

July 2018

Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



On the cover: Chevalier Elvet Davies at Hill 112 when members who had fought in Normandy in 1944 returned with staff from the Llandudno centre in October 2017.

Back page: Retired U.S. army flight surgeon Major, Dr Tom Zampieri, of the Blinded Veterans of America who is the coordinator of Project Gemini in the United States.



July 2018 | No 1094

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The Booking Office for the Brighton centre: To book accommodation at the Brighton centre telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391500. If you have care needs please first contact your Team Leader or Community Support Worker (CSW).

The Booking Office for the Llandudno centre: To book accommodation at the Llandudno centre please telephone 01492 868700 bookings and ask for the Booking Office. If you have care needs please first contact your Team Leader or CSW.

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: 0800 389 7979.

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Blind Veterans UK Calendar

Activities from the Brighton centre in 2018.

July.

Paddle Around The Pier 7th & 8th.

Race Week 15th to 21st.

Music Week 22nd to 28th.

Fishing Week 29th to 4th August.

August.

Widows' Week 12th to 18th.

Activities Week 12th to 18th.

Archery Club 19th to 25th.

Adrenaline Weekend 31st to 3rd September.

September.

Driving Week 2nd to 8th.

Fishing Week 9th to 15th.

Dance Week 23rd to 29th.

Amateur Radio Week 30th to 6th October.

October.

Technology Week 14th to 20th.

Bowling Club Fortnight 14th to 27th.

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. If you have care needs please first speak with your Team Leader or Community Support Worker.

Activities from the Llandudno centre in 2018.

July.

Adventure Week 1st.

Technology Week 8th.

Hill Walking Week 29th.

August.

Strolling Week 6th. Amateur Radio Week 6th. Creative Crafts 13th.

Water Week 19th.

September.

Recreation Taster Week 17th. Music Week 3rd. Sea Fishing Week 9th.

Cycling Week 23rd.

October.

Shooting & Archery Week 8th. Live Well 15th. Golf Week 21st.

Creative Crafts 29th.

To book Themed and Club Weeks at the Llandudno centre.

For further information or to book your place please telephone: 01492 868700. If you have care needs please first speak with your Team Leader or Community Support Worker.

From the Chairman.

Your message from Air Vice Marshal Paul Luker CB OBE AFC DL.

I will grudgingly admit that I am prone to irritability. Not just about the important things in life; I more often get grumpy about the really trivial and unimportant. The current Mrs Luker knows this well. She is a saint and tolerates my tantrums with a tranquil serenity, especially as she trails along behind me on long walks. In truth, she hasn't listened to a word I've said for the past 45 years. But even she is beginning to notice that my tolerance level is getting worse, now that I am no longer gainfully employed.

Anyone who has attended the same reunion lunches as me this year will already know this. Several times now I've recounted my disrupted rail journeys. On one occasion I had stayed in London overnight for a dinner and was travelling back the next morning. It should have been a perfect day: a cloudless, sunny sky to brighten the journey with a leisurely afternoon in prospect. South West Trains had other ideas. Well, I say South West Trains. Apparently with a change of franchise we now have to call them South Western Railways. Why? They're just as useless as the last bunch, so why do I have to learn a new name when my opinion of them hasn't changed one jot? Oops: name changing is probably not a sensible line of discussion. There might be St Dunstaners reading this.

So, back to the mainstream of my symposium. About 20 minutes into my hour long journey the train stops at a station. And remains stopped. It transpires that the headlights aren't working. After an eternity of "rebooting" the train (the exact words of the guard) they still aren't working. Some 15 minutes later we are informed that we will "go forward without the headlights". There is one glitch. The powers that be have directed that our forward progress will be at no more than 20 mph. Quite an advance from the days of Stephenson's Rocket. As far as I could determine, the only people left on the train were the driver, the guard and me — everyone else having had the sense to get off and wait for the next working train. It seemed only polite to engage one of them in conversation. Had the powers that be, I enquired, noticed that it was broad daylight or were they perchance cloistered in an underground command bunker? Ah, riposted the guard, it is for the safety of workers on the track. Why is it, I countered, that they cannot tolerate the risk of a train on a fixed line travelling at more than 20mph, when those stalwarts of the motorway traffic cone community routinely face drivers careering along at 50mph?

You get the picture, I'm sure. Not just tetchy. Not just irritable. Oh no, I turn it into a festering sore that I just can't leave alone.

Anyway, I have had a bit of a Damascene moment about irritability. Getting annoyed about things that I cannot possibly change now seems to me to be a complete waste of my considerable pent up grumpiness. However, making a fuss about something that should and can be changed — and that might actually be important — seems a much more profitable and potentially rewarding occupation. The epiphany came, oddly enough, at another Reunion lunch. One of our members was talking to Nick Caplin and me about how he is frustrated by silly little things when he goes walking. He likes to walk and finds it easier to concentrate on walking when alone. It is important to him because it gives him some independence, as well as exercise. But time and again he is thwarted by other peoples' thoughtlessness: vans and cars parked on pavements; pathways that have been left to overgrow, sidewalks closed or fenced off to allow building work, and so on. He made the point that disabled access to buildings is now so widely accepted that we take it for granted but general mobility for the blind is largely forgotten. Could we do something?

Well this is just the sort of challenge I need. Can we do something? And are there other similar irritants that we ought to crusade about? I'm sure there are. I don't think that these things happen deliberately. They tend to be a result of ignorance, neglect and — well — thoughtlessness. How do we get people, institutions and local authorities to understand the challenges of blindness in the everyday things that we do? I don't think this should be a lone crusade. It is exactly the sort of thing that suggests collaboration with other charities and agencies with shared interests. But it is something in which we at Blind Veterans UK can show some leadership and, practically, at the local level try to achieve tangible results through our community teams. I don't know what all the issues are; being fully sighted I can only imagine. You, though, will have first-hand experience and can tell us. So please do.

As in so many things, there is a down-side to irritability. In the winter of 1977/78 I volunteered to go on the TA Infantry Company Commander's course. Now I come from sound Service provenance and understand the importance of never volunteering for anything. However, I had long wanted an exchange tour to the Army Air Corps and thought this could clinch it.

So it was that I found myself selected as syndicate leader for an exercise to assess how to defend the high ground on Salisbury Plain above the village of Bratton. I believe that we called this phase of an exercise the 'appreciation'. Well come the day there was little that I appreciated about it. As we stood in about three inches of the previous night's snow, in the peculiarly penetrating damp sub-zero coldness so typical of Britain and so remote from the Alps, what I appreciated was a pint of bitter in front of a roaring fire in a Bratton pub. The strategic importance of that part of the Plain was known only to the upper echelons of the School of Infantry. What I knew was that my Royal Marine directing staff major expected me to come up with a cunning plan. He was everything one would have hoped for in a Royal Marine major: tall, barrel chested, determined, energetic, inventive, enthusiastic, and — er — enthusiastic. He had also demonstrated just a scintilla of irritability when things didn't go as he intended. I, by contrast, was just cold, as were my syndicate mates.

Basically, my task revolved around siting four archaic anti-tank support weapons known as WOMBATs: max range 1,760 yards, effective range 1,100 yards, four rounds per minute, 28 pound high explosive squash head. (Why is my head still so full of useless information and so devoid of anything useful?). I also knew that this task was all about enfilade fire from a defilade position — essentially hitting the enemy in the flank from a position protected from sight and fire. As our major left us to deep chill while he had a coffee in a steamy Landrover, I hatched a quick plan and then retired to shelter for our own hot drink. An hour or so later he returned and I outlined the masterpiece. Now we knew he had a big thing about getting down to ground level when siting weapons. As I pointed to a pristine piece of untrampled virgin snow, he asked the question, "Have you personally checked the arcs of fire?" I couldn't look him in the eye when I mumbled I had, sort of. Without a moment's hesitation he hurled himself to the ground. Unlike us, he hadn't noticed that the intended site was low lying and covered in a slightly greyer hue of snow than its surroundings, in fact identical in every respect to a very large puddle only just covered with a light dusting of the white stuff. If you have ever wondered what irritability looks like, visualise six feet of Royal Marine major, covered from head to toe in freezing mud with majestically enhanced frosty eyebrows and moustache. I should have left it there. I didn't. "Arcs OK, are they sir?"

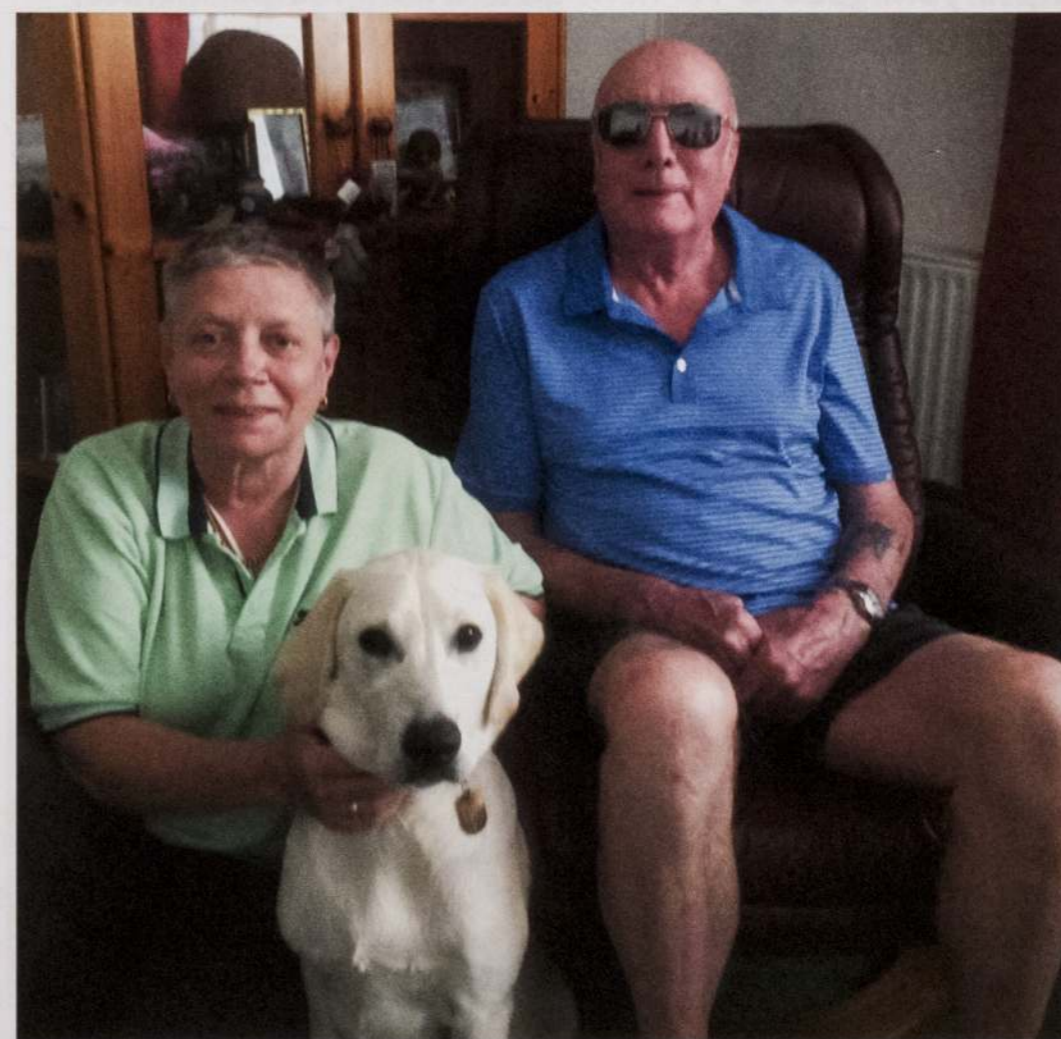
I got the Army Air Corps exchange tour. Annoyingly, there were no other volunteers.

Congratulations to Ray Peart BEM.

We are sure that you will all join us in congratulating Ray Peart on the very public recognition of his many years of service to injured service personnel and charity. Ray has been recognised in Her Majesty's Birthday Honours with the award of the British Empire Medal (Civil Division). Since he was blinded in Northern Ireland while serving with the Gloucestershire Regiment Ray has worked tirelessly to help others.

Speaking of this great accolade Ray said, "I feel really pleased and honoured to have this award and I thank everybody who made it happen for me, especially my wife Claire, family and friends. The letter arrived on 2nd May and we were sworn to secrecy until it was mentioned in the London Gazette on Saturday 9th when we bought six copies for our family."

Since the announcement Ray has been inundated with messages of congratulations from people who have admired his work for many years.



Picture:
Claire
and Ray
Peart with
Hudson.

Send your messages to Sparky and Mick as they compete in The Great Pacific Race.

At the time of going to press the Great Pacific Race's website read that the team of Sparky and Mick Dawson of Cockleshell Endeavour Pacific in their boat Bojangles, had 1991 Nautical Miles to row to the finish in Hawaii and they had so far rowed 215 NM. There was a bit of drama on board Bojangles in the last 24 hours. We received a report from Mick that all was good but they "Had a big knock down last night. Snapped two oars and Sparky may have given birth! Bojangles as resilient as ever as is Sparky." Fortunately all boats have spare oars on board. The big worry is that while on para anchor at the start of the race they went through 400 of their 1600 teabags, so let's hope they have enough to get them to Hawaii.

You can send Sparky and Mick free messages via iridium at www.messaging.iridium.com/ and use number 881623435461. You will get a reply. So please send your messages of support — or other! You can 'watch' their progress in Bojangles at <https://yb.tl/gp2018> For news go to www.greatpacificrace.com Or, please post or email messages for Sparky and Mick to the Review as we will post them to Hawaii for their arrival on dry land. Review editor, Blind Veterans UK, 12 - 14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD. Email revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk



Picture: Sparky rows Bojangles as Mick gets two hours rest.

Another Successful Volunteers' Week.

Speaking of a great week, Alice Dibblin, Volunteer Development Co-ordinator said, "Volunteers' Week took place from 1st to 7th June and it was our chance to say a huge thank you to our wonderful volunteers. This year's theme 'Volunteering for all' celebrated the huge range of people giving their time, and the many ways in which they do so. We currently have over 700 volunteers who last year dedicated 37,421 hours of their time to support our members. Whether it's visiting members in their homes, supporting staff in our offices, helping raise vital funds or one of our many other roles, every volunteer makes a valuable difference. This year we celebrated with our volunteers at events in our centres and in the community when we enjoyed quizzes, BBQs and afternoon teas (some are still to come!). All of our volunteers received a special 'Volunteer 2018' pin badge to wear with pride."

Alice sent a photo of Jenny Flory who volunteers at the Brighton Centre every Wednesday, where she has started ad-hoc hairdressing for members, and here she is pictured with a very happy Win Amos.



Picture: Win Amos and Jenny Flory at the Brighton centre.

The Review would like to thank their own very special volunteers, Dianna Adler and Andrew Cooper, who each month read the Talking Review. It would not be right to finish without also thanking David Castleton who read the Review for many years. As a former editor of the Review David always brought it to life with memories of his chums and working at St Dunstan's.

Chevalier Elvet Davies. I never thought I'd be a soldier and fight in France.

Called up in 1939, Elvet Davies, a Welsh man to his core who was living in Oxford when war broke out, wanted to join the Welsh Guards. It was not to be, but he is proud to have served in the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and the Gordon Highlanders.

"When I was 17 I moved to Oxford for work from my home town of Cemmaes, near Machynlleth in the Dovey Valley, and as I carried out my work as a baker's roundsman I watched the troops from Cowley Barracks go to the station on their way to France as part of the BEF. I saw them go to war and never thought that I would be a soldier or go to France, but I did. Six years and one month I was in the Army. I got my calling up papers to report to a place in New Inn Hall Street in Oxford. I attended that, and during the interview when they asked what part of the Forces I wanted to serve in, I said I wanted to be a Welsh Guardsman. Anyway, sometime afterwards I had my orders to report to Birmingham. I travelled from Oxford station with about a dozen other young men and in Birmingham we had some interviews and that's when I joined the Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry. We started training, it was the middle of winter, and we queued at a shed and they gave you sacking that we took to a barn and filled it with straw, and that was your mattress and pillow. We were billeted in a stable, two half doors, middle of winter. We did basic training, rifle, Bren gun, Sten gun, mortars, hand grenades, and of course drill. After about three months the adjutant interviewed you. I went up in front of him and he asked, 'How do you like the Army Davies?' I told him that I was rather disappointed as I had wanted to serve in the Welsh Guards. 'Well I can tell you,' he said, 'that you are in one of the best Regiments in the British Army.' So what could I do?"

"Anyway, after three months in basic training in Banbury we were transferred to Havant in Hampshire, and as I could drive I was put into a Transport Platoon. I was very fortunate as there was hardly any transport, just a few commandeered lorries. We marched from Havant to Southampton where we were stationed and that was the first time I was in an air raid when the Germans bombed Southampton dock area. We were quite a distance away but I could see the searchlight spotting the bomber planes. Soon after that Dunkirk came and the British troops arrived in Southampton and they were put into Shirley Park. They were in a terrible state and the sight of them stays with you."

Elvet was then transferred to Northern Ireland where he remained for three years. It was in Coleraine that he met Violet at a dance and during a walk one day he proposed and Violet accepted.

"After three years in Northern Ireland when we were stationed in a few places we were sent back to England. We were stationed between Folkestone and Dover, right on top of the cliffs, and when we looked down at the Channel we could see a lot going on and knew something big was about to take place. As we weren't down to go in the first wave we went to Aldershot where we were put on a train to Newhaven for Normandy. There was a big line of very small boats and we embarked with only our kit bag and rifle. It was heavy storms lashing the beeches and as we couldn't sail we slept on the boats, it was very tight and I tried to sleep in one of the hammocks. They kept us on exercises in the harbour and we walked for about a mile for our meals. After three days the storm ended and we sailed in dozens of these little boats and as they could get quite close to the beaches we were able to step on to the landing stages that the Royal Engineers had prepared. They were like duckboards and we didn't get wet.

"As soon as we landed in Normandy we walked, and walked, and walked with a full pack. We reached a very big chateaux where we were told that we weren't allowed to write home. The first time I wrote a letter to Violet I put too much and it was censored. We were in a holding unit and they took men from our unit when someone was killed or wounded to replace that man. The first night in this chateaux as we slept on the floor, and it was a morbid looking place, you could hear the German planes dropping bombs. We were ordered to get out and spread out over the fields opposite, and as the bombs rained down you could hear so much whistling that I thought I was gone then. It lasted for about half an hour with the bombs whistling and dropping quite near, although not on the chateaux. After a while things became quiet and we went back inside. After that we moved from place to place, always sleeping outside in the open. You would sleep anywhere.

"We ended up in the fields just outside Bayeux and you wouldn't think the war was on. It was taken by the French Canadians and it was full of them and a few English troops. Everywhere was open, shops and cafes, and I was able to have a haircut and even pay for it with English money. We moved on, moving all the time, until just three of us were left and I was to report to the Gordon

Highlanders, Harry Hardiman to the Argyll's, Ben Ford to the Highland Light Infantry. It was in Bretville, Normandy that I was made a Gordon and I was very, very proud to be in such a famous Regiment. I was the only Welshman. My first night with the Gordon's I was billeted out in the open in an orchard where I was met by a Sergeant who showed me round. He pointed and said, 'That's your vehicle.' I was initially trained on a portee and here I had an attack vehicle, very similar to a Bren gun carrier, and I'd previously trained on the same vehicle in Dover. It was very quiet and I asked the Sergeant where everyone was. 'They're out collecting the dead.' I didn't ask any more. I didn't want to know what happened to the men from the vehicle I took over, I just didn't.

"I got used to the carrier and loaded it up with ammunition and in about four or five days we were off on our first action. I didn't know then that it was Hill 112. We landed in daylight on the bottom of Hill 112 in very rough country where we came into very heavy mortar fire. The track came off the carrier and I'd never experienced that before, but the Sergeant grabbed an iron bar that was in the vehicle, jumped off, put it behind the track and got it back on, and I thought that was wonderful. Hill 112 was taken by the British. Then it was taken back by the Germans and most of the fighting was done the first time. It was the second time that I was involved. We stayed in this wooded country on the bottom of Hill 112 with heavy mortar fire going on all day long. There were several wounded but luckily, along with the gun crew, I escaped injury. When it got dark you had to move up and out of the hill. I was anti-tank, not in the rifle company, and the hill was taken by the rifle companies. We went up the hill, following the path that the other tanks had made for us until we were in about the middle of the hill. We got the gun in position and it was pitch dark and I had to withdraw my vehicle and find a place to park and camouflage it. I dug a trench beside my vehicle to put my head down and later when the Sergeant came round to see if I was ok he said, 'Davies you're not safe there you'd better dig another hole further along from the vehicle.' So I did, but I never slept as you could hear gunfire and the odd German plane coming over.

"At dawn as it was getting light there were lots of shouts of 'Stand to! Stand to!' I crawled towards the gun and in the distance at the bottom of the hill were three tanks, German tanks, ideal target. As they came into view we were given instructions to open fire. We were on target and that was it as we were using armour piercing ammunition. As I walked back from the gun with some empty shells a machine gun opened fire and bullets hit the ground right in front of me. I was unhurt and quickly got back to my vehicle.

"We were on the hill for about three days just holding it. We held it until the Royal Welch Fusiliers took over and we got off the hill in the pitch dark. There were two Gunners, the Sergeant, and me, and we tried to find the way we had come up. When the Sergeant said he thought that we were in the middle of a mine field we got out of the vehicle and walked all the way to the bottom of the hill. We got down and we were really whacked. We didn't have any food and we hadn't slept for about three days. In the morning when it was light the Sergeant said that we had to go and retrieve the vehicle as it had been made safe and he and I walked up the hill. The vehicle was OK, and as we came down the hill I prayed to God. And that was Hill 112.

"We moved from our front to take over the American front near Saint Lô where there had been a very big battle and the Americans had taken it. I remember one night we were with B Company of the Gordon's and they wanted volunteers to go on reconnaissance at night. It didn't affect me because I wasn't an infantryman. They only needed eight but they all volunteered. They blackened their faces, went off in the night, and they all arrived back safely the next morning. I met some very brave people. I had positioned my vehicle to one side of a farmhouse with another anti-tank vehicle. It was daytime and me and the other driver were sitting down, and we could hear gunfire and aeroplanes, and there was a Messerschmitt just above us and a Spitfire firing at it. This fella sitting next to me, he was shot in the face and killed by my side, just two feet away. It didn't hit the vehicle but he was killed. He didn't suffer.

"After that we moved about all over the place and we landed up at the Boccage near Caen. It was terrible country. We moved from there to the front line coming under heavy mortar fire and moaning minnies, the big mortar, and they made a terrible noise. It was frightening. I told the gun crew that we'd better bail out of there and we ended up by a ditch where we laid flat, three of us, as these moaning minnies came over. One dropped on my vehicle and it went up in flames and a big lump of shrapnel landed on my back, red hot. We got up when it was quiet and walked down the lane through an orchard where we came across a Sherman tank by a little shed. We took cover in that little shed and it was filled with big vats of raw cider. The tank was just outside and there were Welsh Guards, and a Guardsman from Wrexham spoke Welsh to me. As we sat there one of the gun crew called to me. He called me Tom as he couldn't pronounce Elvet and my first name is Thomas, 'Tom have a look at my leg.' I looked and his leg was full of shrapnel. We found the stretcher bearers and they took him away.

"While in the Boccage, the Sergeant, a regular soldier, the one who met me when I first transferred to the Gordon's and who jumped out of the vehicle to replace the track when we were on Hill 112, asked to borrow my vehicle to drive to the gun crew who were down a lane. I offered to go with him but the Sergeant insisted that he would go on his own. He went over a land mine and was killed. He was a great fella.

"Then all the fighting was on Caen, but for a while it went very quiet until the bombers came over, about 250 bombers to blanket bomb Caen, and as they passed over you could hear the bombs dropping. Next day Caen was taken by the British, I think it was mostly Welch Fusiliers. The place was flattened and the bulldozers had made a track for us to get through. I don't know how many civilians were killed. Soon after that we came to the Falaise Gap where the British were in the centre, the Americans to the right, and the Canadians and Polish to the left, when they trapped thousands of Germans, although a lot got away. Soon after that we had to go through the Falaise Gap again and that was blocked with the German tanks and vehicles, and all the animals in the fields were dead. There was one tank in a ditch and we got out of our vehicle, looked inside, and two or three dead in the tank.

"After the break through in Normandy I had to take my vehicle to the field workshop as there was a problem with it. As I went down a narrow road, who did I meet in his staff car, but General Montgomery. I gave him a nice salute and he saluted me back. After that it was sort of plane sailing as the Germans were on the run. We knew we were going towards Northern France but we didn't know where we were. I was taken ill with a terrible temperature and was transferred to a field marquee that had a Red Cross on the roof, I remember that quite well. It was getting dark when I was moved into the marquee and it was full of German prisoners, all wounded. I laid there all night and didn't sleep as they were groaning in pain. In the morning I was put in a Red Cross ambulance and taken to an airstrip near Gent where I was transferred to a Dakota that was full of wounded. I was in a stretcher right at the top and as we were flying back to Blighty one of the engines conked out, but Dakotas can fly with one engine. We landed in Kent and I made it to Worcester on the ambulance train where I was washed and cleaned up and put in a lovely bed, and I'd got over the worst by then. I laid in my bed and the next day who came through the door, Violet, I couldn't get over it, but the Red Cross had written to her. I got better and after a week's leave in Oxford with Violet I reported back to Glasgow. I was shipped

over to Ayr and at Ayr Racecourse on our way back to Normandy I met this fella who had the shrapnel in his leg; Jimmy who was one of the gun crew. He was a very small fella and he wore glasses, but he was a tough little fella. God Jimmy he was a nervous wreck. He was on the same draft as me and I said, 'Jimmy go and see the MO and explain to him.' He did and I saw Jimmy before I got on the train and he said he'd been taken off the draft. So it did help him.

"I was sent back to Normandy and landed in Belgium, somewhere near Gent. Right through Germany and we ended up on the German border at Kranenburg where we found that the Germans had burst a dam and drowned that area. We went in a DUKW, an amphibious vehicle, to the Gordon Highlanders where I was shown my new vehicle, an armoured vehicle, as I was to drive the Signal truck. It was just like a Rolls Royce and I could make my bed in it. After a while we went into the Battle of Cleve in Germany and we drove into Cleve in the dark, but when we came to a bridge there were unexploded bombs on both sides of it. They were made safe and we crossed the bridge and took the Germans by surprise. Cleve was taken and after that we were taken out of action for a while when we were sent back down to Holland, to Tilburg, where we were billeted with civilians in their houses. Then to Brussels for 48 hours.

"Back in Germany after leave as we had to cross the Rhine and the River Elbe we were issued with a sort of suit and off we went towards the Rhine. It was a very fast flowing river and I was put on a platform as it was very important for the Signal truck to get over. While we waited to cross the Rhine hundreds of gliders and paratroopers flew over and landed on the other side where we joined with them. We could see that the RAF had blasted the place with machine guns. It was a great feeling to be driving through Germany where there were just odd pockets of resistance and we carried on to Cologne and saw that it had been bombed to pieces. Now there was one more River to cross, the River Elbe in the Hamburg area. We got to the River Elbe, billeted there, and the Germans were the other side of the river, but the RAF were strafing everywhere. I crossed the River Elbe in a buffalo, an amphibious vehicle, and there was just room for my vehicle and the gun crew and I was never so scared in my life. We got this vehicle into the water and it just floated through and I was so pleased when we landed on the other side. As I looked towards the River Elbe on my right a German plane skimmed the water and dropped a bomb, but it didn't do any harm. As we drove the vehicle there were a lot of German dead, their bodies just lying in the open, and there was a German soldier and his watch was very prominent and we were certain his body was booby trapped.

"After the River Elbe we met with the odd pocket of resistance as we carried on. We got on the autobahn again where we could see the Germans landing small planes on the autobahn, spotter planes I suppose. We were making for Lubeck on the Baltic Coast and we branched off the autobahn and into a little village where we heard that the war had finished. They brought the rum out of the Quartermaster's stores and it was raw stuff, thick stuff, and all the Signal Platoon got paralytic drunk.



Picture: Elvet in the gear they were given to wear to cross the Rhine and Elbe.

"As we continued our way to Lubeck we stayed in a farmhouse and stables for the night and as we were in the stable there was a noise from the hay loft. We looked up, and all of a sudden the hay split, and two little faces looked down on us. It was two little fellas who were about 18 and they must have escaped from a concentration camp as they were wearing the striped pyjamas and they didn't have any shoes. The sight on their faces. Marvellous. They were safe. Two little lads. We gave them a drop of water and they looked haggard. After those little chaps we carried on and in one village as I stood by my vehicle two soldiers came down the road with a big tall civilian, who must have been in his 70s, and he was made to double. I don't know who he was and he looked frightened, white in the face, but he must have been somebody really important, and as he

was made to double I really felt sorry for him. He just passed us by.

"We reached Lubeck where we were stationed in the Labour Exchange near the end of the autobahn. The war was over and as we were allowed to speak to Germans we had a little booklet that explained how to behave. We became friendly with some and they did our washing in exchange for cash. Lubeck was beautiful and it was hardly bombed. After that they took about eight drivers from the Gordon's and we were transferred to the RAC and we were sent in a truck down to Nijmegen. Next we picked up six or eight troop carriers and drove them to Ostnerbrück as it was a big centre for soldiers on leave. We moved on again to a place not far from Lubeck where we had a cook and stayed in a big church room in bunk beds. There were thousands of displaced persons, Polish, Latvians etc, and we were given the job to take them to different places in Northern Germany. Then we had to transport some Highland Light Infantry to Shewrin and when we returned to pick them up we were in our trucks, and as it was by then in the Russian zone, the Russians put two fingers up and spat at us, but we didn't retaliate, we just got on with our job.

"Still no sign of being demobbed and we moved to a place near Hamburg where we were billeted in Nissan huts in one of the Stalags. We were driving trucks from this camp to Hamburg for recreation and we went to the Victory Club in Hamburg and just enjoyed ourselves. It was a wonderful feeling to be driving through Germany, as it was a miracle that we had won the war, because after Dunkirk we had nothing, we had to leave everything in France."

After six years and one month Elvet was eventually demobbed. He was reunited with Violet who had worked as a plotter during the war. They lived in Oxford and Elvet put all thoughts of the war from his mind and enjoyed life with Violet and their son Clement. In October 2017 Elvet travelled to Normandy and Hill 112 with staff from the Llandudno centre. It was only the second time that he had returned.

"I saw the trip for Normandy veterans advertised in the Review and registered for it, but then thought as there would be a lot of walking that I shouldn't go. My son spoke with staff at the Llandudno centre who assured him all would be well and I'm so pleased that I went. Everything was perfect and I've never known such a well organised trip. We weren't scheduled to go to Hill 112 but as we travelled on the coach they announced across the tannoy that we would

make a detour and when we left the coach we were on Hill 112. I couldn't believe it. Steve Boswell talked me through Hill 112 and he said, 'That is where the 15th Scottish were.' That is where I was and as I'm a bit sentimental I cried. It was very moving. Steve said that we would do a service and he asked me to lay a wreath on Hill 112. I was honoured to do so. The piper played the Scots Lament and Billy Baxter played The Last Post. I thought of everyone I was with on Hill 112, and of course the Sergeant who was killed.

"Belonging to Blind Veterans UK is wonderful. I've spent Christmas at the Llandudno centre and it's a wonderful place. I don't know what I'd do without my magnifier and I shall never forget the impression Martin Shail at the Brighton centre made on me and then meeting Billy Baxter. I want to thank the staff for their kindness during the Normandy trip and when I visit the Llandudno centre."



Picture: Our great friend Elvet Davies.

Well done to Haydn on a Hole in One.

Thank you to Haydn Callow for emailing the Review with news of his golfing success.

Haydn wrote "Yesterday (Saturday 2nd June) whilst playing golf with 20 friends at our local Golf Club I achieved, after 45 years of playing the game, my very first hole in one. This was witnessed by my three playing partners and my guide dog Webster. We were playing the 14th par 3 hole, which is 175 yards from tee to green. I was diagnosed with an eye condition when I was 52 and it has slowly deteriorated to the point that at the age of 72 I have only about 5% of central vision left. My friends look out for me whilst playing and Webster keeps me safe by not allowing me to get ahead of other players and preventing me from walking into ditches, trees etc. I understand there is a 12,500 to 1 chance of a sighted golfer making a hole in one. What must be the odds of a registered blind golfer doing it?" If you know the odds on that do write into the Review.



Picture: Haydn Callow retrieves his ball after his magnificent hole in one.

Call for member Trustees from Air Vice Marshal Paul Luker CB OBE AFC DL, Chairman of Blind Veterans UK.

Do you have what it takes to be a member Trustee of Blind Veterans UK? Have you previous experience that would benefit the Council and would you like to serve our organisation in this way? Nominations close on 20th July, so read on if you are interested.

You will probably know that we have, for a number of years now, had several member Trustees on the Council, as our constitution was revised in December 2011 to allow for three member Trustees. Colin Williamson, one of the member Trustees of Blind Veterans UK will continue as your President. He holds office ex-officio for as long as he remains President. The other two member Trustees are selected from the wider membership and will be appointed for a period of three years, following which they may be appointed for a further term of three years. No Trustee will hold office for more than two terms of three years unless specifically asked to do so by an 80% majority of the Council.

Our existing member Trustees Paul Palmer and Kerry Levins will step down in December of this year, so we are looking to fill those Trustee positions from our membership. Under the auspices of the Council, the Nominations Committee considers the suitability of all applications or nominations for people wishing to become Trustees and will put its recommendations forward to the Council for ratification. Colin as President and myself as Chairman form the Nomination Committee.

When member Trustees were first appointed, prior to the change of Constitution in 2000, there was a pool of approximately 400 war blinded St Dunstaners who were eligible. We now have well over 4,500 Members of Blind Veterans UK who are eligible and I am hoping that you will wish to either put yourselves forward or nominate others who you feel would make good Trustees.

The role of member Trustees is very important to the Council as it ensures that the Council is kept in touch with the views, wishes and feelings of the members and other beneficiaries of Blind Veterans UK and that decisions will always be made with the best interests of beneficiaries in mind. This crucial role does entail a time commitment with meetings in London and an expectation that

member Trustees will attend some Reunion lunches in an official capacity and other ad hoc charity events. Our Council meetings happen four times a year at Harcourt Street in London and it is hoped that Trustees would attend the majority of these. In addition to the Council we have five Trustee committees that report to the Council on the various areas of the charity, so if you have background experience in finance / fundraising / corporate affairs or health and social care these would be valuable attributes for sitting on any of these committees which also meet up to four times a year. Papers for the council and committee meetings are sent out in advance and we make every effort to ensure that they are accessible for member Trustees. All reasonable travel expenses are refundable so that no Trustee is out of pocket for this voluntary work.

Any member wishing to nominate either themselves, or someone else, as a Trustee should first ensure that they have the consent of the person concerned to do so and should then write to or e-mail Nick Caplin, Chief Executive, who acts as Secretary to the Nominations sub-committee, with a brief description of any relevant experience and saying why they think they would make a good member Trustee of Blind Veterans UK. If you are interested but would like to know more information please contact Sarah Gray, Executive Assistant to Nick Caplin who would be happy to assist with any queries. Contact details can be found at the bottom of this article.

I know, from my own experience, that being a Trustee of this organisation is both interesting and enjoyable and I do hope that you will want to contribute to the continuing development of the work that was started in 1915 by Sir Arthur Pearson and is now continuing to help more and more blind and vision impaired veterans.

With best wishes to you all.

Paul Luker,
Chairman.

Nick.caplin@blindveterans.org.uk

Sarah.gray@blindveterans.org.uk

Christmas centre bookings in 2018.

It seems somewhat strange to be talking about the Christmas period at the height of our summer. However, the centre bookings teams have received a number of calls about the arrangements for booking into one of the centres for Christmas and New Year.

If you would like to put your name forward to stay in the centre over either Christmas or New Year please contact your Community Support Worker on or before the 31st August. This year the centre bookings team will not be able to take requests for Christmas or New Year stays directly.

The community teams will allocate places in each centre for Christmas or New Year. Once the spaces have been allocated, members who have been successful will be notified as soon after as possible. This year we are planning to contact members from 17th September 2018.

If you are offered a place but are unable to attend please let the centre know as soon as possible because we anticipate there will be a waiting list.

From previous experience, Christmas and New Year stays can be an emotive subject. In previous years, rumours have passed around the country that members have been given a place before the application process has closed. Both the community and centre teams would like to reassure everyone that no spaces have already been allocated for Christmas or New Year stays.

I hope you all enjoy the summer and look forward to seeing you in one of the centres soon.



Ron Russell's History themed quiz.

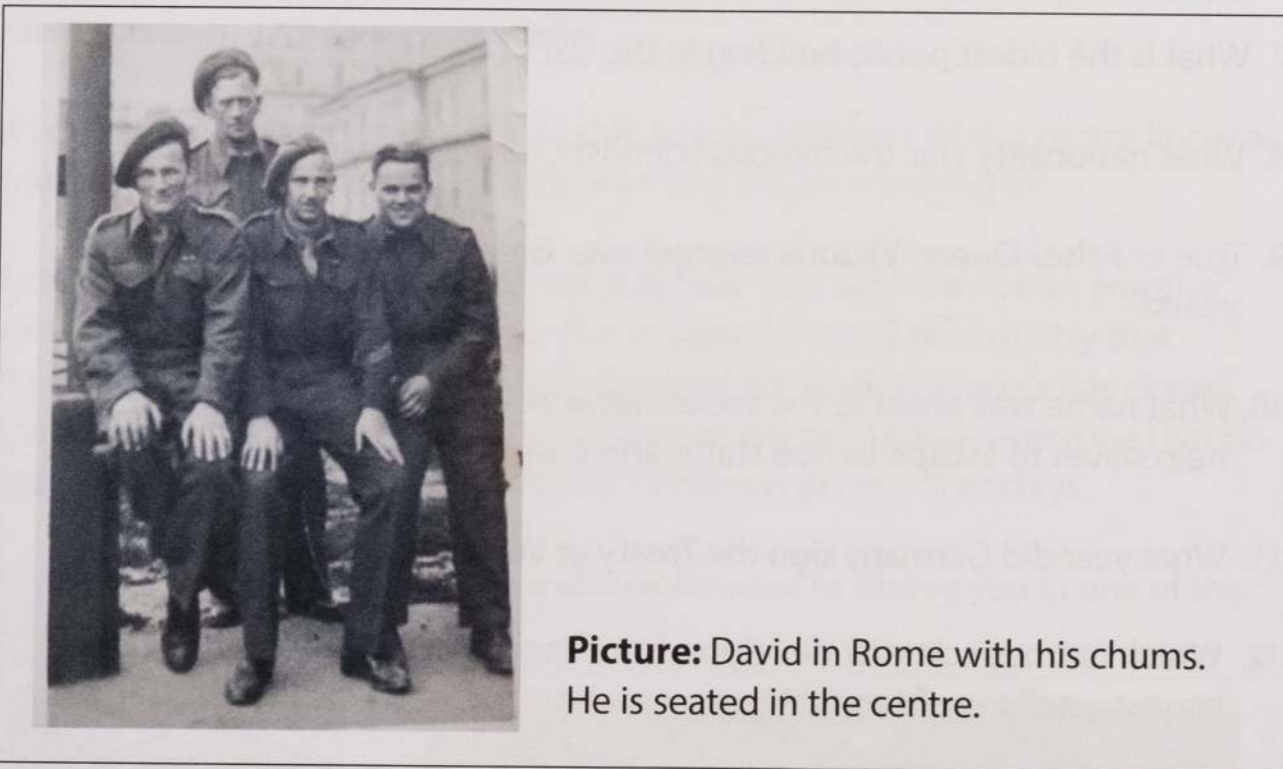
1. Who was President of the United States in 2000?
2. What was Amelia Earhart the first to do in 1928?
3. The tense relationship that occurred between the three main powers, USA, Great Britain and the USSR, following the Second World War was known as what?
4. Thomas Edison invented the first practical and commercially viable what?
5. How many times was Winston Churchill Prime Minister?
6. Who was the third wife of Henry VIII?
7. What is the oldest public building in the US?
8. What nationality was the famous scientist Charles Darwin?
9. True or False? Queen Victoria reigned over Great Britain for more than 60 years?
10. What name was given to the secret network of routes and safe houses to help slaves to escape to free states and Canada during the 19th century?
11. What year did Germany sign the Treaty of Versailles?
12. Which famous scientist developed a telescope and discovered the four largest satellites of Jupiter?
13. Which undeclared sea based war was fought between the US and the French Republic from 1798 to 1800?
14. Who assassinated Abraham Lincoln?
15. What was the largest empire in pre Columbian America?

Answers on page 44.

Happy 100th Birthday David Hughes.

David's son Peter wrote the following to mark his father's 100th birthday.

A little about David's life. He was born in Trefriw before the Great War ended in 1918. He volunteered for the Army in 1939 and was posted to the 1st Army Medical Corp, primarily because he told the recruiting department that he had successfully completed a Red Cross health and safety course. David was sent to Aldershot for his medical training and was with the Royal Army Medical Corp as a Field Orderly with the British Expeditionary Force in Dunkirk in 1940. His unit was cut off as the German army advanced and they escaped by travelling the length of France after the troops had been evacuated from the beaches. His unit was eventually evacuated from St Nazaire on the French Atlantic coast. He was then sent to Goodwood House in Sussex during the Battle of Britain and then supported the 1st Army in North Africa.



Picture: David in Rome with his chums. He is seated in the centre.

He saw action in Italy after the successful Africa campaign and after the tide turned against the Nazis after the Battle of Monte Casino he was given leave to visit Rome. He and three of his mates found the city virtually deserted, but while visiting St Peter's Square, the group were approached by a furtive individual who asked them if they wanted to meet the Pope. Suspecting skulduggery, they at first declined and my father gave the excuse, if one was needed, that he was a Methodist and his family back in the Conwy Valley would not be pleased

if they heard of his flirtation with Catholicism. However the Italian was persistent and eventually the group agreed. They were led to the upper floors of the Vatican and on opening the doors to a rather grand chamber, were greeted by the Pope seated on a throne. He beckoned them forward, spoke a few sentences in Italian and then placed his hand on their heads and blessed each of them in turn. After the war David did not speak too much about the war years as was the style of that generation. He spoke more about the excellent food offered to the troops in French villages and later in Greece (his last war posting). However he did mention the blessing, which may or may not account for his extraordinary longevity.

After the war David worked for the family coach, haulage and taxi business — Hughes Brothers, and Conwy folk may well remember the firm that was based in Central Garage, Trefriw.



Picture: David pictured with his colleagues in the family business at Butlin's in 1960.

David was married for 65 years to Gwyneth, the love of his life. He celebrated his 100th birthday on 10th June.



Picture: David with his great granddaughter Wren.

The Llandudno centre lays out the red carpet for Project Gemini 2018. By Colin Williamson, Contributing Editor.

Blind veterans from the UK and the United States gathered together at the Llandudno centre in May under the umbrella of Project Gemini, the annual exchange programme which sees members of Blind Veterans UK, the Blinded Veterans Association and St. Dunstan's South Africa come together for a week of peer to peer support, learning, camaraderie and activities and which has become a very popular event in the Blind Veterans UK calendar. Unfortunately our South African blinded veterans were unable to make the trip across this year but they will be represented in 2019 when the Project Gemini roadshow returns to the Brighton centre.

The veterans were joined by former U.S. army Colonel Rob Mazzoli, one of the leading eye surgeons in the United States and Professor Randy Kardon, currently Director of the Vision Centre of Excellence in Iowa City, who were both due to speak at the Research and Innovation Seminar, which was held in conjunction with Project Gemini later in the week. Also speaking at the seminar was retired U.S. army flight surgeon Major Tom Zampieri, an old friend of Blind Veterans UK and the coordinator of Project Gemini over in the United States.

The Blind Veterans UK contingent consisted of Steve Thomas, Hugh Megarry, Gary Tomlinson, Richard Haynes, Mick Johnson and Keith Ward with the Blinded Veterans Association (USA) represented by Scott Carruthers, Brian Harris, Ken Horn and Lawrence 'Larry' Carlin.

Unfortunately things didn't get off to a good start on Sunday morning when our American cousins missed the connection at Heathrow Airport and were forced to spend all day waiting for the next available flight to Manchester which wasn't until 20:25! All plans tend to go to the wall once the first shot is fired and this was one of those days. It was a tired bunch that arrived at the centre later that evening but they were met by the amazing Llandudno centre staff who had arranged to have food and drinks available for them when they eventually turned up.

Despite the setback it was a cheery bunch that sat down together for breakfast the following morning and started the process of getting to know their UK counterparts before we all set off for the first activity of the week,

the underground zip and cavern experience at Blaenau Ffestiniog. Talk about an adrenaline rush! The site includes three zip lines that take you over the mountain and forests, somewhat unimaginatively named Alpha, Bravo and Charlie, with the latter of the three taking you back to the start at Llechwedd Slate Cavern where the underground fun begins. Inside the cavern there's hundreds of metres of zip lines and obstacles to clamber over and around and it really is a fantastic way to spend a couple of hours or more, despite it being somewhat claustrophobic in places.



Afterwards we tucked in to good old fish and chips at nearby Betws-y-coed and then headed back to the centre to have a few beers and reminisce about the day.

On Tuesday the group visited the beautiful castle at Caernarfon and took in a tour of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers museum inside the castle walls. Our tour guide was extremely knowledgeable and often chipped in with a joke or funny anecdote to lighten up the tour. We were treated to a splendid lunch by our Llandudno centre caterers TNS whilst at the castle and I'm sure that I speak for everyone concerned when I say what a beautiful meal it was and in such a marvellous setting.

After lunch it was back on the coaches and our next stop was Lake Padarn, a glacial formed lake at Llanberis where we tried our hand at paddle boarding. Our instructor, Health and Wellbeing Team Leader Lee Evans took on a

rather demonic, almost bordering on the sadistic, delight in making sure that everyone ended up in the lake, regardless of whether we liked it or not! Lake Padarn is famous for its large shoals of Arctic Charr, a rare fish that has remained in the lake since the Ice Age and is known to thrive in cold, Arctic waters and Alpine lakes which clearly illustrates how cold the water actually was; needless to say Mr. Evans is now in my little black book.



Wednesday was an early start as we were heading to Manchester to participate in an indoor skydive experience which simulates true free-fall conditions in a vertical wind tunnel. Great fun was had by all and very exciting! After a quick lunch we then drove the short distance to Manchester University where the seminar was due to take place in the afternoon. It was a very well attended event with some really exceptional speakers, including our very own Chris Nowell and Scott Carruthers, our guest from the Blinded Veterans Association. Both spoke from the heart about the challenges experienced by the blind and vision impaired veterans' community and the barriers that we have to overcome, but also about the coping strategies that we employ in our day to day lives, and how both our organisations have helped us to triumph over these obstacles and enjoy life once again.

We were blessed with another fine sunny day on Thursday and after breakfast we hopped onboard the coaches and headed for Hover Force over in Broughton for a day of hovercraft and buggy driving. It was a great day out and the chance to get back behind the wheel was an opportunity not to be

missed. The staff at Hover Force were extremely patient and took time to instruct us on the various techniques involved in driving the hovercrafts and we really enjoyed our time there. One slight drawback though was, come spring a young man's fancy turns to BBQ, and he is overcome by a primeval instinct to plunder the freezer in search of burgers and sausages. That is exactly what happened at lunchtime at Hover Force and the resulting fayre was perhaps a little too 'well done' for some peoples tastes, myself included. In fact we thought that at one point they were electing a new pope!

In the late afternoon we relocated to a bowling alley for a few games followed by a long anticipated dinner at a nearby restaurant.

Friday was our last full day together and we celebrated by driving over to Zip World at nearby Bethesda which is Europe's fastest and longest zip line. Having been before, I was expecting the same format but I was completely blown away by the improvements that have been made over the past couple of years. It really is a first-class set-up and everything is extremely efficient, well organized and very professional. The one thing that stood out to me was how quiet everyone became once we got to the launch point; up till then everyone had been laughing and joking but once we reached the point of no return you could hear a pin drop! Regardless, everyone who took part said they had an amazing experience and would love to have done it again.



After the zip line experience it was time to head back to the centre and get ready for the Gala presentation dinner in Hogwarts. We all met in the lounge at 17:00 in our best bib and tucker for a few pre-dinner drinks and an opportunity to chat with one another about how well the week has gone and

how much we enjoyed the marvellous itinerary put together by Mark Hollis and his team. In the lounge we were entertained by two Welsh tenors ably accompanied by two of our extremely talented female staff members, Kate Pierce and Nadia Wazera.

The dinner bugle was duly sounded by our shy and retiring anchorman for the evening Mr. Billy Baxter and we were all invited to take our seats in the very impressively laid out dining room where we enjoyed a splendid meal in the presence of our CEO, Major General Nick Caplin and Isobel Caplin and other distinguished guests included Head of Research and Innovation Dr. Renata Gomes with husband Vitor Domingos and Professor Russell Foster from Oxford University who we are working alongside on a collaborative research project. Also present on the top table were our international seminar speakers and Nicky Shaw, Director West.

Our caterers, TNS, deserve great credit for the wonderful dinner and the sheer professionalism of the catering team. Well done all! A fantastic night was had by all and we enjoyed some really inspirational speeches. We were presented with some beautiful tokens of appreciation from our American guests, including a Native American Indian peace blanket from the chief of the Cherokee tribe that will hang in a prominent place in the centre. Our American veterans were presented with a beautiful Welsh slate plaque to commemorate their visit to the centre and all blind veterans received their much coveted Project Gemini bespoke coin.

After the meal we retreated to the lounge and enjoyed each other's company until time at the bar was called. During a lull in the conversation at the bar our American friend Dr. Tom Zampieri, an avid collector of body parts, was presented with a splendid Blind Veterans UK themed decorated jar containing a couple of sheep's eyeballs, preserved in salt water, to help see him through the week. What I found slightly disturbing was the high degree of enthusiasm demonstrated by Lee Evans when tasked to harvest these organs.

It was a fantastic week with some marvellous camaraderie, humour, knowledge sharing, peer to peer support and sometimes we hardy old bunch of blind veterans let our masks slip and a little bit of emotion crept in. I once again firmly believe that we have created friendships that will stand the test of time.

Many thanks must go to Mark Hollis and his team for organising the programme for the week, all of the staff at the Llandudno centre for their help, patience and professionalism, especially Lee, Rhian, Karl, Filip, Gaz, Paula, Sam and volunteer Bob McKenzie; may I also thank Louise Timms, Richard Phinbow and Georgie Byne from the Brighton centre for their invaluable support during the week, and last but certainly not least our blind veterans from the UK and the USA for their part in making it such a memorable week.

Later this year we have the reciprocal visit to the USA when we will don our Wild West outfits and head for Tucson, Arizona, to visit the historic town of Tombstone, scene of the shootout at the OK Corral, and Boot Hill cemetery, where many legendary cowboys were laid to rest. We will spend a day on a ranch like true cowpokes. Some members will also fly out to Cape Town to spend a week with our South African cousins when they will visit Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, Table Mountain and spend time in the bush on a safari.

Project Gemini; enriching blind veterans' lives through shared experiences and peer to peer support.



Picture: A very happy Project Gemini team at the end of a great life changing week.

If you knows of a better Fraternity, join it. Bruce Bairnsfather and St Dunstan's. By Mark Warby.

Captain Bruce Bairnsfather became famous during the First World War for his Fragments from France cartoons depicting life at the front, published weekly in The Bystander magazine from 1915, and as creator of the walrus-moustached character Old Bill, who grouched his way through the war with his pals Bert and Alf. His iconic cartoon, "Well, if you knows of a better 'ole, go to it," became one of the most famous cartoons of the 20th century, and more than a century after it was first published the caption is still borrowed by cartoonists today.

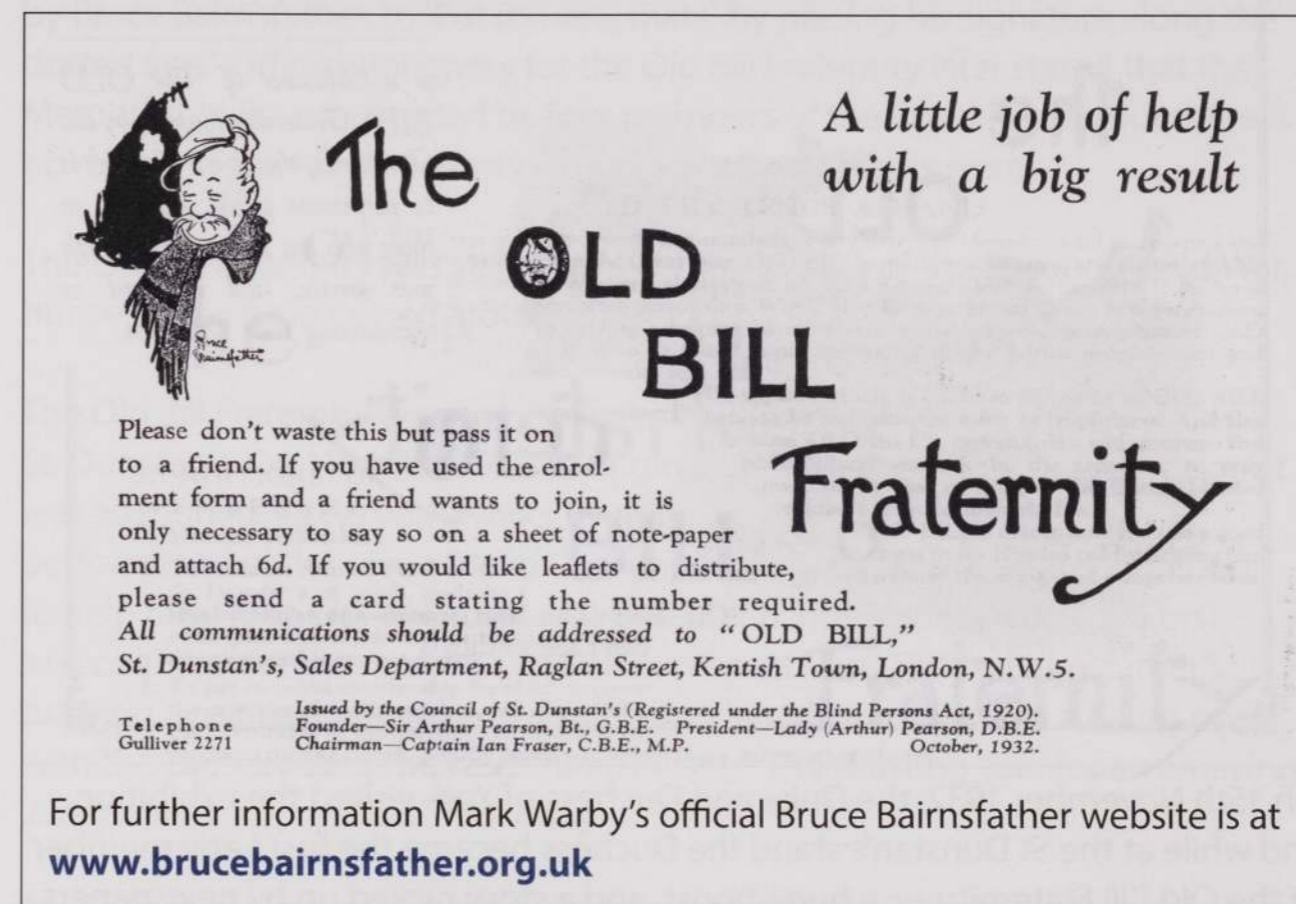
Bairnsfather's popularity was immense. Published volumes of his cartoons sold over one million copies, and his drawings were reproduced on postcards, prints, playing cards, jigsaws and other merchandise, including a whole range of Bairnsfather Ware china. Old Bill was the subject of books, plays and even films. By the end of the First World War Bairnsfather was an international celebrity, credited as 'The man who made the Empire laugh in its darkest hour,' and to those who had been through 1914-18 Old Bill was "a never-to-be-forgotten personality." Bairnsfather's career lasted through to the Second World War, and in 1932 St Dunstan's turned to the still popular cartoonist and his famous character to help boost sales of the products made by the war-blinded men in their care.

Two thousand war-blinded soldiers had been trained by St Dunstan's in professions and handicrafts, between them producing nearly 250,000 products a year, including basketwork items, wooden furniture, woollen rugs and mats, and items made from netting. Goods were sold centrally through St Dunstan's, but by the 1930's sales had slowed up and the warehouse was full.

Sales of goods made by the men of St Dunstan's were particularly good between October and December due to Armistice and pre-Christmas orders, but during the remainder of the year orders were slower and not sufficient to keep the veterans employed to capacity.

To help overcome this difficulty, St Dunstan's came up with the idea of establishing an Old Bill Fraternity, through which members could buy goods. They asked Bairnsfather to support the scheme by allowing them to use Old Bill, and the cartoonist also furnished St Dunstan's with a total of seven illustrations,

which were subsequently used on the Enrolment form, Membership certificate, in the Fraternity's logo and on other official stationery.



The OLD BILL Fraternity

A little job of help with a big result

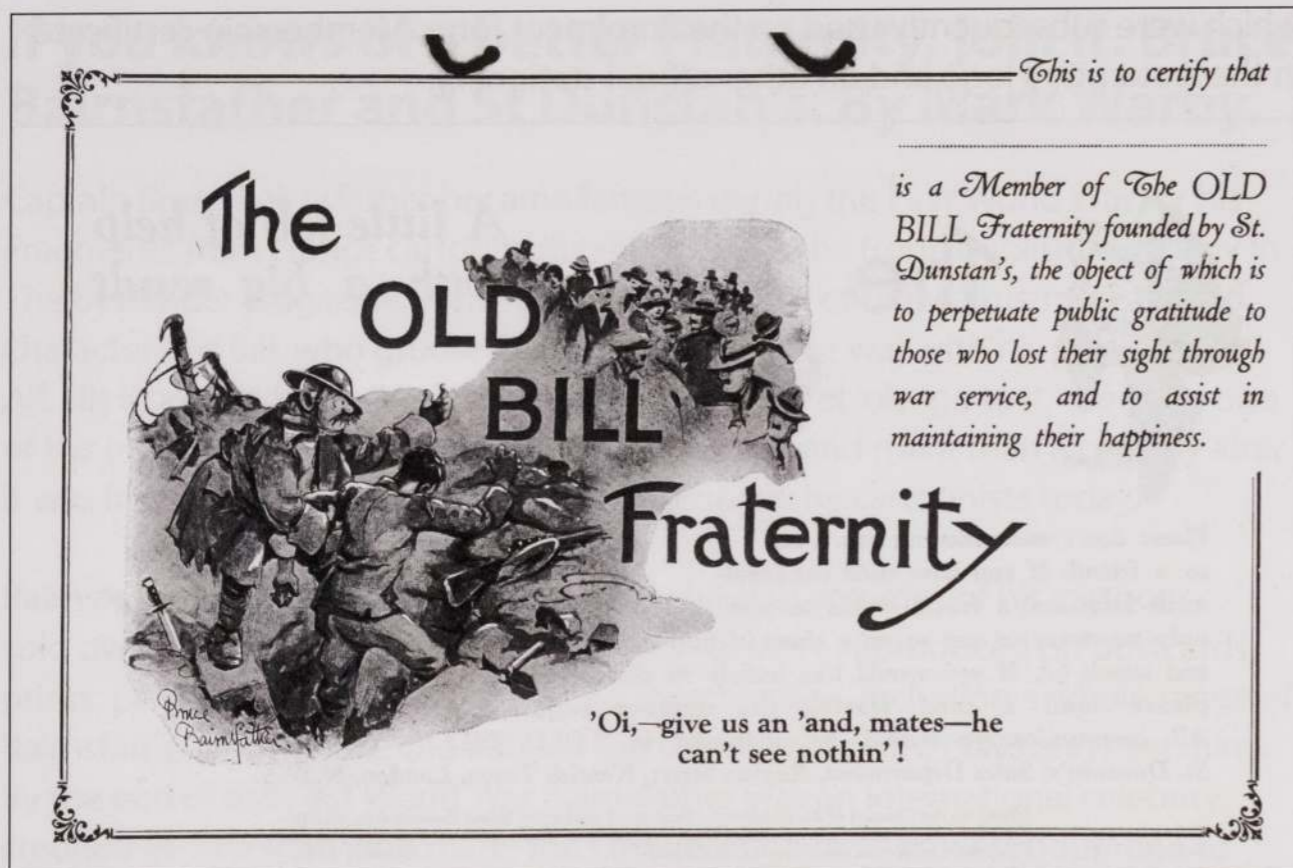
Please don't waste this but pass it on to a friend. If you have used the enrolment form and a friend wants to join, it is only necessary to say so on a sheet of note-paper and attach 6d. If you would like leaflets to distribute, please send a card stating the number required. All communications should be addressed to "OLD BILL," St. Dunstan's, Sales Department, Raglan Street, Kentish Town, London, N.W.5.

Telephone Gulliver 2271
Issued by the Council of St. Dunstan's (Registered under the Blind Persons Act, 1920).
Founder—Sir Arthur Pearson, Bt., G.B.E. President—Lady (Arthur) Pearson, D.B.E.
Chairman—Captain Ian Fraser, C.B.E., M.P. October, 1932.

For further information Mark Warby's official Bruce Bairnsfather website is at www.brucebairnsfather.org.uk

Members paid an initial 6d membership fee, and agreed to purchase goods made by war-blinded men to a minimum value of 5s during a specific month selected by St Dunstan's. Upon enrolment they were sent a Certificate of Membership, featuring a drawing of Old Bill helping a blinded soldier out of a shell-hole, calling out "'Oi, — give us an 'and, mates — he can't see nothin'!" and advised which month they had been allotted for purchasing goods. They were then sent a catalogue at the designated time, and made their purchases. The new scheme aimed to create a more constant flow for sales of goods between January and September, thus keeping the war-blinded men fully employed throughout the year.

The Old Bill Fraternity was officially launched at the opening of the sixth annual Exhibition and Sale of Goods made by War Disabled Men at the Imperial Institute in London, on 8th November 1932. The exhibition was opened by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, who became the first member of the Old Bill Fraternity. The new scheme was heavily promoted on the St Dunstan's stand, and caught the attention of the press, many of whom reported on "Old Bill's Appeal" the following day.



On 15th November 1932, the Duke and Duchess of York visited the exhibition, and while at the St Dunstan's stand the Duchess became the first Lady member of the Old Bill Fraternity — a huge boost, and a story picked up by newspapers worldwide.

Such was the response to the reports about the Duchess of York joining the Fraternity, that in December 1932 Grenville Robbins, Editor of St Dunstan's Review, was prompted to send a letter to the press. "Since it was announced that the Duchess of York had become the first woman member of the Old Bill Fraternity," he wrote, "so many enquiries have reached us regarding the Fraternity that we thought it might be worth while to put its objects on record." Robbins went on to explain that "the root idea in brief is to carry on in peace the spirit of service personified by the figure of Captain Bruce Bairnsfather's Old Bill during the war" and he outlined how the scheme worked. His letter concluded by noting that there were now 2,000 members of the Old Bill Fraternity, "but, of course, more are always wanted."

A year after the Old Bill Fraternity was launched it was again a key feature of the St Dunstan's stand at the Imperial Institute exhibition, and on this occasion attracted further Royal patronage. During a surprise visit to the exhibition on 17th November 1933, the Prince of Wales "immediately asked for an enrolment

form, and there and then paid his sixpence as the initial membership fee and responded to the invitation on the form of the cheerful figure of Old Bill drawn by Bruce Bairnsfather, to 'Put it there, mate' by placing his signature along the dotted line." Official stationery for the Old Bill Fraternity later stated that the Membership list was headed by four members of the Royal Family, but there is no record of the identity of who the other two members were.

The Old Bill Fraternity was still going at the outbreak of the Second World War, but seems to have ceased around this time.

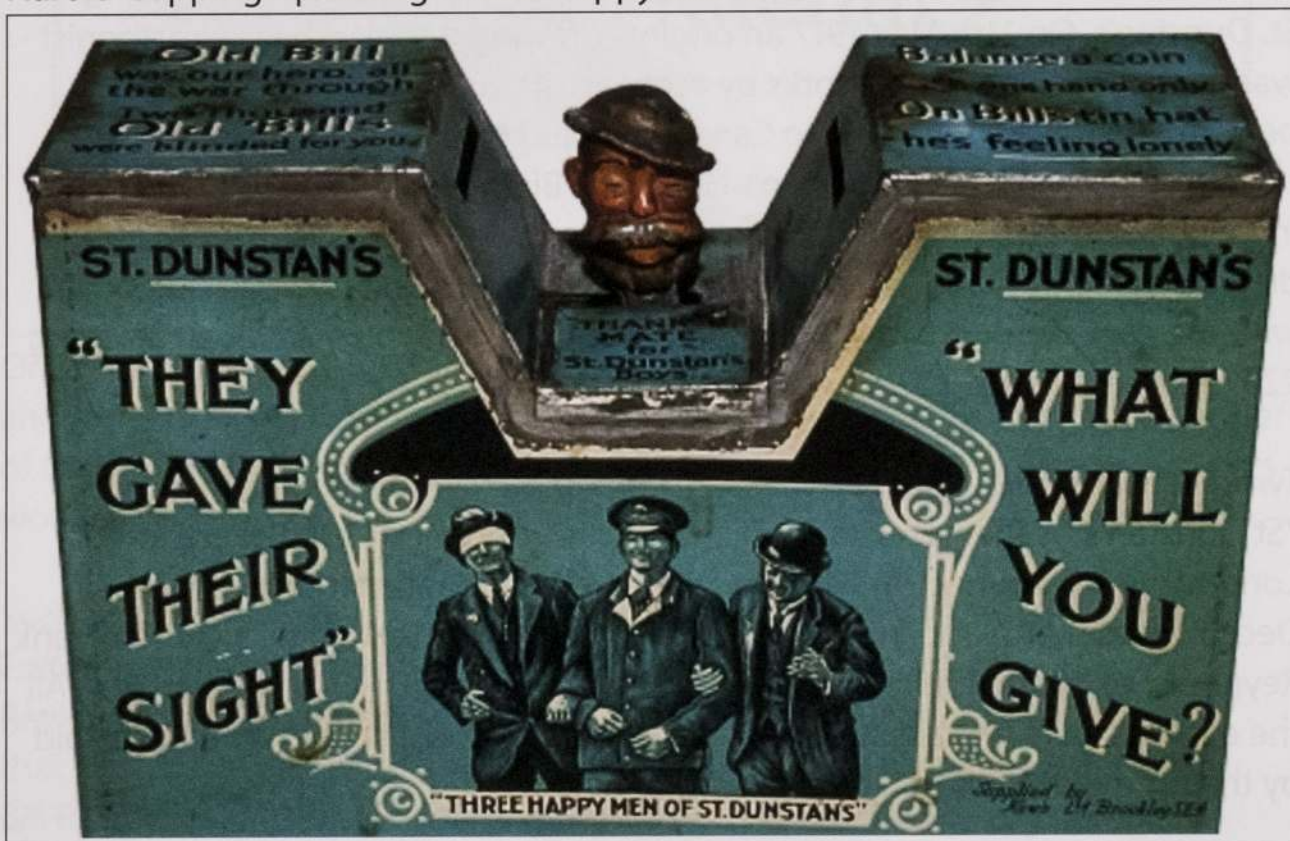
The Old Bill Fraternity was not the first instance of Bruce Bairnsfather aiding St. Dunstan's. On 11th May 1917 an original drawing donated by the cartoonist was auctioned, along with works by other artists, at a charity matinee performance of the revue 'Hello Canada,' at His Majesty's Theatre in London, to help raise funds for St Dunstan's Hostel for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors. In recognition of the recent Canadian success at Vimy Ridge, Bairnsfather's drawing was titled "Vimy!" and depicted a Canadian soldier in a striking pose, with the caption "And the next thing, Please." The drawing sold for an amazing 225 guineas (approx. £22,800 today).

Two years later, Bruce Bairnsfather was among the contributors to a 'St Dunstan's Academy' exhibition at the Windsor Gallery, 33b Baker Street, London, which opened on 24th November 1919 and ran through to mid-December. Other black and white artists who contributed works included Frank Reynolds, W Heath Robinson, H M Bateman and Bernard Partridge, and Poy. All the exhibits were on sale, to aid the St Dunstan's Fund, and any works not sold by the time the exhibition closed were to be disposed of at auction.

In 1921, a Cricketers Fund for St Dunstan's was formed, and clubs throughout the UK were asked to assist in raising funds. A 'Test Match Souvenir' was published to accompany the appeal, featuring articles by some of the 'greats' of the game. Priced at one shilling, the booklet was illustrated with photographs, and specially drawn cartoons by famous artists including Bruce Bairnsfather, Frank Reynolds, Poy, GL Stampa and Leo Cheney.

When Sir Arthur Pearson died in December 1921, Bairnsfather dedicated a drawing to the founder of St Dunstan's. 'The Victory Supreme' was published in The Bystander on 28th December 1921.

From the 1920's Bairnsfather's famous character appeared on collecting tins, encouraging the public to 'Support Old Bill's Appeal for the war blinded men of St Dunstan's' with the slogan 'They Gave Their Sight — What Will You Give?' The tins featured Old Bill's head on a pivot inset in the top of the tin, flanked by the rhyme 'Old Bill was our hero, all the war through — Two thousand Old Bill's were blinded for you' — 'Balance a coin with one hand only, On Old Bill's tin hat — he's feeling lonely.' When a coin was placed as directed, Old Bill's head would rock and the money would drop through one of the slots either side of him. Donations were acknowledged Old Bill's message 'Thank 'E, Mate for St Dunstan's Boys.' The collecting tins also incorporated a reproduction of Harold Copping's painting 'Three Happy Men of St Dunstan's'.



Another St Dunstan's collecting box, in use from 1926, was made of wood, and featured 'Old Bill's Magic Drawer.' Above a small drawer in the front of the box was a cut-out of Old Bill saying 'Where did that one go to?' Coins placed in the drawer would drop into the box when this was shut, by means of a false drawer bottom.

Bruce Bairnsfather died in 1959 aged 72. His support for St Dunstan's is largely forgotten today, other than among enthusiasts of his work. In July 2011, four of his original drawings for the Old Bill Fraternity turned up at auction — sadly, neither the vendor or auction house seem to have been aware of their original purpose or how they had helped the war-blinded men of St Dunstan's.

Darren Blanks speaks about the importance of Accept, Adjust and Achieve.

Growing up in West Cumbria, where the nuclear power plant Sellafield was the main employer, 17 year old Darren Blanks joined the Army in 2004 to give himself the career he wanted and the opportunity to see the world.

Speaking to the Review after one of his daily training runs Darren said, "I joined the Royal Armoured Corps and then served with the King's Royal Hussars, a Challenger II tank regiment based in Tidworth. It made sense to join the King's Royal Hussars as where I live I drove tractors from a young age, and really that's as close as you can get to driving a tank. It has big wheels, big tracks, makes a lot of noise, drives through fields and gets dirty. That may sound stupid but that's the similarity."

After training Darren went to Regiment and his first overseas tour. "I went to Regiment in 2005 and as soon as I did they needed troopers to go out to Iraq on Op Tellick 6. I was trained up in Lid down in Kent and within three months of joining the Regiment was sent out to Iraq, and then again in 2007 on Op Tellick 10. The first time I went to Iraq for Op Tellick 6, and I was only 18, I was a bit scared and nervous. When I got out there I wasn't based with tanks, I was with my Regiment, but we were more of a special unit assigned to drive a high ranking officer to meetings. That was a bit of what you would call a cushty job as we went to the Lithuanian camps and the Italian camps, and we were always in the American camps where we ate the best food. So, a bit of an easy job, and Tellick 6 was probably one of the easiest Tellicks, whereas Tellick 10 was the total opposite. During Tellick 10 I was a Warrior driver, constantly in Basra Palace, constantly with mortars coming in, so it went from one extreme to the other, as the second tour was probably the most violent and brutal of the Tellick tours. I quickly learnt that you have to trust the lads you work with, and the main thing in the Army is team work and trust, and believing that everyone can do the job."

Since joining Blind Veterans UK Darren has continued that team work and he is now one of the regional representatives for the charity's working age members to help with any queries they may have. From the early days as a member of Blind Veterans UK in 2011 Darren embraced the training that was open to him and he learnt from the examples set by those who went before him.

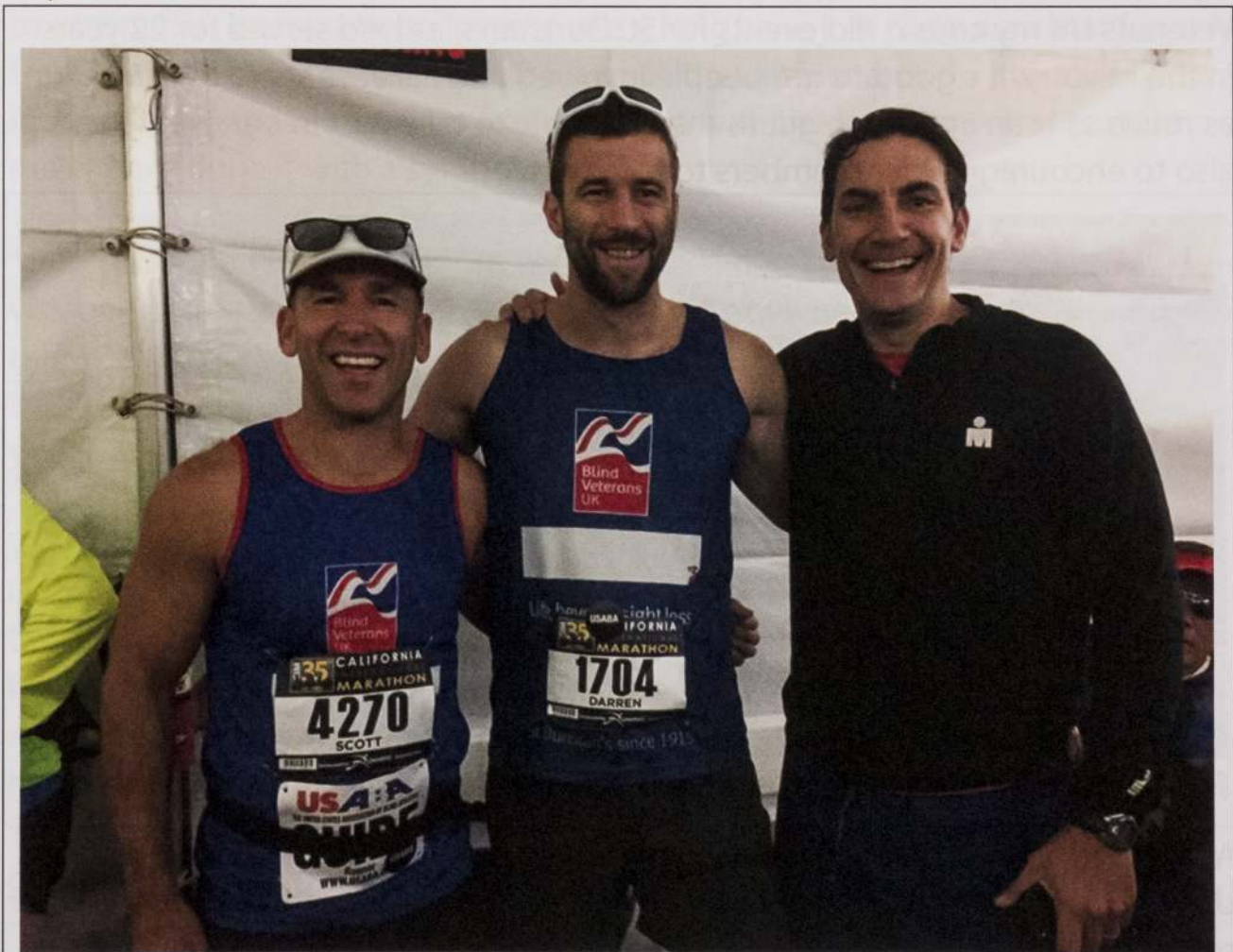
"Gaye Atkins, the IT trainer at the Sheffield centre at the time I joined the charity told me about Billy Baxter, Ray Hazan, Colin Williamson, Kev Alderton and Simon Brown and mentioned their achievements. Once you hear what people have done and that they've obviously gone through the hard times as well, and yet they've achieved so much you just think, 'Well perhaps I can do that too.' So just hearing what other members have achieved, whether their sight's worse than yours, or better than yours, it doesn't really matter, it's what they've achieved despite their sight loss. It's that realisation that we have two things in common — we all served and we all lost our sight in one way or another. We also all have our backstories. I live in the North of England in the middle of nowhere and people come from the cities but we all have those factors in common and that is what brings us together."

When Darren realised he could still take part in sporting events he embraced the opportunity, also putting his newly learnt IT and social media skills to good use. "In 2013 Blind Veterans UK gave me the opportunity to take part in the London Marathon and since then I've completed other marathons and half marathons and the 100K Challenge. I've always run, I did cross country and fell running, and was junior cross country champion in the Army for under 18s, and it's great that I can still run, but now with a sighted guide. Cumbria possibly has the best fell runners in the world and when I need a guide to run with I use social media and at least five people will respond to go out running.



Picture: Darren Blanks, right, and guide power through the 100K Challenge in the rain. To find out more about the 100K go to www.blindveterans.org.uk

"A really exciting development came through Project Gemini at the Brighton centre when Cathy Champion, one of the Americans, saw how committed I was to running. She told the organisers of the California International Marathon and I was invited to take part in 2017. Glynis Gillam, [Working Age Member Case Manager], and I worked together to put everything in place and it was an honour to compete with so many great athletes, and to achieve a personal best of three hours and 32 minutes and come in sixth place out of 51 blind runners. It's an annual competitive marathon and blind runners are classed as athletes, not just competitors. There's nothing like that in this country for blind runners. In most marathons there's a category for wheel chair runners and runners who are aged over 60, but there's not one marathon in this country where blind runners are recognised as athletes. The fastest runner was Chas Davis, an American guy whose time was two hours and 31 minutes — and that's inspirational."



Picture: Darren Blanks, centre, with running guides in the 2017 California Marathon that he completed in a personal best of three hours and 32 minutes and came in sixth place out of 51 blind runners.

On 16th April Darren ran in this year's Boston Marathon, which he completed in a new personal best of three hours and 28 minutes despite torrential rain and 40 mph winds for the duration of the race. In America he caught up with friends from Project Gemini, friends from the 2017 California Marathon, made new running friends, was a guest at a Boston Red Sox baseball game and stayed with great hosts during his stay. Blind Veterans UK has become known across America because of Project Gemini and Darren and his two guide runners wore Blind Veterans UK vests. Darren hopes that in the future more members will take part and his goal is to run in the New York Marathon.

Social media is something that Darren embraced during his training at the Sheffield centre. "The IT training that I received from Gaye Atkins was key to independence and to get sponsorship for events and to encourage people to sign up to take part and support the charity. Before I became a member of Blind Veterans UK my cousin did events for St. Dunstan's, as he'd served for 22 years in the military. It's good to get people involved and I always share the 100K run as much as I can and try to get as many people to take part in our events and also to encourage older members to take part."



Picture: Darren Blanks, front, skis as his guide directs him.

Another sport that helped Darren's recovery was skiing. "I joined Blind Veterans UK's Ski Club for my third year of skiing in Italy and this year the biggest number of members took part, and everyone who was there had a great week as the skiing was amazing. Back in 2016 the biggest initial challenge was to learn to trust the guide and as at first I didn't I kept falling when I shouldn't. Gerry Jones and Sparky spoke to me, saying that the guides are 100% perfect at their job, and after that I put my trust in the guide and advanced quite quickly and did

red runs and then black runs. It's important to take part in activities like this as it's good to hear what people get up to and we all encourage each other. One of the best things Blind Veterans UK can give you is to meet up with other members as you can hear their stories, or read about them in the Review.

"Blind Veterans UK has Accept, Adjust and Achieve and we all go through that at our own speed. When I came back from that first ski trip in January 2016 I tried to travel independently from Gatwick airport to Cumbria, pulling a suitcase, carrying a bag, and using just a symbol cane to show that I had sight loss. No one recognised the symbol cane and people kept crashing into me. Once I got home I phoned Elizabeth Dodds, my then Welfare Officer, and asked for proper long cane training. I hadn't done it before as I was maybe a bit embarrassed as I'm such a young guy and thought I didn't need a long cane and didn't want to be seen using one. I had to swallow my pride as I was being stubborn. The need to accept that it was time to learn to use a long cane just clicked on that journey from Gatwick to Cumbria and that made all the difference. Now I've travelled independently to Sacramento from Cumbria with the long cane, but I would never have done it with a symbol cane.

"Once I stopped being stubborn and accepted that I was going to live as a vision impaired person, and that I couldn't get anywhere without a proper cane, things improved. There are other members out there who say they don't need this training, they don't need that training, but until you actually accept where you are on your journey you can't move on."

When asked his advice to new members Darren said, "You're going to have to learn to live with sight loss as a vision impaired person and different people take different times to work through accept, adjust and achieve. While you're finding yourself try everything that the charity has to offer and speak to other members and to staff. Remember that your family has to adjust too. The charity has so much to offer and you don't have to be a crazy fitness person like me. There's photography, artwork, amateur radio, so much that there's something out there for everyone. And as we know from the Brighton Radio Play Society — if it doesn't exist they will work with you to create it."

Noticeboard.

Dates for your diary and useful information.

Get your tax right.

Did you know that RNIB has a tax team that supports blind and partially sighted people with tax, tax credits and HMRC issues across the UK? The team, based in Liverpool, is supported by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC). Mark Rogerson, Project Assistant, told us how his team makes a difference to the lives of blind and partially sighted people.

We make tax and HMRC issues clearer. We help people to claim extra tax allowances, such as Blind Person's Allowance and Marriage Allowance, which can reduce your tax bill and these can be transferred and backdated. Our tax service is free, confidential and available to people with sight loss, regardless of their age or income. We can arrange help with form filling, completing your tax return, claiming a tax refund and resolving problems. We also advise customers about which products and building work are VAT-free, saving them more money.

Since the service started in 2011, we've helped over 34,000 people, identified £3 million in extra tax allowances and tax credits. We make sure people feel supported. We have access to a dedicated team within HMRC for people who need extra help with their tax and tax credits. We help customers who are unable to speak to HMRC directly because of hearing loss, dementia or living in a care home. We also have a factsheet in different formats with information on tax allowances and useful contacts.

We help customers to use HMRC's online services. HMRC have introduced the Personal Tax Account, which allows you to manage your affairs with HMRC online, similar to an online bank account, but for tax. But if you can't get online or the issue is more complex, we can help arrange for an adviser at HMRC to come to your home or meet you at a local venue. It's about making sure blind and partially sighted people are supported in all their tax-related queries.

Tracy was referred to the tax advice team for advice on her tax. "The team helped me to claim the Blind Person's Allowance and the Marriage Allowance. It made a big difference having RNIB as part of the call to HMRC and support me with the claim. I've saved £678 in tax this year and I received a tax refund of almost £2,000 which was a lovely surprise."

You can contact RNIB's tax team by telephone on 0345 330 4897, or email tax@rnib.org.uk or to find out more about the service visit rnib.org.uk/tax

Pamper week Monday 17th to Friday 21st September at the Brighton centre.

The pamper week in the Brighton centre has been running for a few years now. The week was started by blind veteran Iain Millard who is the therapist at Ovingdean as a way of giving back to the charity. The week started as a themed week with the proceeds of any treatments being donated to fundraising. Two years ago it was changed from a themed week to a fundraising week so that more people could take advantage of the treatments on offer.

There are a number of our members and volunteers who are qualified therapists who also join us for the week offering treatments such as Indian head massages, head, shoulder and leg massages, balabachi or a facial to name but a few.

If you want to join us for the week you just need to book in as a holiday maker. During your week you can still take full advantage of the facilities at the centre but with the added benefit of (for a small charge) being pampered for the week. Telephone bookings on 01273 391500.

Race Night at the Brighton centre.

Come and enjoy Quiz Master Ron Russell's horse race night, that's an indoor parlour derby, at the Brighton centre on Tuesday July 17th at 7.30pm.

Review format changes.

If you would like to change the format you receive the Review in please phone 020 7616 8367 and leave a message with your name, postcode and format preference. Or email revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk The Review is also available on USB, MP3CD (not audio), by email, Braille and on Sonata.

Blind Veterans UK's Masonic Group Cymru.

Blind Veterans UK's Masonic group will meet at the Llandudno centre for the annual week of fun, laughter and Freemasonry.

We visit a local lodge where we are hosted by them and in return we host them at our group dinner at the end of the week. There will also be other activities put on during our stay.

If you are a mason and would like to join with us at the Llandudno centre during the dates of Sunday 10th to Saturday 16th February 2019 then please contact me on the following details no later than the 12th December 2018.

W.Bro Clive Jones P.P.P..G.Purst

07854 800256

Dragoneye67@sky.com

Answers to Ron Russell's Quiz from page 23.

1. Bill Clinton.
2. Fly across the Atlantic.
3. The Cold War.
4. Incandescent light bulbs.
5. Twice.
6. Jane Seymour.
7. The Palace of Governors.
8. English.
9. True.
10. The underground railroad.
11. 1919.
12. Galileo Galilei.
13. Quasi war (the Franco American Naval).
14. John Wilkes Booth.
15. The Inca Empire.

Family News.

Congratulations to:

Birthdays.

George Cooper who celebrated his 104th birthday on 24th July.

John Duff who celebrated his 101st birthday on 19th July.

Sidney Wilkins who celebrated his 100th birthday on 10th July.

Anniversaries.

Diamond 75 years.

Arthur & Peggy Wignall of Llandudno, Gwynedd on 1st July.

Platinum 70 years married.

Joe & Joan Waterman of Christchurch, Dorset on 10th July.

Eric & Elizabeth Carter of Ashby De La Zouch, Leicestershire on 30th July.

Gordon & Elsie Munro of Bognor Regis, West Sussex on 31st July.

Blue Sapphire 65 years married.

Albert & Hilda Farrington of Middlewich, Cheshire on 4th July.

Gerald & June Burrige of Borehamwood, Hertfordshire on 18th July.

Fred & Sylvia Whitworth of Burnley, Lancashire on 18th July.

Reg & Madge Florence of Worthing, West Sussex on 25th July.

Peter & Sheila Fold of Bexhill On Sea, East Sussex on 25th July.

John & June Norton of Stafford, Staffordshire on 25th July.

Ronald & Doreen Woan of Liverpool, Merseyside on 25th July.

Diamond Yellow 60 years married.

Alan & Betty Johnson of Oswestry, Shropshire on 5th July.

Roy & Edith Lakin of Stone, Staffordshire on 19th July.

Brian & Pat Stansbie of Burton On Trent, Staffordshire on 19th July.

Nigel & Marion Adams of Grantham, Lincolnshire on 26th July.

Ruby 40 years married.

Edward & Jane Bebbington of Cockermouth, Cumbria on 22nd July.

Pearl 30 years married.

Malcolm & Ann Wilding of Rotherham, South Yorkshire on 2nd July.

Silver 25 years married.

Stephen & Pippa Parnell of Brackley, Northamptonshire on 3rd July.

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.

Margaret Fuller who died on 1st March 2018. She was the wife of Leslie Fuller.

Anne Golding who died on 8th April 2018. She was the wife of Michael Golding.

Yvonne Hall who died on 7th September 2017. She was the widow of the late Arthur Hall.

Jennifer Meikle who died on 21st May 2018. She was the wife of John Meikle.

June Metcalfe who died on 12th June 2018. She was the spouse of Anthony Metcalfe.

Connie Morris who died on 17th March 2018. She was the wife of Sidney Morris.

Sarah Moseley who died on 31st May 2018. She was the spouse of Frank Moseley.

June Prior who died on 3rd August 2017. She was the widow of the late John Prior.

Joyce Robinson who died on 20th January 2018. She was the spouse of Peter Robinson.

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.

James Abel of Kirkcaldy, Fife died on 19th May 2018, aged 88. From 1947 to 1951 he served in the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders in Burma, Malaya and Singapore.

Brian Alstead of Abbeydale, Gloucester died on 1st May 2018, aged 87. From 1949 to 1951 he served in the Royal Engineers.

Cecil Atkinson of Wallasey, Merseyside died on 17th May 2018, aged 86. From 1950 to 1955 he served in the South Lancashire Regiment in the UK, Italy and Korea.

Gordon Beddows of Walsall, West Midlands died on 20th May 2018, aged 94. He served as an Able Seaman in the Royal Navy from 1943 to 1946 in South Africa, India and England.

Margaret Berry née Backinsell of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 3rd December 2017, aged 96. From 1941 to 1946 she served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in the UK.

Frank Booth of Bolton, Lancashire died on 10th June 2018, aged 95. From 1941 to 1946 he served in the Royal Air Force as a Leading Aircraftman in France, Holland, Belgium and Germany.

Bernard Brooks of Ilkeston, Derbyshire died on 1st June 2018, aged 91. From 1943 to 1947 he served in the Royal Navy in France, the Mediterranean and Pacific Oceans.

William 'Bill' Brown of Rhyl, Clwyd died on 1st June 2018, aged 98. From 1940 to 1945 he served in the Home Guard in Scotland.

Alan Coburn of Alderley Edge, Cheshire died on 31st May 2018, aged 101. From 1940 to 1946 he served as a Flying Officer in the RAF in the UK and Middle East.

Paul Collins of Lewes, East Sussex died on 18th May 2018, aged 67. From 1970 to 1975 he served as an LAC in the UK and Hong Kong in the RAF.

James Dowling of Bootle, Merseyside died on 1st June 2017, aged 93. From 1941 to 1946 he served in the Welch Regiment, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and Cheshire Regiment in North Africa, Sicily and Italy.

John Earnshaw of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 1st February 2018, aged 87. He served as a Sergeant in the King's Royal Rifle Corps from 1948 to 1959, moving to the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers when he served as a Corporal until 1970. He served in Palestine, Malaya, Egypt, North Africa, the Middle East, Germany and Northern Ireland.

David 'Glyn' Ellis of Llangollen, Clwyd died on 3rd June 2018, aged 93. From 1942 to 1946 he served in the Royal Welsh Fusiliers and the Suffolk Regiment in the UK, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Egypt and Palestine.

Peter Ford of Hove, East Sussex died on 30th May 2018, aged 85. From 1948 to 1970 he served in the Royal Navy in the Far East, South Atlantic, Mediterranean, Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean, South America, the USA and UK, retiring as a Lieutenant.

Harry 'Ezra' Gascoyne of Chesterfield, Derbyshire died on 23rd February 2018, aged 74. He served in the Sherwood Foresters in Germany, England and Cyprus from 1963 to 1970.

Arthur Goodwin of Wallasey, Merseyside died on 3rd June 2018, aged 93. He served in the Royal Engineers from 1943 to 1944.

Gordon Howells of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 8th June 2018, aged 91. From 1946 to 1948 he served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Singapore.

Edna Jackson née Tyler of Flint, Clwyd died on 20th May 2018, aged 98. From 1941 to 1945 she served as an LACW in the Women's Royal Air Force in England.

Ronald Jackson of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 24th May 2018, aged 88. He served in the Royal Army Medical Corps in the UK, Egypt and Ethiopia from 1948 to 1950, discharging as a Corporal.

Geoffrey Johnson of Salisbury, Wiltshire died on 4th June 2018, aged 87. From 1948 to 1954 he served as a Cook in the Royal Navy. He then joined the Royal Air Force in 1958 and served as a Cook until 1967.

Patrick Kelly of Sheffield, South Yorkshire died on 5th June 2018, aged 91. He served in the General Service Corps in 1945 in England and Wales.

Geoffrey Kerr of Taunton, Somerset died on 2nd June 2018, aged 87. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1949 to 1952, discharging as a Sergeant.

Peter Labram of Bristol died on 1st January 2018, aged 85. He served in the Royal Air Force from 1951 to 1954.

Denis Lewis of Taunton, Somerset died on 1st June 2018, aged 91. From 1946 to 1948 he served in the Royal Artillery in the UK and Germany.

Harry 'Tony' Lloyd of Wrexham, Clwyd died on 13th May 2018, aged 89. He served as an LAC in the RAF in the Canal Zone in Egypt from 1950 to 1952.

William 'Bill' McGlasson of Poole, Dorset died on 22nd May 2018, aged 81. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps from 1957 to 1961.

Desmond 'Des' Page of Maidstone, Kent died on 15th May 2018, aged 94. From 1942 to 1947 he served in Holland (Arnhem) and Germany with the Royal Tank Regiment and then the Army Air Corps.

James Philipson of Colne, Lancashire died on 6th May 2018, aged 87. From 1949 to 1955 he served in the Royal Engineers in the UK.

John Powell of Woodingdean, East Sussex died on 23rd May 2018, aged 91. From 1945 to 1959 he served in the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment in South East Asia and the Middle East.

Mary Pratt née Warburton of Leicester, Leicestershire died on 20th May 2018, aged 94. From 1943 to 1945 she served as a Driver in the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Frank Ramsden of Redruth, Cornwall died on 25th May 2018, aged 98. From 1940 to 1946 he served in the Royal Artillery and Royal Pioneer Corps in the UK, India and Singapore until demobilised as a Sergeant.

Robert 'Bob' Reynolds of Wolverhampton, West Midlands died in 2018, aged 98. From 1939 to 1946 he served in the RAF in the UK and West Africa.

John Ricketts of Dartford, Kent died on 17th February 2018, aged 84. From 1952 to 1957 he served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps in Germany.

Albert 'Robbie' Roberts of Portslade, East Sussex died on 28th May 2018, aged 93. From 1943 to 1946 he served in the Royal Artillery in North Africa, Italy, Palestine, Egypt, Middle East, Syria and Lebanon, demobilising as a Sergeant.

David Roberts of Tunbridge Wells, Kent died on 5th June 2018, aged 89. From 1947 to 1949 he served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in England.

Frederick Roberts of Lincoln, Lincolnshire died on 2nd May 2018, aged 96. He served as a Petty Officer in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm from 1942 to 1946 in numerous ships and in East Africa.

Netta Rogers of Radstock, Somerset died on 12th May 2018, aged 91. She served in the Women's Royal Naval Service from 1949 to 1953.

William 'Bill' Shields-Appleton of Frinton On Sea, Essex died on 15th May 2018, aged 90. From 1945 to 1953 he served in the Grenadier Guards in Germany, Palestine and Libya.

Joyce Simnett née Reed of Bristol died on 2nd May 2018, aged 97. From 1942 to 1945 she served in England as a Corporal in the Auxiliary Territorial Service.

Anthony Smith of Southampton, Hampshire died on 24th May 2018, aged 81. From 1955 to 1958 he served in the RAF Bomb Disposal Squadron.

Ronald 'Ron' Stevens of Ashford, Middlesex died on 17th May 2018, aged 95. From 1936 to 1942 he served in the Royal Army Service Corps and the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in North Africa, Italy, Europe and Korea, discharging as a Staff Sergeant.

Edward Stewart of Jarrow, Tyne And Wear died on 16th May 2018, aged 90. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1946 to 1948 in the UK and Libya.

Ivan Thompson of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne and Wear died on 6th June 2018, aged 92. From 1946 to 1948 he served in the Royal Navy Fleet Air Arm as a Naval Airman 2nd Class.

Sarah 'Jean' Thornhill née Prior of Stockton On Tees, Cleveland died on 27th May 2018, aged 95. From 1941 to 1946 she served in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force as a Leading Aircraftwoman in East Anglia with Bomber Command 3.

Malcolm Tucker of Norwich, Norfolk died on 30th May 2018, aged 91. He served as a Captain in the Army Catering Corps in the UK from 1946 to 1948.

Oliver 'Ollie' Wallace of Sunderland, Tyne and Wear died on 3rd May 2018, aged 83. He served in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps from 1953 to 1958.

Frank Walsh of Blackburn, Lancashire died on 26th May 2018, aged 93. From 1942 to 1947 he served in the RAF in the UK, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany, discharging as a Leading Aircraftman.

Alan Warman of Brackley, Northamptonshire died on 17th May 2018, aged 85. From 1951 to 1953 he served as an LAC in the RAF in the UK.

Amy Watts of Bexhill On Sea, East Sussex died on 31st May 2018, aged 95. From 1942 to 1946 she served in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in England.

Cyril 'Dennis' Williams of Eastbourne, East Sussex died on 19th May 2018, aged 98. From 1940 to 1946 he served in the Royal Air Force in the UK, Egypt, Libya, France and Germany until demobilised as a Corporal.

Reginald 'Reg' Wiseman of Harpenden, Hertfordshire died on 5th June 2018, aged 87. He served in the King's Royal Hussars and the Royal Tank Regiment from 1949 to 1954 in the UK and Germany.

