

November 2018

# Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



## Victory Over Blindness

We commemorate  
100 years since the  
Armistice was signed





**On the cover:** Member Jim Wright meets HRH, The Countess of Wessex at the unveiling of our 'Victory Over Blindness' statue in Manchester on 16th October.

**Back page:** More details about our Victory Over Blindness campaign.

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**ROVI IT Helpline:** If you need to speak with the ROVI IT Helpdesk please telephone the staff at the Sheffield centre on 01273 391 447 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 - Brighton

### November.

Cuisine Week 18th to 24th.

### December.

Turkey & Tinsel Week 9th to 15th.

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

## Activities at the Llandudno centre in 2018

### November.

Military Week 4th.

Wood Week 19th.

### December.

Christmas Crafts 3rd and 10th.

### January.

Food & Drink Week 27th to 3rd February

### February.

Photography Week 24th to 3rd March

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

For further information or to book your place please telephone: 01492 868 700. If you have care needs please first speak with your Team Leader or Community Support Worker.

### A different format?

If you would like your copy of 'Review' in a different format, then please contact your Community Support Worker, or ROVI for more information.



# Contents

- 2** Contacts
- 3** Calendar
- 5** Editor's welcome
- 6** Welcome from our Chief Executive
- 8** Welcome from the Chairman
- 11** Our 'Victory Over Blindness' launch
- 15** Two new Vice-President roles
- 16** News from around the regions
- 20** Tips and more from our ROVIs
- 22** In Your Community
- 24** Celebrations as Brighton turns 80
- 26** Getting the most from Synapptic
- 29** A visit to Norway – Wild camping and more with Andy Leitch
- 33** The latest from our research team
- 34** Padre's corner
- 36** Invictus Games update
- 38** Dates from Llandudno for your calendar
- 39** Family News
- 40** In Memory
- 48** A visit to HMS 'Sultan
- 49** On Safari – Colin Williamson reports from South Africa

## Editorial welcome



Hello, and welcome to your November edition of 'Review'. November, for most veterans, is a special month in its own right, as we commemorate the fallen not just in the First World War, but in the other conflicts that have happened since. This year is more poignant, in that it marks 100 years since the Armistice was signed inside that famous railway carriage in the Forest of Compiègne. Sadly, there are no

living veterans of the war that was naively deemed 'the war to end all wars', but there are still many alive from the battles that followed – including lots of yourselves. It is pleasing to know that our nation remains grateful to our veterans for their sacrifice - in whatever form it has taken – despite the years in between, and I fervently hope that no matter what conflict they thought in, their names will truly 'liveth for evermore'.

This November also bears significance for us, as we launched our Victory over Blindness campaign, with the unveiling of our statue on 16th October by Blind Veterans UK patron, HRH, Countess of Wessex, outside Manchester Piccadilly railway station. Thousands of people will pass that wonderful sculpture every week, and it is nice to think that its striking and emotional form will inspire some of those who see it to support both us as an organisation, and you, as our members. You can read more about the ceremony inside, and in the words of our Chairman, Paul Luker and Chief Executive, Nick Caplin.

Paul also has information on the appointment of two new Vice Presidents, Billy Baxter and Paul Palmer. They'll be working with you and for you, and will be two very worthy additions to the Blind Veterans UK executive. Also in this edition you can read about what happened when some of you were lucky enough to visit Norway on a camping trip, while member Grace Bittan tells us about the mobile phone that's changed her life. With all this and the usual mix of features and regulars, there's lots to read about. Until December's edition, enjoy your magazine.

**Chris**



# Not just a statue

## Your message from Major General (Rtd) Nick Caplin CB

At our Centenary Service of Thanksgiving at Westminster Abbey in 2015, we were joined at the service by a concrete sculpture.

Crafted by Johanna Domke-Guyot, it depicted seven blind veterans who had lost their sight to shot, shell or gas in the First World War, each wearing bandages over their eyes and resting their hands on the shoulder of the soldier in front. Sharing a similar inspiration to the John Singer-Sargent painting 'Gassed', the sculpture depicts both the tragedy of war and also the beginning of hope for these young blind veterans as they help each other on the start of their journey of rehabilitation.

It was perfect for our Thanksgiving service, and those who were with us at the abbey that day will recall 'the Lads' standing outside the Great West Door, joining us for their commemorative service - it was a very moving scene.

The power of the image was not lost on us, and in the days after the service we began to think about how we could make this sculpture into a lasting commemoration for blind veterans.

Discussions started, not least with Johanna, and the dream slowly became a reality. Johanna loved the idea, and readily agreed to gift us her sculpture and to support the project. We cast around in London and discovered a foundry in Limehouse - with Royal pedigree! - which was willing to take on the work at a very competitive price, and brought together a small committee to oversee the work. I was particularly pleased that Barry Coupe, one of our trustees and the son of a former member, agreed to chair the committee. The statue is funded by the very generous donations of two special benefactors.

### An easy decision

An early decision was a very easy decision: that the bronze statue should be called 'Victory Over Blindness', recalling Arthur Pearson's description of the journey of the blind veteran.

Finding a suitable location was not so straightforward. Our initial thinking was that it might go into Regent's Park, close to St Dunstan's Lodge which was our first training centre in 1915. We had discussions with the 'authorities' which quickly suggested that this was not going to be straightforward. On reflection this was a bit of a blessing as we realised that there are more than enough statues in London and that we should look elsewhere.

Our minds turned to Manchester, the nation's second city, and the idea of Manchester Piccadilly railway station. The North West was a major recruiting ground for the Army in the First World War. Soldiers went to war by train and, if they were lucky enough to return, they came home by train. We approached the station authorities who got this in a heartbeat and quickly provided their support. The Manchester community has also been remarkably supportive throughout and has quickly adapted to the idea that this is going to be an iconic statue for their city and one of national significance.

So we had a statue on the way and we had a venue. Now we needed to make the most of it. In April this year we rebuilt our Engagement team, the staff responsible for marketing the charity, raising awareness of our work and fundraising. They have picked up the challenge and opportunity of the Victory Over Blindness project with tremendous enthusiasm and have built a campaign based on the statue that you will see over the next few weeks.

The statue was unveiled by our Patron on 16th October - for now, I just want to record my thanks to all involved for making this exciting and inspirational project a reality.



**Picture:** The 'Victory Over Blindness' statue in Manchester



# Credit where credit is due

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

Unusually, I am writing this month's letter on a train from Manchester to London. Yesterday, I was immensely privileged to attend the unveiling of 'Victory Over Blindness', the statue we sponsored, which now takes pride of place outside Manchester Piccadilly station. I think my missive this month needs to be more nuanced than a mere description of the occasion; others will describe the joy of such a splendid day far better than me.

Instead I will concentrate mainly on recording many thanks. First, unquestionably, I must thank our patron, HRH The Countess of Wessex. Her assumption of that role from HM The Queen has been a real boon to Blind Veterans UK. It is truly gratifying how quickly she has come to know us. This was clearly evident yesterday from her words at the unveiling - but even more so as she spoke to everyone - literally everyone - at the reception which followed.

My second thank you must go to the people of Manchester and the North West who seem already to have taken the statue to their hearts. While this was clear from the public words of the Lord Mayor and the private conversations I had with the Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff, the real proof was in watching the thousands of commuters flooding through the station, hundreds of whom stopped and photographed the statue as I waited for my train during rush hour this morning.

Next, enormous thanks to the home team, amongst whom I now number Johanna, the incredibly talented sculptor who created 'the lads' (as she personalises the statue). My fellow trustee, Barry Coupe, has shouldered most of the organisational burden for the Manchester event - a project which has been in his hands for a good three years now. He has been the driving force behind everything, but even he couldn't do all this alone. So, yesterday was a bit of a baptism for our mainly new engagement team who rose magnificently to the challenge. And in the evening, at a highly successful fund-raising dinner, another trustee, James Leavesley, showed his mettle in milking every last penny out of already-generous diners.

My final thoughts turn to a largely unsung band of volunteers, out of the limelight and collecting on street corners around the station. I stopped and chatted with just a few of them to say thank you personally. One slightly bemused fundraiser raised her eyebrows when I did: "You're not going to do this to all of us are you; we're all over the city!" Thank you so much for your support and the generous time you give us.

I have written before about the statue and the importance of Manchester as its resting place, so you might wonder why I'm still banging on about it. Well, I think yesterday marks a step change in what we are doing inside the charity. Nick Caplin talks often about how we need to adopt a "One Charity" approach to engagement in order to get Blind Veterans UK more into the public psyche. Yesterday was an early example. Although this is by no means just about fund-raising, money is very much the bottom line. Our justifiably ambitious plan to reach and support more deserving veterans inevitably drives up our costs and, although we are currently able to use our reserves to initiate this work, we need to increase our income quickly to make it sustainable.



**Picture:** Paul, together with Barry Coupe and HRH Countess of Wessex at the Victory Over Blindness event on 16th October



The wider Blind Veterans 'family' has always been most generous to the charity: donating directly, organising events or - crucially - remembering us with legacies in their wills. We would not be where we are today without this - another thanks! But vital as this remains, we increasingly need to grow our support base to include those that don't yet know about us. And that is why Manchester was so important: success there is a springboard to becoming better known in all UK's regional centres with other, equally imaginative, engagement activities.

You might also ask why I needed to be at Manchester at all, given the evident talent already coping admirably with all the work. I did wonder myself. But when the moment came I rose to the occasion and brought my best skills to bear. My key role was to carry the hastily prepared doggy bags out to HRH's entourage, who would otherwise have missed lunch, because her determination to meet everyone was stretching the schedule. I know my place!



**Picture:** Her Royal Highness, Countess of Wessex talks to veteran and member Simon Brown at the unveiling of the Victory Over Blindness statue on 16th October

Photo: Ian Masters

# A proud day in Manchester

Tuesday, 16th October was a very special day for Blind Veterans UK, when our patron HRH Countess of Wessex unveiled our 'Victory Over Blindness' statue outside Manchester Piccadilly station.

The statue has been created in bronze by artist Johanna Domke-Guyot, and shows seven war-blinded First World War soldiers in a line, supporting each other with arms on shoulders. Manchester Piccadilly is a particularly apt place for the statue, as it is there that many soldiers would have arrived back from the conflict before entering rehabilitation.



**Picture:** The seven veterans, led by Jim Wright, line up proudly in front of the 'Victory Over Blindness' statue on 16th October





**Picture:** Veteran Marion Burrows meets Her Royal Highness

Before unveiling the statue, Her Royal Highness said, "This statue commemorates not only the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, but also the life-changing support Blind Veterans UK offers to vision-impaired ex-Service men and women since that conflict through to the present day.

"As we approach the anniversary of the end of the First World War and, quite rightly, remember all of those who never returned, it is also important to remember those who did, changed by their experiences.



**Picture:** HRH talks to Jamie Weller at the post-ceremony reception

"I have seen at first hand the difference the charity makes to the lives of blind veterans and I am looking forward to meeting many more blind veterans here today and hearing their stories."

Her words were echoed by our Chief Executive, Major General (Rtd) Nick Caplin CB, who said: "Helping blind veterans achieve victory over blindness is the cornerstone of everything we do, and have always done, at Blind Veterans UK. In 2018 victory over blindness means enabling blind veterans to lead the lives they choose.

"Blind Veterans UK enables ex-Service men and women to rebuild their lives after sight loss through free services and lifelong practical and emotional support. We support all blind veterans regardless of when they served or how they lost their sight. The statue demonstrates the life-changing impact the charity has had over the last 103 years.

"This statue is our way of commemorating the centenary of the end of the First World War and recognising the amazing work achieved by our veterans at that time and ever since."

### Meeting our members

Following the short ceremony,



**Picture:** Her Royal Highness, Countess of Wessex addresses the assembled guests at the unveiling of the statue



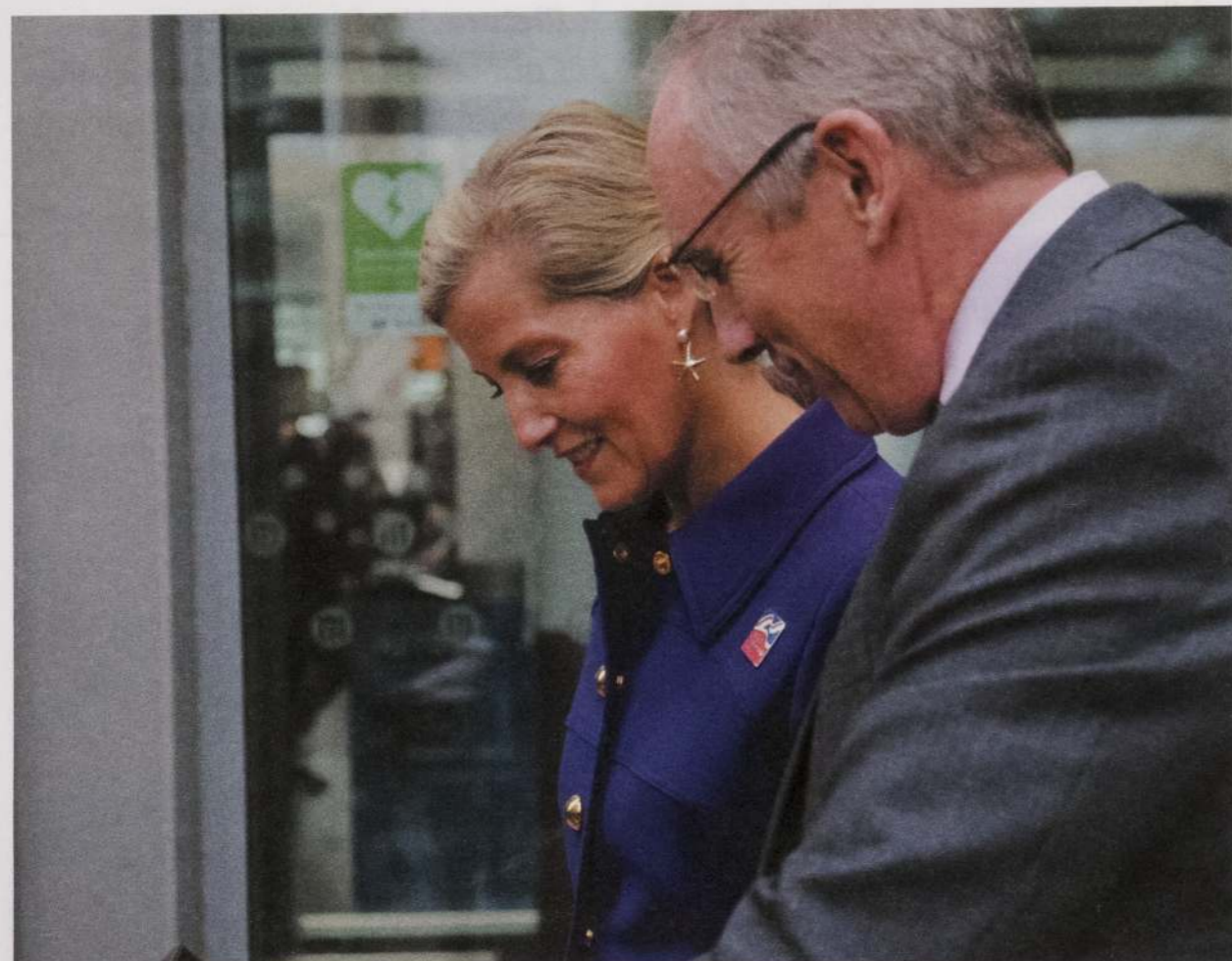
**Picture:** Sculptress and the statue's creator, Johanna Domke-Guyot



which was attended by many of our members and staff, Her Royal Highness was introduced to seven of our veterans, who took their places alongside the sculpture.

The seven were, Ken Facal, Jim Wright, Simon Brown, Lindy Elliot, Danny Williams, Marion Burrows and Blind Veterans UK President, Colin Williamson. All of them had an opportunity to exchange words with her Royal Highness, before leaving for a reception for our members and staff that was held at the University of Manchester.

Our 'Victory Over Blindness' sculpture will be the only permanent memorial in Great Britain to commemorate the centenary of the signing of the Armistice, on 11th November, 1918. It is accompanied by two plaques, one of which is in braille.



**Picture:** Blind Veterans UK Chief Executive, Major General (Rtd) Nick Caplin CB and Her Royal Highness examine the plaque next to the statue

## Our new Vice Presidents, a letter from Paul Luker

*Dear members and colleagues,*

I am pleased to welcome both Paul Palmer and Billy Baxter to the role of Vice Presidents at Blind Veterans UK. Paul and Billy were appointed to their new roles following nomination by our President, Colin Williamson and approval at the Council meeting of 25 September.

The role of the Vice Presidents is to support the President with his responsibilities, and Paul and Billy will undertake any specified duties delegated by our Council. They will also be asked to speak on behalf of the charity, and represent us at functions, events and ceremonies. Billy will be responsible for covering the north west of the country and Paul the south.

Both Paul and Billy will maintain close links with the members within their regions and ensure that the President is able to address any concerns, views or issues that they may have. Paul Palmer has been recognised for his outstanding contribution to Blind Veterans UK over the past six years in his role as member trustee where he has tirelessly championed the cause of the membership. Paul is immensely proud to be appointed Vice President, and will represent the charity with respect, together with a strong sense of loyalty and dignity.

Billy Baxter is another fine example of a member putting other's interests ahead of their own. Billy is a fantastic champion for the charity, and brings to his new position an enthusiasm, an abundance of knowledge about the organisation, and a huge amount of pride. I have no doubt that you, like me, wish both Paul and Billy every success in their new roles, of which they'll be talking more about in the December edition of 'Review'.

With very best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Luker". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line underneath.



# News

## Looking back through the lens

A new photographic display has recently opened at the Imperial War Museum (IWM) in London. It is called, 'Renewal: Life after the First World War in Photographs', and is a fascinating look at the rebuilding and regeneration which took place after the conflict.

It includes a section about the work of Blind Veterans UK, and the lives of our early members, with photos taken both from the IWM's own collections and our own archives.



**Picture:** The group picture of 26th May, 1919, showing our veterans at Regent's Park, together with St Dunstan's Founder, Sir Arthur Pearson on the second row

One of them, shown here, is a group picture which includes our founder Sir Arthur Pearson (second row, with bow tie). This dates from 26th May, 1919, when Major General Sir Geoffrey Fielding (standing next to Sir Arthur) visited our Regent's Park base to talk to the men, and present medals to 11 of them who had been decorated for their efforts in the war.

The photographs are part of a much wider programme of exhibitions and events taking place at both IWM London and IWM North in Salford. The London exhibitions also include a 'Room of Voices' which makes use of the IWM's extensive oral history collection.

'Renewal: Life after the First World War in Photographs' is free of charge to visit and is at IWM London until 31st March, 2019.



**Picture:** Mike Saunders

## Mike's hitting the high notes again

Mike Saunders, from Cwmbrân, South Wales, has found his voice once again after 25 years of being in a musical void.

When Mike lost his sight, he also lost his confidence for choir singing as he could no longer read the music notes or words. He was an avid, and certainly talented, choir singer. Singing had taken him around the world; he even once sang with Dame Shirley Bassey.

Mike last sang with the Cwmbrân Male Choir about 25 years ago, before withdrawing due to his sight loss. The team in Community 5 knew of his previous passion and arranged for the choir to sing at the Cardiff Reunion. Mike, as well as



a number of other members, enthusiastically joined the choir on stage and sang a rousing Welsh national anthem.

After the dinner, Mike was approached by the Musical Director, Matthew, and invited to re-join the Cwmbrân Male Choir. Initially, Mike was anxious about learning the songs. Matthew suggested using YouTube.

"He asked if I could access YouTube, and, thanks to some training with my Synaptic tablet, I can," said Mike. "Matthew sends me the songs, and I learn them through that."

Mike now practises daily, and attends every choir meeting that he can since being reintroduced to his passion. With pride, he wears his special choir suit when they sing at events.

It is an exciting time for Mike's reintroduction to life as a choir member. The Cwmbrân Male Choir is joining with two other choirs in the vicinity. Of Matthew, he says: "He tests you as an individual, not as a choir. He's a strict choir master, but he needs to be! It's a big thing to amalgamate three choirs together."

Mike's first performance was for a lady's 80th birthday. He is looking forward to many more with the choir, including being part of the tours in the future. He has gone from being a man who had lost both his passion and motivation to someone once more fulfilled and with renewed sparkle. He's even recruiting more members for the choir; so, to any members in the South Wales vicinity reading this, do get hold of Mike if you are interested.

### Ex-gunner hits the target again

Football fan, ex-Bombardier and Blind Veterans UK member David Manser scored, when he won a signed Brighton and Hove Albion shirt at the Brighton centre on 8th August.

The shirt was a raffle prize in a competition hosted by Albion in the Community, the official charity of the Brighton-based team, which had an information stand at the centre as part of a health and wellbeing programme.

As David recalls, "I saw the signed Brighton & Hove Albion shirt and thought how

much my wife would love to have this, she is a huge Brighton and Hove Albion supporter and went to all the games when she was younger including the 1983 cup final.

"With our 57 year wedding anniversary approaching on the 29 November it would be amazing to win the shirt for her, so I brought a couple of raffle tickets. We were overjoyed when we received a call to say we had won the shirt, and that we were invited to the Amex Stadium for a tour and to present the shirt to us.

"We were shown around the stadium on a buggy, and taken to the pitch edge for some photos. We got to sit in the dugout and were presented with the signed shirt, which was signed by the whole of this year's first team."



**Picture:** David Manser proudly wearing his Blind Veterans UK shirt when collecting his prize on 8th August at Brighton & Hove Albion football club's ground



# Rehabilitation

**Craig Vaughton and Sarah Hughes are Rehabilitation Officers for people with a Visual Impairment (ROVI). Here, they talk about life working for Blind Veterans UK, and offer you some top tips.**

## Craig

I joined the staff in March 2017, having previously spent over 25 years working in IT for a large bank. Before that, the RAF graciously trained me to fix the electrical bits on BAe Harriers – the famous ‘jump jets’.

I’ve quickly put my experience with computing and all manner of other devices to far better use running the IT part of the ROVI-IT helpline (01273 391 447). As well as sorting computers out by remote connection, I occasionally manage to escape the office to arrange home visits and fix recalcitrant devices or printers and deal with stroppy software.

I also deliver or collect ROVI equipment to aid my colleagues on the other side of the office. The helpline calls also arrive at my desk as well when we’re busy, so most of the time I get to hear about the wonderful array of equipment we supply to members. In the increasingly rare quiet times between helping our members, I’m also trying to improve the internal systems we use to run the helpline - which in turn makes life easier for our community staff.



**Picture:** Craig

We have a great team working here, and receiving the thanks from members (and staff!) for sorting out their computer problems definitely makes the job more rewarding.

## Sarah

I have been a member of staff at Blind Veterans UK since September 2016, and I was a volunteer for the charity before this.

I initially started working as a support worker at the Sheffield centre, helping out on

introduction, training and holiday weeks. I moved over to start working with the Helpline team in January 2017, and I was the person who would turn up at some of your homes to either deliver and set up equipment or carry out collections.

I now look after the admin side of equipment recycling, making sure we utilise and reuse as much as possible which helps save money for our charity. I also help out with the Helpline, taking calls from members and staff, and I have just started a small role within the procurement department working with suppliers when demonstrations are requested.

Going forward, I have just started an Apprenticeship foundation degree course to become a ROVI, which is something I am really enjoying (it is only early days!) and I’m excited to where this may lead. The Helpline is a great team to work within, and it’s very satisfying knowing that we help our members and staff every day.



**Picture:** Sarah

**Craig’s Top Tip:** If you get a call from someone claiming to be Microsoft, BT, TalkTalk, or any other IT company and they say they’ve seen or know your PC or tablet is running slow, or that there’s a problem they have to fix then put the phone down, as it’s more than likely to be a scam! There’s over 40 million Windows PC users in the UK alone, plus Apple users and even more phone and tablet users. Consequently there isn’t a company on earth with the ability to individually monitor your PC, and let you know you have a problem.

**Sarah’s Top Tip –** If you have any problems with equipment, always check that leads and cables are plugged in firmly, and check if batteries are working. Sometimes it can be quite a simple remedy to the problem. Please do not hesitate to contact the Helpline on 01273 391 447 if you need any assistance with your equipment.





**Picture:** Our members enjoying their time together during their day out to Portmeirion village

## In Your Community

### A tour of the village

Our team in Community 4 (North and Mid Wales and Cheshire) has been holding a series of engagement events to find out from members what is happening in their local area and what they would like to see provided or developed by Blind Veterans UK. Last month, members from the Llyn Peninsula in North Wales were invited to come together at Portmeirion for an amazing Psygod a sclodion (fish and chips) lunch, some lively discussion and a tour of the famous village.

Portmeirion is an enchanting Italianate village on the coast of North Wales. It was designed and built by Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, who wanted to show how a naturally beautiful site could be developed without spoiling it. He incorporated fragments of demolished buildings, including works by a number of other architects into the village which overlooks the beautiful Dywryd estuary. Portmeirion has served as the location for numerous films and television shows, most notably as "The Village" in the 1960's television show 'The Prisoner' starring Patrick McGoohan.

The veterans enjoyed the day immensely, especially meeting others from their local area. As well as lots of lively discussion about forming a Blind Veterans UK North

Wales choir, our Community ROVI Katie was also on hand to discuss any individual challenges members were facing, and to look at solutions on the spot.

Our members in this region are few and far between, so this was a rare opportunity for them to get together and share experiences and ideas. The community team came away with lots of feedback and ideas, and will be taking up the challenge to create a local choir over the coming months.

### Reunion at Towcester

The first Community 14 (Eastern region and Oxfordshire) reunion took place in the beautiful setting of the Orangery at Whittlebury Hall in Towcester, Northants on 20th September. Previously, members in the community were invited to reunions in surrounding areas such as North London, and Worcester. Towcester was chosen as being fairly central to all six counties in the community, but we are considering changing the venue each year to make it more accessible to our members.

Nearly 100 guests attended (despite the pouring rain). Before they ate, members were entertained by 'Vision in Song' - a wonderful choir made up of veterans from Community 16. They performed a variety of wartime and other songs, including 'We are Sailing' with an additional verse about Blind Veterans UK written by one of the choir members.

One of our members sent this feedback, "My parents used to sing all the Second World War songs such as 'Blue Birds over the White Cliffs of Dover' and 'We'll Meet Again' as sung today. I was so emotional at hearing this last one, that I waved my arms and hands as if I was the conductor" Rob Baker from HQ brought along a selection of photos from the charity's archives, while following the speeches, member Diane Mountford read out a moving poem which she had been inspired to write, following her recent trip to the battlefields.

We've had some lovely feedback from members and the trustee who attended, including a suggestion we have another one in six months' time!



**Picture:** The 'Vision in Song' choir entertains our members during the Northamptonshire Reunion on 20th September



# 'It's all about community'

## 80th anniversary celebrations at the Brighton Centre

On Wednesday 10th October, our Brighton Centre celebrated 80 years since it first opened its doors in 1938 as an answer to the charity's growing need for a purpose-built location for blinded veterans to rest and convalesce following the First World War.

The occasion was marked by the official opening of the new 80th anniversary garden in the inner courtyard of the building.

Blind Veterans UK members, staff and volunteers came together on what was a gloriously sunny day not only to celebrate the work of the charity and its staff, but to recognise the amazing work achieved by our members from 1938 to the present.

Centre manager Lesley Garven, acting as event M.C., opened proceedings by highlighting the significant role that the centre has played in so many of our members' journeys to rebuild their lives after sight loss.

Celebrations kicked off in earnest with a special screening of 'World without



**Picture:** Staff and members at our Brighton centre celebrate in style

Shadow', a short film made in and around the centre in 1950 by the then-renowned Anthony Asquith ('We dive at dawn' and 'Carrington VC').

The film remains a product of its time, but is nonetheless a nostalgic glimpse into the centre in its earlier days, we were lucky enough to be joined by one of the film's stars – Joan Osborne, who many will know as a long-standing friend of the charity.



**Picture:** The amazing cake by Fay Miller

Former president of the charity and member himself, Ray Hazan OBE joined the event to do the twin honours of opening the garden and unveiling the commemorative plaque which can now be found at the entrance to the garden.

Speaking of the benefits that the garden will bring to our members, Ray praised the calm and meditative quality of the space and congratulated the garden designers Andrew Tomlin Fisher and Dan Bower on their work, which last year won gold medal recognition at last year's Hampton Court Palace Flower show.

Following his speech, Ray was presented with a hand-carved crook made by the Arts & Crafts department at the centre as a token of thanks from all at Blind Veterans UK.

The centrepiece of lunch was a spectacular cake creation – a replica of the centre constructed by baker Fay Miller of Brighton Cakes.

The sun still shining, the garden designers gave a short talk about their work and the process of transporting the garden to its new site, followed by presentations from Archivist Rob Baker on the history of the Centre, and IT instructor Mark Kingston on the part technology has played in its activities.

As a way to capture this special milestone and share information about the charity's work at Brighton, a special 80th anniversary film was made which you can now view on the Blind Veterans UK Facebook page and on our website at [www.blindveterans.org.uk](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk).

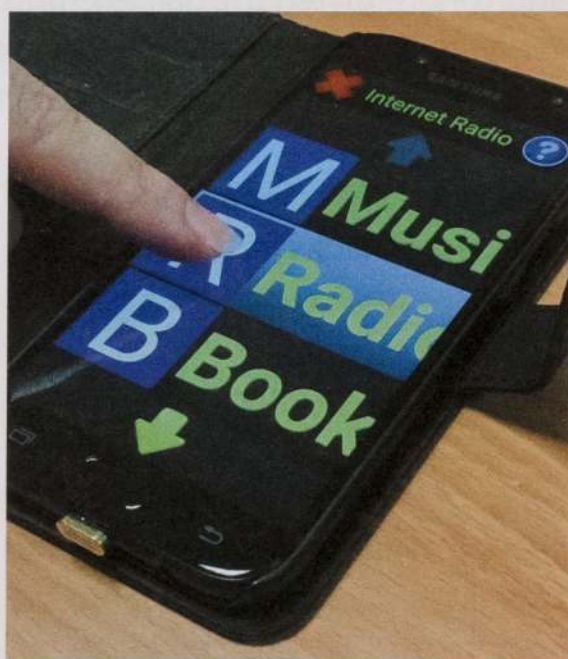


# Technology

**When member Grace Bittan's trusty mobile phone stopped working, she was lost. Until she found a suitable replacement that is, as she explains here**

I had a small mobile phone that talked and - quite frankly - thought I'd made it big time. My friends were impressed, and my family, after feigning interest for a while, was happy that they could contact me to ask for my baby sitting services.

Suddenly the phone started going wrong, and as they had stopped making that model I was unable to get a replacement. I am an avid phone talker and text sender, and so was very upset. Also, my phone is my safety when I walk my dog and go out on my own. I was feeling nearly naked without it, and was very pleased when I saw Community Team Leader Carol Fletcher at the Veteran's Dinner.



**Picture:** The Synaptic programme makes a big difference in being able to see the icons on a normally small mobile phone screen

She told me about the new phone - a swish Samsung Galaxy with Synaptic added to help sight impaired people. I was then contacted by another of the team, who explained it further and said that someone would teach me to use it either at home or at the Brighton Centre.

Then she asked how I got on with technology and what could I say? After writing for the 'Review' I had really put myself in the front line, and so with fingers crossed I replied that I managed quite well, and would be prepared to have a go on my own.

## The phone arrives

Within a few days the phone arrived. I felt around it, and couldn't find an on/

off button. I thought, "Here we go, me and showing off, and I can't even turn it on". Of course, at this point I hadn't even got the instruction manual out of the box. So with my usual, 'have a go and worry about it later' technique, I took a deep breath and slowly felt around the edges of the phone. Low and behold I found an indent on the right and pressed. The phone was on.

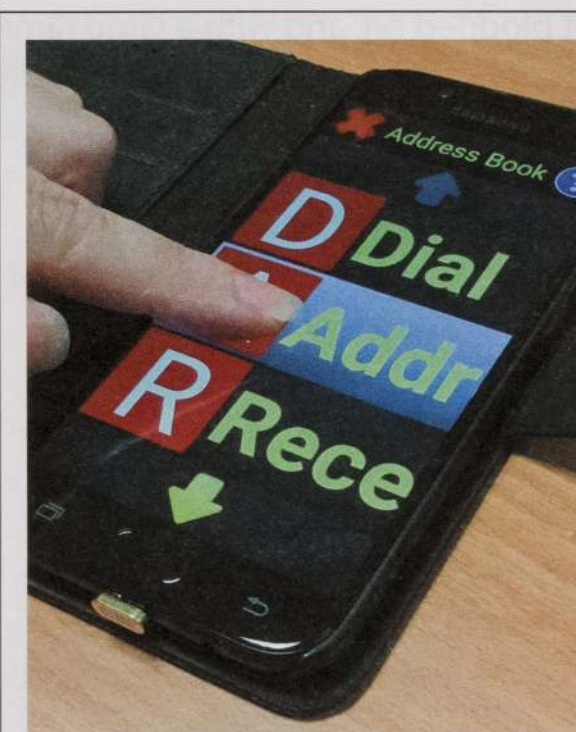
If any of you have the Guide System on your computer you will understand the principle of this phone. It works on the basis that each individual item you press leads into a whole section about said item. For example, the first thing is 'making a phone call'.

- Press on this, and it asks you if you want to dial the number or find one from your address book, or do you want to see who has recently called you?
- Press the dial option and up comes a large numbered pad with a green 'call' button at the bottom together with a red 'off' button.

Press the address book, and up comes an alphabetical list of your contacts. Press the 'recent calls', and a list comes up of people who have phoned you, or you have called them. To get out of any section, you just press a red cross on the upper left of the screen and you go back through all the button presses to the beginning.

The main menu has five pages with four different parts to each page. I should say at this point that you can enlarge the print, and change colours and backgrounds to suit your requirements.

On the first day I managed to put all my contact numbers in the address book and give everyone a call with my new number. I still hadn't read the book,



**Picture:** Functions such as the address book on your phone can be easily opened using Synaptic



but plodded on, and with a large family of technology-mad grandchildren, I thought I'd better get to grips with everything before they came around and laughed at me.

### Texting comes next

I went to the texting section next, and was delighted to find that it had both keyboard and speech recognition.

Now a long time ago - more than 15 years - my husband bought me a voice recognition programme for our computer in the hope that I would just sit and talk into the machine and 'write my stories' quicker. That was a complete disaster, as it just wouldn't recognise my voice. Wouldn't he have been delighted to see me now, pressing the 'speak' button and talking into the phone? Lo and behold, up comes the words, you just press 'send' and off it goes.

Over the following days I ventured into different realms of the phone. I have discovered that I can access the radio, and there are over a hundred pages of stations including the RNIB site, Radio Caroline for all you hippies out there,

and my favourite, Absolute Radio 60's, which is a good sing along site. I have managed to store them in my favourites tab for easy access.

I have also found other functions, including the magnifier, calendar, and alarm clock. There is plenty more to go through and keep me busy for a while, and I would urge any of you with this phone to try its features. With a bit of help you can do it, and although I have a little sight left I have taught myself to text and make phone calls with my eyes shut just to prove that it's possible.

As an aside I have been trying out a couple of new gadgets that I will tell you about another time. Good luck!



**Picture:** The screen display on the phone is bright and easy to read, even for people who are visually impaired



**Picture:** The kayakers head out along the fjord, with the magnificent backdrop of the mountains behind them. Bet that water was cold, though

## Midnight sun

**Three of our members were given the opportunity to join the Not Forgotten Association (NFA) on a four-day trip to the Naeroy Fjords of Norway. Andy Leitch tells all.**

When I found out that I was lucky enough to be selected to go to Norway on a wild camping and kayaking trip in early September, I instantly panicked and thought, 'how do you kayak?' Speedily, I got myself on a quick-fix training course, and with the help of the internet, YouTube and not getting wet, I was able to kayak in 15 minutes.

Myself, Kev Alderton, Carl Adamson and Daz Sharma (escort to Andy) met up with the NFA group at Gatwick Airport for the flight to Bergen, Norway. Our team of recovering and ex-service personnel all had their own issues, and stories ranging from being visually impaired to deafness, knee injuries and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.



We arrived to a damp, wet day in Bergen and hoped that wouldn't be the weather for the rest of the week. We were met by the people from Nordic Ventures sea kayaking tours, and taken to the town of Voss. There's not much I could really say about that road trip, as it seemed you drove in and out of tunnels every 500 meters or so! Arriving in Voss, we were dropped off to our accommodation for the night, and once settled in to our rooms we all met up on the patio which overlooked a big lake and in turn was over looked by massive granite mountains.

Intriguingly, the conversation from 16 burly men was about vacuum cleaners and the different brands available! Our guide Rosie from the NFA then introduced herself and gave us a plan of action for the rest of the week. That night, we walked into the town of Voss to a little bar where we had burger, chips and a beer. After a broken night's sleep from sharing a room with six snoring blokes, breakfast loomed. Walking through the hostel, I noticed our group seemed to have taken over the sofas in the reception area to get some rest.

## Day Two

With a warm start to the day, we got back on the bus for a short drive to Naeroy and the start of our Kayaking adventure. As we got into wet suits and packed our



**Picture:** The kayakers enjoy a well-earned hot drink before setting up their campsite for the night after the first day



**Picture:** The incredible scenery as seen from a kayak traveling down the fjord

some facts about the house at the top of the mountain we had stopped at. It was known as Stige (ladder) because the only way to it was via a ladder, and when the tax man came to collect, the owner would raise the ladder and not pay his tax!

It's now a hotel and, incredibly, is still only accessible by ladder. With lunch finished, we continued to paddle on, with Craig pointing out more points of interest, including Carl's kayak being right next to three porpoise - a sight that hadn't been seen in that area for months. Once again, we beached the kayaks and made our camp. Craig and Emily cooked tea on the open fire, as the group set other fires around the camp to dry off their wet kit. After a few hours of chatting, and that ageless military banter, we bedded down for the night.

## Day Three

Rising at 0530, the view before us was simply amazing as the sun climbed

dry bags, our tour guides Craig and Emily from Nordic Ventures introduced themselves, and explained what we would be doing for the next few days. Then came a short trip to the kayaks, where we loaded up all the camping equipment, dry bags and food. Once on the water, we paddled up-stream before a landing for some dinner.

With 'Sparky' Sparks rowing the Pacific Ocean, I pointed out to Kev I didn't understand Sparky's problem as 'we' had contented with waves or ripples of at least 8 to 12 inches. Craig gave us



**Picture:** Kev Alderton, a by now, expert kayaker



over the mountain tops and the mist lifted. Within an hour, breakfast was done and our camp broken down and cleared away as we continued to paddle down the fjord, stopping for a group photo at a waterfall.

As we continued to paddle along, the peace and quiet was unreal and hard to explain, but at the same time comforting. When we stopped for lunch, we knew our adventure was coming to an end – it was just a short paddle back to the start of the Naeroy Fjord. Once we were de-kitted, we said our thanks to Craig and Emily and departed back to Bergen, and the hotel, for the night. Unfortunately, Carl managed to get an eye infection during our adventure, and had to be taken to the local hospital.

### Day Four

On our last day, we had a wet walk around Bergen, picking up little gifts for family and friends before heading back to the airport and home.

Daz and I found a McDonald's and both nearly had heart failure when we worked out that a big Mac meal cost nearly £15! However, I was secretly glad it wasn't the fish market and the whale sperm sushi instead!



**Picture:** The kayaks lined up alongside the shore of Naeroy Fjord. In the background, the mountains rise up to create a breathtaking view

# A Slice of Science

**Nancy Ranlall, Research Executive talks about one of the events to be hosted by the Research and Innovation team**

Dr Renata Gomes and The Research and Innovation team will be hosting its next event, 'A Slice of Science, Episode 2', in the Trophy Room at the Blind Veterans Centre, Brighton on Tuesday, 20th November from 2pm to 4pm.

We are inviting all of you to join us, so please feel free to come along - our event is open to all veterans, staff and volunteers, and is an informal coffee afternoon where you can drop by anytime from 1400 to 1600 to meet all members of the Research Team. You can also learn more about the exciting projects and innovations that we are currently working on.



**Picture:** Nancy Randall

Some of the research areas that we will be covering include upcoming innovations, traumatic brain injury and sight loss, psychological and social studies, and The Sleep Study.



There will also be a chance to meet members of the GOAL (Get Out and Live) group, and hear about the valuable work that they are doing with our members. Fun activities will also be included!



# Padre's Piece

**Blind Veterans UK padre Clare Callanan offers some guidance in finding some calm in a busy world**

Victory over Blindness... meaning to overcome...to conquer. The men that are represented in the powerful sculpture unveiled at Manchester Piccadilly on October 16th 2018, had given of themselves in war; and in returning, had the chance to overcome, to conquer their injuries, physically, mentally and emotionally.

*Invictus*, a poem written by WE Henley in 1875, while in hospital as a young man having his leg amputated as a young man, focuses on this power of the human spirit and its ability to overcome adversity. Here are three of its verses:

Out of the night  
that covers me,  
Black as the pit  
from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever  
gods may be  
For my  
unconquerable  
soul.

In the fell clutch  
of circumstance  
I have not winced  
or cried aloud.  
Under the  
bludgeonings  
of chance  
My head is bloody,  
but unbowed.

It matters not how  
strait the gate,  
How charged with  
punishments  
the scroll,  
I am the master  
of my fate,  
I am the captain  
of my soul.

What can we hear in these words?  
That times may be dark. That it may feel like a kind of hell.  
That the future cannot be seen.  
That there are times of total darkness.  
But that the head can be held high.

That there may be anger and pain associated with life on earth. I wonder where was that anger and pain for our soldiers sculpted here? Where might that anger and pain be for us today?

That you can overcome dark times by never losing faith in your own soul's strength.

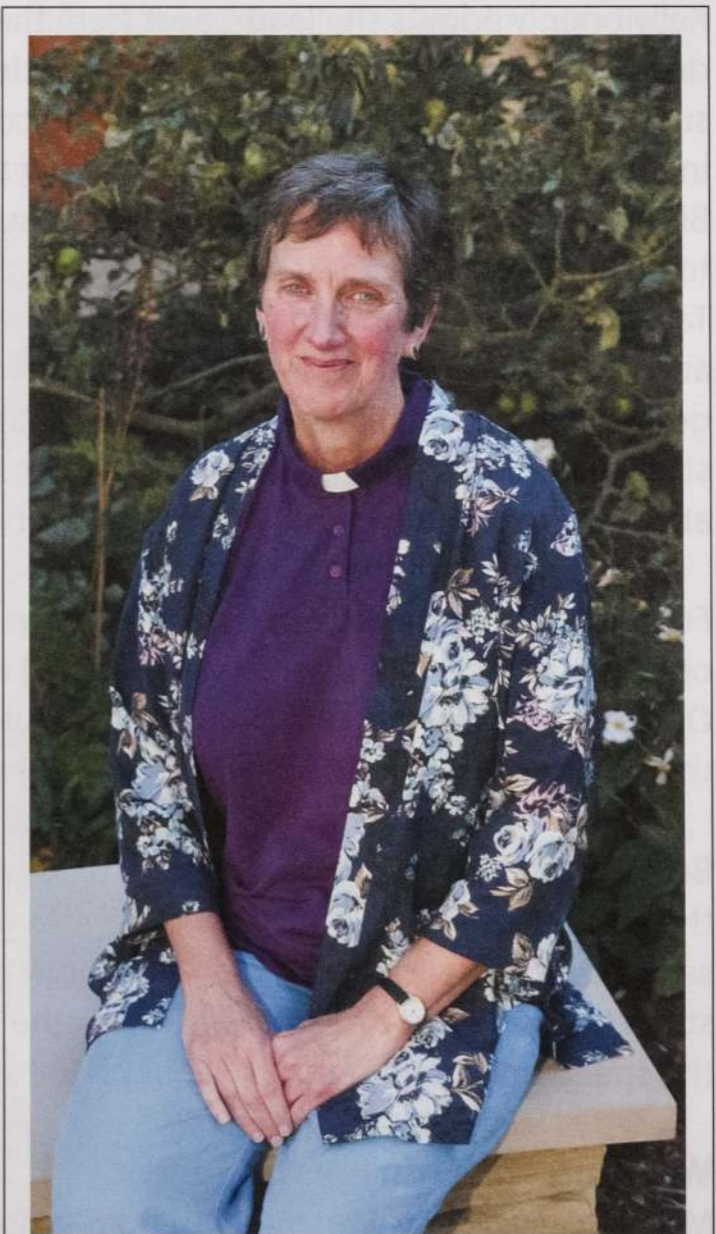
That for some, as Christians, that strength may come from the one, Jesus Christ, who had ultimate victory, that is, victory over death. We can read in the New Testament "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him, Jesus Christ, who loved us."

I was privileged to take part in the unveiling event of the 'Victory Over Blindness' sculpture. It stands there to tell the story of overcoming adversity and difficulty and loneliness, through belonging and trust, love and care, in order to transform and thrive and have victory. Everyone has dark times; usually these times are painful and exhausting. In this season of Remembrance, such dark times on both a collective and personal scale are there in front of us.

May I reassure you that it is part of the human condition to feel and know such times? Yet it is also part of the strength, perseverance and healing of our bodies, minds and souls to know the victory over our inner and physical blindness.

Look for it and know it amongst those you love and who love you, in the sunset, in music, in art, in the trees and plants around you, in laughter and in tears. Your soul is unconquerable,

Blessings  
**Padre Clare Callanan**



**Picture:** Padre Clare Callanan



# Invictus games

INVICTUS  
GAMES  
FOUNDATION

## Kelly's Trip Down Under – a short report by Anika Backhouse

Kelly Ganfield, from Trowbridge, Somerset, headed down under to Australia in October to participate in her second Invictus Games. Unlike her previous competition in Canada, this time Kelly was the only vision-impaired competitor to represent the UK.

Kelly openly admits she learnt a lot from the event in Toronto last year, and has developed a strong training strategy, which Blind Veterans UK is proud to be supporting. Alongside the indoor rowing competition, Kelly is also participating in the 100m and 200m sprints, with trainer and guide runner Mikail Huggins. Blind Veterans UK has supported Kelly by supporting her training, enabling her to be at her personal best when taking on the challenges to come.

Talking about her training with Mikail, Kelly said: "He tests me with these drills and helps me to believe in myself. I thrive on the challenge, and know I am getting better and more confident. He creates drills to suit me and my learning style, and adapts drills he coaches to other athletes, with my visual impairment and brain injury in mind. My drills are tailor-made for me."

Following a number of strokes, Kelly has no peripheral vision. The strokes not only caused her sight loss, but also slowed the left-hand side of her body down. One of the challenges of running with a guide is that she has to work harder on the side that is linked to Mikail, as that is the affected side.

Because Kelly is the only VI person attending from the UK, she was asked by the organisers to take on a third style of event – the long jump. Of course, Kelly said yes - despite it being a brand new discipline for her to learn. The explosive starts that Kelly has needed to learn for the sprints have transferred across to the speed and leaping ability required for the long jump.

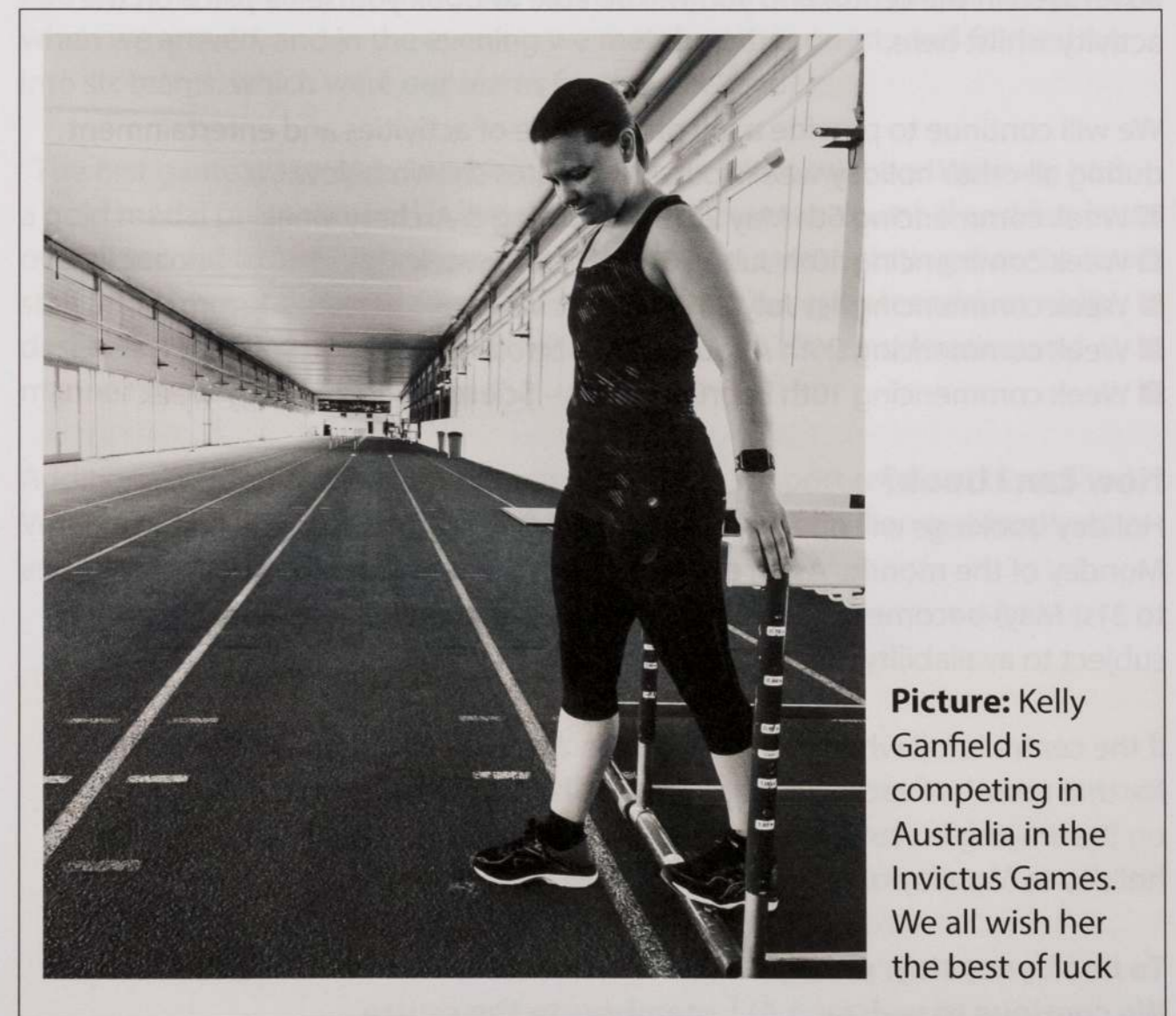
### Working with hurdles

Mikail has had Kelly working with hurdles to provide this instant command of the power needed. In September, she said: "These are all new drills for me and are quite daunting. Jumping up and over things with no depth perception is

very scary and I am conscious that I don't want to get injured so close to the games in October. I feel like I am jumping into the unknown, and have to rely on my other senses to help me, particularly touch. I feel around the floor, step and hurdles before I attempt it, so I have some idea of where things are."

In preparation for the games, Kelly took part in the Godiva Classic in Coventry, running against other female para-athletes, none of whom have a vision impairment. Kelly proudly came joint first in the 100m and third in the 200m sprints. For someone who had become used to facing adversity, Kelly's joy was overflowing!

Everyone at Blind Veterans UK has been backing Kelly all the way through the Invictus Games. We know how hard she has worked, and are very proud to have her representing us.



**Picture:** Kelly Ganfield is competing in Australia in the Invictus Games. We all wish her the best of luck



# Time for something new

## Llandudno Holiday Bookings for April 2019 – March 2020

From April 2019 we will be introducing new Topic of the Weeks for those members coming to the Llandudno Centre for a holiday. On the following weeks of the year the activities, trips and entertainment whilst you are on holiday will be based around different topics. A list of the activities will be advertised in the centre and you will be able to book yourself a place on the activity whilst here.

We will continue to provide a full programme of activities and entertainment during all other holiday weeks outside of dates shown below.

- Week commencing 6th May 2019 – Shooting & Archery week
- Week commencing 10th June 2019 – History week
- Week commencing 1st July 2019 – Music week
- Week commencing 26th August 2019 – Strolling week
- Week commencing 10th February 2020 – Science & Technology week

### How can I book?

Holiday bookings will open 6 months in advance of arrival on the first working Monday of the month. As an example, on 5th November, all dates in May (up to 31st May) become available to book. Lines open at 8.30am. Bookings will be subject to availability and transport.

If the centre is full when you call, you can ask to be added to the waiting list for that month. If vacancies arise, the bookings team will work with members on the waiting list to fill the spaces. Arrival/departure dates for members on holiday to Monday or Tuesday.

**To book your stay, please call Llandudno reception on 01492 868700.  
We continue to welcome ALL members to the centre.**

# Family News

## Celebrating 61 years of marriage, with a little help from their friends...

John Luther, from Chepstow, and his wife Marion celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary this summer with a little help from their community team. At their request, we helped them arrange a weekend away with the Not Forgotten Association. They joined with other guests there to celebrate their special occasion.

On their return, John told Diane, Member Support Worker in the South Wales and South West region: "We had a great weekend. It was a lovely old house that had been furnished for courses. We had a lovely barbecue in the walled garden when we arrived, and in the evening we met the other guests and formed up into six teams, which were our teams for the weekend.

"The first game was a quiz, in which our team were the winners. We even had a gold medal presentation! Unfortunately, we then went downhill and finished overall second to last." John gave credit to the host venue, stating that the food, staff and atmosphere were all great. He also said: "Our volunteer driver really deserves a mention; his driving was excellent, as was his consideration and manner throughout the journeys."

Additionally, John and Marion acknowledged the support received from Blind Veterans: "Thank you so much, Blind Veterans UK, and all who were involved in arranging this trip."

## Birthdays.

**Alice Coupe** who celebrated her 100th birthday on 27 November.

**George 'Jim' Hardwick** who celebrated his 100th birthday on 27 November.

**Sydney Spiers** who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 1 November.

**Doreen Woan** who celebrated her 102nd birthday on 9 November.

**Leonard Wright** who celebrated his 101st birthday on 3 November.



# 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.

**Majorie Adcock** of Market Harborough, Leicestershire died on September 2018 aged 97. She served from 1944 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force.

**Thomas Ashton** of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 1 October 2018 aged 92. He served from 1944 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force.

**Harold William Baker** of High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire died on 2 October 2018 aged 85. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force.

**Charles Ballard** of Evesham, Worcestershire died on 5 October 2018 aged 83. He served from 1956 to 1958 in the Royal Air Force.

**Thomas Bell** of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne And Wear died on 22 September 2018 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1947 in the Royal Navy.

**Alistair Bernard** of Gorebridge, Midlothian died on 1 October 2018 aged 84. He served from 1952 to 1954 in the Army.

**John Nelson Bradley** of Barnoldswick, Lancashire died on 29 September 2018 aged 89. He served in 1947 in the Army.

**Robert Bromley** of London, died on 29 September 2018 aged 97. He served from 1941 to 1943 in the Army.

**Charles Garrett Brooks** of Wisbech, Cambridgeshire died on 31 August 2018 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1943 in the Army.

**John Browne** of Woking, Surrey died on 4 September 2018 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1946 in the Army.

**Charles Burdis** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 12 September 2018 aged 79. He served from 1960 to 1960 in the Army.

**James Allen Cameron** of Gravesend, Kent died on 8 August 2018 aged 79. He served from 1960 to 1963 in the Army.

**Ernest David William Carver** of Newhaven, East Sussex died on 24 July 2018 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force.

**John Clegg** of Bury, Lancashire died on 13 August 2018 aged 101. He served from 1940 to 1943 in the Army.

**Richard Commins** of Flint, Clwyd died on 22 August 2018 aged 94. He served from 1943 to 1943 in the Army.

**Arthur Cooper** of Sutton, Surrey died on 31 July 2018 aged 97. He served from 1938 to 1946 in the Army.

**Barry Edward Cottle** of Plymouth, Devon died on 1 September 2018 aged 86. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Army.

**Peter Edward Crust** of Ipswich, died on 1 October 2018 aged 87. He served from 1949 to 1951 in the Royal Air Force.

**Patricia Davidson** of Towcester, Northamptonshire died on 23 August 2018 aged 98. She served from 1942 to 1946 in the Army.



**John Dawson** of Saffron Walden, Essex died on 1 July 2018 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy.

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**William John Dell** of Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire died on 9/9/2018 aged 93. He served from 5/24/1943 to 8/11/1943 in the ARMY.

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**John Christopher Doyle** of Duns, Berwickshire died on 3 October 2018 aged 99. He served from 1939 to 1947 in the Army.

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**Brian Drake** of Whitby, North Yorkshire died on 19 September 2018 aged 85. He served from 1952 to 1953 in the Army.

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**James Duffy** of Seaham, County Durham died on 5 October 2018 aged 87. He served in the Army.

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**Ronald Victor Eden** of Warminster, Wiltshire died on 10 October 2018 aged 98. He served from 1940 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Albert Thomas Edwards** of Wickford, Essex died on 28 August 2018 aged 98. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Patrick Feeney** of Shoreham-By-Sea, West Sussex died on 20 September 2018 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Army.

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**Andrew Finnigan** of Rhyl, Clwyd died on 1 September 2018 aged 88. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Royal Air Force.

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**David Gemmell** of Glasgow, died on 1 August 2018 aged 93. He served in 1943 in the Army.

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**Edwin George Grail** of Chepstow, Gwent died on 22 September 2018 aged 91. He served in 1945 in the Army.

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**Albert William Henry Green** of Lewes, East Sussex died on 1 September 2018 aged 87. He served from 1950 to 1955 in the Army.

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**Vivian Harris** of Cardiff, Whitechurch died on 7 July 2018 aged 97. She served from 1940 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

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**John Peerless Henry** of Stocksfield, Northumberland died on 27 August 2018 aged 89. He served from 1948 to 1950 in the Royal Navy.

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**Robert John Hicks** of Barry, South Glamorgan died on 17 September 2018 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Serviah Hughes** of Cwmbran, Gwent died on 1 September 2018 aged 90. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Royal Navy.

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**Robert Johnson** of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 30 September 2018 aged 93. He served in 1944 in the Army.

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**John Ivor Jones** of Neath, West Glamorgan died on 27 July 2018 aged 96. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy.

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**Brian Lambert** of Downham Market, Norfolk died on 25 September 2018 aged 86. He served from 1950 to 1953 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Donald Lane** of Staines-Upon-Thames, Middlesex died on 4 September 2018 aged 97. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Army.

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**Gladys Lodge** of London, died on 16 September 2018 aged 95. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Army.

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**George Lown** of Bedlington, Northumberland died on 5 October 2018 aged 86. He served from 1953 to 1964 in the Army.

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**Hugh Patrick Maguire** of Bathgate, West Lothian died on 29 August 2018 aged 98. He served from 1942 to 1942 in the Army.

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**Patrick Colman Mann** of Llandudno, Gwynedd died on 13 September 2018 aged 90. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force.

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**James March** of Hexham, Northumberland died on 6 September 2018 aged 83. He served from 1954 to 1956 in the Army.

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**Doris McCreight** of Leatherhead, Surrey died on 18 September 2018 aged 96. She served from 1943 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Martin Mccrorie** of Saltdean, East Sussex died on 20 July 2018 aged 62. He served from 1974 to 1977 in the Police.

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**Archibald Henry Mcneice** of Jersey, died on 5 July 2018 aged 92. He served from 1944 to 1947 in the Royal Navy.

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**Francis Middleton** of Ryton, Tyne And Wear died on 30 September 2018 aged 84. He served from 1959 to 1960 in the Army.

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**Robert Moorcroft** of Coventry, West Midlands died on 23 September 2018 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1947 in the Royal Navy.

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**Sidney John Morris** of Telford, Shropshire died on 20 August 2018 aged 93. He served in 1944 in the Army.

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**Frank Moseley** of Henfield, West Sussex died on 28 August 2018 aged 94. He served from 1946 to 1947 in the Army.

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**Terence Murphy** of Bexleyheath, Kent died on 7 October 2018 aged 90. He served in 1946 in the Army.

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**Kenneth Nelson** of Jarrow, Tyne And Wear died on 10 September 2018 aged 89. He served in 1947 in the Army.

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**Katherine Noel-Johnson** of Girton, Cambridge died on 12 October 2018 aged 98. She served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Allan Norman** of Pulborough, West Sussex died on 18 September 2018 aged 96. He served from 1941 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Charles Oates** of Stockport, Cheshire died on 1 October 2018 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force.

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**William Edward Oliver** of Bridgnorth, Shropshire died on 1 September 2018 aged 95. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Robert Christie Paterson** of Glasgow, died on 17 Septemebr 2018 aged 83. He served from 1955 to 1957 in the Army.

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**Roy William Pearce** of Stamford, Lincolnshire died on 16 July 2018 aged 91. He served in 1946 in the Army.

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**Norman Phelps** of Stockport, Cheshire died on 1 October 2018 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1947 in the Army.

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**Thomas Adrian Mcewan** Pigott of Wadhurst, East Sussex died on 1 September 2018 aged 88. He served from 1949 to 1950 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Howard Reid** of Oswestry, Shropshire died on 25 September 2018 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1953 in the Army.

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**Margaret Mcphail Riach** of Coventry, died on 29 September 2018 aged 95. She served from 1942 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force.

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**George Samuel Richards** of East Cowes, Isle Of Wight died on 8 October 2018 aged 101. He served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Cyril Thomas Mayne Richardson** of Sidcup, Kent died on 11 September 2018 aged 95. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

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**James Ritchie** of Rogart, Sutherland died on 2 August 2018 aged 94. He served in 1945 in the Army.

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**Margaretta Emily Riviere** of Bristol, died on 2 September 2018 aged 96. She served from 1942 to 1945 in the Royal Navy.

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**Eric Roberts** of Cowbridge, South Glamorgan died on 20 September 2018 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1950 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Vincent Jackson Robins** of Southampton, Hampshire died on 17 September 2018 aged 89. He served from 1948 to 1951 in the Army.

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**Roy Joseph Roper** of Nottingham, died on 9 September 2018 aged 96. He served from 1941 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Sibyl May Sloane** of London, died on 10/7/2018 aged 92. She served from 1944 to 1949 in the Royal Navy.

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**Lewis Henry Smith** of Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire died on 10 October 2018 aged 94. He served from 1945 to 1969 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Edward Smith** of Sunderland, Tyne And Wear died on 11 September 2018 aged 92. He served in 1944 in the Army.

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**Edna Smout** of Camberley, Surrey died on 4 October 2018 aged 91. She served from 1945 to 1948 in the Army.

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**Ronald Stokes** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 22 July 2018 aged 83. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Army.

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**Ernest Leslie Stokes** of Christchurch, Dorset died on 11 September 2018 aged 89. He served in 1947 in the Army.

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**Oliver Lee Stone** of Harrow, Middlesex died on 15 September 2018 aged 85. He served from 1951 to 1951 in the Army.

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**Cyril Tibbs** of Hornchurch, Essex died on 26 August 2018 aged 83. He served from 1953 to 1958 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Albert Edward Tully** of Brighton, died on 26 July 2018 aged 93. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Eric Raymond Turford** of Rhayader, Powys died on 22 September 2018 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Army.

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**Philip Edward Vincent** of Lincoln, died on 15 July 2018 aged 94. He served from 1941 to 1945 in the Merchant Navy.

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**Sylvia Wilde** of Maidstone, Kent died on 21 September 2018 aged 85. She served from 1963 to 1971 in the Army.

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**Huw Williams** of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 1 September 2018 aged 103. He served from 1940 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force.

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**John Charles Wilson** of London, died on 3 July 2018 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Navy.

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# Sunshine on 'Sultan' - part 1

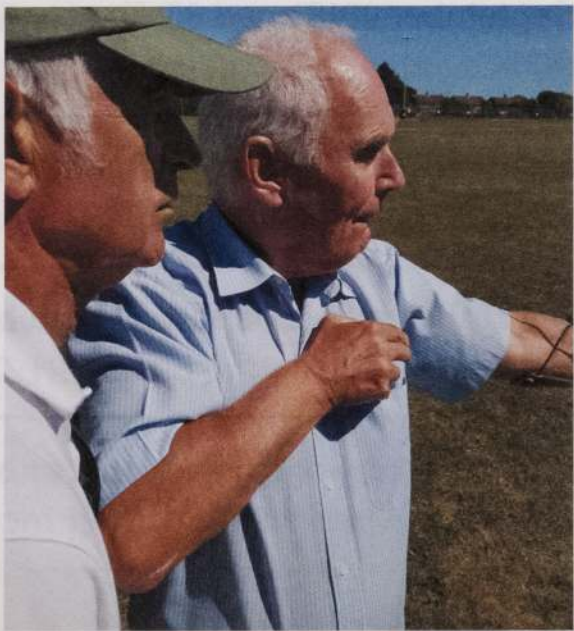
Fifteen of our veterans, and a band of willing helpers made their way to HMS Sultan for the start of the 2018 summer camp. Andy Salter tells all. Part two will follow in December's edition.

Summer camps at the naval shore base of HMS Sultan in Gosport, Hampshire are always something to look forward to. After our evening meal, we were formally welcomed to the warrant officers' and senior NCOs' mess, our home for the next week, by the mess president, Warrant Officer Steve Micaloff. We were delighted to welcome Terry Bullingham, Chris Currie and Horace Howkins as new campers, and very soon, with the bar open, the mess was buzzing with conversation as friendships were renewed or made.

After breakfast on the Saturday, we travelled the short distance to Gosport Cruising Club, where under the supervision of Iris Davies, Rear Commodore of the club, we were all on the water by 10 am in a range of vessels. With the new carrier HMS 'Queen Elizabeth' dominating the waterfront at Portsmouth Dockyard, we enjoyed a very pleasant time going around the harbour before

returning to the clubhouse for a delicious buffet lunch and quiz later on.

The hot weather continued on Sunday. A walk to the coast at Stokes Bay attracted a few campers, while others enjoyed a service at the Church of the Holy Trinity, situated within the establishment. Prior to a reading of the 'St Dunstan Prayer' during the service, we respectfully remembered the 'campers' who had "crossed the bar" since our last camp - Billy Miller, Brian Alexander and Don Planner. We also thought of campers and helpers who were recovering from operations or too unwell to join us.



**Picture:** Getting to grips on the archery field, find out more in part two next month



**Picture:** The Operation Gemini team about to go Dragon Boat racing

## Project Gemini's inaugural visit to South Africa

**Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson talks about an African adventure as part of Project Gemini**

In September, members Richard Haynes, Gary Tomlinson, Hugh Megarry, Steve Thomas and Colin Williamson, our President who has led Project Gemini from the beginning, embarked on an amazing adventure to visit our sister organisation, St. Dunstan's South Africa. They were accompanied by staff members Lee Evans, Glynis Gillam and Nicky Shaw.

A packed program of activities started with dinner and a "get to know you" over



a few glasses of Castle Draught, the flagship product of South African Breweries - an excellent pint it is too apparently!

During a visit to the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town - an impressive bastion fort dating to the 17th century and the oldest surviving building in South Africa - they were given a tour by a very knowledgeable and humorous tour guide who kept them entertained with anecdotes and historical facts. At one stage he even locked them in the ammunition cellar to experience how dark it was... much to the amusement of our totally blind veterans.

Other activities included Dragon boat racing in the placid waters of the lagoon, and a mini-safari at Buffelsfontein Wildlife Reserve followed by dinner that evening in one of Cape Town's most popular African restaurants, Mama Afrika. There they ate most of the animals seen at the game reserve! Crocodile kebabs, kudo steaks, warthog and ostrich were all on the menu.

En-route to Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, nestling in the eastern foot of Table Mountain, they passed the small but very elegant suburb of Llandudno, which has some of the most expensive properties in the whole of Cape Town.



**Picture:** South African Defence Force Sgt and war blinded veteran Zuko Mtwana and two of his colleagues at Cape Town Castle

### **Sharpshooting at Simonstown**

Simonstown naval base, the South African Navy's largest, was the next tour, then it was on to False Bay shooting range where all had a great time firing the CZ polymer pistol, the M4 carbine assault rifle, which fires a 5.56 round, and the .22 semi-automatic rifle. Staff member Glynis proved to be quite a sharpshooter! Annie (or Glynis) get your gun.

Table Mountain is the highlight of any visit to Cape Town. The cable cars hold up to 68 people, and revolve 360

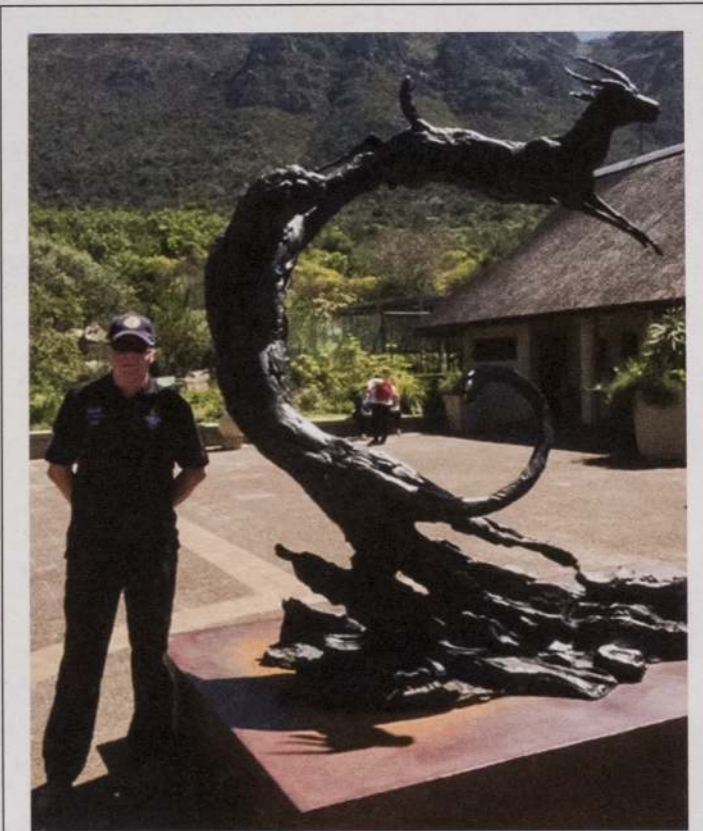
degrees when ascending the mountain, giving the sighted passengers an amazing view of the urban sprawl of Cape Town, Robben Island, where former South African president Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, and the epic and majestic mountains that surround the Cape Peninsular and dominate the skyline.

### **Synaptic demonstrations**

Synaptic, the UK based company that specialises in providing software for mobile phones and tablets for the visually impaired, gave us lunch, followed by technical talks and demonstrations of their devices and equipment.

During 'down time', when they weren't out and about, time was spent chatting with the St Dunstons members, sharing knowledge, talking about some of the coping strategies used by our members in their daily lives, and generally getting to understand their needs and frustrations in order to try and make their lives a little easier. True comradeship in every sense.

The trip concluded with us presenting St. Dunstan's CEO, Gareth Morgan, with two framed photographs taken in 1946 depicting members of St. Dunstan's South Africa producing their in-house magazine 'The Tembani Times'. Member Richard presented their Chairman, Brian Figaji, with a beautiful wood carving from his native North Yorkshire as a token of our appreciation for what had been an amazing week and everyone was given their Project Gemini bespoke coin and badge. Each member of Blind Veterans UK was presented with some small gifts produced in South Africa, leaving us with mementos of a very happy and successful trip.



**Picture:** Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson alongside an amazing sculpture at Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens








Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss

# Victory Over Blindness

More than 3,000 veterans lost their sight as a result of serving in the First World War. Making their way home from the front, they began the journey to rebuild their lives after sight loss. In 1915 our charity was founded to support them.

Blind Veterans UK continues to transform the lives of thousands more blind veterans. But, for every one that we support, there are ten more that we can't yet reach without your help. Those who have served our country deserve our support.

**[blindveterans.org.uk/victory](https://blindveterans.org.uk/victory)**

   #VictoryOverBlindness

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