

September 2018

Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



On the cover: Working age member Steve Birkin who is a Poomsea Taekwondo champion and a member of Team GB's Taekwondo squad. Pages 32 to 35.

Back page: Members of Blind Veterans UK and staff at The Thiepval Memorial during the 2018 Battlefield tour that was organised by the Brighton and Llandudno centres.

Photographs by Lisa Taylor, IT Instructor Llandudno.



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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.

Review Editor: You can telephone the Review Editor, on 020 7723 5021 or email revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk or write to Review Editor, Blind Veterans UK, 12 - 14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD.

Blind Veterans UK Calendar

Activities from the Brighton centre.

September.

Driving Week 2nd to 8th.

Fishing Week 9th to 15th.

Wood Week 24th to 28th

Dance Week 23rd to 29th.

Amateur Radio Week 30th to 6th October.

October.

Technology Week 14th to 20th.

Bowling Club Fortnight 14th to 27th.

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 391500. If you have care needs please first speak with your Team Leader or Community Support Worker.

Activities from the Llandudno centre.

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.

November.

Military Week 4th. Wood Week 19th.

December.

Christmas Crafts 3rd and 10th.

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.

In my first term as a Cranwell cadet in 1968 it came as a shock to discover that I was not immediately going to be launched into the wide blue yonder but instead had to undertake a further period of academic study. In addition to learning about airmanship, physics, avionics, signals, aerodynamics, thermodynamics, and a bunch of other 'dynamics' now long-forgotten, we were also required to take an elective module. While most of my aviator chums chose something technical, I opted for the humanities — specifically the literature of the Great War.

The first book my tutor gave me to study was *Covenant With Death*, by John Harris. As a schoolboy I had already read *The Sea Shall Not Have Them*, by the same author, so I was pleasantly surprised to discover I was going to be reading a novel of derring-do. As ever in my life, first impressions were wrong. *Covenant With Death* is a harrowing, gritty story of war, recounted not from the point of view of academics, politicians, strategists or commanders but instead from the perspective of ordinary soldiers. It follows a Pals Battalion from its raising in Sheffield to its destruction at the Somme in 1916. Quite apart from the deliberately stark narrative that covers the social history of the day, what came out most for me was the power of comradeship amongst these men and the deep emptiness they felt when that bond was broken. Indeed, in his introduction to the novel Louis de Bernieres likens it to an asexual love story, akin to what the Aussies call "mateship". Nothing within the book seems contrived; everything it says is wholly believable. I am pretty sure my tutor wanted me to understand this. The book certainly rocked any jaunty self-belief in my own invincibility and — my tutor's goal, I think — caused me to re-examine whether the profession of arms was for me. I have reflected on it often in my career, not just as life changed for me but even more when I had responsibility for the lives of others.

All this came back in a flood on August the 8th this year, when I went to Ypres with Sue, my wife, to represent Blind Veterans UK at the Royal British Legion commemoration of the last 100 days of the Great War and the 90th anniversary of the Great Pilgrimage. As one would expect from the RBL, the day was meticulously planned and perfectly executed. It centred on a parade of over 1,100 standards through the Menin Gate, followed by a simple but moving Remembrance service within the Gate and culminating with the laying of over 1,000 wreaths by branches and individuals from across the UK (one by Simon Brown).

The only sadness was that the ceremony clashed with a similar commemoration at Amiens on the same day attended by HRH the Duke of Cambridge and the Prime Minister, which naturally drew all the media attention. Put simply, Amiens

is where the last great Allied offensive began which directly led to the Central Powers' defeat and the Armistice some 100 days later. So why choose Ypres as the RBL location? For many British soldiers of the time, Ypres was entirely synonymous with the Great War. Notwithstanding its strategic importance as a salient into the German front line, for thousands of soldiers Ypres was not only an oft-fought battlefield but at other times also their departure point for the front line.

By the end of the war over 250,000 British and Commonwealth soldiers had died in the Ypres salient, of whom some 90,000 have no grave. At the eastern exit from the town, the Menin Gate Memorial to the Missing, designed by Sir Reginald Blomfield in 1921, commemorates 54,395 soldiers who died in the salient but whose bodies have never been found or identified. In 1919 Winston Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, said "A more sacred place for the British than Ypres does not exist in the world". Unsurprisingly Field Marshal Haig directed that Ypres would be the focal point for the Great Pilgrimage of 11,000 veterans and widows in 1928. If Amiens draws the attention of politicians and historians, Ypres is the place of the people.

Ypres also holds a special place in our history. The Second Battle of Ypres in 1915 saw the first use of poison gas, when the German Army released 171 tons of chlorine gas against predominantly French colonial troops, the effects of which were then felt by French and Canadian forces in their counter-attack. As the war progressed both sides developed chemical weapons and defensive measures, but not before Britain saw far too many young men returning having been blinded in combat. And this, of course, was the major stimulus for Sir Arthur Pearson to found St Dunstan's.

My life has odd strands of continuity within it. This one runs from my earliest days in the RAF — and a slightly rebellious streak that made me take a course in humanities — to a hugely moving and meaningful ceremony representing Blind Veterans at a Commonwealth War Grave some 50 years later, all connected through a chance encounter with a powerfully emotional novel. It seems this strand has further still to run.

Next month (October) we will unveil a fabulous commemoration of our own. 'Victory Over Blindness', a bronze statue with its origins in the imagery used to celebrate our centenary, will be unveiled in Piccadilly station, Manchester. The symbolism of the sculpture is, I am certain, enormously important, not least in binding together our earliest history as St Dunstan's to our work now as Blind Veterans UK. So too is the location. The industrial north of 1914 raised huge numbers of soldiers in Pals Battalions. Marching off, full of jingoism and optimism, far too many never returned and more still came back to their home towns maimed and broken. It seems right that Piccadilly station, which saw so many out and far fewer home, should have a lasting memorial to that sacrifice: "We will remember them".

It's goodbye from me, Catherine Goodier, and thank you for the wonderful memories and laughter.

By the time you read this I will have left Blind Veterans UK, and I want to thank you for eight glorious years of laughter, some truly wonderful memories, and utterly priceless life experiences. There are so many of you that I would like to name, but sadly due to paucity of space can't, but you each know who you are. I want to thank you for inviting me into your lives and sharing your experiences through the Review as it has been an absolute joy.

I would like to make a very public thank you to my colleagues on the Review, past and present. To start, a massive thank you to past Chairmen Andy Keeling and Tim Davis, and to Colin Williamson, the Review's Contributing Editor and the charity's President. You are each the perfect combination of wit and wisdom and have helped me so much. Andy, I know that Alan Saunders family will never forget the way you organised for the Royal Marine's bugler and so many impressive representatives from the Royal Marines to attend his funeral, as you shone light on their darkest day. Tim, like Andy, for everything you've done behind the scenes for so many. Steve Sparkes still speaks of your offer to fly him and his partner Nikki to a Reunion lunch. Colin, I remain deeply impressed with everything you have achieved and will achieve with Project Gemini. Billy Baxter thank you for your podcasts. How to describe Billy? Legend, lion heart, wise and funny. David Castleton, a former editor of the Review, who after his retirement travelled to London each month to read the Talking Review, and you couldn't meet a better person. David's book, 'In The Mind's Eye, the war blinded veterans of St. Dunstan's,' remains my favourite book about the charity. Of course along with Sir Arthur Pearson's, Lord Fraser's and V.M. Duche's. Rob Baker, Archivist, for always coming up trumps with information and photos, and for being an all round good guy. Quiz Master Ron Russell for the quizzes. Dianna Adler and Andrew Cooper who each month read the Talking Review and do it so well. Lucy Skilbeck and her students at RADA, who give the breath of life as they read articles and poems that were penned by the blinded veterans of WWI. Damian Edwards and Liz Wanden at Newnorth, the Review's printers. Mike Rouse at MRA Studios for distributing the Talking and Braille Review.

And thank you to the man who is without doubt a superstar, Ray Hazan OBE, past editor of the Review and the charity's former President. As it was such a daunting task to follow in Ray's footsteps and I didn't even try as you can't improve on perfection.

Forty one years ago Ray started the Talking Review that so many of you listen to each month, but in 1977 it was a first for the charity and truly ground breaking. Ray also founded the Ski Club, now in its 41st year, and trialled the early talking computers. Ray is an achiever with a GSOH, and rather than write about me, I'd rather write about Ray and the history of the Talking Review.

Speaking of those early editions Ray said, "I joined St Dunstan's PR department in 1977 and the first job I was given by my boss David Castleton was to help the blind and handless St Dunstaners. Their wives and husbands read the Review to them, but only reading what they thought they wanted to hear. They got a bit hacked off with this so my first responsibility was to put the Review on cassette. We had a lovely reader, Steven Jack, who read a lot for the Talking Books Library. He'd been an actor between the wars and was renowned for his different accents. I'd go to his house with a reel to reel tape recorder, and that was copied onto a cassette and copies made. So that's where the Talking Review started in 1977. Thankfully it was well received as men and women who couldn't read Braille no longer had to rely on well intentioned people to read to them. I would interview people like Henry Perrett, who went through the Battle of the Somme, only to be blinded at Ypres, and to interview people from the First World War was a great privilege and one I was honoured to do."

To finish, I'd like to thank Sir Arthur Pearson Bt GBE, for founding this life changing charity. General Sir Peter de la Billière for securing the interview with Lord Ashcroft. Nick Caplin for agreeing to the ceremony at the Bastion Memorial Wall. And finally, Joan Osborne for many happy hours of conversation and laughter and insights into our history. Joan has known the charity her entire life as her father was blinded at Passchendaele and Joan worked in the Music Department at Church Stretton, our WWII home. She has run the Brighton Club for more than 60 years and so much more. Like Ray Hazan and many others, Joan is part of the fabric of this life changing charity.



Picture: Ray Hazan OBE, right, interviews Henry Perrett.

Please continue to send emails to revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk and telephone 020 7723 5021.

My life. By Alan Wortley.

As part of his family history project Alan sent this wonderful testament of life into the Review.

Alan Frederick Wortley, born 23rd November 1934, now aged 83 and a half and superbly fit. Go for long hikes over the Sussex Downs. Do a physical routine every morning after rising from bed at 0720 hours, press ups, squats, sit ups, running on the spot, etcetera.

Born in York in a tiny terraced house at the edge of the River Ouse, in a street which some comedian named Cherry Street! I say comedian because, as far as I know, there was not a tree in the street, let alone a cherry tree. At four pounds in weight and two months premature I was not the healthiest looking infant in the district. After a year or two we were offered a council house on the edge of Heslington village where the air was good, but not so the name of the street — Thief Lane! We lived at number 93.

I attended St Laurence Street Primary School from the age of five and found lessons fairly easy. That is when the Germans were not bombing us during the Second World War! If there was a raid after midnight we were allowed to go into school at 10am instead of 9am. Then, lucky me, I had a bit of good fortune with Forster's Education Act at the end of the War when I sat a scholarship test and was allowed to go to Grammar School at Archbishop Holgate's in Lord Mayor's Walk. Stupidly, I left school before sitting the School Certificate, but later made up the loss while serving in the Royal Navy.

I worked for a few months in a factory, but yearned for adventure, and at the age of 17, caught a bus to Hull and enlisted in the Navy. Down to Plymouth I went and trained as a Boy Stoker! Learned sailing skills and rowing a 'whaler' and coping with a Lee Enfield rifle.

On HMS Swiftsure, along with many other ships of many different Navy's, we formed a mighty display to greet our new Queen Elizabeth who had just been crowned. The cheers rang out as Her Majesty passed each ship in her yacht.

We lost a very good Officer; a 'frogman,' Commander Crabbe, who got too close to a potential enemy ship and he paid with his life.

On the same cruiser, north of Iceland, in pitch darkness and in foul weather, we were rammed by a destroyer that turned to port instead of starboard. We had a hole in us big enough for two double decker buses to drive through, and then we caught fire. The fire was spreading from stem to stern and it took a huge effort to drag ourselves to a sheltered cove to 'Save our Skins'. The other ship was HMS Diamond and 30 feet had ripped off its bow, but it managed to limp away to safety. How the ammunition we carried did not explode in the fire we never knew.

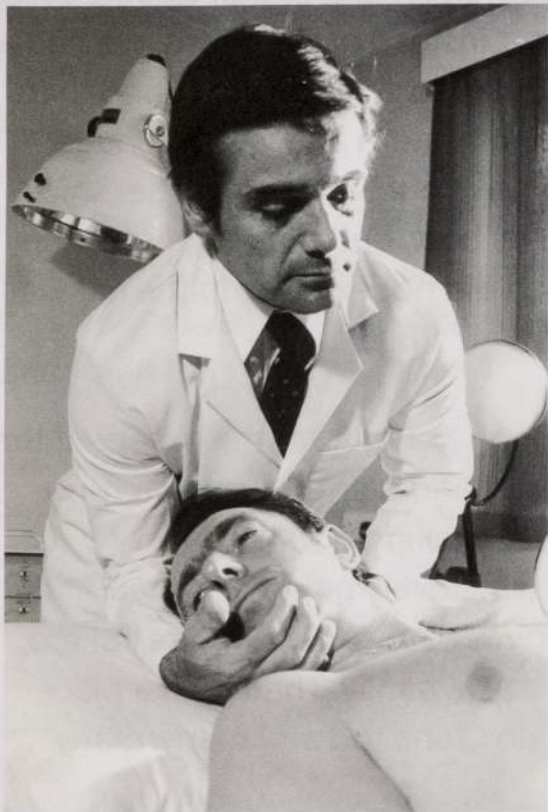
The most wonderful port I ever went to was Hong Kong. After the misery of the war, Hong Kong was a neon lit beacon of wonder and plenty. Busy enterprising people working in small factories in every street, making goods of every description to sell. The dance halls were busy with lovely girls, the restaurants and pubs were ablaze with life: it was awe inspiring. Africa was wonderful too, and now, a daughter lives there with her wonderful family. There was a place called Korea, which I found interesting: and Indo China too and many, many other exotic places.

But I did have a bit of bad luck in Borneo. The upshot being that after a spell in hospital I lost my eyesight when my optic nerves became kaput. After a few enjoyable weeks in a Kenyan hospital in Nairobi I ended up back in the United Kingdom and found myself at St Dunstan's. The Matron asked an undergraduate student from Sussex University who helped out there in her spare time, "Can you help a young chap who only came in yesterday?" Her name was Joan Hughes.

St Dunstan's made it possible for me to train as a physiotherapist and Joan and I married and ran our own combined physio and chiropody practice in Lincoln. So, out of blindness came love and the most amazing family of three children and ten grandchildren.

I could not have had a better or more interesting life. I am truly blessed and most grateful. Thank you Joan, my wife, and my fantastic family.

Photographs are on the following page.



Picture: Physiotherapist Alan Wortley at work. **Photo** by David Castleton.



Picture: Alan and Joan Wortley trip the light fantastic at a dance at the Brighton centre.

Letters to the Editor.

As we always want to hear from you please send your letters to the editor to revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk or post to Review Editor, Blind Veterans UK, 12 - 14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD.

Dear Editor,

I send my heartiest congratulations to Ray Peart who was recognised in Her Majesty's Birthday Honours with the award of the well deserved British Empire Medal. Ray and I first met on our initial course many moons ago. As the Ovingdean building was on an extensive rebuild at that time we stayed in York Town and did most of our training there, typing, Braille and mobility. We travelled up to the main building each day by minibus to do arts and crafts plus woodwork.

Well done Ray.

Yours faithfully,

Gerry Jones.



Picture: Ray Peart BEM in Paternoster Square.

Work is underway with the Community IT team.

Erica Allison, Community IT Manager, told the Review about the IT service that is taking place in the communities across the country. Many of you will already know Erica, as from 2014 to 2017 she was an IT Instructor at the Llandudno centre, and you may already have benefited from support with the four Community IT Instructors in her team.

Speaking about the move from IT training at the Llandudno centre to heading up the delivery of a new IT service in the Community, Erica said, "I loved working with so many members at the Llandudno centre and being part of a fantastic team, but decided to move into the Community as I'm excited by change and the development and opportunities that can bring. I have a new fantastic team to work with, and as my role covers the whole of the UK the first action was to recruit a team of Community IT Instructors, who are Sunny Bains, Edward Howard, Carol Johnston and Rebecca Newton-Hunt.



Picture: Erica Allison with her team of from left to right Sunny Bains, Rebecca Newton-Hunt, Carol Johnston and Edward Howard.

"They work in various locations across the UK carrying out one to one visits in members' homes and often work with people who are unable to attend IT training at a centre or in a local venue. That means someone who would have been unable to benefit from the IT service can have an IT assessment and training at home. I'm enjoying the new role immensely, and am fully aware there's a huge need for this work, as having been an IT instructor I know how technology can benefit you by increasing independence and confidence and decreasing isolation and enabling you to become part of the modern world.

"We have also piloted a group training course, which we are now focussing on when the team will identify members who live in the same area to set up localised group training. That means there will be more of a social aspect to the training, as for example Edd would identify members in Community 12 to find members in the Lincolnshire area. He would contact them and arrange for everyone to collectively attend the same venue one day a week for approximately six weeks for training. It means you are seen more locally and you get to meet your fellow members who live close to you. That means you can benefit from peer support and perhaps keep in touch with each other when the course has finished. The IT Instructors also hope to increase attendance at Lunch Clubs, Reunions and other social events where they can meet you and answer your IT queries. There's a massive need for this work and we are hoping to grow the service, but it's early days yet.

"We're also piloting an IT member volunteering programme and we are lucky to have four wonderful new IT member volunteers who will support you at home or in your community. Their role includes helping the IT Instructors by providing you with further IT support after initial training when needed, supporting group training sessions and offering support at Lunch Clubs and social events. Again this is something that we are looking to grow and if you would like to offer your support as an IT volunteer, please contact the ROVI/IT Helpline who will pass on your details to me."

You can contact the team through the ROVI/IT Helpline on 01273 391447 or email rovi-it@blindveterans.org.uk

Please sponsor working age member Darren Blanks as he cycles around Brands Hatch for 24 hours.

Those of you who know Darren Blanks, or if you have not yet met Darren you may have read his interview in the July Review, will know that he has an abundance of energy that he channels into raising awareness and money for Blind Veterans UK. On the 15th of September, Darren, who completed two tours of Iraq with the King's Royal Hussars, will cycle in tandem with his pilot Helyn around Brands Hatch for 24 hours to raise money for Blind Veterans UK.

If you would like to sponsor Darren you can telephone Stacey Jones at the Brighton centre on 01273 307811. Or go to Darren's justgiving page at [justgiving.com/fundraising/darren-blanks24cycling](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/darren-blanks24cycling)

Diane Mountford answers the Review's 10 Questions.

Having returned from an extremely enjoyable, albeit very emotional battlefield tour of Ypres and the Somme, where her grandfather fought in WWI, Diane penned the poem Remembrance for those, who, unlike her grandfather did not return home. Her poem is included in the Talking Review. Diane also took time to answer the Review's 10 questions.

1. What was your service and what did you most enjoy?

I served in the Royal Air Force as an air traffic control assistant. I had a lot of fun and learned a lot about people as well as the military and aviation. I have always loved anything to do with aeroplanes and being based at RAF Leeming and then RAF Lyneham, which were both active airfields, I was able to see quite a lot of those big silver birds in the sky! I was also the first WRAF posted in to Leeming so I won't say any more about that one.

2. What was your favourite job post services?

After leaving the RAF I worked as cabin crew with Monarch airlines, but only for one season as I got married and went to live in Malaya. So I would say my favourite job came much later on when I ran my own business as a restaurant and hotel assessor. I have a lifelong love affair with food and this gave me the opportunity to be paid to enjoy some wonderful meals (and occasionally some awful ones). I also had to report to my clients on all the aspects of standards and service. Quite often the results of these assessments would be used to grade venues for star ratings and so on. It was a great job but I had to leave it when my sight became too bad to deal with reports from my assessment team. I handed over the controls to one of my trusted colleagues and I think the setup is still going quite well. Since then I've been assisting my husband with his business.

3. What's your favourite memory?

When my youngest daughter, Rowan, was six months old she became very seriously ill with meningo-encephalitis. The medical team told us that she was very badly brain damaged. Needless to say it was utterly devastating. It was Christmas 1982 and she lay in a deep coma in a little crib underneath an open window. Anything to try to reduce her high temperature. I went home to spend Christmas day with my children and my family. On Boxing Day she was no better. We spent all day with her then returned home to our other daughters. The following morning when we went back into the intensive care unit she was

not in her room and her cot was empty. A nurse took us into the children's ward and she was standing up holding onto bars of a baby bed and shouting out to us. It truly felt like a miracle. I shall remember that wonderful sight for the rest of my life. I'm pleased to say my daughter, now 36 years old, is beautiful, healthy and highly talented.

4. What's the most important lesson life has taught you?

Never give up. I adhere to the wise words of Sir Winston Churchill "keep bugging on". And from Shawshank Redemption, "You either get busy living or you get busy dying." I have instructed the song "Hold on tight to your dream" by ELO to be played at my funeral. It's my message.

5. What makes you happy?

Lots of things make me happy. Waking up every day for one thing! But contentment is more important to me and being with my wonderful husband Richard, my daughters and grandchildren, my cats, my family, my friends, is what makes for a contented soul.

6. What qualities do you admire in others?

I very much value the 'three Rs,' respect, responsibility, reliability. Along with kindness, compassion, integrity and loyalty. One of the things I really treasure about being a blind veteran is the loyalty and camaraderie that embraces us. You can't put a price on those qualities.

7. What's your irrational fear?

I don't really have any irrational fears. I do have a fear of being buried alive or burned to death but I think they're both quite rational. I'm not frightened of anything or anyone as far as I am aware.

8. What's your favourite place?

I really shouldn't answer this question because my favourite place is very easy to visit and I don't want everybody else going there. But if you twist my arm I will admit it is Jersey in the Channel Islands. I have been visiting since I was five years old and I still love it as much as ever. Unfortunately you need to have at least £20 million in the bank to live there so I think it's fairly unlikely that I will retire there. I also love Guernsey as it's the best place in the world for food. And that's saying something as I've eaten in many parts of the world and had some wonderful meals, but Guernsey sticks in my mind most of all.

9. What's the biggest challenge you've overcome as a blind veteran?

Since I became a blind veteran I have learnt so much and really enjoy my life as a blind woman. About four years ago I joined the GOAL Group and as we have to make our own way on public transport to the venues I found it quite challenging at first. Now I really enjoy it, although I do get nervous at the start of every journey, especially as passenger assistance fails the system so many times. I would like to take on some of the physical challenges, but at the moment I am still recovering from breaking my back so I have to take things steady. That's my excuse, anyway.

10. What is the most useful piece of training or equipment?

I've enjoyed all the training from Blind Veterans UK but using this voice to text on my iPad has been very beneficial. I love my iPad. I also love the hot water dispenser in my kitchen and the insulated oven gloves and the Kevlar glove. My hands are in much better condition since acquiring those. I do a lot of cooking (it's that food thing again) and very much enjoy all of the equipment.



Picture: Cool, calm and collected sky goddess Diane Mountford.

Meet our working age Regional Member Representatives.

There are 392 working age members in Blind Veterans UK, who account for 8% of the total population of the membership, and Glynis Gillam, Working Age Member Case Manager and Kevin Alderton, Working Age Member Coordinator are responsible for ensuring that they are at the heart of the charity's work.

Here Kevin Alderton writes about the importance of the work of the appointed five Regional Member Representatives.

Following our strategic review in April 2016, it was decided that we needed to completely revamp and reorganise our Working Age Group (WAG) committee. After an extensive restructuring process, we decided that the Working Age Member (WAM) committee should be represented by members from our newly restructured regions. In line with that an invitation was sent to working age members inviting them to apply, and I am delighted to say that we now have five regional representatives in place, who are committed to representing members across the five regions. They are:

Sue Eyles for the South East region.

Alan Walker for the East/Midlands region.

Darren Blanks for the North West/Scotland region.

Richard Cruice for the North East/West region.

Mark Pile for the South West region.

The work of the Regional Member Representatives.

Our regional member representatives have two main purposes. Primarily they are your link to us, and our link to you, the charity's working age members. This means that if you have a suggestion you would like to feed into the WAM committee, or have knowledge of something that might be of interest to others within your area, then let them know.

The second main aspect of their voluntary role is to help and assist with the long term planning of peer support events where you live. We are very conscious that not everyone is able to travel great distances, either alone or accompanied. This is why we want to bring more activities and training closer to you and our communities. Working closely with our colleagues within the community teams we are keen to support you more effectively in your local areas.

However, don't worry, we shall continue to run larger events around the country and within our centres.

If you are a working age member of the charity, and currently we focus our services towards members under the age of 66, but they are always willing to hear suggestions from everyone, and you can contact your regional representatives at:

Sue Eyles, South East Region sue.eyles@blindveterans.org.uk

Alan Walker, East/Midlands alan.walker@blindveterans.org.uk

Darren Blanks, North West/Scotland darren.blanks@blindveterans.org.uk

Richard Cruice, North East/West richard.cruice@blindveterans.org.uk

Mark Pile, South West mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk

They will be delighted to hear from you.

Quiz Master Ron Russell's Match Me With My Home Quiz.

- | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. Badger. | 2. Beaver. | 3. Bee. |
| 4. Bird. | 5. Cow. | 6. Dog. |
| 7. Eagle. | 8. Fowl. | 9. Fox. |
| 10. Hare. | 11. Horse. | 12. Lion. |
| 13. Mouse. | 14. Otter. | 15. Pig. |

Answers on page 50.

Sparky & Mick in Cockleshell Pacific Endeavour/Bojangles are on the home leg to Hawaii.

The latest update from the Great Pacific Race on Race Day 74, August 19th, is that our very own sea gods, Sparky and Mick Dawson, have 249 NM to finish and they have so far rowed for 2265 NM. This means they could potentially reach Hawaii by the month's end. The boys, both former Royal Marines and Falkland's veterans, have really demonstrated great team work as they have no doubt reached into their reserves of mental and physical stamina. How proud we all are of them and can't wait to welcome them when they drop into the Brighton centre on their return.

Thank you to everyone who has sent them messages of support as they row towards the finish and into the records books. Please continue to send your messages via Iridium, which is free, at www.messaging.iridium.com and use number 881623435461.

In his latest update Mick finished with: "Very much on the home leg now, tired but in good spirits and looking forward to a safe conclusion of what's been a tough row. If it was easy though, everybody would do it."



Picture: A thumbs up from Mick Dawson in choppy waters. What great spirit he and Sparky possess.

Welcome to Blind Veterans UK's Chaplain.

Having recently returned from the battlefield tour of France and Belgium that was organised collaboratively by the Brighton and Llandudno centres, our new Chaplain, Rev Clare Callahan, has experienced a warm welcome into the family of Blind Veterans UK. Here is Clare's account of her path to the charity.

I have been a chaplain in the Royal Army Chaplains' Department for nearly nine years, and I knew I would be retiring in July 2018 due to my age. During that time I served in Germany with the Royal Engineers and the Royal Artillery, with the infantry in Cyprus, with the Royal Signals' training in Blandford, deployed to Afghanistan for six months and served in Australia for four months. I had been a primary schoolteacher and full time mother to two children before becoming a minister in the United Reformed Church (Congregational and Presbyterian churches). Prior to joining the Army I had been a part time hospital chaplain and served three churches for three years, having been ordained in 2005.

Blind Veterans UK had been commended to me by a chaplaincy colleague who was aware that the charity was looking for a chaplain. Nearly two years has gone by since that initial conversation and subsequent visits and interviews and discernment about the role. I was delighted and excited to be appointed and officially began on 1st August 2018.

I do consider this to be a full time role and the first few days in post have proved it! I will be based at the Brighton centre and have moved to the area to facilitate that. My duties will involve the leading of services at the centre as and when required; whether they are Sunday worship services, baptisms, weddings, funerals, memorials, commemorations. However I see this as just one aspect amongst many. My particular wish is to be the true role of the chaplain which is to be that pastoral carer for everyone whether they are members, residents, staff, or family; wherever they are. The chaplain goes to where you are and accompanies you on your life journey; irrelevant of issues of faith, gender, race, or culture.

I also welcome any ideas and suggestions as to how I can continue to shape this role as I work to establish it.

Since I had some leave in order to move to Brighton I was able to attend the

battlefield tour at the end of July which was a privilege. The levels of physical, mental, emotional and social tiredness were high, and yet everyone continued to laugh, cry and care together as we journeyed to some deep and dark places. I was invited to speak at Tyne Cot Cemetery and the Thiepval Memorial. I felt that in the midst of the overwhelming statistics and information which we were absorbing from our two amazing guides, it was important to ground these thoughts and emotions into personal stories and experiences. I chose to read an extract from *All Quiet on The Western Front*, and also two poems by G.A Studdert-Kennedy who had been a chaplain in the First World War. The poem, *A Soldier for his Mate*, seemed appropriate at Tyne Cot with its rows and rows of graves, many only 'Known Unto God.' At Thiepval I read, *I Know Not Where They Have Laid Him*, which speaks the passionate and heartfelt words of a mother. Every one of those soldiers, be they British, American, South African, Indian, French or German was a mother's son. We will remember them.



Picture: Rev Clare Callahan, Blind Veterans UK's newly appointed Chaplain, recites 'I Know Not Where They Have Laid Him' at The Thiepval Memorial.

Photo: Lisa Taylor, IT Instructor Llandudno.

Lest We Forget. The 2018 Battlefield Pilgrimage of France and Belgium.

Although he had previously visited the battlefields of the First World War where his father and uncle fought, Normandy veteran Les Hammond, who served in the Middle East and Europe during WWII, was moved by the journey through France and Belgium where so many gave their lives. "The high points were the Menin Gate Memorial when we marched up the steps, which I'd never noticed before, and laid our crosses and saluted the dead. I had previously read the exhortation from Binyon's Fallen at the Menin Gate in 2012 and 2017, so am conscious of the very terrible loss of life and the sacrifice. On the last day we went to the Thiepval Memorial and we all stood there and sang WWI songs to them and that was very moving. My father came back from the Somme in 1916 and as he had lost a leg in battle he joined BLESMA. His youngest brother, who was in the Royal Fusiliers, must have fought at Passchendaele, but he did not return home from the War. At the time it was my uncle who was engaged to my mother, and when my father was invalided home, and after my uncle's death, they became friends and then sweethearts and married. My father never spoke of the war, just as I haven't spoken about Normandy to my sons. You don't go into detail and I think that was common to a lot of fathers and sons. The battlefield tour was very moving and very well organised and I would like to thank the staff as we were so well looked after."

Thiepval Memorial is the largest Commonwealth Memorial to the missing in the world as it commemorates more than 72,000 men of British and South African forces who died in the Somme sector before 20th March 1918 and have no known grave, the majority of whom died during the Somme offensive of 1916.

As history has shown, for each man who returned home, whole in body, though perhaps emotionally wounded, shell-shocked and sorely hurt in mind, many had also been physically wounded and our charity was on hand to welcome those blinded. One soldier blinded on the Somme was RJV, who we believe to be Richard J Vine. A draughtsman before the war he enlisted on 4th September 1914 and as Vine, L/Cpl Richard J. No 13282, 10th West Yorkshire Regiment, he was blinded in Fricourt on 1st July 1916, the first day. His poem, The Eve of Call Up, is included in the Talking Review. A recording of Leo Neasham's account of how he was blinded on the Somme in 1916 is in the Talking Review, along with James Shaw's account of the gas attack in France that blinded him.

John Endres, a former Staff Sergeant who served in the Royal Dragoon Guards for 23 years in Germany, Libya, Egypt, Palestine, Scotland and Ireland said, "Lisa Taylor was my guide for the tour and I could not have found anybody better. At the Menin Gate Memorial Lisa helped me try to trace my uncle, as I thought he may be remembered there. We didn't find him on the Menin Gate, but we did at the Thiepval Memorial. That was quite emotional, and the whole experience of the tour was emotional. I didn't know my uncle, but when I was young my mother told me she had a brother who had died, and I knew it was either at Passchendaele or on the Somme. My dad joined the Welch Regiment in 1914 when he was 18 and he was badly gassed on the Somme. He was sent back to England where he spent a long time in hospital. He didn't talk about it, but as far as I know he was never the same person, as when I was born he was quite poorly. Having relations who were killed and wounded I've read a lot of books about the First World War and it was a time to think of family and those who were killed." John had not been to the Menin Gate since 1964, when, with his Regiment, they marched up to the Memorial as a full squadron.



Picture: Bob Irons, Lisa Taylor IT Instructor at the Llandudno centre, and former Staff Sergeant, blind veteran, John Endres.

Lisa Taylor, IT Instructor Llandudno centre said, "It was a privilege to escort John on the battlefield tour and to help him find his uncle's name. During the tour we enjoyed many interesting conversations."

John Poyner also had a special connection to the former battlefields of France: "My dad's youngest brother, Sydney Poyner 12803, was killed in France and we laid a wreath on his grave at Sierra Road No 2 Cemetery. He was killed on 23rd July 1916 at the Battle of Guillemont when he fought with the 19th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment, 4th City Pals. He survived the early days of the Somme only to be killed on the barbed wire as it hadn't been cut. He was only 16 as he had lied about his age."

That date, 23rd July 1916, is an important one in Blind Veterans UK's history as it was the day Lord Fraser of Lonsdale, our second Chairman, was blinded. As Lieutenant William Jocelyn Ian Fraser of the King's Shropshire Light Infantry he was blinded on 23rd July 1916 during the Battle of the Somme, when he was just 18 years of age. Below is an extract from his account.

'The day I was struck I had spent that morning in charge of a burial party, finding a last resting place for some of those who would not grow old as we that were left have grown old. We had fought in the afternoon, when I was knocked out by a bullet in the head. I am not sure if I lost consciousness, but I remember being bandaged up. I recalled my first experience under artillery bombardment. I had been frightened — frightened on two accounts: first of all for my own life and limb; and secondly, frightened lest I should let the show down; but I got over this as we all did, and though I continued to be frightened from time to time I got used to shell fire, and to crawling about and being sniped at, and to all the other hazards of that war, and even though later on shell splinters and bullets may have come very near to me, I was never so frightened again as I had been at first.

'When I was hit I remember being wheeled along on a stretcher — one of those flat things on a pair of wheels, rather like the barrows from which hawkers sell fruit. We seemed to go for miles down the Pozières-Bapaume road — a shell-swept road. I remember an injection of anti-tetanus serum, and the doctor marking a cross upon my forehead with indelible pencil. He told me about this; it was a sign that I had been inoculated, so that the next doctor wouldn't do it again. I remember thinking that was rather funny. Looking back now, I can only think of odd things that happened during these weeks — my cousin Lilia Howard who came out to see me, brought out by the Red Cross, because I was on the danger list, and who read to me for hours while I lay in the Casino at Le Touquet, which had been converted into a hospital.'

For Roger Breese, who served in the RAF, being part of the tour reminded him of conversations with his father. "I was fortunate to be picked from the ballot to take part in the battlefield tour and I am very grateful and appreciate everything that was done for me during the tour. As my father fought in the First World War, in Gallipoli and Palestine, I had the good fortune to attend commemorative events in Gallipoli in 2015 and Palestine in 2017. I was keen to go on this battlefield tour as he spent the last three months of the war in Belgium or France. My father joined a cavalry regiment in 1912 at the age of 18, and he was called up with the horses in 1914. When one of the guides spoke about a mascot of a South African Regiment, a baboon, it brought to mind something my father told me, although he didn't tell me much about the war, he did mention that his Regiment bought their donkey back as their mascot. The other remark was how a soldier was identified because his name and number was on his cut throat razor. That reminded me of how in about 1949 my father got his cut throat razor out and showed me how one should shave one's self. I'm still trying to trace where my father would have fought and I'm grateful to have attended the tour and to have experienced where he may have been."



Picture: Beside the Cross of Sacrifice, Standard Bearer Alan Walker, Rev Clare Callahan, Billy Baxter and Bob Irons at The Commonwealth War Graves Commission's military cemetery at Tyne Cot.

In the August 1928 Review, WWI St Dunstaner W. Lowings, who fought at Wipers, wrote movingly of the cemeteries: "I have refrained from mentioning the cemeteries we visited by name, but in our travels we did not miss one, and these sacred spots which are "for ever England," are well cared for and reverently kept; just quiet resting places, where good soldiers sleep, awaiting the last Reveille."

Working age member Charlie Parkinson found the battlefield tour profoundly moving. "As ex Service personnel it was an honour to pay our respects to those lads who gave everything for us. It was overwhelming, and I've never been so moved or cried so much, as it was humbling to think of everything they did for us. It was also very patriotic. Being there brought everything into perspective and I think everyone should visit the graves to understand the debt we owe for their sacrifice. If they hadn't fought for us we wouldn't live as we do today. I saw the graves of lads from the King's Liverpool Regiment and the King's Manchester Regiment, that later merged to form the 1st Battalion King's Regiment I served with, and that was moving. The battlefield tour was well thought out and it was good that the Llandudno and Brighton centres worked together to make the tour happen, as we are united as one as Blind Veterans UK, formerly St Dunstan's. I salute Sir Arthur Pearson and am so thankful that he organised St Dunstan's as this charity saved my life.



Picture: Charlie Parkinson, left, and Alan Walker, front right, at the Menin Gate Memorial. **Photos by:** Lisa Taylor IT Instructor Llandudno.

We finish with Ken Grimward: "The most poignant thoughts of this tour really started at Ypres with thousands of people standing in silence in this magnificent setting at the Menin Gate. The intensity of the moment made me feel honoured to be present. As the time grew near to 8.00pm the buglers played the opening tones for the service to begin, and in good military fashion, we all lined up ready to lay our crosses. I was proud to escort two guardsmen, one either side of me, and we linked arms and step by step we marched up the massive staircase to lay our crosses and salute. We about turned and slowly descended and marched back in line. I was deeply moved as I thought of the huge loss of life I had seen in the many cemeteries in the villages. By now the atmosphere at the Menin Gate was intense and the buglers sounded their last notes to bring proceedings to a close as we began to line up for departure. I also thought of my late brother as I was wearing his medals for his service in the Gordon Highlanders. My thoughts went to him as he landed on the Normandy Beaches on D-Day aged just 19 years, and what a terrifying experience he went through, as indeed thousands of others did. This brought home to me the depth of gratitude we owe all these gallant men at that time. It was hard to suppress that chocking feeling you get when you are faced with this mammoth experience, an experience I shall never forget."



Wipers 8th August 1928. Wipers 8th August 2018.

"Well if ever I get back to Blighty after this stunt is over, I'll take jolly good care I will never come back to this mud bath again." But he did, on 8th August 1928, as part of The British Legion's Battlefield Pilgrimage, when 8,000 veterans and 3,000 mothers, wives and sweethearts returned; so too did W. Lowings, a First World War St. Dunstaner, who from August 1914 had served as a Company Sergeant Major in the 4th London Regiment.

8th August 2018, Simon Brown and Brian Eldridge, Blind Veterans UK's Standard Bearer, stood with thousands of veterans as part of the Royal British Legion's Great Pilgrimage 90. As they stood in the shadow of the Menin Gate they thought of the enormity of war and gave their respect to all who had served, fought, survived and died. In 1928 it was W. Lowings' wish that if a Battlefield Pilgrimage such as that of 1928 was organised again that St Dunstaners attend.



Picture: Simon Brown, representing Morley Royal British Legion at GP 90.



Picture: Blind Veterans UK Standard Bearer Brian Eldridge.

The complete account features in the Talking Review, but we bring you an extract of William Lowings' experiences from the August/September 1928 Review.

"Well if ever I get back to Blighty after this stunt is over, I'll take jolly good care I will never come back to this mud bath again." Ah, well, that was in 1916, or thereabouts, and they were the sentiments more or less forcibly expressed by most of us who had the misfortune to be stumbling about in mud and trip wire, not knowing or caring very much when we should stop something hard and heavy. Now we find ourselves balloting for position in a party to go over there, and every one of us in his innermost thoughts hoping to get the chance. What would it be like? Should we find the same old estaminets, broken down barns, apologies for roads, "Pomme de terre et iaufs," and those funny little bowls of café? We all wondered and conjectured, and I feel sure prayed for fine weather. We found all these things, and more.

Monday morning found us up and doing early, parading under our company leaders and marching down to the station to entrain for Vimy. Passing through the town of Vimy, and being greeted by the inhabitants on all sides in a most cheery manner, we made our way up and ever up towards the Ridge which has become famous in history. Reaching the wooded slopes commanded by the Ridge, we were able to trace the old trench lines and passed over many a dugout, which had been a haven of refuge in the old days; the ground here is pitted with shell holes, but the havoc of war is being mercifully covered by nature with a thick undergrowth, which has grown remarkably and one is only sure of the way by advancing over trench after trench, and the imagination goes back to the dogged struggle made by our gallant troops, and the gradual squeezing out of "Jerry". I do not remember there being a portable estaminet here the last time I was up that way. No man can help wondering how we ever managed to take such a position — it seems untakeable — and it is easy to see why Jerry shelled our ration parties; they must have looked like ants to him labouriously making their way up to our lines.

Tuesday found us detaining at Beaucourt, and here again everything is changed. A fine station and good substantial houses, from which we set off up the famous Y road, towards the (in my opinion) most interesting part of our pilgrimage. The Y road runs up the side of a valley, with a bank on the right hand side, where dugouts once offered shelter, and the country turns away on the other side in a succession of ledges to the high ground. The left bank of this

road is still strewn with thousands of shell cases, and pieces of what were once guns, rifles, shells, aerial torpedoes, and the like, now almost unrecognisable, and twisted into grotesque shapes. Then up to the old trench system, which has been bought by the Newfoundland Government, and is to be left as it is, a lasting memento of those who defended it. The trenches, both ours and friend Jerry's, are here found in their original state, and one may go down the communication trench and into the dugouts, some of them still as serviceable as they were ten or eleven years ago. We wandered round picking up such watch charms as nose caps, pieces of shell, trench mortars, bomb throwers, rifles, entrenching tools, stumbling over the same old trip wire and coming across the original corkscrew posts for wiring and wire, and yet more wire. Not far away there are the remains of what was once a fine naval gun, a lasting tribute to our gallant naval pals of the Hood, Hawke, Nelson, and others, who lie quietly buried in the little cemetery which we visited later.

On Wednesday, the last active day of the pilgrimage, we reached the Mecca of the journey, 'Wipers,' for that is the name handed down by the troops, and so it will be known in the Service for ever. We all looked forward to Wipers, for who did not remember 'Hell Fire Corner,' the bridge over the canal, the Cloth Hall, the ruined water tower, the cathedral, the pump with the half broken handle, and, last but not least, the Menin Gate, where one took a deep breath, and legged it as fast as possible, round to the friendly shelter of the dugouts in the side of the wall of the town? But as we detrained and marched up the now wide streets, we looked in vain for the old signs; I asked for them. The water tower was back in its old place, but rebuilt, in grand style. "Windy Corner" is no more, and it is hard to place the town as it exists today. We placidly walked through cheering crowds to our station near the new Menin Gate, where none could show his head with safety in the old days. And then came our Prince — one of us — who had shared the dangers of war with us; I wonder what he thought of it all. Much the same as we did, I expect. What a glorious reception he got as he passed to his place accompanied by the Prince of the Belgians! Every man, woman, and child, British, French and Belgian alike, joined in that roar of welcome.

Then the service, with the words of encouragement and hope of the Archbishop of York, followed by the Last Post and Reveille, sounded by our Guardsman, resplendent in full dress; a slight pause, and the wonderful inspiring strains of the Belgian National Anthem, followed by the Marseillaise,

and our National Anthem, all played remarkably well by the Belgian Cavalry Band in attendance; the voices of the vast crowd, all joining in "God Save the King," and bringing the impressive ceremony to a close. Followed by the reverent laying of wreaths, and preparations for the March Past. The saluting base was fixed about 200 yards from the Menin Gate, and we of St Dunstan's had the honour of leading the British Legion immediately behind the standards of the various countries. I think we acquitted ourselves well, linked up in our customary fashion, and four deep, we passed the saluting base with hats doffed, and eyes right, and I believe that our Prince pointed us out to the Belgian prince as we passed.

Through more cheering crowds, back to our temporary base — the Cavalry Barracks — which was almost entirely destroyed during the war, but which has now been nearly rebuilt on the old foundations. We sat down here on what was once the parade ground, but is now overgrown with grass, and had our lunch, and as our train did not leave until seven o'clock, we were free to try and rediscover Wipers. This was not easy, but taking the Menin Gate, and the Cloth Hall, as landmarks, we were able to place the direction of all the old haunts. We walked along the old ramparts, where one would have been riddled with machine gun bullets once. There are still signs of repairs. In the square a fine band was playing an all English programme, with items like, "If You were the only Girl in the World," and "The Policeman's Half Holiday," it was very strange. We sat outside a large café and drank bock at little tables on a wide pavement with hundreds of people promenading to and fro, and a sense of bewilderment came over me to think that this was the same place that had been torn and battered, shaken to its foundations, alive with shrieking shells, and the scurrying figures of men, khaki clad, and, later on, steel helmeted. All this has given place to wide streets, large well stocked shops, picture palaces, and the imposing Gate; even the ice cream merchant plied his trade. So this was Wipers!

Before leaving Amiens in the morning we had packed up our trouble (and our souvenirs) in our suit cases, and these had been dumped in the cavalry barracks. Having had our fill of sight seeing, we made our way back to Ypres station, to entrain for home. Visibility was still good, as we used to say, and our escorts were able to pick out on the journey back to Calais many interesting sights along the route — elephant dugouts, gun placements, shell craters, ruined farmhouses, and the old shacks that were put up by the inhabitants when they first came back to their poor battered homes.

Steve Birkin's Bucket List.

Two years ago Steve Birkin from West Yorkshire created a bucket list to get a black belt in martial arts, a degree, and shear a sheep. He's not much closer to shearing a sheep, but he's in the second year of a law degree and part of Team GB's Taekwondo Squad. Having won Gold and Silver at three International Poomsea Taekwondo competitions he's done rather more than achieve a black belt in martial arts. Speaking of his bucket list Steve called it 'all the usual stuff'. Some may disagree.

To achieve his bucket list Steve initially had to exercise extreme tenacity as it wasn't easy to find a club that would accept him. "I phoned many martial arts clubs, but because of the insurance issue no one would take me on. My partner Angela took over and she found a Taekwondo club in Baildon, near to where I live and the instructor, Master Rick Simpson (5th Dan), was quite happy to teach me. The first time I went into the Taekwondo club was nerve wracking but everyone was really welcoming. After a couple of weeks at the club I decided that I wanted more than a black belt, I wanted to be part of the Taekwondo family and go as far as I could, so that's how it all started. Rick, who is a Para approved coach had never worked with a vision impaired person, but once he realised my strengths and weaknesses it made it a lot easier for him, and we went from strength to strength. I was very grateful to Rick for taking me on, and shortly after my first grading I transferred to Lee Kay (2nd Dan) as my main coach, as he is closer to where I live and he got me to where I am now, taking part in Poomsae Taekwondo competitions. I now train on Monday and Wednesday with Lee, then on Thursday with either Rick or Natalie Simpson-Kidd (2nd Dan) at Horizon Taekwondo Academy.

"Before I lost my sight I'd done martial arts and it felt great to be back in that environment and I'm a lot more confident since I took up Taekwondo. You feel better in yourself as you know that you're achieving something and doing martial arts you become more disciplined and gain inner strength. Going back to martial arts as someone with a vision impairment you have to do things totally differently. There's the fact that I'm not allowed to spar, but am instead judged on the patterns I complete. The first time the coach showed me Pattern One I thought I would never remember it, but now am able to complete a series of complex patterns as I compete. I had to learn these in a new way as for a sighted person the instructor will say, 'I'll show you what you need to do. Just watch what I do.' But obviously with me he gives instructions to everyone and

then the instructor has to come over and put my hands and feet where they need to go for all the stances. He can't just demonstrate it, he has to physically do it for the first time. You need to have a lot of trust in the instructor as he's man handling you and you have to remain focused, but it does become easier to learn the patterns."

Steve's skill was proved in March 2017 when he was spotted by Russell, a para talent scout for Team GB. "Last year I competed in Harrogate where I won Gold. I'd collected my trophy and sat down when Russell came over and invited me to the trials. Of course I said yes and by the time I got home he'd already emailed with details to go to Sunderland for the trials the following Sunday. I went and demonstrated two basic Poomsae patterns, and thankfully got into Team GB when Russell said, 'Right then we'll accept you. We've got a lot of work to do, but if you give your weekends up we'll devote the time to training you to make you the best you can be.' I went home on an absolute high.

"Russell said that to qualify for Team GB I had to compete in two international events to get my accreditation. Luckily I'd already applied to compete in a competition in Vienna, Austria. I went there, won Gold, and came home expecting no more international events, but there was one in Sheffield with competitors from all around the world coming to the UK to compete. That meant by October 2017 I had done the two international events to qualify for Team GB." Steve was crowned National Para Taekwondo Champion 2017 when he won Gold in the National Taekwondo Championships in Nottingham in November.

"Work with Team GB really picked up and we were sent away for training weekends and told that we would compete in the International Taekwondo Championships in London. That was the biggest competition I had competed in, and on Sunday 15th July at the British Taekwondo Poomsae Championships in London, I came away with Silver for my patterns. It was a major international event and the competition was of a really high standard when we were judged by a panel of international judges."

Steve and the British Taekwondo Federation and the World Taekwondo Federation is keen to encourage more people who are vision impaired, or have a disability, to take up Taekwondo. If you would like to find out more do contact Steve.

In early 2018 Steve was awarded the Disabled Sports Person of the Year Award at Bradford City Football ground in a ceremony that was organised by Wayne Jacobs, a former footballer with Bradford City FC.

Royal Navy.

A former Sea Cadet from the age of 11, Steve joined the Royal Navy in 1986 as he wanted to see the world. He saw most countries in Europe and served in the Gulf War in 1991. "It was quite nerve wracking knowing that I was going to war and my parents were a bit upset but I said to them, 'You join up with the chance it may happen. You don't want it to happen, but it does'. I left the Navy in 1998 and really enjoyed my service as I saw a lot of sights that I wouldn't outside the Navy. Did things I wouldn't have done and have no regrets about joining the services. I'd do it again if I could.

"I lost my sight through some kind of infection and in one month went from perfect sight to registered blind. The shock was staggering and as I sat in the hospital's waiting room I phoned my son and daughter to tell them what was happening. I was very lucky as the waiting room was next to the ECLO's office, he stuck his head out and said, 'I wasn't ear wiggling but I believe that you are being registered blind.' He said he could help and asked if I'd been in the services. When I told him I was ex-Navy, straight away he told me about Blind Veterans UK. Then I ran into Simon Brown at a Sight Village in Leeds and he phoned up Membership, and a month later in December 2014 I got a welcome letter from Blind Veterans UK, and the rest is history.

"You lose your sight and you think what can you do? It's not anything you ever think about and you don't know how to proceed with life. I went to the Llandudno centre where I met Billy Baxter, a brilliant guy who said, 'The Llandudno centre is a magical place and as the week progresses you'll feel it growing through you'. It was true as the week progressed you do get stronger. Then I met Vince Godber the ROVI who asked what I'd done in the past and about the help I wanted. Then they provided the equipment to help me get back online and to be able to communicate and it just went from there. It was great to discover that most of the things you could do when you had sight you can still do as a vision impaired person. You just have to adapt."

Now in the second year studying for a law degree Steve uses the skills taught to him at the Llandudno centre as he studies. "I didn't go to university before serving in the Royal Navy and thought it would be nice to have a degree. I'm in the second year so that's pretty straight forward and have just another eight years to go, so not long (laughs). Even though they said the law degree is one of the hardest degrees it's probably one of the easiest for a blind person because it's just text, and as all of the textbooks for the first two years are online I use speech software to listen to them. It's hard work, I've learnt a lot, it's interesting, and I'm enjoying it. It's tricky at times but I'm glad to be able to do it. I do get a little behind with my work because of the Taekwondo, but I've caught up again and the exam for this year is in October and I'm on track."

The sheep.

As for the sheep shearing we will wait to hear about that for a future edition.



Picture: Steve, left with coach Lee Kay.

Blind photography. By Nick Barber.

I have been a member of Blind Veterans UK since 2007. This article is all about sharing my hobbies and interests, with my main hobby being photography. I started photography whilst in my teens, only film then no digital, and this carried on during my teenage years. I then didn't really start again until I was posted to the Falkland Islands, where once again the photography bug struck. Unfortunately, I stopped completely when my eyesight started to fail. I was eventually diagnosed blind with RP and as we all know that knocks you sideways for a while. It wasn't until I was walking past Phillips Cameras in Norwich that I was drawn in to buy a camera. That was when my hobby really took off again and I joined the local camera club and found I was beating sighted photographers in competitions. My main enjoyment comes from photographing architecture and flowers but I will photograph virtually anything.



Picture: Nick Barber's magnificent photograph of an owl.

When Blind Veterans UK started to host photography weeks I was able to mix with like-minded people and regained my confidence with the help and encouragement of Blind Veterans UK members and staff. I am a member of the Royal Photographic Society and the Disabled Photographers Society and this

was where I gained my LDPS, a photographic award. They have three levels of distinction which sets recognised standards of photographic achievement. If you are interested their website is at www.the-dps.co.uk Their last competition was an open theme but they will hold others if you fancy getting involved. My prints have been in several exhibitions and I have prints that will be exhibited with the RPS East Anglia Federation and the Architecture and History group. I will also hold a solo exhibition later in the year at Beyond the Image Art Gallery near Ipswich.

Having been on many photo weeks with Blind Veterans UK I would encourage anyone to come along to one of the weeks, whether you are an accomplished photographer or only thinking about trying photography. I can guarantee you a relaxed, informative, and most important of all, fun week. We're also exploring forming a member led Blind Veterans UK Photography Club and we would welcome and appreciate your thoughts for the formation of this club. It doesn't matter if you have attended a photography themed week in the past, or just have a general interest in photography and would like to learn more through taking part in club activities.

Please send your feedback and comments about the possible formation of a member led Blind Veterans UK Photography Club by email to Mark Pile, the Member Regional Representative. You can email Mark at mark.pile@blindveterans.org.uk Or you can telephone or write to Louise Partridge at the Brighton centre at Louise Partridge, Rehab Lead Art & Craft, Blind Veterans UK, Greenways, Ovingdean, Brighton, East Sussex BN2 7BS. Or telephone: 01273 391458. We look forward to hearing from you.



Picture: Nick Barber's photograph of the Llandudno centre.

Deputy Marshall Sam Harris MBE. By Colin Williamson, Contributing Editor.

Member Sam Harris was born in Shottery, Stratford upon Avon in 1932 but grew up in the north east of England, eventually settling in Peterlee, County Durham, where he lives with his partner Christine. The Harris family moved from Shottery when Sam was only little, both his mother and father were in show business, his mother was one of the original Tiller Girls, a professional dance troupe founded by John Tiller in Manchester in 1889 and his father and uncle were part of Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show which toured Europe and North America. His uncle, quite bizarrely, stepped ashore in North America on one visit and was never seen nor heard of again. Despite Sam appearing on numerous TV and radio stations in the US appealing for information regarding his missing uncle neither he nor his family have any closure. Sam's fear is that it's a mystery which will never be fully explained in his lifetime.

He also recollects handling a flag that was taken from Fort Sumter in South Carolina where on the 20th of April 1861 when the first shot was fired in the American civil war.

Sam's time in the military was spent with the RAF where he reached the rank of Senior Aircraftsman, based at Tiree in the Inner Hebrides. When Sam turned up at the early warning base the commanding officer, a flight lieutenant, didn't have a designated role for him, so asked what he liked to do. Sam replied "fishing" and was given a boat and spent his time with the RAF catching fish for the mess table!

Angling had been a hobby for Sam since he was six years old and he has fished all over the world, from the Arctic Circle to Africa and all points in between. His most memorable catches are a 150 pound blue shark, caught in Southern Ireland, and a 75 pound sailfish netted in Kenya. "The Sailfish took over 40 minutes to reel in, it was a real struggle but we managed to get it on the boat where we took some photos, weighed it and released it back into the water. I'd been told that if we had brought it ashore it would have been a world record for catching a sailfish with the kind of tackle that I was using, but I wanted to return it back to the water."

He is a world renowned angler who presents a regular radio show on Saturday morning that is broadcast around the world. A veteran journalist and broadcaster, Sam spent over 40 years with the BBC as a presenter and disc jockey and was awarded the MBE in 2015 for his services to sea angling. During an interview for his Country and Western music show, broadcast in Europe and America, Sam was chatting about music with singer Marshall Allen Bailey from the band, The Silver Bullets, when Marshall Allen suddenly revealed that he was in fact a real lawyer and promptly appointed Sam as Deputy Marshall of Dodge City, Kansas! "It came as quite a shock; I thought Marshall was his first name!" said Sam.



Picture: Sam at his Investiture at Buckingham Palace when he was made an MBE by His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, The Prince of Wales.

Veteran politician Nigel Farage is a good friend of Sam's and regularly visits him at his home. "Nigel is a keen angler and often pops in to see me," says Sam. "We chat about fishing and obviously politics, he's a nice fellow and we get on well. I still fish regularly, a friend of mine has his own boat which he keeps in North Shields up here in the north east and we often go out, I'm still very much into my fishing."

Sam became a member of Blind Veterans UK in 2016 after chatting with a doctor at Sunderland Eye Infirmary where he went for injections into his eye for Macular Degeneration. "The doctor asked if I was ex-forces and when I replied that I was a former member of the Royal Air Force she asked if I'd ever heard of Blind Veterans UK. I replied that I hadn't so she told me that she'd get an application form for me and we promptly filled it in and sent it off. I became a member shortly after that. I'm really looking forward to visiting the Brighton centre sometime in the future, I'll probably have to pre-record some of my radio shows, but I'm keen to visit the centre after hearing so many positive things about it."

I'll be bumping into Sam and Christine again when they attend the Durham Reunion lunch, which is held at the sumptuous Ramside Hall Hotel and Golf Club and I'm really looking forward to chatting with them both again, they're such a lovely couple.

An interesting modest man who has led, and is still leading, a very interesting life. Thank you Sam.



Picture: Sam in his RAF days.

Portsmouth Reunion.



Picture: Thank you so much to Jenny Evison for sending in this photograph of Ron Cross MBE, left, at the Portsmouth Reunion.

Peter Osborne wins the US Disabled Open Golf Championship.



Picture: Congratulations to Peter Osborne who proudly displays his trophy. Peter won the US Disabled Golf Association's 2018 United States Disabled Open Championship.

About Project Gemini. Our highly successful peer to peer support programme.

Project Gemini is an annual exchange programme that brings together blinded veterans from the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa. Participants spend a week together at one of Blind Veterans UK's centres learning about adaptive technologies for the blind and vision impaired, sharing information about new techniques and equipment that can enhance the lives of blind and vision impaired people, talking about the coping strategies that we use, (which are a vital part of the healing process) and other topics related to sight loss and rehabilitation. They also spend a week over in the United States as guests of the Blinded Veterans Association (USA) and South Africa, where they are hosted by St. Dunstan's South Africa. They fight together, therefore it makes sense for them to heal together. Because of the way the project is funded, to be eligible to participate in the programme you must be below the age of 66. We are incredibly grateful to Revision Military who have sponsored Project Gemini, and to British Airways for providing flights.

Strategic Objective.

To provide veterans who have recently lost their sight with an opportunity to interact with other veterans who have gone on to lead happy, productive and fulfilling lives despite sight loss.

To participate in a transatlantic peer to peer support programme where members can serve as role models and mentors for newly blinded veterans.

To share cultural, educational and recreational concepts and to learn from each other.

To seek improvements in services and benefits for blinded veterans.

To bring together senior military and civilian eye trauma specialists, neurosurgeons, researchers, senior government and military leaders and blinded veterans to raise awareness of the importance of research into treatments and after-care for blind and vision impaired veterans.

To highlight the need for better health care systems and to advocate for more research regarding blind rehabilitation services currently being offered to blinded veterans.

To provide a forum for the sharing of vision rehabilitation experiences amongst veterans.

To provide an opportunity for blind and vision impaired veterans to share their 'war stories' that are part of their personal adjustment to blindness and subsequent rehabilitation.

To provide the chance to experience once again the unique camaraderie that only exists amongst the forces community.

To provide an opportunity to highlight just how common sight loss in action is — around 10% of wounded British Service personnel and 16% of wounded Americans in Iraq and Afghanistan suffered some form of blindness as part of their injuries.

Blind veteran and Blind Veterans UK's communications officer Colin Williamson came up with the idea to hold an annual exchange programme between blind and vision impaired veterans from the UK and the US after hearing about a visit made to the Blinded Veterans Association (USA) annual conference by some of Blind Veterans UK younger war blinded members. He suggested the name 'Project Gemini' because 'Gemini' was the name given to the first ever transatlantic communications cable linking the UK with the USA. Also, the UK leg of the exchange takes place in late May, star sign Gemini, and is represented by the twins Castor and Pollux, which is apt as Project Gemini started off as a twinning programme. The programme has been extended to include blind veterans from our sister organisation in South Africa.

The first exchange took place in 2011 when six blind and vision impaired veterans from the United States visited the UK and stayed at our Brighton centre. Since the projects inception, in addition to the many US, UK and South African blind and vision impaired veterans, we have welcomed senior military ophthalmologists, civilian researchers, military and civilian staff from the Department of Veterans Affairs, senior government officials and senior medical staff to our annual exchanges. We have been guests of the US Embassy in London, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, Buckingham Palace, and the world renowned Moorfields Eye Hospital in London, and on each occasion we have taken the opportunity to champion the cause of Project Gemini, and the importance of better funding and research into combat eye

trauma, traumatic brain injury, which causes sight loss and the need to improve treatment and the after care of blind veterans.

For some blind veterans, it is quite a cathartic experience to sit and talk with their peers about their service, how they were injured and their subsequent rehabilitation. It is, as some often say, a vital part of the healing process and this is encouraged during the programme. Through Project Gemini, the cooperation between our two countries that was forged on the battlefield is now being extended to our joint recovery and rehabilitation. We hope that by bringing together blinded veterans from different countries we can influence changes to the various health care systems with the goal of achieving better care for injured veterans and their families. We also want blinded and vision impaired veterans who have participated on the project in the past to act as role models and mentors to newly blinded veterans and to show them that there is life after blindness and there is no need to battle blindness alone. Through the programme, we also want to bring to relevant people's attention the need to ensure that injured ex-servicemen and women receive the benefits and support they deserve and that they are not excluded from receiving health care and vital services.

Another vital aspect of Project Gemini is the opportunity for veterans to share experiences and knowledge about matters such as blind rehabilitation and readjustment training, vision research and adaptive technology for the blind. We learn about strategies for coming to terms with sight loss. We believe that lessons can be learned from the American, British and South African healthcare systems and veterans' services, and how all our organisations can best support blind veterans in our three nations.

One of the aspects of the exchange is the opportunity for blind and vision impaired ex-servicemen and women to mix socially with their peers. The camaraderie amongst the military is unique, and to see injured veterans laughing and enjoying themselves in the company of their fellow veterans is a fantastic tonic. We hope that by the end of the week blind and vision impaired veterans go away with their self-esteem rejuvenated, the feeling that the future is looking brighter for them and that they now possess the skills, techniques and the knowledge to pass on to other blind veterans in order to make their lives better.

If you are interested in representing Blind Veterans UK on Project Gemini in 2019, and fulfil the eligibility criteria, then please contact Colin Williamson at colin.williamson@blindveterans.org.uk or telephone 07894414670. Previous participants can apply, but priority will be given to those members who have yet to take part in the programme.



Picture: The first Project Gemini in 2011 when Colin Williamson arranged with his local MP for the British and American contingent to visit the Houses of Parliament.



Picture: Project Gemini 2018 at the Llandundo centre.

Top Tips from Lauren Layzelle and Lucy Bradshaw at the ROVI/IT Helpline.

Lucy Bradshaw and Lauren Layzelle from the ROVI/IT Helpline have provided their top tips for you, and a bit of background information about the helpline, and what they enjoy about their work.

They explain, "In November 2015 the ROVI-IT Helpline was set up to replace the old ROVI and IT on duty telephone numbers, and over the years the helpline has gone from strength to strength, as so many more of you call us up now that you know how we can help. We're all really proud of what it has become. We really love talking to you over the phone and helping you and now that we've moved to our lovely new premises in Sheffield we're really looking forward to seeing where things go next for the helpline."

Lucy's Top Tip: If you change the batteries in your communi-clock talking clock it will re-set itself to the factory settings. These clocks are radio controlled so to get it to go back to the correct time, place it in a windowsill overnight and it will correct itself when it receives the radio signal from the transmitter in Anthorn, Cumbria. The same goes for talking clocks or watches that haven't adjusted after Daylight Saving Time.

Lauren's Top Tip: If you have are having a problem with a Synapptic device that we have issued to you, Synapptic has a helpline team, who are on call to offer advice/troubleshooting tips for you. We have IT technical support here at the helpline too, and we are always happy to help, but as Synapptic make the software, they are in a fantastic position to be able to solve problems very quickly. Their number is 0191 909 7909.

To contact the ROVI/IT Helpline please telephone 01273 391447. You can also send your queries direct to email rovi-it@blindveterans.org.uk

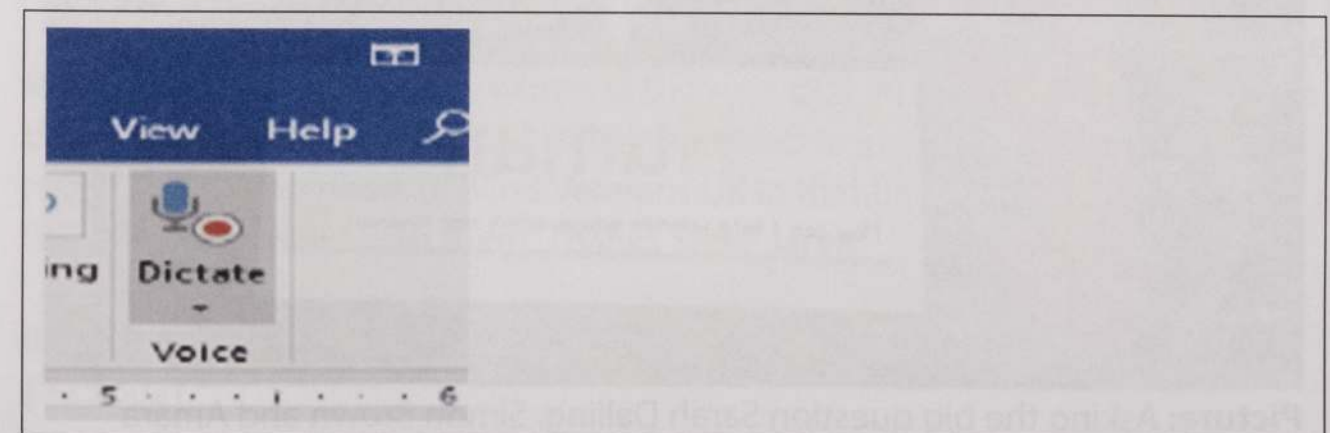
Microsoft Office 365 and other handy Microsoft services. By John Brice.

Did you know that if you have Office 365, with a subscription, you do not need to type a letter ever again? You do not have Office 365 with a subscription? Check this out and you may feel it's worth getting. A subscription costs £6.99pm for a single PC or £7.99pm for five PC's. Christmas is around the corner; why not give the grandchildren it as a Christmas present and use one copy yourself! To find out more about the service go to support.microsoft.com for step by step instructions and getting started info. To find answers for questions others have asked, yours might be similar, or to ask a new one go to Microsoft Community.

You can also use speech recognition to control your PC. You can open applications, dictate emails and letters, switch between applications and a great deal more!

You may not know that Microsoft have a Disability Support Line – I didn't! I was having trouble getting my voice recognition to work, so went on the Support page. As soon as they found I was partially sighted I was transferred to the Disability Support. The guy rapidly found why my installation would not work! He installed the facility to control Word and to control the PC; after finding the issues and recommending I get a new, up to date microphone! The service is brilliant and now voice recognition operates fine; even starting to cope with my Zummerzet accent!

If you have Office 365 with a subscription, open Word and look at the far right of the top bar to find the icon shown below, and follow the instructions.



Happy dictating, I hope you find this helpful and it saves you lots of time!

Remember a Charity Awareness Week. By Amara Gordi, Blind Veterans UK's Gifts in Wills team.

September is going to be an exciting month for the Gift in Wills team at Blind Veterans UK, with Remember a Charity Awareness Week from the 10th to 16th September. RAC is a consortium, formed by 200 national charities, that aims to spread the word amongst the general public, solicitors and governing bodies to promote this special way of giving, advocating for this to become a social norm. From the 10th of September the initiative will put the focus on how to "Pass on something wonderful".

This year, the national campaign will launch the Human Search Engine that aspires to give an answer to life's biggest questions through short films, starring our wisest population. From "What is the secret to a happy marriage?" to "How do you keep yourself healthy," the elderly will take on the task of passing on their wisdom. On those lines, each charity will get one question that is unique to their organisation and the work they do. After involving the rest of the staff we came up with ours: "How can I help blind veterans achieve victory over blindness?" It was Tricia Robinson, Community Support Worker from Bristol who came up with it, and she was rewarded with a delicious box of chocolates.



Picture: Asking the big question Sarah Dalling, Simon Brown and Amara Gordi.

To answer that question we have been extremely lucky to count on some of our members. Simon Brown's will be the face of the campaign, but we also had the help of Constance Halford-Thompson, from London. We visited the centre in Brighton to hear from former Blind Veterans UK's President Ray Hazan and CEO Nick Caplin also gave his time to support our team. The videos will be live on our website on the week at, blindveterans.org.uk and we sincerely hope you enjoy them.

On another note, the team is also looking forward to the upcoming event at the National Memorial Arboretum. After the success of the event on-board HMS Belfast, when we welcomed more than 50 supporters and guests, who were all eager to learn about Blind Veterans UK and the ways they can support us to plan the organisation's future. As of today, Legacies or Gifts in Wills are 60% of the organisation's voluntary income. That means, six out of every ten blind veterans are helped thanks to someone leaving us a final gift in their will. It is an incredible and extremely valuable way of supporting our cause, and achieving our goal of reaching out to more and more new members. Currently, there are over 55,000 people in the UK who are eligible to receive Blind Veterans UK's support and the friendship and camaraderie from all of you. We hope that by explaining our work and making our supporters aware of the many ways they can help, we will achieve this in the next few years.

To find out more about the events, Remember a Charity or Gifts in Wills, contact me, Amara Gordi, on 020 7616 7923 or email me at amara.gordi@blindveterans.org.uk

Request from Steve Jarvis for people he may have served with to contact him.

I joined the Royal Signals Apprentice College, Harrogate in September 1979. I've lost contact with everybody who was there on that intake and obviously I hope that all still have their sight, but I'd be interested to know if any of that intake have become members of Blind Veterans UK in that time. If this is the case I'd like to make contact with them. Thanks Steve Jarvis.

If you know Steve and would like to get in contact with him please phone 020 7723 5021.

Noticeboard.

Dates for your diary and useful information.

Wood themed week, more of a topic than a themed week, at the Brighton centre.

From 24th to 28th September at the Brighton centre the Art & Craft Workshop will theme all of their sessions around wood and trees. They will set up a pole lathe and saw horse in the Inner Garden for wood turning taster sessions, a carving demo, and woodturning demos. A wood cut printmaker will talk about his work and offer a wood cut printmaking workshop. There will be a Friday trip to Bentley Wood Fair and you can book a holiday during this week and take part in some of the activities. To book or for information telephone 01273 391500.

Review format changes.

If you would like to change the format you receive the Review in please phone 020 7723 5021 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, by email, Braille and on Sonata. Should you wish you can receive the Review in both print and audio.

If you opt to listen to the Talking Review on USB please do remember to return it in the padded wallet once you have listened to it. I'm afraid that if you don't we can't send you future editions of the Review on USB. To return it please remove the address label that is under the clear plastic strip on the front of the wallet so that it shows MRA Studios address in Dronfield, Derbyshire. Place it back under the clear plastic. Place your USB in the wallet and next time you pass the Post Office or a post box, post it, and there is no need to add postage.

Answers to Ron Russell's Match Me With My Home Quiz from page 18.

- | | | |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Badger sett. | 2. Beaver lodge. | 3. Bee hive. |
| 4. Bird nest. | 5. Cow byre. | 6. Dog kennel. |
| 7. Eagle eyrie. | 9. Fowl coop. | 10. Hare form. |
| 11. Horse stable. | 12. Lion den. | 13. Mouse hole. |
| 14. Otter holt. | 15. Pig sty. | |

Veterans Oyster Card Scheme.

If you receive payments under the War Pensions Scheme, or Guaranteed Income Payment under the Armed Forces Compensation Schemes, you may be eligible for concessionary travel. With a Veterans Oyster photocard you can travel free on bus, tube, tram, DLR, London Overground, and most National Rail services in London.

You may be eligible for a Veterans Oyster photocard if you are: In receipt of ongoing payments in your name under the War Pensions Scheme or income payment under the Armed Forces Compensation Scheme, again in your name. This includes widows, widowers and dependants.

Ongoing payments are awarded to Service personnel who have sustained a certain level of physical or psychological injury in the line of duty. If you received a one-off gratuity payment instead of ongoing payments, then you're not eligible for a Veterans Oyster photocard.

You can also travel on some National Rail services in London:

Chiltern Railway services between Amersham and Marylebone, West Ruislip and South Ruislip. Great Northern services between Finsbury Park and King's Cross. Thameslink services between West Hampstead Thameslink and Elephant & Castle. London Midland services between Harrow & Wealdstone and Euston. Greater Anglia services between Stratford and Liverpool Street. c2c services between Upminster and Fenchurch Street. You can travel free from 09:30 on weekdays and any time on weekends and public holidays on most other National Rail services in London and services to Dartford and Swanley.

Call TfL on 0343 222 1234 (TfL call charges) to get an application form.

Contacting the Review.

To contact the Review please telephone 020 7723 5021 or email revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk

Father's Eulogy. Fred Collingwood by his daughter Dorothy.

Fred was an ordinary man who found himself living an extraordinary life. Born near Tilbury in Essex in 1925, from what he recalled, Fred lived a happy and carefree childhood with his brother Ken and his twin brother and sister, John and Iris. He had another sister, Jean, who died in infancy, and later two adopted sisters, Joy and Christine. He talked of scrumping for apples, catching tiddlers in jars, listening to nightingales near his home and being taken onto the Thames by his father who was a merchant seaman.

He also recollected big family Christmases with aunts and uncles and cousins where food was plentiful. Later in life his favourite day of the year was to go shopping with me for the food for our Christmas get togethers where we bought enough food to feed a small army.

Having passed the 11+ Fred's Grammar School education was interrupted when he and his brothers and sister were evacuated, by paddle steamer, to Norfolk. Here his charmed existence continued as he stayed with a generous couple who fed him well, and, at 14, where he broke the heart of an 18 year old village girl!

However, here we see the development of a stubborn streak in Fred that was to be both a trial and a triumph in his life. Returning from Norfolk he refused to complete his education and when his family moved to Leek to avoid the bombing in Tilbury he, at 15, refused to go with them and stayed looking after himself working in Bata's shoe factory — watching the loaded German bombers following the Thames up to London on one side of the river and the empty ones coming back on the other.

But by 16 he was in Leek working as a silk-screen printer and serving in the Home Guard, and there he continued his romantic exploits by finishing with one girlfriend to go out with another — our mother! On New Year's Day 1944 he, at 18, and my mother were married and after only a few days together both returned to their respective barracks.

In June of that year, on D-Day +3, Fred landed in France — once again, according to him, a peaceful event with no shell-fire, unlike the blood bath that John Wayne seemed to face at every turn!

As with his childhood Fred's memories of his time in France were mostly positive. When Neil read him another veteran's account of the same battlefield Fred would say, "I never saw that; there weren't any woods where I was; we didn't leave for France from there!" We began to wonder where he had been!



Picture: Fred Collingwood in uniform.

But, on July 17th, shortly after his 19th birthday Fred's life was to change forever. At 8.00 in the evening his brigade of the Blackwatch was part of a push towards the German front line which was only a mile away. These are his words about what happened to him that he wrote for an article commemorating the D-Day Landings.

"All around us there were 25 pounders, machine guns and mortars firing towards the Germans. If you get a shell coming towards you, you can hear it from a good way off. But a mortar bomb coming straight down, all you get is a bang and that's what hit me on my left side. I felt no pain from the injury but I was blind as a bat. I lost both my eyes and my nose. The last thing I saw in front of me about 20 yards away was three ambulances."

And so at 19, already married, and soon to have a child to support, Fred had some important decisions to make. His mother had used the collection, that had been made at his former work place, to buy an accordion and she envisaged him begging on street corners for a living — our mother did not! Or St Dunstan's. Instead, after months of reconstructive surgery he began a three year training course in London and qualified as a physiotherapist, typing out

the exams and, typically, telling one of the tutors marking his final practical exam that one of the questions was wrong — and being told he was right!

He worked in Burton where I was born (daughter number three), returned to Leek, where Neil was born and in 1958 the family of four children and a Scottie dog named Peter moved to Newcastle where Fred continued his 35 year career at the North Staffs while treating private patients at home in the evenings. He would leave for work at 7.30am in the morning and finish in the evenings at 9.00pm when he would have his first and only meal of the day.

So what was it like for us growing up with a totally blind father? Well, for us it was quite normal as we didn't know any different. We never left cupboard doors open, in case he walked into them, we never left things on the floor or stairs that might trip him, and even the dogs learned to get out of his way when he walked across a room!

What was different, I think, were the hilarious things that happened because he was blind and the way we could all laugh about them, him more than anyone. Let me tell you the Woolworth's story. You need to understand that when you went shopping with my father, you were two people wide and if the shop was crowded you would leave Fred standing somewhere and then collect him when you had got what you wanted. This was the case one Saturday when my mother wanted something from downstairs in Woolworth's.

She 'parked' Fred in a corner and went off to buy what she needed. However, when she came back for him — he was gone! Now this never happened. He always stayed where he was left. Feeling a bit panicky my mother climbed a few stairs and looked across the shop floor. On the far side she could see a woman with a look of terror on her face walking through the shop — with my father hanging on to her arm like grim death! My mother went over quickly to rescue my father. She tapped the woman on the shoulder and said, "I think you have my husband!" Without speaking the woman gave my mother a disgusted look and disappeared into the crowd!

When they had stopped laughing Fred explained that he had been standing waiting when he felt a nudge against his arm. Assuming it was my mother he latched onto the arm and walked off with the person. The woman never spoke to him so he had no idea that he wasn't walking with my mother! What she

would have done with him we will never know, but somewhere in Newcastle is a woman telling her family of the time she was kidnapped by a totally blind man downstairs in Woolworth's!

Fred had many interests. He enjoyed all sport, especially cricket, and knowing the positions on a cricket pitch, he would sit for hours listening to the Test matches, able to picture exactly where the ball and each player was. He enjoyed fishing, perched precariously on rocks above Trearddur Bay all day with my mother never sure he would still be there when she went back to collect him!

He loved babies and liked to show off his child rearing skills by soothing even the most fractious of his grandchildren, each in turn having lain peacefully in his arms searching his face with a slightly puzzled expression, as if trying to work out what was missing!

He had a great general knowledge, although he was useless in pub quizzes because his stage whispered answers were so loud everyone in the room could hear him. To his great amusement he was a National Swimming Champion — only because he was the only entrant into one particular event, but he did swim his last mile at the age of 75. He was an avid reader and he loved natural history, he never missed David Attenborough or Springwatch, and for years fed birds in the garden that he never saw.

After retiring, when he no longer had to protect his hands, he took up woodwork, making numerous coffee tables and gardening, seeing the colourful displays he grew in his mind's eye. He liked to cook, his signature dish being a meat suet pudding wrapped in a tea cloth and boiled in a basin. Like his mother used to make, and which he relished, and the rest of us avoided like the plague!

In the 1990's Fred lost two of his children, our sisters Pat and Val, and after the death of our mother in 2009, after 65 years of marriage, the family rallied round him. Shopping followed by lunch on Saturdays, trips to the Monkey Forest and evening concerts at the Victoria Hall, weekend stays away, as well as regular visits and phone calls, all helped him to maintain the independent life he so valued.

However, he had not finished his extraordinary doings and in 2014, at the age of 89, he declared his love for Mary, a lady he had known for many years at his Friday club. After a whirlwind romance they were married and lived a happy life

together until Mary's health began to fail and she eventually had to be cared for away from home. Every day he could Fred visited her and her loss last year was a great blow to him.

Fred had a strong sense of duty and saw himself as the provider for his family. Those of you who knew him will have experienced his generosity and his often cheeky sense of humour. Those of us who knew him well, also knew him to be a headstrong man, who could not be persuaded to do anything he didn't want to do. Maybe it was that very stubbornness that kept him going against the odds to enable him to be the provider he wanted and needed to be.

Last year Fred, along with all of the surviving D-Day veterans, was awarded the Legion D'Honneur by the French Government. I joked with him that he should send it back because, as he would want you all to know, because it was a great relief to him, he never even shot at an enemy soldier, let alone killed one.

However, this paragraph from the letter he received with the medal changed my mind: "As we contemplate this Europe of peace, we must never forget the heroes like you who came from Britain and the Commonwealth to begin the liberation of Europe by liberating France. We owe our freedom and security to your dedication because you were ready to risk your life."

And so the ordinary man, who lived an extraordinary life is no longer here, but in our hearts and minds, we will all miss him.



Picture: Reunited with his fellow WWII St. Dunstaners, Bob Osborne, Percy Saywell, Len Withington, Colin Beaumont-Edmonds a past President, Fred Collingwood and Reg Goding.

Family News.

Birthdays.

Ernest Foard who celebrated his 103rd birthday on 5th September.

Walter Pritchard who celebrated his 102nd birthday on 14th September.

Marjorie Theobald who celebrated her 100th birthday on 5th September.

Elizabeth Hardinge who celebrated her 100th birthday on 10th September.

Weddings.

Congratulations to Steve and Joan Stephens on their 11th April wedding earlier this year.



Picture: Steve and Joan Stephens on their 11th April wedding day.

Anniversaries.

Platinum 70 years married.

Frank & Dorothy Walden of Clacton-On-Sea, Essex on 11th September.

Blue Sapphire 65 years married.

Ted & Joan Arnold of Potters Bar, Hertfordshire on 5th September.

Tom & Margaret Wright of Kidlington, Oxfordshire on 5th September.

Dennis & Veronica Kerby of Abingdon, Oxfordshire on 16th September.

Peter & Joyce Hansen of Staines, Middlesex on 19th September.

Peter & Jane Source of Banbury, Oxfordshire on 20th September.

Edward & Joan Vaughan of Birmingham, West Midlands on 26th September.

Diamond Yellow 60 years married.

Graham & Watts Draycott of Sheffield, South Yorkshire on 6th September.
Thomas & Margaret Lutwyche of Walsall, West Midlands on 6th September.
Lindsay & Minnie McClean on 6th September.
Trevor & Lena Secker of Blackpool, Lancashire on 6th September.
Ian & Mary Garvie of Shaftesbury, Dorset on 20th September.
John & Eileen Foley of Swindon, Wiltshire on 27th September.

Golden 50 years married.

Dennis & Grace Cook of Sheffield, South Yorkshire on 7th September.
Richard & Shirley Eastley of Paignton, Devon on 14th September.
Brian & Margaret Eldridge of Chesterfield, Derbyshire on 14th September.

Pearl 30 years married.

Paul & Anita Meredith of Stafford, Staffordshire on 3rd September.

Silver 25 years married.

Barry & Joan Metcalfe of Wellingborough, Northamptonshire on 11th Sept.
Albert & Mary Mack of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire on 18th Sept.

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.

Richard Dashper who died on 1st July 2018. He was the widower of the late Sylvia Giles.

Joan Durrant who died on 11th May 2018. She was the widow of the late David Durrant.

Iris Harris who died on 1st July 2018. She was the widow of the late Reginald Harris.

Constance 'Connie' Langridge who died on 19th July 2018. She was the widow of the late John Langridge.

Violet Sargent who died on 1st March 2017. She was the widow of the late Robert Sargent.

Helen 'Mavis' Tillyer who died on 8th January 2018. She was the wife of John Tillyer.

Kathleen Wearn who died on 23rd February 2018. She was the wife of Alan Wearn.

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.

Leslie Astill of Birmingham died on 24th July 2018, aged 84. From 1952 to 1954 he served in the UK as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Benjamin 'David' Bingham of Hereford, Herefordshire died on 15th July 2018, aged 83. From 1954 to 1968 he served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps in Malaya, Asia, France, Borneo and Cyprus.

Michael Bird of Colchester, Essex died on 8th July 2018, aged 61. From 1972 to 1992 he served in the Royal Anglian Regiment in England, Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Germany, discharging as a Corporal.

Bernard Boyle of Brighton, East Sussex died on 17th July 2018, aged 87. From 1953 to 1955 he served as an Aircraftman 2nd Class in the RAF in Felixstowe.

Antony 'Tony' Canning of Walmer, Kent died on 25th July 2018, aged 88. From 1948 to 1951 he served in the Royal Navy as a Pilot 3rd Class in the UK and Malta.

Norman 'Ray' Cooper of St. Ives, Cornwall died on 1st May 2018, aged 79. From 1959 to 1962 he served as an Aircraftman First Class at RAF Cosford.

William Cutler of Leeds, West Yorkshire died on 1st July 2018, aged 99. From 1936 to 1946 he served in the Royal Navy at Chatham, discharging as an Able Seaman.

William 'Bill Davidson of Luton, Bedfordshire died on 30th July 2018, aged 85. A Gunner in the Royal Artillery he served in the UK from 1954 to 1956.

Desmond Deans of Chichester, West Sussex died on 10th July 2018, aged 94. From 1942 to 1946 he served in England with the Royal Veterinary Corps and the Royal Berkshire Regiment.

Geoffrey Drayton of Epping, Essex died on 1st April 2018, aged 85. From 1951 to 1955 he served as a Flying Officer in the RAF in the UK and Malaya.

Peter Edwards of Hove, East Sussex died on 24th July 2018, aged 90. From 1945 to 1948 he served as an Aircraftman First Class in the Royal Air Force in the UK.

William 'Bill' Eldridge of Hastings, East Sussex died on 23rd July 2018, aged 89. From 1949 to 1952 he served as a Corporal in the Royal Engineers in the UK.

Wilson Eilbeck of Whitehaven, Cumbria died on 4th August 2018, aged 98. From 1940 to 1946 he served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers in Greece and North Africa and spent four years in a German Prison of War Camp.

Walter Forshaw of Middleton, Manchester died on 19th July 2018, aged 91. From 1945 to 1948 he served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps in Egypt and Palestine.

Leonard 'Len' Garner of Ross On Wye, Herefordshire died on 9th July 2018, aged 93. From 1943 to 1946 he served as a Sub Lieutenant in the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm in Egypt, Sri Lanka, Sumatra, Canada and Scotland.

David Gitton of Telford, Shropshire died on 14th July 2018, aged 77. From 1956 to 1974 he served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery in the UK, Singapore, Borneo and BAOR.

Samuel 'Jack' Godley of Golders Green, London died on 1st May 2018, aged 92. From 1944 to 1948 he served as a Sergeant in the Royal Army Service Corps in India, West Africa and Burma.

David Hauley of Chard, Somerset died on 1st July 2018, aged 85. From 1950 to 1957 he served as an Engineer Mechanic in the Royal Navy's Fleet Air Arm in the UK.

Jack Horne of Luton, Bedfordshire died on 22nd July 2018, aged 89. From 1947 to 1949 he served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in the UK and Middle East.

Derek Jones of Nantwich, Cheshire died on 10th July 2018, aged 96. From 1940 to 1946 he served as an Officers' Steward in the Royal Navy in the Middle East, Atlantic, Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean.

Joseph King of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 1st August 2018, aged 85. He served as a Leading Aircraftman in the Royal Air Force in High Wycombe and Compton Bassett from 1951 to 1954.

Peggy Kite née Wray of Ipswich, Suffolk died on 17th June 2018, aged 96. From 1943 to 1945 she served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in the UK.

Douglas Knight of Haslemere, Surrey died in 2018, aged 94. From 1942 to 1946 he served as a Craftsman in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers in the UK and Belgium.

Gladys 'Mickey' Lodge née Overthrow of Hoxton, London died on 16th July 2018, aged 94. From 1941 to 1946 she served as a Staff Sergeant in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in the Royal Military Police.

John Marcel of Newmarket, Suffolk died on 14th June 2018, aged 91. From 1944 to 1965 he served in the Royal Marines in Palestine, Hong Kong and Cyprus, leaving as a Captain.

Bernard Marsden of Bury, Lancashire died on 1st July 2018, aged 88. From 1947 to 1952 he served as a Gunner in the Royal Artillery in Germany, Hong Kong and England.

Vincent 'Vince' Martin of Inverness died on 23rd July 2018, aged 61. From 1972 to 1978 he served as a Sapper in the Royal Engineers in the UK, Germany and Northern Ireland.

Cyril Mead of Winscombe, North Somerset died on 22nd June 2018, aged 95. From 1942 to 1947 he served as a Private in the Suffolk Regiment in Africa, Sicily, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Alan Newman of Leicester, Leicestershire died on 7th July 2018, aged 86. From 1950 to 1956 he served as a Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps in Germany.

Francis Nichols of Prenton, Merseyside died on 30th June 2018, aged 96. From 1942 to 1946 he served as a Leading Wireman in the Royal Navy in the Far East.

Andrew 'Drew' Oliphant of East Kilbride, Lanarkshire died on 1st July 2018, aged 91. From 1945 to 1948 he served as an Aircraftman 1st Class in the RAF in England.

Frank Oliver of Woodthorpe, Nottingham died on 28th July 2018, aged 90. From 1945 to 1957 he served as a Corporal in the Durham Light Infantry, Duke of Wellington's and the Green Howards.

George Phillips of Tenbury Wells, Worcestershire died on 28th July 2018, aged 96. From 1938 to 1953 he served as a Telegraphist in the Royal Navy throughout the world.

Trevor Plackett of Morecambe, Lancashire died on 22nd December, aged 85. From 1951 to 1955 he served in the Royal Navy as a Stoker then Mechanic First Class.

Patrick 'Pat' Ratcliffe of Teddington, Middlesex died on 13th July 2018, aged 94. From 1942 to 1947 he served as a Corporal with the Rifle Brigade, Royal Ulster Rifles and the Royal Army Service Corps in India and Burma.

Lillian Richards née Chugg of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 29th July 2018, aged 97. She served as a Private in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in 1942.

Clive Reynolds of Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire died on 1st August 2018, aged 80. From 1956 to 1958 he served as a Signaller in the Royal Signals in Singapore.

Basil Robinson of Norwich, Norfolk died on 28th November 2017, aged 91. From 1944 he served in the Royal Norfolk Regiment and the Royal Lincolnshire Regiment in Egypt, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany until demobilised as a Corporal in 1948.

Ronald 'Ron' Saunders of Stowmarket, Suffolk died on 28th July 2018, aged 94. From 1942 to 1947 he served as a Warrant Officer in the Royal Air Force in England, Egypt, Italy when he was operational with 144 Squadron in 1944-45, and Aden.

James 'Jim' Sothern of Selby, North Yorkshire died on 30th July 2018, aged 83. From 1953 to 1955 he served as a Private in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps in Bicester and Aldershot.

Ronald Smith of Wotton Under Edge, Gloucestershire died on 1st December 2017, aged 97. From 1940 to 1946 he served in the Hampshire Regiment, 157 Training Regiment and the Army Catering Corps in Tunisia, Libya, Egypt, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Germany.

Ronald 'Leslie' Tudor of Flint, Clwyd died on 15th July 2018, aged 76. From 1962 to 1969 he served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Signals in Chester.

Brian Turner of Hull, East Riding of Yorkshire died on 24th October 2017, aged 84. He served as a Corporal in the Royal Army Veterinary Corps from 1951 to 1964. He was involved in the Suez Crisis in November 1956 and learnt to swim in the Suez Canal.

Thomas 'Tom' Waugh of Barrow In Furness, Cumbria died on 13th July 2018, aged 81. From 1955 to 1957 he served as a Corporal in the Border Regiment in Germany.

Vivienne Webb née Botterill of Northampton, Northamptonshire died on 25th July 2018, aged 94. From 1942 to 1945 she served as a Leading Wren in the Women's Royal Naval Service in Lee On Solent, Arbroath and Orkney Islands.

Walter 'Wally' White of Lyndhurst, Hampshire died on 20th July 2018, aged 93. From 1944 to 1947 he served as a Lance Corporal in the Royal Hampshire Regiment and the Cheshire Regiment in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

Reginald 'Reg' Wilkes of Tipton, West Midlands died on 27th June 2018, aged 91. From 1945 to 1959 he served in the Worcestershire Regiment in Burma and India.

