and didn't even have to ask for help as you could smell it as soon as you walked up to the doors. And that's how my training began.

"I did various courses all the time. There was a woodwork course, more typing and more mobility. And then Jock took a party of us to Berlin for the 50th Anniversary of the Blind Games and we were absolutely useless. There was Norman Perry, Ray Peart, Alan Wortley and Bill Shea, and I remember that we played a game of Rollerball. It's played on a court the size of a badminton court with a goal at either end. You couldn't go past the netting and you had to roll a ball on the ground. The night before we'd been into The Royal Military Police Mess in Berlin and we'd got rather hammered in a very nice way. We went back into a former gaol where we were staying and in the morning came out to play



this game of rollerball. The other teams turned up and they were all padded up, they wore elbow pads, gloves, knee pads and they looked professional. We came out in our usual blue shorts and t-shirts looking wonderful and clean and we came off absolutely wrecked, especially Ray Peart, as he played in goal and he was flinging himself around like a mad man.

"Ray was bruised and bleeding and refused to go in goal for the last game, so like a mad man I said that I would. Jock Carnochan had another chap with him, who, also called Jock, was one of the dogs from Sultan, but a bigger version of Jock Carnochan. We did everything wrong as we didn't know the rules and then it came to a penalty to be taken by the opposition who could come up to the net and then fire away. I was standing in the goal when Jock said 'Gerry, there's the biggest German you've ever seen who is going to take the ball and he's going to put you, and the ball, and this net, into the front row of the seated area.' I thought oh dear and asked if he was right or left handed. He was right handed and we'd learnt by then that there was a bell in the ball, but if you spun the ball it didn't ring. It took us a while to work that out, as there was a church next to where we were playing and we thought the church bells were the ball. I thought, if he's going to throw the ball at me it's going to spin in to my right hand corner, so I shall dive to the right. Jock said 'He's getting ready. He's lining up. Now!' You could hear his feet running up and then crunch! So I flung myself to the right and sure enough the ball hit me full on the face and I ended up in the net with the ball and in the front row of the seats. All Jock said to me was 'I told you so.' And that was great, as they just expected you to get up and get on with it.

"During that trip there was a funny incident when Alan Wortley and I were looking around Berlin and as we stood waiting to cross the road Alan came up and kicked my white cane into the road. Not realising he was part of the party, a Policeman on duty came across to arrest him. That was the sort of humour we enjoyed. So that was our first trip away with St Dunstan's. Then we had swimming galas and sporting weekends, which I enjoyed as well, and then of course the Ski Club, which was, from the start, life changing.

"That first time skiing was good fun and lots of things happened. I think you've read our reports about people falling off benches and the mammoth train journeys we did to get to the ski resorts before we found Canazei. It was great and there was always an element of comedy, especially on one occasion when

we eventually got into the village where we were staying, only to be met by Herr Lip. We were given an Army instructor each who was our ski guide. You always remember the first guide you had, it's like the name of your first flying instructor. I had Bill Cousins as Flying Instructor and Corporal Gascoigne, Gaz, as my skiing instructor. There was so much laughter during the week. It was hilarious and we all survived. I ended up in the top of a fir tree. I'd been down a sharp gulley and you just thought 'this is great!' And in the evenings when we got back we made our own entertainment.

"It was the best bit of bonding and everybody got on. It didn't matter if you were the best skier in the world or the worst and that remains the same today. Like I've said before I got home and couldn't stop talking about it to everybody. I just thought it was no problem to do anything after the freedom and exhilaration of skiing. It was all just easy. Thanks to the training from Jock I could go around independently, you had to be a bit bold, but you could go anywhere. I've also done a bit of running, as inspired by the first London Marathon, a friend decided we should do it. A good idea and with little training we ran the 1982 marathon in under four hours. The bug got me and with many helpers I ended up doing 18 marathons, all in good times except for the last when I had just had a knee job, but it was worth it for the money we raised.

"Going back to the ski trip, it gave me the skills to join with people where I live to set up a local rugby club. Another group I'm involved with locally is the Cornwall Rowing Association for the Blind (CRAB). We formed it as a PR stunt to raise awareness of the blind, especially during the eclipse, and it worked so well that we are still here and of course our logo is a crab. We've just returned from the World Pilot Gig Championships and this was our 19th year. Once again we did not come last and even managed to win the bottom group, beating the Irish and Americans from Boston Mass, plus a few others. It was tough this year with strong winds and at times we were just holding our position until there was a lull in the wind and then we would forge ahead once more. We had a couple of novices in the crew who did particularly well in tough conditions.

"I'm not sure I would have been able to do any of that without the confidence I gained from Jock Carnochan's mobility training and from being in this charity, especially skiing, as that built up confidence and great friendships with many different people."



## **Gerry Jones answers the Review's 11 questions.**

### **What was the most exciting part of your service?**

"Everything I did flying was exciting and fantastic. A funny experience was when we were in Norway, near Voss, flying a Scout when I had three of my guys on-board. We were just flying around looking at the area, getting used to it, when one of the guys said, 'That's a ski jump down there.' Sure enough it was a ski jump where people would fly down the slope on their skis, take off and fly through the air. He said 'Let's have a go at that boss.' So I flew around and got to the top of it and thought, this is a bit ruddy steep, it's going to be tricky keeping it on the deck, as the blades would be almost hitting the sides. So we just waggled it over the edge and down we went, flying down trying to keep it on the deck, and as we got towards the lift off point I had to bring her up early because the blades would have hit the lip of it and that would have been that. When we lifted off the ski jump I immediately set her down in a rapid descent to follow the jumpers flight and all we could see was the Church and cemetery below. It was a great thrill."

### **What's your favourite memory?**

"I have lots of special memories, but I think the favourite one has to be going solo for the first time. It was wonderful going solo for the first time in a fixed wing chipmunk, but going solo in a chopper in Middle Wallop was something else."

### **What's the most important lesson life has taught you?**

"Never say no. Always have a go at everything. Don't say 'I can't do that' just give it a go. If you were in the bar at the pub and someone asked if you wanted to go for a hot air balloon ride the following day, put your hand up. You might be scared of heights, but put your hand up and go, as it might be the best thing you've ever done."

### **What qualities do you admire in others?**

"We all go and do things, but I admire those who become really good at something. It doesn't matter if its work or its play, whatever you do, it's the dedication to have a go at something."

### **What's your irrational fear?**

"Losing my Zippo lighter. It's all very well having a pack of cigars on you, but if you lose your lighter, I mean your Zippo, then you're lost. The Zippo will burst into flames in a hurricane. You've got to have your Zippo with you."

When asked if Gerry knew that Lord Fraser had written of lighting his pipe in wind Gerry said, "He was a great man and I take inspiration from him and Sir Arthur Pearson. I've read their books many, many times, as I have them on tape cassette and you think 'Where the hell do you get that from?' Ian Fraser was such a young man when he was blinded on the Somme and to go to St. Dunstan's when he was just 19 and then to run it at a very young age when Sir Arthur died suddenly and everything that he did is incredible. He advanced the charity as he followed Sir Arthur's vision. He was totally responsible for talking books and also very keen on computers and advances in technology, which Ray Hazan became involved in. Unimaginable when you think someone actually pushed that and it was Lord Fraser."

### **What makes you happy?**

"Hearing people laugh. I love humour and enjoy people having a laugh and taking the mickey out of everybody else and seeing the funny side of things. I enjoy that immensely."

### **What's the biggest challenge that you have overcome as a St Dunstaner, now blind veteran?**

"I think the biggest challenge was being trained and able to do several jobs. I worked for an explosives company for 15 years until health & safety ruled that out, so had to overcome that challenge. I think mobility is the biggest challenge, as you could sit at home and not go out and that's definitely the biggest challenge."

### **What's the most useful piece of training or equipment?**

"Definitely the long cane training. The most useful bit of kit I've got is the woodwork kit. I'm not brilliant at it, but I do all kinds of things and make bits of furniture and turn wood and all that. It's great to get out there and play around."



### What three things could you not live without?

"I couldn't live without Marian, my wife, who has been so staunch and we've been together since we were 18. She's been there the whole time. Just when things are looking really good, and you're smacked back down, she's been there. Marian's always worked. There's our children, I love my family, my daughter Lucy and son Nathan, and now of course their children. Marian and I have great grandchildren, as our eldest granddaughter had twins. That makes you feel really old, but they do keep you young! They all live locally except Nathan who lives on the other side of the world. He was a ski guide to Bill Shea, a Royal Marine who lost his sight at Montecassino. And then of course our lovely cottage that we live in and our garden, which is Marian's domain, as I just do as I'm told, or try to. They're the three most important things — Marian, our family and our cottage."

### What's your favourite smell?

One of them is Rosa Alba, which is a very old rose that leads all the way down our path to the gate. The other one is the most wonderful plant, a mock orange, or a Philadelphus and it has the most incredible smell. It's like a rose when it comes out, as it's a shrub, but it grows to about 6' in height. I'm so lucky as it's my job to go down to the shops every morning to get the basics, the newspaper etc, and I pass this during the month of June and it's the most staggering scent you could ever, ever imagine. I cannot wait for it to come back again each year. I wish my life away for Philadelphus.

### What in recent years has struck you about the importance of the annual Ski Club Week?

"It's the way people come together and the difference it makes. I remember when Ken Facal came skiing for the first time and he was really quiet and we paired him with Mick Shepley, one of our long established ski guides. The first day they came back from the slopes Ken was exhausted and he staggered into the bar and we sat him down and Ken was very quiet, totally exhausted. Second day Ken came in with a big smile on his face and he was laughing and starting to chat to people. Day three he came into the bar and Mick said 'Right everyone quiet. I've got an announcement to make. I've adopted Ken.' And from that moment on Ken was away. And we all thought that's what this week is all about. It's the way that Mick looked out for him and knew how to get him through that

initial stage during the week. It's daunting when you come into a big group and you only know a couple of people, but as everyone is looking out for each other the week really works to get people back to who they were."



**Picture:** Gerry Jones, centre, rowing with Cornwall Rowing Association for the Blind (CRAB). Copyright: Barefoot Photographer.



**Picture:** Gerry Jones, left, on an early skiing trip. Could this be his first skiing instructor Corporal Gascoigne, Gaz, whom Gerry mentioned in his interview?



## Project Gemini wins the Soldering On International Award.

In 2010, in his spare time, Blind Veterans UK's President Colin Williamson set up Project Gemini, as he worked in the evenings, the early hours of the morning and at weekends and sometimes through the night. With Louise Timms, the Sport & Recreation Manager at the Brighton centre, and Dr. Tom Zampieri, his counterpart in America, he developed an engaging itinerary for the week long peer to peer support programme. Those who most needed to hear its message of support were invited to take part. In May 2011 the first exchange took place when 10 war blinded veterans from the Blinded Veterans Association (USA) came to England to visit the Brighton centre. Over the week war stories and tales of rehab were exchanged, as they bonded during meetings at the House of Lords and the American Embassy. There were fun evenings full of laughter when the newly blinded found that spark that had for a while been dimmed. Project Gemini has grown and in 2014 St Dunstaners from St. Dunstan's in South Africa joined. At the heart of Project Gemini is a message of support. Participants witness the transformative change in young soldiers from the UK and America who have been blinded in Afghanistan, and in established veterans from South Africa who experience the life changing work of Project Gemini and Blind Veterans UK.

It was a proud moment, when on Friday 24th March, Colin Williamson, blind veteran Chris Nowell, Louise Timms and Mark Hollis, Activities Team Leader (Llandudno), accepted the Soldering On International Award from Angela Rippon. The Award was for outstanding achievements, acts of personal sacrifice or comradeship demonstrated internationally, by individuals, groups or associations which have supported the British Armed Forces Community.

Accepting the Award Colin said: "I feel very pleased, honoured and humbled to win this magnificent award. Project Gemini is all about teamwork, with everyone pulling together to achieve the programme's aims and objectives and I'm proud to say that we've been very successful over the years in accomplishing our goals. I'd like to place on record my thanks to Louise Timms and Dr. Tom Zampieri for their outstanding contribution and commitment to the project; without their help and support Project Gemini wouldn't be where we are today."

## Project Gemini visits Washington DC. By Colin Williamson.

John Fitzgerald Kennedy, the 35th President of the United States of America and one of the most famous of American Presidents, once described Washington DC as "a community of Southern efficiency and Northern charm" and he couldn't have put it any better.

Thanks to a grant received by our sister organisation the Blinded Veterans Association (USA) from the United States Embassy in London recently, a small group of Blind Veterans UK beneficiaries were invited to attend a series of events commemorating America's entry into World War One on April 6th 1917. These events included educational forums, key federal agency site meetings with agency leaders, talks with U.S. vision rehabilitation experts, eye trauma specialists, researchers and the Department of Defence speciality leadership.

The group included our Head of Research, Dr. Renata Gomes and consisted of blind veterans Sue Eyles, Alan Walker and Steve Birkin. The Blinded Veterans Association members who accompanied us on our various tours, meetings and social events were BVA President Dale Stamper, Project Gemini alumni's Dr. Tom Zampieri and Monaca Gilmore, Iraq war veteran Brian Corcoran and former U.S. Ranger and retired Georgia state police officer Joe Amerling. Our drivers and escorts for the trip were Team River Runner executive director Joe Mornini and police officers from Montgomery Police Department.

Our group were met by a uniformed police officer when we disembarked from the plane at Washington Dulles airport on the afternoon of Sunday 2nd April and escorted through customs to our transport where we were met by our old friend, former U.S. army Major Dr. Tom Zampieri who soon had us whisked off to our hotel for our stay, the very impressive Hyatt Regency in nearby Bethesda.

It was a very early start on Monday morning and the sun was shining as we set off to visit the Pentagon, the headquarters of the United States Department of Defense in Arlington Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington DC. This is one of the largest office buildings in the world, employing around 23,000 military personnel and a further 3,000 civilian employees. The building has its own shopping mall and actually has six zip codes (the American equivalent of our post codes) as it is so large.



After what turned out to be a fascinating tour we were then bussed to Fort Myer, a joint U.S. army and Marine Corps base which is home to Caisson Platoon of the 3rd United States Infantry 'The Old Guard'. These soldiers are expert horsemen who ride and groom the horses that pull the black artillery 'caisson' on which the flag draped casket rests when conducting military funeral ceremonies at nearby Arlington cemetery. These men and women have the honour of carrying a comrade for his last ride so that he can rest in peace with other honoured dead. We toured the stables and got to meet the soldiers who are all volunteers and all are trained infantrymen, all skilled in the various fields and disciplines. The caissons that they use were built in 1918 and used to carry 75mm cannons.

After touring the stables we were driven by our police officer escorts, Scott and Mike to our next port of call which was the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery. After witnessing an immaculate 'changing of the guard' elaborate ritual we were taken in to meet the staff sergeant who was the relief commander of this particular guard change. As you can imagine, she was impeccably dressed and her drill was as good as it gets. We handed over a Blind Veterans UK poppy wreath which she promised to lay for us that evening.

In the evening we were guests of the John Lyon Veterans of Foreign Wars Post in Arlington. The commander, former U.S. Air Force Captain David Hanisch, welcomed us to the post and we enjoyed the warm hospitality that was afforded to us all. It was a great night and we made a lot of new friends. It was another early start on Tuesday morning and at precisely 07:15 we were met by Montgomery County police officer Aaron Bailey who was to be our



**Picture:** At the John Lyon Veterans of Foreign Wars Post at Arlington.

driver for the day. We then proceeded to the Senate Hart Office building for our first meeting of the day and this was with Senator John Boozman who is the senior Senator for Arkansas, followed closely by a meeting with Chief of Staff Colonel Tom Bowman. We were then ushered downstairs and invited to board the internal underground train which connects the Senate building to the Capitol building. After a short journey we arrived at the Capitol building for our 'grand tour' of one of the nation's most symbolically important and architecturally impressive buildings. And what a beautiful piece of architecture it is; originally built in 1800, it has been added on to at various times over the years and the huge, cast iron ornate dome that sits on top of the building, topped by the Statue of Freedom made of bronze and standing at 19 feet 6 inches tall, dominates the skyline of the city of Washington.

Inside, the building is no less spectacular. The immaculate Rotunda is fringed with beautiful murals, friezes and paintings depicting various scenes from America's colourful history and it also houses the National Statuary Hall Collection, comprising of two statues from each of the 50 states to honour persons notable in their histories. We were shown around this iconic structure by a very enthusiastic and witty tour guide who impressed us all with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Capitol. In the afternoon we were guests of the British Embassy Defence Attaché Major General Richard Cripwell and his assistant, Colonel Nick Lock at the British Embassy on Massachusetts Avenue and after a very constructive and positive meeting we were given a tour of this amazing building and we came away very impressed.

Getting up before the larks was becoming a bit of a habit now as we boarded the Team River Runner bus on Wednesday morning for our next visit, this time to the Walter Reed Military Medical Centre. Team River Runner incidentally, specialise in teaching service members and veterans how to kayak, regardless of their injuries, whether it's a sensory loss, a mental health issue or physical injury and have chapters throughout the entire United States. Their executive officer, Joe Mornini is a great friend of the Blinded Veterans Association and was our designated driver for the day.

The Walter Reed National Military Medical Centre is the top tri-service medical centres in the U.S. and gained the nation's attention when it performed the autopsy on U.S. President John Fitzgerald Kennedy after he was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, in 1963.



We were met at the entrance to the massive hospital complex by the Director, Colonel Michael Heimall who welcomed us all to his facility and gave us all a brief history of the centre. We then went into a series of meeting and lectures with various senior members of staff from the Vision Centre of Excellence, the Ophthalmology Clinic, the Military Amputee Treatment Centre and the National Intrepid Centre of Excellence.

After a brief lunch we were back on the bus and driven the short journey to National Mall to visit the amazing Korean War Memorial, the iconic Vietnam Wall, the Lincoln Memorial and the World War One memorial. Thursday the 6th April was a special day. This was the day back in 1917 that the United States formerly declared war against Germany and entered the conflict in Europe. To commemorate this momentous occasion, we spent the day with senior staff members from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs attending lectures and discussions on subjects such as blind rehabilitation, hearing and sight loss research, the advancement in prosthetics and other topics concerning veteran's health and wellbeing.

After these visits we spent a couple of hours kayaking at the Olympic size pool at the Walter Reed National Medical Centre with Joe Mornini and his Team River Runner volunteers.

On Friday we visited the National Museum of Health and Medicine and after a fascinating tour of this amazing museum we sat and listened to talks by eminent military medicine historians and health professionals regarding traumatic battlefield injuries and subsequent treatments. A really interesting day was had by all.

In the evening we gathered at one of the many Irish pubs in the area for our farewell dinner and presentation evening. It was a superb occasion and we were subject to some outstanding hospitality. We had made so many new friends, renewed acquaintances with old ones, learnt so much about the U.S. healthcare systems for veterans and serving personnel, met many interesting and dedicated health professionals, both military and civilian, and made to feel most welcome by all.

It was a truly memorable occasion and one that will stay with us all for a long time to come. Thanks to the Blinded Veterans Association for making this possible and to the U.S. Embassy in London for supplying the grant to fund it all. And a special thanks to everyone who gave up their time and office space to accommodate us all!



**Picture:** At the Lincoln Memorial Steve Birkin, Sue Eyles, Dr Renata Gomes Blind Veterans UK's Head of Research & Innovation, Alan Walker and Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson.



**Picture:** In the UK Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson makes his acceptance speech at the Soldering On Awards. From left to right: Mark Hollis, Louise Timms, Chris Nowell and Angela Rippon.



## **Journey's End. Simon Brown speaks to the Review about Soldiering On. By Catherine Goodier.**

"It's interesting to do this, to reflect on where you started, where you come from because I've always been a big advocate that if you brush everything away, I'm just a kid from a council estate who got hurt doing his job. I've been fortunate that along the way I've had some great opportunities. I've had some pretty cool stuff to do and I've been able to help people and so it's nice to reflect on that journey of where you started, where you are and maybe where you hope to end up.

When asked what drew him to the Army, Simon said, "My dad is ex-military and to be honest I kind of wasted my education, as I wasn't the best student at school. I started hanging around with some wronguns, as we call them round my way, and I needed an escape, I needed a career, I needed an opportunity. A lot of people are going to love this, but the Navy said no to me, as apparently I didn't have the right aptitude for the job. So, I literally walked out of that interview, went and sat at the Army desk and said, 'Right are you looking for people?' I originally wanted to join as a tankie, but when I did the assessment, the BARB, they said they were a bit short of people in the REME and asked if I fancied going down that route. I knew what the REME was as my uncle had Served in it. He was an air tech and a strange link is that he worked on the same base as Nick Caplin. It sounded good so I said 'I'll give that a go. What do I need to do next?' Like I said I'd wasted my education. I wasn't an idiot kid, but I didn't get any qualifications, so I sat down and did some further assessments with them and was told that I'd passed the criteria to train in the REME. I took my oath of allegiance and never looked back."

Asked if the training was the making of him, Simon replied, "I don't think anybody goes into basic training really understanding what's going to happen. It's changed over the years and it would be very different today to when I went through, and what I went through would be very different from what people before me went through. It was tough, it was hard, and as the only Northern monkey in my training platoon I got a bit of grief. I was belligerent, I come from an old mill and mining town and we were taught to be tough and just suck it up. It was hard and there were times when I thought about quitting, but I think everybody goes through tough times in life when they think about that. I looked at what the end product was, and it was that I wanted to be in the Army, and if I wanted to be in the Army then I had to tolerate it. Soldier on if you like.

"As one of the reasons to join the Army was to get away from a lot of wronguns I wanted to really get away from them. I did, as when I finished training at Borden I was given the opportunity to go to Germany for my first posting. That was pretty cool, because when you go out to your unit you really learn what being in the military is all about. So, I went out and was with the King's Royal Hussars Battle Group HQ Section. It was interesting because the first night there some people tried to take advantage of you and make life difficult and there were initiations and that sort of thing. Fortunately I've always been a fairly big lad, so some of it I'd put up with and other bits I'd fight back against. It was all part of becoming a team, becoming part of a unit. Within a couple of weeks of getting to Germany I was on an exercise in Poland. I cut my teeth in Poland and earned a lot of respect there, because I grafted and people could see that I was happy to get down and dirty to do the job. I listened, I worked hard and delivered results for people, which is what everybody wants from their troops.

"That was 1998 and at the beginning of 1999 I deployed on my first operational tour to Kosovo, which was Agricola. It was probably one of the most harrowing experiences of my life. To go out there as a young soldier, expecting to be a soldier, and then to find that you weren't, as at first we became Policemen, which was not what I'd understood my training to be. Even though you're a tradesman, you're also an infantry soldier. Then once we had full control of the country we found out what they'd been doing, and it was pretty horrific as a 20 year old to discover that mass graves still existed and to be part of the teams there to deal with them. It was tough, it was hard and I came back from Kosovo very much a changed person. My parents spotted it straight away and I look back on that period of my life and I'm a little bit ashamed as I was angry, I was upset and distressed. I've had a chance to reflect, and one of the things that we've discussed before is that you're quite important in your own little world. Then you go away for six months when you do something pretty horrific, and then, when you come back the whole world has moved on quite happily without you. You feel a bit insignificant that you've gone through all this hardship and the rest of the world has just carried on regardless. It was tough to take and I was angry about it. I was distressed about it and I wasn't able to sleep, because what happened out there was haunting me, so I turned to drink. I wasn't addicted to alcohol I was using it as medication. It's easy to pass out when you're drunk, it's hard to sleep when your dreams keep you up.



“So, I went through that phase of my life and I woke up one morning and suddenly thought ‘What am I doing?’ I’d tried so hard and worked so hard to get to where I was and I was throwing it away. I just looked at myself in the mirror and thought you need to get a grip son. It was then I was thrown a lifeline when we were sent to Oman to do an operation called Saif Sareeh (Arabic for Swift Sword), in the Omani Desert with the Omani Army. So, on September 11th 2001, I was on an aeroplane to the Middle East. When we landed we were told not to worry about what had happened in America that day, as the exercise would still go ahead, and we’d be kept up to date with the progress on world politics. We’d just got off an aeroplane and we had absolutely no idea what had happened and because we were in the Middle East, in the middle of the desert, it took three or four days for information to filter through. Obviously at first we didn’t believe it. We were just ‘Is this a wind up? Is this a joke?’ We had a job to do, we had to get on with the exercise, but in the back of our minds we were thinking, are we going somewhere from here or are we going back to Germany to pack our lives up? What happens next?”



**Picture:** Simon Brown, Corporal Paul Brain, Corporal Lester Pell and Craftsman Paul Higginbottom

“That was at the back of your mind, but obviously the first important actions were to make sure that we completed the exercise safely and correctly and made sure that no-one was seriously injured. When you’re practising for war you kind of work quite hard, and accidents can happen, mistakes can happen. You have to be alert, you have to up your game, because when you’re working

with heavy equipment and ammunition, the slightest mistake can obviously ruin lives.”

“I came back after a few months away and again the world had changed, and again without my being there. It was strange, as the climate had changed and the goalposts had been moved by that one attack. Things were different and that obviously put us on a pathway to invade Iraq. I’m not going to get into political ifs, buts and maybes about Iraq, as I took my Oath of Allegiance and I was sent there with my unit. It’s taken 13 years for the Chilcott Enquiry so how was I, as a soldier on the ground, supposed to know that the evidence was wrong. It’s taken 13 years to work it out after the facts. We were told to go and do a job and in 2003 I was with the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards as part of the Invasion Force going into Iraq. It was another chapter of events that later went on to change my landscape. I was out there as part of the invasion force and later the setting up of the infrastructure for us to be a police force in Basra and we were fortunate on that first operation as we didn’t lose anyone. No one was killed or hurt physically. A really good friend of mine commanded an impossible op when he went in and rescued a Challenger tank. He was 16 hours on the job under enemy fire. He got everything out of there, he didn’t lose anyone and no-one was hurt. He was a great friend and mentor.



**Picture:** Simon Brown working on top of the vehicle.

“What was really strange was that one day we were fighting the enemy and the next day we were handing out bottles of water, as literally overnight everything had changed. Obviously, it’s very difficult that one minute these people are trying to kill you and you’ve no idea if they’re the same people you’re handing out food and water to. Granted we’ve got to be flexible, we’ve got to be able to



change, but it's a very difficult thing to process. You've got all this aggression, as you're psyched up for war and then literally overnight you're told 'Well tomorrow you're going to be peace keepers. You're going to be humanitarians.' And it's like 'Well how do we switch off?' It's very difficult to switch that off and I'll give the troops on the ground their dues, as the vast majority of them were able to do it. Unfortunately, there were some who couldn't and as we know it's been in the media that they were punished and then there were others who made mistakes. Again, it's probably a bit political, but I was really glad when that bloke was struck off for hunting down servicemen and women for their actions in Iraq. It's a dangerous enough job without the fear of someone hunting you down afterwards. We hold ourselves to the highest moral account, we're not going to make a decision that will affect that. As our audience is veterans they will understand.

"When I do talks one of the questions I'm asked is what's the scariest thing about being in a war, about being in a battlefield. They all think that the scariest thing is getting killed, but that's number three. The first one is getting your mate killed and the second one is doing something that you have to live with. Then losing your own life is number three. So yes, that transition was difficult, but I came back from Iraq in 2003 and I was fine. There were a lot of people who weren't, and unfortunately the mental scars are often worse than the physical ones. I know that from personal experience, as my mental scars come from Kosovo. So, I came back, did my upgraded course in Borden, was posted up to Catterick with the Armoured Infantry and then in 2006 deployed to Iraq."



**Picture:** A time for family. On leave for his grandmother's funeral Simon with his brothers Martin and Iain.

Asked to speak about the deployment that changed his life Simon continued, "Well 2006 was a very different experience. In 2003 I was out there as a young Lance Corporal, as a vehicle driver I was just part of a section, whereas in 2006 I went out as a vehicle commander. That's a lot more responsibility and I was in charge of crews. I was expected to make bigger decisions on the ground so it was a different experience going out there with that responsibility. Although you're always looking out for your muckers and your mates, when you're a Commander there's that added element. At the leaving do from my hometown of Morley I went out with the rugby team and at about 2am I fell out of a pub into the middle of the road with my arms in the air singing 'I'm leaving on a jet plane'. The Landlady came out of the pub and shouted, 'Simon you bloody fool get out of the road you'll get yourself killed.' And I look back at that and think how ironic.

"So I went out there as a commander and it was different. We'd been there for three days when the first kid in our company was killed. We were at a Forward Operating Base, a FOB, in the middle of Basra that was called the old state building. He was shot in the back coming out of a sanger, which for the uninitiated is a guard tower, and he was dead before he hit the floor. That was quite scary as my colleague Warren Ward and I knew that he was dead when we saw the medics carry his body to the makeshift med centre that we had in the facility. I felt for his commander because it hurt, as he wasn't there to look after his lad. I was with John, the Section Sergeant, when he told his lads that Jamie was dead. I was trying to keep their spirits up, they were young lads, most of them were 19 to 21. You're trying to say to them 'If you don't think it's real, there's your evidence. This isn't a game.' There was fear in their eyes and that scared me. I think that hit home harder than anything. That sudden realisation of how dangerous it all was when you knew what the consequences could be.

"December 6th 2006 started like most other days. We had a briefing in the morning, then out on patrol to the main camp, which was Basra Palace, and we weren't sure why, but we were told to bring two recovery vehicles, which we did. A guy called Stewart was commanding the other recovery call sign and I was commanding mine. When we got there we realised why they wanted two vehicles, as they wanted one of our recovery assets to go out with another unit's patrol. It was the Green Jackets, so I went out with B Company Green Jackets and Stewart went out with our Warriors, our company. It was all decided by the flip of a coin. They had newer vehicles and I said that as the senior



mechanic I'd go with the newer vehicles, as we might have a better chance of working out what was wrong. I told Stewart to go with the Warriors as he would have Fuzzy in the back who was a good lad, a good mechanic, and I was sure that Fuzzy would be able to deal with anything that happened to the Warrior. Although Stewart was an armourer he wasn't scared of spanners so I had total faith in him.

"So, he went on one patrol and I went out on the other. We bimbled around town a bit and then we got into an area where things got naughty as the baddies weren't happy about us being there. They [Green Jackets] did an op and captured a few people that we were supposed to get our hands on. They found a weapons stash that we seized and as the baddies weren't very happy about it they opened up on us and it was a turkey shoot. We were pinned in and we were getting a lot of incoming. I give the infantry guys their dues as they were brilliant, They kept their discipline, they did really well and they subdued the enemy.

"We went to pull out of the area and as we started moving off we got '24 Alpha Zero Bravo we can't move'. Right ok, that's my job. So, I jumped off the wagon, had a look and knew what had happened. The enemy knew that we had a stranded vehicle and that we were soft targets floating around that vehicle, so they just opened up. Warren Ward, the guy I marched with at Cenotaph in 2016, was my driver that day and I had a kid in the back, Gus. Me and Gus hooked up the vehicle, connected it to ours. Warren always makes me laugh because he said that I ran up the front of the wagon like John Wayne. I just wasn't thinking. Bullets were pinging around everywhere so I just ran up the front, jumped into the wagon, got on the weapons system and said, 'Right let's get out of here mate.' Then Warren said 'I can't see bud. I don't know where we are.' Now bearing in mind our vehicle was about 55/60 tonne, and we're towing a vehicle that's the best part of 25 tonne with six people on-board, and three on ours, the last thing you want is to put it in a ditch or drive into something. That would mean that more people would have to come out.

"Warren likens it to the movie Black Hawk Down. I don't have that much recollection of how much incoming we got, as I had other things to think about, but it just went ape. I put my head out of the turret, as Warren couldn't see because of all the dust. I said go, go, go and as I dropped my head back into the turret I felt a smash to the side of my face. I kind of knew what had happened.

I always joke that being a Yorkshire man meant that I was hard as nails, but as the bullet didn't knock me out that saved my life, as due to the delay out in the vehicle, if the bullet had I would have choked to death. As it went through my left cheek it came out of my right cheek and it disintegrated both cheek bones, shattered my eye sockets, broke my jaw in four places and my palate collapsed. I was a mess. Somewhere in the depths of my mind I knew what the problem was, so I put my thumb in my mouth and held my palette up. And then, as the shepherd would say, Warren got us the flock out of there. He got us to a checkpoint and at this point, and Warren tells this better than me as my concentration was obviously elsewhere, he said that he heard me gargling and thought that I was dying and he was terrified. He got us to a checkpoint that was out of the killing zone and got a medic. This young medic jumped on top, but there wasn't a lot he could do as the situation was in the access he had to me and I just had to continue what was going on. Genuinely I still didn't comprehend how badly I'd been injured and that was probably a God send because not knowing how badly I was injured meant that I didn't panic as much as I should.

"So, I kept my calm and the medic had hold of my hand and he was talking to me and I was trying to respond. Obviously in my head I'm talking perfectly clearly, but with a broken jaw it probably wasn't as clear as I thought it was! He was sending back reports and he was getting them ready for me to come in. I remember getting close to the Med Centre and where I was sitting in the vehicle I had my arm up in the air and the medic was holding my hand. He felt my arm start to drop and he went all Hollywood on me saying 'You've done so well. Stay with me. Stay with me. Come on!' And I was trying to explain to him that my shoulder had gone to sleep and my arm was dead.

"It was a bit crackers at that point and Warren said that as the guy wasn't opening the gate fast enough he crashed through it. He went the wrong way through a one-way system, which the RSM wasn't very happy about. It was a comedy of things really. We got to the Med Centre and Warren jumped out and he shouted at people to do this, that and the other. The medic's obviously trying to get people up to do what they need to. Then the RSM marched over to have a go at Warren, and Warren being Warren, ripped into him and then as the Sergeant Major was about to tear him a new backside he saw me come out of the vehicle. What had gone on during that time was that they were all standing at the top of the turret wondering how to get me out and I heard them talking



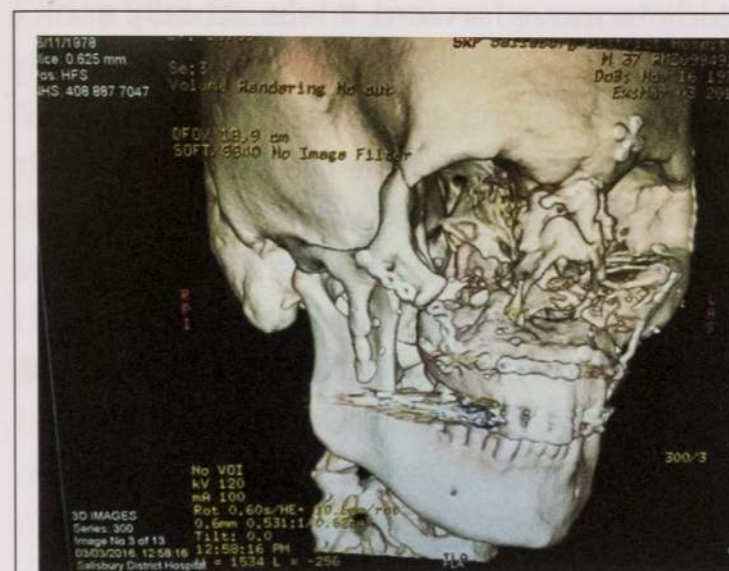
and thought 'What's wrong with you people?' So, I ripped my body armour off and climbed out of the vehicle and it still hadn't dawned on me that my eyes were damaged. I walked down the front of the vehicle and jumped off and that's when the medics started grabbing me and I started swinging. They put me on a stretcher and carried me in. I was literally shot in the head and walked away. I'm quite proud of that.

"It's quite a funny thing to be able to say that I was shot in the head and walked away. The last thing I remember was being on the stretcher and I think at that point I wanted my morphine, which with a head injury they wouldn't allow. I thought, I've carried that thing around for 10 years and the one opportunity when I want to use it, I'm not allowed to. I went into the medical tent and heard all the noise and all the chaos going on around me and then it all went quiet. Then there were the dreams and the voices and the coma and that's why I say to anyone who's with someone in a coma, talk to them, because I can tell you from personal experience they can hear you.

"They obviously did surgery while I was in a coma and they pump you full of anaesthetic so you're asleep. I'd drift off and come back and drift off. I heard voices. Some I knew and some I didn't. If I didn't recognise the voice I got stressed because I couldn't move my body. I was living in this really weird dream where I'd been kidnapped. My dad said that he could watch the monitors and know how I felt, because with certain voices I'd tense up and my heart rate spiked like I was getting ready to fight, and with other voices I relaxed. He could read my mood by watching the monitors and that shows how long he sat by my bed. I lived in this dream world where I had no idea what people looked like or who they were. The only thing I heard was a voice and obviously the last thing I remembered was a very traumatic experience. After that I could feel people grabbing me and moving me, but I had no ability to move myself and the only sense my mind could make of this was that I'd been kidnapped and that I was being held hostage. It was horrible. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy. The only time it switched off was when they did surgery or increased the morphine and knocked me out. I was in that really weird place, and when I woke up in Birmingham thought I'd been asleep for about six months, but it had been 18 days and it was Christmas eve.

"It took about 48 hours to get my bearings to assess where I was, what was going on and to realise the actual situation. At one point I had a lot of stuff on my teeth where they'd put the frame on my face and I thought my teeth

had melted. I couldn't understand why, as obviously I couldn't look in the mirror and my dad had to explain that I had protective stuff on my teeth and it was attached in a way that wouldn't damage the inside of my mouth. The whole situation was very surreal and I didn't want to talk to anyone until I had my bearings and understood where I was and what was going on. Then I was moved into a ward with other military lads who had been wounded and that helped to be around other guys. A civvie, who had broken his leg and contracted MRSA moved in, and he could moan. He sat in the ward moaning about getting MRSA and saying how he would sue the hospital. He didn't stop and he was with a Marine who'd lost a leg, an infantry guy who'd lost a leg, there was a kid who had 60% external burns, another guy who'd lost his thumbs, I'd been shot in the head. This guy was just proper carrying on and I tell you if any of us could have got up we would have chinned him.



**Picture:** A 3D image of Simon's injuries.

"That was where this new journey started, as I remember lying in that dark hospital bed suffering and feeling sorry for myself and thinking 'Why did I fight so hard on the battlefield if this is my reward?' That's all I could look at. Then you hear that your mates have been killed and it switches your focus, as all of a sudden it dawns on you that you're a survivor. You're not a victim and you get all that energy, and all that drive and you think, I need to take advantage of this. I felt that I had an obligation to carry on living in their honour. I knew my family would support me. My parents are lovely, they irritate the living death out of me, but they are incredible people who would run through a wall for any of their kids."

Asked when he found out the extent of his injuries Simon continued: "Things were starting to dawn on me, but I think you're still clinging on to that hope



that they're wrong. Right up until the point they removed my left eye I was still convinced that it could repair itself. You hear that thing about ghost limbs where people say they can feel a foot when they've had their leg amputated. Well I had ghost sight. I could cover up the right eye and the image I had would still be there for the left eye. I was convinced that was what I was actually seeing as I moved around the room, but I was looking at the memory, which in my head was as clear as day. The doctor told me to cover my eye and he moved things and asked where the vase was. It wasn't where I could still see it, as I hadn't seen him move it. All of a sudden it dawned on me that I didn't have sight in that eye and that's where the name One Eyed Si sprang from.

"That was also a recognition of acceptance that it was time to move on, that it was time to adjust, and that was liberating, to have accepted that the eye had gone, as it was only then I was ready to move forward. It was actually a very important operation, both physically and mentally, to help me move on. It was quite concerning when the doctor came along and asked, 'Right which one are we taking out?' I said 'I hope you bloody know. Give me that marker pen!' That's when I discovered that doctor humour is not always that funny. I've also had reconstructive surgery and in total have undergone 25 operations to reconstruct my face and with the eye stuff it totals around 140 hours of surgery. It's taken pretty much 10 years to the day, as the last operation was 2nd December 2016, which was four days before my 10 year anniversary of when I was shot.

"This is the legacy of being shot, as it's not as simple as you think. It's not just the legacy of the injury. It's that reconstructive stuff and that takes a long time. It's not an overnight job. I think for me that was one of the big challenges through recovery and through rehabilitation over the last 10 years, as I couldn't get closure until the surgery was finished. It was the knowledge that there was always a next stage. There was more surgery to go back for and it restricted planning things, as you knew you couldn't go and do something because you might get called in for surgery, and you couldn't afford to say no to surgery, because you needed it. That final operation was quite huge to finally get to the end of a journey. I know people use the term that they see light at the end of the tunnel. Maybe not that apt for our organisation, but all of a sudden the light was no longer a train coming at you, the light was the end of the tunnel and it felt good to finally be there."

On Remembrance Sunday 2016 Simon Brown stood on Whitehall with Blind Veterans UK column and Warren Ward. Under the bandages Simon still bore the scars of his injury and from his latest operation. Speaking of the poignancy of that day Simon said: "To reflect on 10 years it was strange, as that 10 years went in the blink of an eye. That's why I tell people to stop now and again and look behind them. You can't live in the past, but you've got to look behind you, because there will be some pretty cool moments. Being with Warren on Remembrance Sunday wasn't the end of something, it was the start. We'd both been on our own personal journeys and that day marked a new chapter, as it was the end of a part of my life that I was looking forward to getting to the end of, and to share it with Warren as a new chapter started was very powerful."

It was part of the beginning of the next stage in Simon's journey, when on Friday 24th March he walked on stage at the Soldering On Awards to be presented with the coveted People's Choice Award by the Deputy Editor of the Sunday Express. He was recognised for the work with charities and individuals that he has done since 2007. Work that started with the Morley Branch of the Royal British Legion when Simon was living on his own as he tried to work out what to do next. It was then that Roy Sagar from Morley's RBL knocked on his door and invited Simon to join him to sell poppies in town. That was when Simon realised that he had lost ownership of himself, as he had been adopted by the town as a local lad done good. Roy told him that people weren't glaring at him as he sold poppies, they were looking at him as they were proud of him and wanted to talk to him.

From that seed of realisation Simon started to grow in confidence. He started to volunteer with Groundwork Trust, working with people who are referred to as NEET, Not in Education, Employment or Training. Kids who were a bit like him as a teenager and that encouraged him to do a teaching qualification. It was at that time he joined St Dunstan's and he was given the support and equipment that he needed to complete his studies. He met Bryn and Emma Parry and became an Ambassador for an emerging charity called Help For Heroes. He was appointed as a Champion for the Defence Medical Welfare Service, as he and his family had experienced first hand the importance of their work. He is a Patron of a children's charity in Leeds and is involved in a schools project with Derbyshire Police where they speak to transitioning kids in Years 9 to 11 about life choices and the importance of accepting responsibility. These are organisations that he is proud to be involved with.



He also brought his fellow blind veterans into an important project when he invited them to be photographed by Bryan Adams for his book and later exhibition, *Wounded the Legacy of War*. Introduced to the fine artist Caroline de Peyrecave, a portrait of Simon featured in her *War Paint* collection.

Simon continued "It was pretty cool when I started to do the teaching stuff, as I was working with some hard kids and I got some victories. I helped some kids out and I see them in town now and again, but I also had a lot of losses. It came to a head just before I left the military when I suddenly realised that I had a lot of my own problems to deal with, a lot of my own demons. It was tough, because I wanted to help, but I was too busy sorting out my own stuff to accept their excuses. It got to a point when I was tired of listening to their excuses and I wasn't mentally strong enough at the time to take on their problems and accept them for who and what they were. It wasn't healthy for me and as I wasn't delivering what the kids deserved I took the decision to step away from that career. In that time I'd started to do some work for Help For Heroes when they set up. I started volunteering with our charity and I was getting some lovely opportunities. It was nice to talk not just about the injury, but to also talk about the fact I wanted to do something. I was always told that the measure of a man is not what he does, but what he does next, and I think that's a good philosophy to live by. As a wounded serviceman it's important to show that while they may try and break our bodies they won't break us. We wear our scars, they don't wear us."

Simon never held on to the hope that he could remain in the REME "I was middle aged when I was injured, I was 28. I knew that my career was over and I didn't want to be put into a job where I would never be promoted on merit. I wouldn't move forward and wouldn't be able to stand on the frontline with my brothers. I knew it was time to move on and that's why I started teaching and trying to find a way to move forward. I was given a great opportunity in 2008 when I was asked to go over to the States to represent our charity at the Blinded Veterans Association's (BVA) convention. You mentioned Gemini and this is pre-Project Gemini. I developed a lot of great friendships with some guys over there who are still very good friends. That kind of led into Colin Williamson and Louise Timms really driving forward the Gemini project as Colin had this brilliant idea and he put a lot of effort in and got Louise on-board. Between them they have created an award winning project that is changing lives and is very much best practice for international relations and rehabilitation. I'm proud of them

and proud to have been involved in that and I've volunteered on some of the exchange visits in the UK and America.

"Going to the BVA's Convention in America was a good point in my life, but all of these things were in preparation for the day when I had to hand in my ID card. Then, in 2010, on 10th August, I handed my ID card in and it was a hugely emotional time, because you have this bit of plastic card that you've had to protect and look after. You get charged if you lose it and they just come and take it from you and cut it in half. You think, I've cherished that bit of plastic throughout my career, that's my identity. It was soul destroying. It was like being booted out of your family. It was hard. It was hurtful. I stayed up all night and polished off a bottle of Jack Daniel's. I was on Facebook chatting to a few old mates, one of them was Warren, and I'm not ashamed to say that I was upset. I cried. I think that's the last time I remember crying. I was distraught and never imagined it would hit me like that. It was 13 years of my life and quite important years. Those years from 18 to 31, and it ended when someone took my ID card and cut a piece of plastic in half. It was symbolic. It was very much 'You're gone. You're not one of us anymore.' It took a while to get my feet back on the ground after that, as it was a hard blow to take."

For some that may have been the end, but as Simon stated earlier he had a responsibility to honour his friends who had been killed in Iraq. "There was always that moment in the hospital when I found out that two of my colleagues had been killed. There was also another moment back in 2006 when I was visited by some senior people from the REME and we talked about Iraq in 2003 and I was kind of upset that my best friend hadn't been in touch. This is before I was discharged, but it was probably one of the anchors that kept me pushing forward. I said that I hadn't heard from him and the Officer said 'Yes it was really sad what happened to him.' I said, you're damn right it's sad, he should have been decorated in 2003 for what he did in Iraq, but he wasn't and that was disgraceful. They said, no we're talking about him taking his own life. Obviously, I hadn't heard and said they must be wrong, as he was the life and soul, the legend. But PTSD had got him. The MoD had killed him with neglect. It was devastating. I'd been angry with him for months for not getting in touch when of course he couldn't. It was soul destroying that I'd been so angry at this man. I was angry at him for leaving his family behind, but for someone of his character to make that choice it must have been so hard for him because he was everything. He was the guy you wanted with you. I had the opportunity



to meet his widow a few years ago and she said he really wanted to come to the hospital, but he couldn't. I was hit on 6th December and his incident was, I believe, the 27th of December. As I was in a coma he was told that he couldn't visit and he was obviously in a very dark place at that time. It wasn't until the day after I realised that I'd been carrying a massive bit of baggage about whether he knew or whether he cared, and to find out that he had meant a lot. His legacy drives me to move forward."

Simon was presented with a great opportunity when Alison Bradley, the former Welfare Manager for the charity, phoned and told him to look at a job on Blind Veterans UK's website. The job was for a Communications Officer within the Membership department to recruit new members, reporting to David Habershon. Simon applied and was given the job. Simon's role later moved into the No One Alone team and a number of you reading this report have probably met Simon at exhibitions and perhaps you are one of the blind veterans he has brought into the charity. It's a role that Simon is proud to hold and at a recent Leeds Reunion the importance of his work was shown when he asked someone how they came to the charity to be told, 'It was because of you. I met you at Sight Village at Leeds Armouries and you told me about Blind Veterans UK, put me in touch with Jenny Barley in Membership, and here I am today.' As Simon told the Review, "It's those conversations that make the early morning train journeys and overnight stays in Premier Inns around the country worthwhile."

Asked about his role models Simon quoted a man who is often cited, Ray Hazan OBE. "I don't think anybody could mention Ray's name without saying inspiration and leader. Ray won the Soldering On Trustees Award in 2016 and this year's ceremony started when they showed Ray's film. I've made some good friends here, especially with Colin Williamson and other members. Unfortunately some are no longer with us and that's one of the things about this charity, as you get to know people so well who are from a different generation, and when they pass it's like losing a cherished uncle. It was incredible to be at the Soldering On Awards as a finalist, and a privilege to win The People's Choice. We can't talk about this without talking about the organisation as a whole, because with Project Gemini, Colin and Louise won the International Award and Mark Threadgold and Clive Jones were finalists in their categories. It was bitter sweet to win The Soldering On People's Choice Award as my friend Nicky Murdoch, CEO of the Defence Medical Welfare Service, was also up for the award. I really want to thank the charity for nominating and

supporting me, everyone who took the time to vote for me and everyone in the No One Alone and PR and Marketing teams, as they did so much work to get people to vote."

So, what's next for the lad from the council estate who actively shuns the moniker of hero? "I'm content with the vast majority of my life. I want what everyone wants, which is to settle down with a companion and find that little piece of paradise that we're all looking for. But if I look at what I've got now and where I am, I've got a job that I love, I work with fantastic people, I've got a great family and cracking friends. Friends like the rugby lads back home who didn't treat me any differently after I was injured. Even if I was sitting on the sofa in my pyjamas and didn't want to speak with anyone they kidnapped me and took me to the pub, we got drunk and they delivered me to my dad's doorstep for him to sort out. The next thing is that I'm going down to New Zealand for my first proper holiday in years and am really looking forward to it. That's what's liberating about having finished the surgery as I can book a holiday. After that I guess we'll see what's next. We all want to say what we'll do next, but let's face it, this wasn't in my 10 year plan. I'll face each challenge as it comes along and might even be stupid enough to look for challenges."



**Picture:** Simon Brown at the War Memorial at the Brighton centre. Photo Slater King.



## Meet Rob Baker, Blind Veterans UK's Archivist in a podcast in the Talking Review.

Opening our Archives to the public and sharing our rich history with the world is something that Rob Baker, Blind Veterans UK Archivist, is passionate about. To this end each Thursday Ashlee Charlton and Katherine Ducie in the social media team at HQ post a historic #ThrowbackThursday report on Facebook.

In the June Talking Review you can listen to a podcast when Rob speaks about the early days of the charity and the work of the women of the Voluntary Aid Detachment. A Facebook post from Rob's #ThrowbackThursday is shown below.

If you would like to following Rob sign up to Blind Veterans UK's Facebook at [facebook.com/blindveteransuk](https://www.facebook.com/blindveteransuk)



**Blind Veterans UK**  
Published by Laura Weston [?] · February 23 at 8:30am · €

Our latest Historical Photography Project post discovers the crucial role of the VADs!  
Do you know what VAD stands for?  
If so, do you have any stories about an ancestor who joined?  
Click through to our blog to read more: [https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/.../the-vads-in-regent-s-pa...](https://www.blindveterans.org.uk/.../the-vads-in-regent-s-pa.../)



6,623 people reached

Boost Post

Like Comment Share

# Noticeboard.

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

**The annual concert by The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines at the Brighton centre on 26th July.**

It is approaching that time when we will soon have the pleasure of the company of The Band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines at our Brighton centre. We at Blind Veterans UK are privileged each year to experience the magic of this concert; a day which is always immensely enjoyed by all. This special event is a highlight amongst our annual programme for local and visiting members. However hosting this event also provides an opportunity to invite and give something back to our volunteers, VIPs and supporters and to demonstrate our ongoing connection with this group of people.

As you are aware it is a popular event and we only have a limited number of seats available for local members and their spouses. If you wish to apply for a place, please contact Anna Funnell at the Brighton centre on telephone 01273 391412.

There will be a limited bus service for members who live in the immediate vicinity of the centre who require the assistance of transport. If you do live locally and are able to make your own way to the centre this would help to alleviate unwanted pressure on the Transport Department.

Unfortunately lunch bookings cannot be taken on the day except for those who are already in house. We look forward to enjoying the concert with you.

Order of events for the concert:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| 1330         | Pimms will be served in the Inner Garden |
| 1400 to 1515 | Royal Marines Band concert               |
| 1520         | Afternoon tea in the Inner Garden        |
| 1600         | Guests depart                            |



## Join us on our visit to Normandy Land of Liberty from 11th September for three nights.

For this trip we will design a bespoke itinerary that encompasses your discovery objectives. We will travel on an executive coach travel from the Llandudno centre to Portsmouth where we will make a ferry crossing to Caen when we will enjoy a three course meal on-board.

In Normandy we will stay in the Novotel Caen that is a 15 minute drive from the beeches. We will have entrance to museums and to D-Day experiences and a Battlefield tour guide with be with us for the duration.

As you can appreciate space for this Normandy Land of Liberty tour is limited and is on a first come first served basis. Please apply to us by 31st July 2017. If you are successful we will collect you and bring you to the Llandudno centre on the weekend of 9th and 10th September, as we will travel to Normandy on Monday 11th September, returning on 14th September. Those of you who are veterans of the Second World War will of course take priority. Please apply to Dewi Roberts, Activity Team Instructor at the Llandudno centre on telephone 01492 864590 or email [dewi.roberts@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:dewi.roberts@blindveterans.org.uk)

## Five new double bedrooms at the Brighton centre.

To better meet your needs five en-suite bedrooms at the Brighton centre have now been changed into double room with the twin beds removed and double beds included. The double bedrooms are rooms 308, 508, 510, 703 and 706.

## Review Format changes.

If you would like to change the format you receive the Review in please telephone 020 7616 8367 stating your name, postcode and preferred format. Or email [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk) You can receive the Review in both print and audio. It is available as a large print magazine, in MP3CD, USB, email or Braille. It is also available to Sonata users through their National Talking Newspapers. If you receive the Review on a USB memory stick please return it in the padded wallet once you have listened to it. If you do not return the USB we are unable to send you the following month's edition as we are sure you will appreciate that new USBs are costly.

# Family News.

## Birthdays:

**Emlyn Morgan** who celebrated his 103rd birthday on 10th June.

**George Haigh** who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 29th June.

**Alan Coburn** who celebrated his 101st birthday on 7th June.

**Eve Latham-Sharpe** who celebrated her 101st birthday on 15th June.

**George Walter** who celebrated his 100th birthday on 30th June.

## Anniversaries:

### Diamond Gold 75 years married.

**Ron & Bonnie Smith** of Crewe on 27th June.

### Platinum 70 years married.

**Iris & Bob Redgate** of Birmingham, West Midlands on 7th June.

**Morris & Jose Masters** of Ilford, Essex on 15th June.

**Richard & Jean Hardy** of Alfreton, Derbyshire on 24th June.

**Robert & Lillian Bromley** of Muswell Hill, London on 29th June.

### Blue Sapphire 65 years married.

**Stanley & Myra Solk** of Leeds on 2nd June.

**Ken & Gloria Jones** of Llandudno Junction, Gwynedd on 7th June.

**Ron & Kath Wells** of Watford, Hertfordshire on 7th June.

**Charlie & Margaret Stephens** of Llanidloes, Powys on 12th June.

**Ted & Jean Franklin** of Frampton Cotterell, Bristol on 14th June.

**Danny & Audrey Martyn** of Birmingham, West Midlands on 14th June.

**Yvonne & David Roddis** of Cromer, Norfolk on 14th June.

**Frederick & Audrey O'Keefe** of Liverpool, Merseyside on 21st June.

**Dennis & Iris Fowler** of Wimbledon, London on 25th June.

**George & Doreen Godfrey** of Colchester, Essex on 28th June.

**Neville & Jenny Scott** of Stafford, Staffordshire on 28th June.

### Diamond Yellow 60 years married.

**Tony & Val Golding** of Faverham, Kent on 1st June.

**Don & Bridget Mulryan** of Wirral, Merseyside on 1st June.



**Kenneth & Joyce Fowler** of Plymouth, Devon on 8th June.  
**Alan & Lorraine Lance** of Uxbridge, Middlesex on 15th June.  
**Gordon & Iris Mitchell** of Hempsted, Gloucester on 15th June.  
**George & Audrey Brewis** of Wooler, Northumberland on 22nd June.  
**John & Margaret Kearns** of St. Helens, Merseyside on 22nd June.

**Golden 50 years married.**

**Colin & Ruth Margetson** of Fakenham, Norfolk on 10th June.  
**Len & Pamela Prime** of Reigate, Surrey on 10th June.

**Ruby 40 years married.**

**John & Judy Calladine** of Rotherham, South Yorkshire on 4th June.

**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.**

**Ronald 'Ron' Charlton** who died on 12th April 2017. He was the widower of the late Joyce Charlton.

**Henrietta 'Rita' Clarke** who died on 30th April 2017. She was the widow of the late Ronald Clarke.

**Pamela Deacon** who died on 9th January 2016. She was the wife of Colin Deacon.

**Mary Gutowski** who died on 17th April 2017. She was the widow of the late Bolestow Gutowski.

**Iris Hallums** who died on 12th May 2017. She was the husband of Brian Hallums.

**Lottie Noble** who died on 1st May 2017. She was the widow of the late Eric Noble.

**Kathleen Pluck** who died on 1st March 2015. She was the wife of Ronald Pluck.

**James 'Jim' Smith** who died on 14th December 2016. He was the husband of Phyllis Smith.

**Kathleen Spathaky** who died on 2nd February 2017. She was the widow of the late Ronald Spathaky.

**Pauline Taylor** who died on 1st March 2017. She was the wife of William Taylor.

**Margaret Taylor** who died on 1st May 2017. She was the wife of Ralph Taylor.

# Welcome to Blind Veterans UK.

**Bryan Alexander** of North Shields, Tyne And Wear served in the Royal Pioneer Corps from 1959 to 1962.

**Robert 'Bob' Allen** of Basingstoke, Hampshire served in the Royal Navy from 1945 to 1947.

**Donald Anderson** of Bromsgrove, Worcestershire served in the Royal Engineers and the Royal Army Educational Corps from 1945 to 1948.

**Donald 'Don' Andrews** of Prenton, Merseyside served in the Fleet Air Arm from 1948 to 1956.

**Dennis Ball** of Prescott, Merseyside served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1955.

**Roy Barrett** of Newbury, Berkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1953.

**James 'Jim' Bland** of Newcastle Upon Tyne served in the Northumberland Fusiliers from 1953 to 1955.

**Eric Bly** of Beeston, Nottingham served in the Royal Signals from 1952 to 1964.

**Arthur 'Bill' Booth** of St. Helens, Merseyside served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1946 to 1948.

**Jeffrey Broadhurst** of Fareham, Hampshire served in the Royal Marines Commandos from 1942 to 1946.

**Bernard Brooks** of Ilkeston, Derbyshire served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1947.

**Norman Boughton-Smith** of Westcliff-On-Sea, Essex served in the Searchlight Regiment and the Royal Artillery from 1939 to 1946.

**Stuart Buchanan** of Nelson, Lancashire served in the Royal Air Force from 1950 to 1952.



**Frederick Camroux** of Wymondham, Norfolk served in the Royal Signals from 1941 to 1946.

**Derek Cholerton** of Wigan, Lancashire served in the Royal Engineers from 1956 to 1972.

**George 'Neil' Clayton** of Ossett, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Signals from 1954 to 1956.

**Edwin Cole** of Mayfield, East Sussex served in the Queen's Royal Regiment from 1949 to 1956.

**Dennis Curran** of Plymouth, Devon served in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve and the Royal Auxiliary Air Force from 1941 to 1960.

**Kenneth Darlington** of Crawley, West Sussex served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1949 to 1964.

**John Davenport** of Brixham, Devon served in the Fleet Air Arm from 1953 to 1960.

**Jean Doidge née Sones** of Poole, Dorset served in the Queen's Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps from 1953 to 1957.

**Dennis Donovan** of Redditch, Worcestershire served in the Royal Navy from 1939 to 1979.

**David Douglas** of Scarborough, North Yorkshire served in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1947.

**Ernest Downton** of Chorley, Lancashire served in the Dorset Regiment from 1952 to 1958.

**Dennis Drinkall** of Scunthorpe, South Humberside served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1959 to 1961.

**William 'Bill' Edwards** of Chapeltown, Sheffield served in the Royal Air Force in 1949.

**Graham Forshaw** of Worthing, West Sussex served in the Royal Artillery from 1956 to 1961.

**Peter Garnett** of Bradford, West Yorkshire served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1954 to 1957.

**Brian Grainger** of Caernarfon, Gwynedd served in the Royal Air Force from 1965 to 1968.

**Kenneth 'Ken' Green** of Southsea, Hampshire served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Artillery from 1942 to 1946.

**Enid Gray née Newman** of Brighton, East Sussex served in the Voluntary Aid Detachment from 1944 to 1945.

**Joan Grocott née Edgar** of Stoke On Trent, Staffordshire served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1943 to 1946.

**Chloe Fink** of Staining, Blackpool served in the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service and the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps from 1974 to 1990.

**Gerald 'Ged' Hackett** of Worsley, Manchester served in the Royal Artillery from 1956 to 1957.

**Edward Hambelton** of Skegness, Lincolnshire served in the Royal Signals and the Royal Military Police from 1953 to 1982.

**Alfred 'Bill' Harris** of Romford, Essex served in the Royal Air Force from 1940 to 1946.

**Ian Henderson** of Bearsted, Kent served in the Royal Air Force from 1943 to 1946.

**Marion 'Marie' Hibbins née Jones** of Horncastle, Lincolnshire served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force from 1942 to 1945.

**John Hodges** of Alcester, Warwickshire served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1958 to 1960.

**Trevor Illingworth** of Chester Le Street, County Durham served in the Royal Artillery from 1965 to 1966.

**George 'Peter' Jackson** of Skegness, Lincolnshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1955 to 1957.

**Robert 'Bob' James** of Tamworth, Staffordshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1957.



**William 'Bill' James** of Leominster, Herefordshire served in the Royal Signals from 1990 to 1997.

**William 'Bill' Kenyon** Upper Denby, Huddersfield served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946.

**Denis King** of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk served in the Royal Engineers from 1943 to 1959.

**Joseph King** of Hailsham, East Sussex served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1954.

**George 'Lewis' Evans** of Dinas Powys, South Glamorgan served in the Welsh Guards from 1953 to 1987.

**Frederick Low** of King's Lynn, Norfolk served in the King's Royal Rifle Corps from 1941 to 1946.

**William 'Bill' Madden** of Stanley, County Durham served in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers from 1958 to 1961.

**Frederick 'Fred' Maher** of Newcastle Upon Tyne served in the Royal Air Force from 1953 to 1958.

**Roy Manchester** of Conwy, Gwynedd served in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1954.

**Douglas 'Doug' Matthews** of Pontypool, Gwent served in the Grenadier Guards in 1974.

**Neil McDougall** of Dumfries, Fife served in the Royal Artillery from 1957 to 1960.

**Cyril Medlin** of Pewsey, Wiltshire served in the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment from 1955 to 1957.

**Leonard Meredith** of Haywards Heath, West Sussex served in the Royal Signals from 1941 to 1947.

**Gordon Millichip** of Whitchurch, Cardiff served in the Royal Signals from 1944 to 1946.

**Derrick Moy** of Hellesdon, Norwich served in the Royal Artillery from 1949 to 1955

**James 'Jim' Mundy** of Ipstones, Stoke On Trent served in the Royal Navy from 1944 to 1946.

**Derek Mycock** of Stockport, Cheshire served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1957 to 1964.

**Robert Nelson** of Salcombe, Devon served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1953 to 1956.

**Henry 'Mel' Oldbury** of Gorseinon, Swansea served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1947.

**Ronald Panagakis** of Petersfield, Hampshire served in the Royal Engineers from 1952 to 1954.

**John Payne** of Evesham, Worcestershire

**Philip Pestana** of South Shields, Tyne And Wear served in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1955.

**John 'Jack' Peebles** of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire served in the Royal Engineers in 1949.

**Janice 'Jan' Price née Tantum** of Bourne, Lincolnshire served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1982 to 2012.

**Patrick 'Pat' Ratcliffe** of Teddington, Middlesex served in the Rifle Brigade, Royal Ulster Rifles and the Royal Army Service Corps from 1942 to 1947.

**Brian Rimmer** of Southport, Merseyside served in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1953 to 1955.

**Francis 'Charles' Roberts** of Cheadle, Stoke On Trent served in the North Staffordshire Regiment from 1942 to 1946.

**Henry 'Donald' Rosling** of Patchway, Bristol served in the Royal Pioneer Corps from 1945 to 1948.

**Harold Rush** of Prescot, Merseyside served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

**Mary Sayer née Weddall** of Sparham, Norwich served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1942 to 1946.



**William Simpson** of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire served in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1969 to 1975.

**Reginald 'Reg' Sloan** of Gosforth, Newcastle Upon Tyne served in the Royal Navy from 1941 to 1946.

**Ronald Smith** of Newbury, Berkshire served in the Royal Artillery from 1953 to 1956.

**Roy Spencer** of Ellesmere Port, Cheshire served in the Royal Signals from 1950 to 1952.

**Peter Stevens** of Cambridge served in the General Service Corps, Green Howards and the Royal Norfolk Regiment from 1945 to 1948.

**Terence 'Terry' Stockwell** of Bradford, West Yorkshire served in the Army Catering Corps from 1956 to 1958.

**Sam 'Roy' Strawson** of Newton Ferrers, Plymouth served in the Royal Marines from 1943 to 1946.

**Francis 'Frank' Titt** of New Milton, Hampshire served in the General Service Corps and the East Surrey Regiment from 1944 to 1946.

**Francis 'Des' Treacy** of Maidenhead, Berkshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1952 to 1954.

**Lindsay Tyndale** of Horley, Surrey served in the Royal Air Force from 1980 to 1991.

**Arthur Vidler** of Welling, Kent served in the Royal Army Medical Corps and the Royal Artillery from 1951 to 1964.

**Fred Warhurst** of Radcliffe, Manchester served in the General Service Corps and the Lancashire Fusiliers from 1943 to 1954.

**Ida Warhurst née Jackson** of Radcliffe, Manchester served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service and the Women's Royal Army Corps from 1944 to 1954.

**Susan Warner née Strachan** of Barnsley, South Yorkshire served in the Royal Logistic Corps from 1993 to 2005.

**Brian Wass** of Chesterfield, Derbyshire served in the Worcestershire and Sherwood Foresters Regiment from 1958 to 1970.

**George Whatmore** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland served in the Royal Engineers from 1952 to 1955.

**Leslie White** of Scunthorpe, South Humberside served in the Royal Navy from 1947 to 1952.

**Fred Whitworth** of Burnley, Lancashire served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers from 1946 to 1948.

**Maurice Williams** of Mansfield, Nottinghamshire served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

**David Wiltshire** of Chippenham, Wiltshire served in the Royal Engineers from 1947 to 1949.

**Michael Windsor** of Hythe, Kent served in the Royal Armoured Corps from 1943 to 1947.

**Bernard Woolford** of Holyport, Berkshire served in the Royal Air Force, Buffs (Royal East Kent Regiment) and the East Surrey Regiment from 1943 to 1947.

## Answers to Ron Russell's Ology Quiz.

The study of volcanos is Volcanology.

The study of earthquakes is Seismology.

The study of insects is Entomology.

The study of trees is Dendrology.

The study of weather is Meteorology.

The study of oceans/seas is Oceanology.

The study of eyes is Ophthalmology.

The study of human behaviour is Psychology.

The study of birds is Ornithology.

The study of precious stones is Gemology.



# 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.**

**Ronald 'Ron' Bentham** of Southport, Merseyside died on 9th May 2017, aged 94. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946, leaving as a Leading Aircraftman.

**Andrew Briggs** of South Shields, Tyne And Wear died on 8th May 2017, aged 85. He served in the Royal Armoured Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1953 until demobbed in 1962 as a Corporal.

**Ronald Buckley** of Hull, North Humberside died on 18th February 2017, aged 89. He served in the Royal Air Force in Italy, Greece and Egypt from 1945 to 1948, leaving as a Leading Aircraftman.

**Alan Carter** of Droitwich, Worcestershire died on 8th May 2017, aged 83. He served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers from 1954 to 1960.

**George Chandler** of St. Martin, Guernsey died on 10th April 2017, aged 80. An Acting Boatswain he served in the Royal Navy from 1952 to 1964 in the Mediterranean, Europe, Persian Gulf and Far East.

**Joseph 'Joe' Child** of Saltdean, East Sussex died on 5th May 2017, aged 94. He served in the Royal Signals in Italy, Africa, Palestine and Lebanon from 1942 to 1945, leaving as a Signalman.

**Robert 'Bob' Clarke** of Lancing, West Sussex died on 20th April 2017, aged 86. He served in the Royal Sussex Regiment in the UK and Korea from 1955 to 1977, discharging as a Mechanic.

**Reginald 'Reg' Coates** of West Kingsdown, Kent died on 23rd April 2017, aged 90. From 1944 he served in the General Service Corps and the King's Royal Rifle Corps in Italy until he was demobbed as a Lance Corporal in 1948.

**John 'Jack' Collins** of Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire died on 26th April 2017, age 89. He served in the General Service Corps, Intelligence Corps and the Royal Army Educational Corps in Gibraltar from 1946 to 1948.

**Kenneth Craig** of Wirral, Merseyside died on 27th April 2017, aged 87. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1947 to 1949.

**Joan Culham née Osborne** of Sherborne, Dorset died on 16th April 2017, aged 94. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1943 to 1946 in the UK, Sri Lanka and Singapore.

**Joyce Davies née Roberts** of St. Ives, Cambridgeshire died on 2nd January 2017, aged 92. She served in the Women's Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1946, leaving as a Leading Aircraftwoman.

**James Dean** of Bromley, Kent died on 3rd May 2017, aged 96. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946 in the Middle East, France and Italy, leaving as a Leading Aircraftman.

**Reginald 'Reg' Duncan** of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 28th April 2017, aged 87. He served in the King's Regiment and the Manchester Regiment from 1948 to 1950.

**Sylvia Gedge née Catling** of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 13th April 2017, aged 92. She served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service from 1943 to 1946.

**Reginald Ellison** of Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands died on 7th October 2016, aged 97. He served in the Royal Navy from 1939 to 1946 in South Africa, Aden, East Indies, Sri Lanka, East Africa, Gibraltar, the UK, Sicily, Malta, East Indies, USA and Egypt, until discharge as a Leading Seaman.

**Reginald 'Reg' Fawkes** of Wargrave, Berkshire died on 7th May 2017, aged 95. He served in the Royal Air Force in England and India until discharged as a Corporal.

**Fourness 'Harold' Furnival** of Ruthin, Clwyd died on 27th April 2017, aged 83. He served in Singapore in the Royal Air Force from 1954 to 1956.

**John Glynn** of Plymouth, Devon died on 28th March 2017, aged 93. He served in the Royal Navy from 1939 to 1968, discharging as a Chief Petty Officer.



**Reginald 'Jim' Goodchild** of Watlington, Oxfordshire died on 14th April 2017, aged 91. From 1943 to 1947 he served in the General Service Corps, Royal Army Service Corps and Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry in Northern Ireland, Palestine, France and Belgium.

**Edith 'Doris' Graham** of Chichester, West Sussex died on 7th May 2017, aged 94. She served in the Women's Royal Air Force in England and the Isle of Man from 1941 to 1946, until discharged as a Temporary Corporal.

**Cecil Hardy** of Barrow-Upon-Humber, South Humberside died on 29th April 2017, aged 92. He served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1944 to 1947, leaving as an Acting Orderly Sergeant.

**John 'Bryn' Harries** of Gloucester, Gloucestershire died on 24th April 2017, aged 82. He served in the Royal Artillery from 1955 to 1960 in Germany, Malta and Cyprus, discharging as a Lance Bombardier.

**Herbert 'Bert' Hayes** of Longridge, Preston died on 25th April 2017, aged 101. From 1933 he served in the Royal Artillery in Gibraltar, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, until discharged as a Lance Bombardier in 1946.

**Ernest Higgins** of Walsall, West Midlands died on 10th May 2017, aged 94. He served in the Royal Armoured Corps in North Africa, Pantalleria, Italy and Austria from 1942 to 1946 until demobbed as a Trooper.

**Kenneth Hill** of Swindon, West Midlands died on 10th May 2017, aged 96. He served in the royal Army Ordnance Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in from 1939 to 1946 until demobbed as a Corporal. Captured in Singapore he spent three and a half years as a Prisoner of War forced to work on the Burma Railway.

**John 'Merfyn' Holt** died on 8th April 2017, aged 92. He served in the General Service Corps, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, Welch Regiment and the South Wales Borderers in France and Germany from 1943 until 1945, until demobbed as a Corporal.

**Alexander 'Alec' McGhee** of Blackburn, Lancashire died on 8th May 2017, aged 80. He served in the Royal Pioneer Corps from 1964 to 1981 in England and Gibraltar, discharging as a Corporal.

**Alan Morgan** of Woodford Green, Essex died on 30th April 2017, aged 88. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps from 1947 to 1949 in the UK and the Suez Canal Zone.

**Samuel Munkley** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 8th May 2017, aged 97. He served in the Royal Army Service Corps in France (Dunkirk), North Africa and Italy from 1939 until 1946 until demobbed as a Staff Sergeant.

**John 'Ken' Oyston** of Halifax, West Yorkshire died on 2nd May 2017, aged 92. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1955 to 1969 in the UK Aden and Germany, leaving as a Wing Commander.

**Joyce 'Jane' Roberts née Burton** of Sherborne, Dorset died on 1st May 2017, aged 96. She served in the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service from 1945 to 1948.

**John Rooms** of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 22nd March 2017, aged 89. From 1944 to 1947 he served in the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean and Malta, discharging as a Coder.

**Ian Shepherd** of Seaford, East Sussex died on 22nd February 2017, aged 94. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946 in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany until he was demobbed as a Leading Aircraftman.

**Kenneth Storer** of Birmingham, West Midlands died on 20th April 2017, aged 87. He served in the General Service Corps and the Royal Engineers in the UK and Egypt from 1947 to 1949.

**Ian Toone** of Solihull, West Midlands died on 5th April 2017, aged 76. He served in the Royal Navy in the UK, Persian Gulf and Canada from 1955 to 1958, leaving as a Leading Seaman.

**Maurice Treloar** of Truro, Cornwall died on 23rd April 2017, aged 95. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1942 to 1945 in France and Germany, leaving as a Leading Aircraftman.

**Donald Whiting** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 8th May 2017, aged 96. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1946 in France, Belgium and Germany until discharged as a Corporal.



# People's Choice Award

## Simon Brown



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