

December 2018

# Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



## A nation salutes

Commemorating  
the centenary of  
the Armistice





**On the cover:** On a beautifully sunny November morning, our members proudly march past Her Royal Highness Princess Anne. They were there to commemorate the fallen on Remembrance Sunday, which this year also saw the centenary of the Armistice. **Back cover:** Our Christmas message to you, wishing you a very Happy Christmas for this year, and a peaceful New Year.

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## Contact telephone numbers

**The Brighton centre** 01273 307 811. **Harcourt Street** 020 7723 5021.

**The Llandudno centre** 01492 868 700. **Research Dept:** 020 7616 8371.

**The Booking Office for the Brighton centre:** To book accommodation at the Brighton centre telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391 500. 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 868 700 for 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 391 447 for ROVI and IT enquiries.

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

**Review Editor:** You can telephone Review Editor, Chris Gilson, on 020 7616 8367, email [revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:revieweditor@blindveterans.org.uk) or write to him at Review Editor, Blind Veterans UK, 12 - 14 Harcourt Street, London W1H 4HD.

## Blind Veterans UK Calendar - Brighton

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

For further information and to book your place at the Brighton centre please telephone the Booking Office on 01273 391 500. If you have care needs please first speak with your Team Leader or Community Support Worker.

## Activities at the Llandudno centre in 2018

**December.**

Christmas Crafts 10th.

**January.**

Food & Drink Week 27th to 3rd February

**February.**

Photography Week 24th to 3rd March

You can find out more about our centre activity dates and themed weeks with our special pull-out supplement, which can be found on page 33.

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

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

**A different format?**

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



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## Editorial welcome



Hello, and a warm welcome to your December edition of 'Review' magazine. It's hard to believe we're nearing the end of the year already, and as ever it just seems like the months have simply flown by. This last month has been very special for me though, as I had the great privilege of being able to help out at the Remembrance Day celebrations in London.

From my personal perspective, it was truly wonderful to be able to meet those of you who attended the ceremony, and to talk to as many of you as possible. Despite the wide variety of backgrounds and service histories present on the day, the one aspect that shone through was how proud you were to be representing both Blind Veterans UK and your country on that historic march along Horse Guard's Parade.

There was another part of the day which many of those who were there would have missed, and that was the reactions of loved ones as they watched our veterans marching on the televised broadcast. The viewing room was crammed to capacity, and as the march began, the expectation and the excitement among those watching grew.

When it was time for our contingent to pass by the cameras, the sense of pride and love that came from the family members watching was absolutely tangible. I can say hand on heart, that they took as much enjoyment watching our members taking part, as the marchers themselves.

In some ways I suppose I've been spoiled, as this year was focused on the centenary of the signing of the Armistice and was a notable date accompanied by more than the usual degree of pomp. Yet I have no doubts that when our marchers make that journey through the centre of London once again, none of the emotion will have diminished in any way, and that the fire in the hearts of those there will be burning just as brightly.

Until next year, I wish you all a very merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year.

**Chris**



# A special family

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

It has been an amazing few weeks for the charity. Our Victory Over Blindness statue has captured the attention and support of countless passers-by in Manchester, and the Mancunians are developing a profound sense of pride in 'the Lads' as it is colloquially known.

Currently they are dressed in rather fetching red jackets and scarves as part of a local charity's campaign to donate overcoats to help the city's homeless, and it was a delight to be asked to support it in this way. Remembrance has been a remarkable time for us, with blind veterans attending commemorations across the country. At the Cenotaph, Ron Freer was the oldest veteran out of 10,000 on parade, and drew particular attention. Ron has been a member of the charity for 72 years and is the epitome of Victory Over Blindness. Our veterans were given amazing coverage in the national media, and a photograph taken of us at the Cenotaph even found its way to the 'New York Times'.

Sticking with this theme of awareness, and looking forward to 2019, we are developing a number of new and exciting fundraising activities for our supporters. The first of these will take place on 26 January when we will be challenging our supporters to lock their phones and 'digital devices' away for the day, freeing them up to spend more quality time with friends and loved ones while raising much needed funds for Blind Veterans UK.

This fundraising campaign will highlight the isolation that our members often experience following their sight loss, which chimes with the current national health theme on combatting loneliness and isolation. It provides a focused opportunity to be freed up from calls, emails and social media, and to reconnect with friends, family and colleagues. Find out more on page 45.

### A call to action

Following on, our 'March for Veterans' campaign will be a call to action for our supporters to join us for a month-long period of fundraising and volunteering

opportunities. We will have our very own march on 30 March when we will be inviting our supporters to join together in taking part in one of our five sponsored 10-mile marches at locations across the UK, including London, Brighton and Llandudno.

This will be a fabulous opportunity for our members and those involved with us to walk and talk together while helping the charity. There will also be two new fundraising offerings during March: Meet Up Brew Up and The Big Breakfast.

Meet Up Brew Up will be a 'family' event where we will invite supporters to get together with family, friends and colleagues at home, schools, clubs and businesses to have tea, biscuits (with a difference) and a darned good yarn, again while helping the charity. If they don't fancy the idea of tea and biscuits, they can help by getting together to join the hearty Big Breakfast where we will join together across the UK to start the day in style.

These are going to be exciting fundraising times for us, and we can all help in creating and spreading awareness of these events. Please feel free to talk about these to people you know. Invite them to look at the events on the website where they will be able to sign up. Also, talk to people you come across to create a buzz about these periods of heightened engagement. If you know someone who is constantly on their mobile phone or on social media, challenge them to unplug it for 24 hours to support us in January.

### Key fundraising

We are hoping that our March for Veterans will become a key fundraising period for Blind Veterans UK for years to come, and that our friends will offer their help during March every year.

We will be sending out much more information as we approach the launch dates, so you know what is going on and how you can help. In the meantime, if you need any further information please speak to any of the Community Engagement team on **020 7616 7958**, or email [fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:fundraising@blindveterans.org.uk).

And finally, this is a very special family indeed. Thank you all for your warmth and friendship over this year, and for all that you do to help rebuild the lives of our blind veterans. Isobel and I wish you a very Happy Christmas, and a peaceful and prosperous New Year.



# More than a sense of loss

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

On 11 November, I had the enormous privilege of marching in a contingent of nearly 200 of our veterans at the Cenotaph. It was a big day for the nation, principally to commemorate the end of the Great War – “the war to end all wars”. It was also a big day for me – and one on which I hadn’t thought I would be quite so emotionally affected, beginning with the incredible reception we received from the public and the other contingents as we marched out from Horse Guards to take our place at the head of one of the columns in Whitehall.

A Kiwi friend of mine recently commented that the reason why the Brits do ceremonial so well is that we know when to stop – by which she meant that we do splendour without going over the top. And during Remembrance, the Royal British Legion and the Household Division made exactly that point in front of the world. It was an honour for us in the Blind Veterans UK contingent to be at the forefront of all this – and to feature so prominently in the media coverage.

Despite all the pomp, in recent years I have come to understand that the most meaningful part of Remembrance really comes down to the two-minute Silence. As a Service brat, Remembrance has always featured in my life. I have vague early memories of my mum hushing us as the clock struck 11. In the sixties, I sense that it went a bit out of vogue with the public - but not in our household. Later, as a young officer I probably fretted about why it went on so long (largely so we could get off parade).

### A new significance

In the last few years the Silence has taken on new significance for me, probably as a function of age but also because of two recent events which have touched me surprisingly deeply. The first was when [my wife] Sue and I visited the National

Arboretum at Alrewas, Staffordshire. We came to the Armed Forces Memorial last - it is a truly impressive monument, but it was not the simple yet striking architecture that grabbed my attention. The memorial honours service personnel “who were killed on duty while performing functions attributable to the special circumstances and requirements of the Armed Forces, or as a result of terrorist action, and those who died while deployed on designated operations”. It records their names, year by year, from 1945 onwards. I imagine most visitors go first to the year most relevant to them - I joined the RAF in 1968, so we started there. I was genuinely shaken to realise that in each year since then, the memorial carries the names of people I worked with and often knew well for every single year.

The second was in 2015, when a Dutch friend took our Royal College of Defence Studies reunion to visit the only United States war cemetery in the Netherlands. Many Dutch families have ‘adopted’ a grave as recognition that most American families will never have the opportunity to visit it. Ben and Lia, our hosts, had brought flowers to lay at their adopted grave. The superintendent of the cemetery accompanied us, and at one point stopped at a grave to tell us about the person



**Picture:** Paul Luker pictured at the Cenotaph on Remembrance Day





**Picture:** Many of our members across the country provided their own personal tributes, such as this moving cross by David Grant.

buried there. As he spoke from behind the grave, he was gently stroking the shoulders of the headstone. Initially I did wonder about how proper this was, but he soon won us over. The gist of his talk was that too many visitors marvel at the scale, the finely manicured lawns, the beautiful flower beds, the quiet and the symmetry of the layout without understanding that it is really about individual people. Each grave marks a real serviceman or woman, with a real family. He invited each of us to walk amongst the graves, pick one at random, and consider the story that lay behind it. Incredibly, Sue stopped in front of one grave, entirely at random,

to discover it bore the name of a soldier who shared her maiden name – a 22 year-old GI from New Jersey.

### About real people

The Superintendent was right. It is all about real people. So, when I stood in silence on Whitehall, I tried to isolate myself from the other 10,000 veterans alongside us and concentrate instead on the humanity and old comrades taken too soon. When we say "We will remember them", I now understand what that means.

If all this sounds overly sombre, I don't mean it to be. As I said when I spoke at the lunch that followed, Remembrance is about much more than the sorrow of loss. It is also about giving thanks - for coming through, for the joy of comradeship, for having done one's bit, for shared experiences, for the chance to rebuild one's life, and so much more. I don't need to tell blind veterans any of that. One only had to listen to the laughter and the banter at lunch to know that Blind Veterans UK understands this more than most. But for me, it was something of a first and I just wanted to express my personal thanks to the whole of our team who orchestrated the logistics necessary to get 200 of us on parade - and for allowing me to be part of it.

Sue and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

# Brothers in arms

## Remembering the fallen – we commemorate the centenary of the Armistice

For all of us, Remembrance Sunday is the one day in the year where everything ceases for just two minutes while we remember those who are rightly described on the Cenotaph as 'The Glorious Dead'. For us at Blind Veterans UK, it is also often the chance to renew acquaintances with those still living, and to take part in our own tributes, whether that means marching with fellow members, or just having a quiet moment of reflection.

This year was a particularly special year, as our country commemorated the centenary of the signing of the Armistice, signifying the end of the First World War. Sadly, there are no longer any veterans from that terrible conflict still alive



**Remembrance Day:** Different generations bound together by adversity. The oldest veteran on parade, Ron Freer is joined by Shaun Stocker, who together with Margaret Wilson laid the wreath on behalf of Blind Veterans UK at the Cenotaph.



today, but the occasion still reverberates along the years, and has lost none of its significance to the following grateful generations.

Under rare November sunshine, our 96 veterans and their escorts waited on Horse Guards Parade for the order to be given for the forming of ranks. Led by our Chief Executive, Major General (Rtd) Nick Caplin CB, together with our Chairman Air Vice Marshal Paul Luker CB OBE AFC DL and President, Colin Williamson, the assembled members became alert, and once again their military training took over as they precisely kept step on the march to Whitehall.

The moment came when the field gun announced the silence, and as its echoes lingered, heads were bowed as those who were left, remembered those who had gone before. Once more that air was broken by the second salute from the gun, and the march began, with the salute this year being taken by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne.

Across the country, millions watched as our veterans proudly passed the cameras – with even the faithful guide dogs having a moment in the spotlight. In St John's Wood, at the hotel where many of the members were staying, the wives and partners proudly watched with eyes that for the most part weren't dry, as their loved ones filed past. Later on there would be reunions when the veterans returned, some emotional, some restrained, but each and all just as important.

Those same eyes watched as wreath upon wreath was laid upon the Cenotaph, with our own being gently placed by Margaret Wilson, accompanied by Shaun Stocker.

Member Graham Forshaw was present at both the memorial service

for our founder Sir Arthur Pearson, and the main parade. Here are his thoughts on the day.

"From all parts of the UK and beyond, our blind veterans assembled to remember those who lost their lives in the First World War – sometimes called The Great War – and the conflicts beyond. We also remember those who survived the slaughter.

Yesterday [on Saturday], in a quiet churchyard, we gathered to honour Sir Arthur Pearson, our founder, First Baronet of St Dunstan's, who did so much for blind veterans and their families.

One hundred years after the guns fell silent we have come to Horse Guards Parade on the eleventh day of the eleventh month to lay our wreaths at the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall.

The day is bright and breezy as we sort ourselves out from the other contingents on the square. Our contingent totals 96 veterans and volunteer helpers, plus four guide dogs – Freddie, Layla, Calvin and Johnny. Foremost in our leading group are Margaret, 95 and Ron, 103; the oldest lady and gentleman on parade today.

Despite the solemnity of the occasion there's the usual chatter as colleagues



**Remembrance Day:** An exuberant Bob Hill with a warming cup of tea before the march on the beautiful morning of 11 November.



**Remembrance Day:** One of the driving forces of the GOAL group, John Brice, in reflective mood before the ceremony.



**Remembrance Day:** Back on home soil after her recent successes in the Invictus Games, Kelly Ganfield enjoys the day.



meet up. Several members of the 2018 ski group are present, including the recently married Arthur Bloomfield, my room-mate Peter Graves, Charlie Eastwood and Carl Williams. Charlie and I are fortunate to have the guidance of Mrs Susan Keeling, a former Olympic skier and wife of our ex- chairman, Andy Keeling.

### A kaleidoscope of colours

As we prepare to march off Horse Guards, the square is a kaleidoscope of colours - red, blue, white and green berets, a touch of tartan, medals glinting in the sun, bowler hats and rolled black umbrellas at the ready.

Column by column, we march out into Whitehall and into a tumult of clapping, cheering spectators. Ahead of us is the white Cenotaph. We take our place amongst the columns of veterans.

On the first stroke of Big Ben the crowds fall silent. Two minutes of silence to remember all those who died. Two minutes to think of those who survived and heard the guns fall silent.



**Remembrance Day:** Our members passing HRH Princess Anne, The Princess Royal.

Birds are singing in the trees on this bright November Sunday. A sudden breeze rustles the autumn leaves; a deep sighing sound, a sound of distant voices. Wrapped in the silence, I remember my grandfather who served in the Royal Field Artillery and survived; a Great Uncle who served in Mesopotamia. I see the scattered white gravestones of a world war.

The clear notes of the Last Post pierce the silence. Wreaths are laid at the Cenotaph, prayers offered, hymns sung and the Bishop of London delivers the blessing. Yes, we will remember them.

As the military band strikes up, backs straighten, eyes brighten. Column by column, we march past the rows of red wreaths laid upon the white stone.

The spectators applaud as we return to Horse Guards Parade. A smart 'eyes right' as we pass the salute of the Princess Royal. The sun is still shining as we disperse.

What a successful day. I'm sure everyone present would applaud the Blind Veterans UK staff led by our Member Engagement Manager Abby Tarrant, and wish to thank all the volunteers for their guidance and friendship. Victory Over Blindness would not be possible without your efforts."



## Brighton remembers

The fallen were remembered at our Brighton centre as well, with two ceremonies taking place over the weekend. On the morning of 10 November, there was a service to remember the members interred at the nearby Bear Road cemetery. The service was conducted by our padre Clare Callanan, while our Standard was borne by Alan Walker, who is pictured here. Remembrance Day itself saw a simple, but moving service at the centre, which was well attended by staff and members alike.



# A ray of sunshine

**It was a rare beautiful morning for the memorial service of our founder Sir Arthur Pearson Bt, GBE, writes Ailie MacDonald-Wilson**

In recent years, the memorial service for our founder, Sir Arthur Pearson Bt, GBE has been shrouded by rain, but this year saw our veterans and padre, Clare Callanan, gather in Hampstead Cemetery under a cloudless sky.

It is a very special ceremony, held during Remembrance weekend, and has taken place every year since 1921, when the Battalions of the Blind travelled from across the country to pay their respects. That first day saw 3,000 people swell the numbers at the graveside, this year, it was a more modest group who came to give thanks for the life of a great humanitarian.

This year, our Chairman, Air Vice Marshal Paul Luker CB OBE AFC DL presided at the service, while it was the first such occasion for our padre, who gave the opening prayer – the same as that used at Sir Arthur's funeral.

Following the prayer, the Chairman gave his welcome address, during which he



**Picture:** A beautiful day shines through in the background as our Standard Bearer Brian Eldridge (centre) stands with Bugler Adam Stockbridge and our Chairman, Paul Luker.

Margaret Eldridge.

talked about the vision of Sir Arthur Pearson, and his single-minded dedication to those blinded in the service of their country.

## Example and inspiration

Our Archives Officer, Rob Baker, took up the mantle with a moving extract from a previously unpublished piece of work written by one of the original war blinded veterans, William Girling, 'St Dunstan's V.O.B.'. The 'V.O.B.' stands for 'Victory Over Blindness' – the phrase used by Sir Arthur that gave hope to so many wounded servicemen returning home from the war. In the extract read out, Girling describes the sadness and shock felt by thousands upon hearing of the great man's passing.

"We have lost our great chief who was our example and our inspiration, the one to whom we owe our present prosperity and happiness. Yesterday, the cold black print of the placards and the coarse voices of newsboys announced 'Sudden death of Sir Arthur Pearson'."

The sun continued to shine down on those present on the crisp morning, as Blind Veterans UK Standard Bearer Brian Eldridge presented our Standard at the grave side, following which Vice-President Paul Palmer laid the wreath on behalf of the 15,000 blind veterans our charity has helped since its inception in 1915.

The wreath laying was followed by our President, Colin Williamson reading the poem 'Night Journey' by Alfred Noyes, which featured the moving verse,

**By the pity revealed in Thy loneliest hour,  
Forsaken, self-bound and self-emptied of power;  
Thou who, even in death hadst all heaven in sight,  
Look down on us gently who journey by night.**

Our Chairman once again took up the reins, with his reading of 'The Blind



**Picture:** Blind Veterans UK Chairman Paul Luker and veteran Kelly Ganfield in front of Sir Arthur Pearson's grave following the service





**Picture:** Our Chairman reads the Blind Veterans UK Prayer while the Standard flies high over the grave

Veterans UK Prayer', which was written by The Reverend Christopher Stoltz for our centenary.

'O God, our creator and our life, you have fashioned us as your people, and you love all that you have made. We thank you for the blessings you give us, for healing and wholeness, and for the invitation to share in your abundant life. Bless the work of Blind Veterans UK, its leaders, and all who find health and hope through its

service, and finally draw us to yourself in that heavenly kingdom where death and crying are no more, and where we shall see you face to face; through him who is the resurrection and the life, Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.'

As the final words of the prayer rang out, the assembled group sang the moving hymn, 'Abide With Me', to a beautiful accompaniment of birdsong that sprang from mainly small birds assembled in nearby trees and bushes.

For the second year running, bugler Adam Stockbridge from the London Military Band played the 'Last Post' while our Standard was reverently dipped over the grave. There followed one minute of silence, during which even the birds seemed to pause, before the rousing notes of 'Reveille' pierced the morning air, and the Standard once again took its place in the air.

As the ceremony drew to a close, Clare Callanan, our padre offered her blessing, and reminded the assembled party that this was a season of words and memories, of reclaiming not just the memories of others, but our own as well.

With the sunshine unabated, each member of the party was handed a glass of sherry, before our President Colin Williamson, once again stepped forward to lead the toast to Sir Arthur.

Even in the most miserable of conditions, this simple occasion never fails to be moving, but on this centenary of the Armistice, it was a reverent moment of tranquillity and beauty in a busy world.

## Dear friends,

Benjamin Franklin, one of the Founding Fathers of the United States, once famously stated, "In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

While some can manipulate the latter, there's not a lot we can do about the former, and that brings me nicely around to gifts in wills.

Christmas is traditionally a time for giving. Unfortunately, especially in this economic climate, this isn't always easy or indeed - for some families - possible. There is a way though, which many of you have chosen, to give a gift to Blind Veterans UK not now, but sometime in the future.

Your gift will ensure that we can continue to provide any future blind or severely sight impaired veterans with the same excellent standards of care and support that we have provided over the past 103 years.

Leaving a gift in your will is easy. If you currently have a will, there is no need to make a new one. All that is required is for you to write a clear statement of intent (a codicil) to leave a specific amount or a percentage share to the charity and have it signed, dated and witnessed.

A small percentage - after remembering friends and family - can go a long way. This is the simplest way to leave a gift in your will to Blind Veterans UK, and will allow us to make plans not just for the charity's future, but also for the blind ex-servicemen and women that will follow in our footsteps.

Blind Veterans UK is committed to supporting you for the rest of your days. Please help us make that same commitment for generations to come.

Thank you.

**Colin Williamson**

President

Blind Veterans UK





# Recruitment Volunteer

**(member volunteer role)**

Blind Veterans UK wants to make sure that it recruits the best possible staff to provide a service to you, and to do this, we need your help!

We are looking for a number of members, right across the UK who would be willing to take part in interview panels, meet and greet candidates for jobs or take part in role plays as part of our staff selection process. For every staff vacancy that has contact with our members, we want them to have a say.

Full training and support will be provided for this role, and we will reimburse any out of pocket expenses.

If you are good at communicating, listening to people, making people feel comfortable and are interested in helping us recruit the very best staff, please get in touch.

Send us a statement expressing your interest, telling us why you want to be involved and we will be in touch.



Please send completed statements by email to: [volunteer@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@blindveterans.org.uk), or by post to: Volunteering department, Blind Veterans UK, 12-14 Harcourt St, London, W1H 4HD

**Closing date: 31 January, 2019**

# News

## Taking to the tracks for North Norfolk tank driving day

Eight of our veterans from East Anglia got to try their hands at tank driving in a day out in October at North Norfolk's Muckleburgh Collection. All eight had to chance to travel on board a Fv 432 armoured personnel carrier (APC) through the grounds of the collection, with Ipswich-based member Roan Webb, 49 even having the chance to drive.

He said, "It was absolutely fantastic. It took a little bit of time to remember how to use the controls because it's been a good long while since I drove a tracked vehicle, but it came back pretty quickly and it was absolutely exhilarating".



**Picture:** Our veterans and their drivers pose in front of the Fv 432 self-propelled armoured personnel carrier at the Muckleburgh Collection



The collection is based at the former Royal Artillery Anti-Aircraft training camp at Weybourne, and features an extensive range of tanks and armoured cars in working condition.

Peter Price, 69 from Peterborough, has a connection with tanks, as his father had been a tank commander in the Second World War. This was his chance to experience life in the turret.

"My father was a tank commander during the Second World War, all the way from Normandy to the end of the conflict. He said he always had his head stuck out of the top and I wanted to see how that felt. Turns out it was absolutely tremendous, but then again no one was shooting at me!

### **Blind veteran George is still on the ball at Maine Road**

Remembrance Sunday was a particularly special day for 103-year old Blind Veterans UK member George Haigh, when he was a guest of honour at Manchester City football club.

George is one of the oldest former professional footballers alive, joining Manchester City back in 1931 as a centre-half before moving to Stockport County. He was lucky enough to see his beloved team beat Mancunian rivals United three-one.

In between playing on the field, George served in the RAF, joining in June 1940 before being discharged in June 1946 and instantly returning to the game, becoming a professional referee and manager. His love of sport has never left him, and the trip back to his old ground was a very special occasion.

Speaking to Manchester City's official magazine, George expressed his pride, saying "I believe I am one of the oldest,



**Picture:** George Haigh

I'm really proud, I couldn't understand it when they told me but there we go! I enjoyed every moment of it!"

### **Military week members take a trip back in time**

Blind Veterans UK members experienced life in the First World War during the Llandudno Military Week between 5-13 November.

The week saw our veterans taken on trips to the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, the RAF Museum at Cosford, and to Bodelwyddan Castle, which has recreated First World War trenches in its grounds. These featured volunteers dressed in period costumes to deliver talks about life on the front line.

A variety of guests attended the centre for talks and demonstrations and included weapon displays from the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, the Anglesey Hussars Re-enactment Unit and the Deva Arms. Staff also held sessions on First World War cooking, including making biscuits and cake for a tea dance in the afternoon.

A highlight of the week was the Remembrance Meal, during which members were treated to a champagne reception with tenors singing in the background, before being piped and drummed in to the main hall.

They were then entertained by the musician before a surprise entrance from 'The Lads' - a re-enactment by staff of our iconic statue. A lavish meal and speeches followed to end an amazing week.

On Remembrance Sunday, our members joined the Llandudno parade. It was a very emotional day for members, volunteers and staff, as over 70 people attended the church service on a beautifully sunny day before they marched or were pushed to the cenotaph for the commemorative ceremony.

### **Calling all Dakota pilots and D-Day paratroops**

Did you fly the Douglas Dakota for the RAF, or take part in the Overlord landings during D-Day? If you did then we want to hear from you.

Please get in touch with the Editor on either his email address, [chris.gilson@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:chris.gilson@blindveterans.org.uk) or **020 7616 8367**.



# Working for you

**Last month, we announced the appointment of Paul Palmer and Billy Baxter to Vice Presidential roles. Here, they talk about what the new positions mean to them**

It's been an eventful time for Blind Veterans UK recently, and included in the many activities and changes was the appointment of two new Vice Presidents – Paul Palmer and Billy Baxter.

Paul and Billy will, no doubt, be familiar to you in their previous roles as trustees for the charity and their new appointment capitalises on their experiences in closely working with our members on a wide variety of issues.

To start, I asked Paul and Billy what their appointments mean to them.

"It's an absolute honour to be given this role," begins Billy. "For me, it's about responsibility, guidance and leadership."

"I feel privileged to be selected," adds Paul, "and to have the chance to represent our membership and make sure they have a voice."

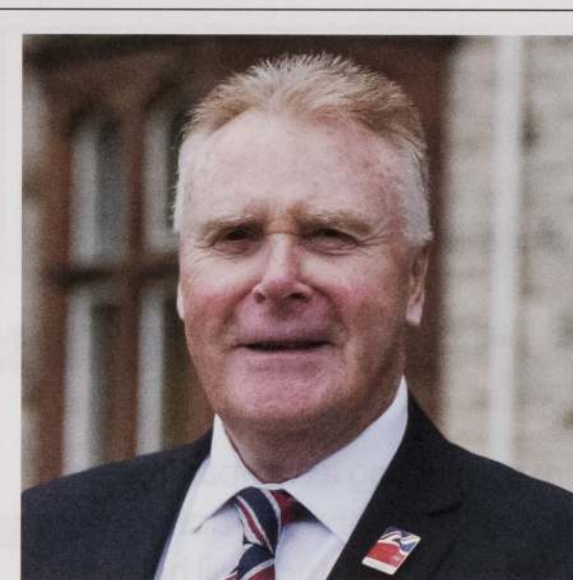


**Picture:** Billy Baxter

The two new Vice Presidents will report to Blind Veterans UK President Colin Williamson, and will be looking after different areas. Paul will look after the south, while Billy will deal with the north-west. Both have clear ideas of how they see their new positions.

"My main priority is to represent Colin and the Board," says Billy, "Essentially I'll be acting as a 'shop steward' for the members. I've walked in their shoes, and I've been on that journey."

"It's very important to get to know



**Picture:** Colin Williamson

our staff as well," notes Paul. "We need to spend time with those who work for the charity and listen to their concerns and views as well, so that we can provide a better service to our members."

## **Not just concerns**

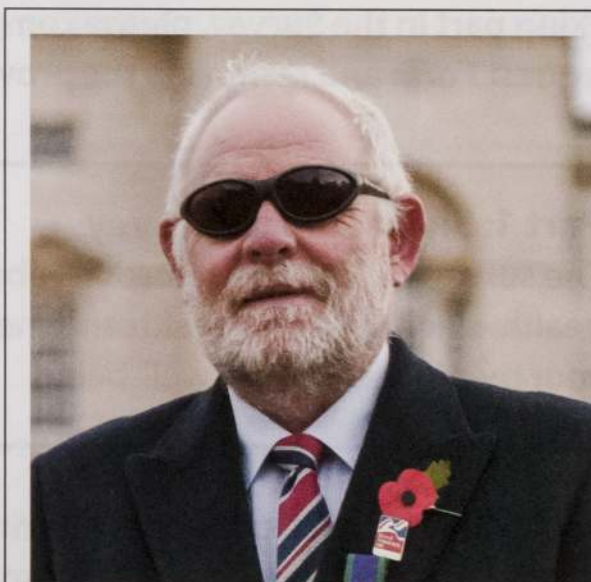
Both Vice Presidents stress the role isn't just about the negative side of life, and that while they are there to feedback on members' concerns, they also want to report positive aspects of our organisation.

"It's not just about the bad things," says Paul, "It's got to be about the good aspects as well. I'll be working closely between communities, and passing on information about such things as IT support and social functions."

One area that members might feel concerned about is ways to get in touch with their new representatives, and there are details at the end of this article. Both Paul and Billy are aware of this, and say that they are keen to address the views of members who may be unable to get to the centres.

"As I'm based in Llandudno, I get to see our members on a day-to-day basis, but at the same time I'm very aware that not all of them get to the centres," says Billy. "I do work with our rehabilitation team, however, so I do manage to stay in contact with those who wouldn't communicate with us normally."

If you wish to contact them, they can be e-mailed at [paul.palmer@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:paul.palmer@blindveterans.org.uk) and [billy.baxter@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:billy.baxter@blindveterans.org.uk)



**Picture:** Paul Palmer



# Circadian Therapeutics – Blind Veterans UK Sleep Health Study

In partnership with the Blind Veterans UK, we are conducting a two-part research study aimed at understanding sleep and daily (circadian) rhythm disruption that is experienced by Vision Impaired individuals. Outcomes of the study will help us to provide informed feedback to the Blind Veterans UK community about treatments and therapies to improve your sleep and circadian rhythms.

**You must be a Blind Veteran UK Member to participate in this study.**

**Part 1 – Sleep health survey:** Questions in the survey will ask about your:

- Visual health
- Sleep and daily rhythms
- Physical health and current medications
- Mental health and well-being

The survey can take up to one hour to complete. You may complete the survey online or by phone with one of our friendly researchers. **If you are interested in taking part in the Survey, please complete the attached Survey Participation Request Form and return via the provided pre-paid envelope.**

## Part 1: Sleep Health Survey

The survey will ask you questions about your visual health, sleep, physical health and medications, and your mental health and well-being



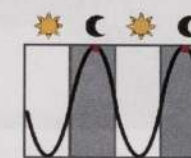
**Part 2 – Sleep and circadian monitoring Study:** Following the Survey, you may also wish to sign up for Part 2 of the research study. This will involve four-weeks of at-home sleep monitoring and a two-night stay in the Blind Veterans UK Residential Care Facility. **Participation in the Survey does not require participation in Part 2.**

## Part 2: Sleep and Circadian Monitoring Study

You may also wish to take part in a second study which involves:

### Circadian Assessment

Assessment of your internal circadian timing via collection of urine samples (four weeks)



### Two-day Monitoring

Monitoring of biological, physiological and behavioural outcomes



If you would like to learn more about the Sleep Health Study, or have any questions, please contact us by phone or email or visit our website:

Email: [sleepstudy@circadiantherapeutics.com](mailto:sleepstudy@circadiantherapeutics.com)

Phone: **01235 841 532**

Online: [circadiantherapeutics.com/blind-veterans-study/](http://circadiantherapeutics.com/blind-veterans-study/)

## Sleep Survey Participation Request Form

**I would like to learn more about the Sleep Health Survey.**

Please provide your name and contact details below and tick your preferred contact method:

Name : .....

Email : .....

Phone : .....

### How would you like to take the Survey?

Online (screen reader accessible)

By phone (a researcher will call you)

Signature: .....

Personal information provided here will only be used to contact you to participate in the study.



Business Reply Plus  
Licence Number  
RTZS-JJCC-SHAL



Sleep Health Study  
Circadian Therapeutics  
99 Park Drive  
Milton Park  
Milton  
ABINGDON  
OX14 4RY





**Picture:** The Tornado GR.4 cufflink is made using melted down aluminium from airframe ZG750 and comes with a presentation box, certificate and even drawstring bag made from flying suit material

## Working age member Alan begins own business

Working Age member and former Royal Naval engineering officer Alan Lock has established a start-up business focussed on high-quality, British-made cufflinks and other gift products. His business – Icarus Originals – produces items that commemorate some of the icons of British engineering. What makes these gifts different is that they are made from the aircraft, ship or vehicle they seek to commemorate.

Alan and his co-director, John Mercer – a current RAF aero systems engineer – have developed an initial range of products that include parts of the wing of Avro Vulcan B.2 XH558 – the last flying example - captured in a beautifully finished sterling silver cufflink and single piece polished aluminium cufflinks melted down from the iconic Panavia Tornado. He has also produced hand-finished brass bottle openers made from Royal Navy torpedo propellers.

“I have always wanted to start my own business,” said Alan. “As an engineer, I really wanted to produce physical products and given my military background, together with John’s current service, this seemed a great niche.”

A percentage of each sale made will be go to Blind Veterans UK. “I wanted to support our charity in some way, since it has been terrific in helping me get this venture off the ground” says Alan. He and John are also offering a special launch price to our Blind Veterans UK community, which will receive a 20 per cent discount against the normal retail price by using the discount code ‘blindvets’.

Each item comes beautifully packaged with its own certificate of authentication and high-quality, UK-made presentation box, ensuring these gifts will stay in perfect condition. The launch products and other items can be viewed and ordered at [www.icarusoriginals.com](http://www.icarusoriginals.com). You can also contact Alan by e-mail at [alanlock2000@gmail.com](mailto:alanlock2000@gmail.com)



**Picture:** These soon to be released sterling silver cufflinks contain an actual piece of the wing from the final Vulcan to fly, even down to the original paint



**Picture:** How to own a piece of military history on your arm

### Win a pair of Vulcan cufflinks

Alan has kindly donated a pair of the Vulcan cufflinks as a prize. The first reader to email the Review Editor will win, and the results will be announced in the February issue. Just answer this simple question – which of these is not a ‘V-Bomber’. [ReviewEditor@blindveterans.org.uk](mailto:ReviewEditor@blindveterans.org.uk).

Vickers Valiant  Vultee Vengeance  Avro Vulcan



# Sunshine on 'Sultan' - part 2

**Our conclusion of Andy Salter's account of what happened when a band of our veterans visited HMS Sultan for a week in the summer**

Our programme continued in the afternoon, with archery classes taught by the Havant and Hayling Bowmen.

On Monday, Captain Peter Towell formally welcomed us to HMS 'Sultan' and wished everyone an enjoyable week. The event attracted media cover from 'Forces TV' and the local newspaper. Ex-chief petty officer Martyn Webb soon had proceedings underway with four Blind Veterans UK teams, a trainees squad and a very enthusiastic lady helpers group all participating.

The sports morning was followed by an afternoon at Rowner Bowls Club, where we had a friendly 'roll up', testing both the inexperienced and seasoned bowlers. In the evening, we visited Court Barn Conservative Club for a lively social evening, during which we won the quiz. A delicious buffet, jointly funded by Court Barn and Gosport and Lee-On-Solent Lions Club, was enjoyed before we finished with a sing along with a local entertainer and friend, Derrick Ince.



**Picture:** Renewing acquaintances during one of the social evenings

Showing no signs of fatigue after three days, we travelled to Museum of Army Flying at Middle Wallop on Tuesday morning. The site covers the first ventures with kites and balloons, to the helicopters of today. Following suitable refreshment in the Apache Café, we re-joined our coach to our afternoon destination, the Bombay Sapphire Gin distillery at Whitchurch. On a guided tour we were introduced to the botanicals used in gin production, and learned the history of gin making on site before sipping a leisurely cocktail or two in the beautiful setting adjacent to the River Test. Good weather enabled us to make the most of the experience to the full before we returned, on a very sleepy coach to 'Sultan' for a quiet evening.

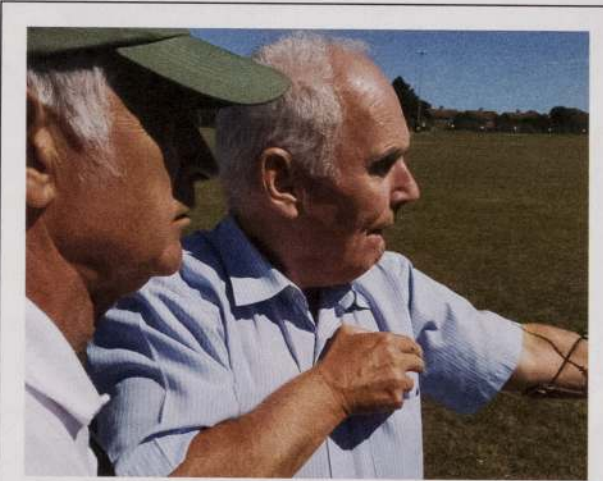
## Memorial gardens

On Wednesday morning we had the option of two events. Crazy golf was played by many, with the helpers faithfully recording some impressive rounds. Some of the others opted for a visit to the Haslar Memorial Gardens at the former naval hospital. The site is steeped in history, and provides horticultural therapy for veterans, enabling them to improve their overall health and well-being. We took part in a guided tour around the gardens with Christine Robson, whose knowledge of the gardens, trees and history was staggering.

In the evening, we were all guests in the officer's mess, at 'Sultan'. Having been welcomed by Commander Joules Philo, we enjoyed dinner followed by a quiz organised by young officers at the start of their engineering training. With prizes of bottles of port at the end of every round, the stakes were high.

Thursday started with a cooler morning, although this didn't dampen our spirits for a visit to the Diving Museum. This displays the history of diving, from the early days to techniques and equipment being used today. The museum - the only one of its type in the UK - is run by volunteers who opened it especially for our visit.

In the afternoon, with brightened skies, we took a trip on a Sentinel steam lorry, owned and maintained at on the base. The lorry, built in the 1930's, never fails to



**Picture:** At the archery classes



# Review

Blind Veterans UK | St Dunstan's since 1915



Picture: The assembled campers

attract interest and with a comfort stop at a couple of local hostelrys, the journey lasted for about three happy hours.

On Thursday evening, we celebrated our success at archery, the sports morning and contributions to the Camp. We were delighted to welcome our Blind Veterans UK Chief of Staff, Andy Cash and his wife Geraldine, who were able to join us together with representatives from the local clubs and organisations who had hosted us. The awards were presented by Pauline Jeffs of the Havant and Hayling Bowmen, and Captain Towell. There were many surprised faces as the awards were

made, no more so than Graham Draycott who received the Don Minter Trophy. This trophy is awarded to, **'The blind veteran who has without question entered full into the spirit of the camp, and contributed to its success, both on and off the sports field.'**

Two cheques were presented to the camp, one from the welfare fund of HMS 'Sultan', and the other from Les and Lynne Heyhoe, who had raised a significant amount of money for us at a horse racing night earlier this year.

### A very wet affair

Friday marked the last full day of camp and a real change in the weather. We held our annual general meeting in the morning, when Charlie Eastwood and Gerry Jackson were voted back onto the committee as Blind Veterans UK representatives, and the remainder of the committee were voted back in to plan next year's camp. The afternoon was a very wet affair, with our planned trips to Lee-on-Solent and Gosport being cancelled.

Our final evening saw the return of the Rose and Thistle Pipes and Drums Band, and we toasted our health with a tot of "Pusser's Rum", kindly provided by the Fleet Air Arm Field Gun Association.



## Activities supplement

2019-20



# Welcome

Hello, and a warm welcome to your activities and themed week supplement for 2019.

We have produced this guide for you to choose the activities you would like to take part in at our Brighton and Llandudno centres. Some details are given for each of the activities, all of which will take place throughout next year, and the early part of the year beyond.

Booking details and contact numbers for both Centres are detailed below. Bookings are limited to one themed week per member, per centre, but there is an opportunity to place your name on our waiting lists if you would like to join more than one.

Don't forget to highlight with your Community Support Worker any care and support needs in advance of your stay at the Centres. Please note you can take part in a themed week or have a holiday even if you have not attended an introduction day or week

We look forward to welcoming you soon.

## Themed and activity weeks and clubs at our Brighton Centre from April 2019 to March 2020

**Please note** – Our procedures have changed, be please aware we are not working on a first come first served basis this year. This is to enable all members the opportunity to enjoy time at our Centre. You have two weeks to express your interest as follows:

**Register your interest between:**  
11-28 February 2019 8.00am - 4.30pm

### Confirmation date:

We will contact you between 8-15 March 2019 during the hours of 8.00am - 4.30pm

The Brighton Centre bookings number is **01273 391 500**. If you reach the answer-machine please do leave a message and we will return your call as soon as possible.

Both the themed weeks and topic of the week breaks are charged at a standard holiday rate. The bookings team can tell you how much this will be when you book.

## April

7 – Fitness Training week  
16-20 – Mini Spring break  
23-27 – Mind and body re-balance mini break  
28 – Fishing week

## May

7-11 – Women's mini break  
24-1 June – Archery club  
28-1 June – Healthy eating for all

## June

2 – Walking week  
9 – GOAL Group  
16 – Photography week  
30 – Amateur radio club

## July

7 – Fitness training week  
15-18 – Carers Summer break  
21 – Exercising at home fitness week

## August

11 – Widows' week  
11 – Cycling week  
18-23 – Archery club  
25 – Mini summer break  
25-31 – Archery club

## September

1 – Pamper week  
15 – Activities week  
22 – Technology week  
29 – Amateur radio club

## October

6 – Fitness training week

13 – Food and drink week  
13-26 – Bowls club

## November

24 - Fighting fit week

## January 2019

5 – Fitness training week  
10-12 – Carers winter break  
12 – Ski trip

## February 2019

21-29 – Archery club

## March 2019

8-21 – Bowls club



**Picture:** Brush up your camera skills at the Photo Week





**Picture:** Golf always proves to be a popular activity

## Brighton Centre – what's in store

So you can see what's best for you, here are some descriptions of the activities, clubs and weeks on offer.

### Activities week

If adrenaline fuelled outdoor pursuits are your thing, then our Activities week is the one for you. Have fun and challenge yourself while taking part in activities such as rock climbing, abseiling, kayaking, coasteering and high ropes courses.

### Amateur radio society

Would you like to become an amateur radio ham and communicate with people across the globe? If so, then please join us at the Brighton Centre to learn how to operate the systems and

create networks with support from long-standing members of the group.

For more information, please contact the society's Chairman Ray Peart on **01452 533 839** or email him at [Raymond.peart@btinternet.com](mailto:Raymond.peart@btinternet.com)

### Archery club

Blind Veterans UK Bowmen are the founders of blind archery. The club is known worldwide and is seen as the fount of all knowledge for this exciting sport.

Archery weeks are open to Blind Veterans UK Bowmen, and we would welcome new members from our fellow veterans.

If you would like to find out more in advance, please contact David Poyner on **0161 282 9524**, or email him on [d.poyner@ntlworld.com](mailto:d.poyner@ntlworld.com)

### Bowls club

Bowlers of any level are welcome to join this club, with bowling weeks being made up of singles, pairs and triples. There are also round robin competitions and finally a club dinner. However, please note it is not possible to book for a single week.

If you would like more information on the Brighton Bowling Club, then please contact Dave Mackenzie **07399 481842**.

### Cycling week

Cycle around Sussex on a bicycle made for two! Based in Brighton, enjoy daily tandem cycle rides on routes taking in the South Downs and beyond. Distances can be tailored to suit all levels of fitness and experience. There will also be the opportunity to cycle at the Olympic Velodrome, which promises to be a fantastic day out.

### Exercise in the home

Do you find yourself wishing to be more active at home but struggle to with home-based exercise? We will be exploring various ideas from chair-based exercises, relaxation, yoga, body weight workouts and stretching, All the above will help you perform your daily tasks and keep you moving.

### Fighting Fit

These four days will give you the opportunity to train and experience a range of martial arts and contact sport such as boxing. You will leave feeling motivated albeit drained from the physical exertion you will have to put into everything. All you need is determination and a willingness to learn and take part.

### Food and Drink week

Welcome to the world of food, drink and all things cooking at the Brighton Centre. The week is packed full of food related activities. The highlight will be a food related day trip out.

We will fill your week with quizzes, reminiscence, and talks from food related professionals. Activities include our famous Brighton Bake Off.

### Fishing Week

The week is open to all members whether you've fished before or never picked up a rod, and will have the benefit of all those big fish being at their maximum weight before spawning starts.

You will need to bring waterproof clothing and a fishing license. If you do not have one, then you can purchase a week long fresh water license from the Post Office. If you have your own fishing equipment that you would like to bring then you are welcome to do so but please keep in mind we have limited space and the transport team will need to know in advance.



**Picture:** Raft building at Llandudno





**Picture:** Enjoying the open air on an Activities Week

#### **Healthy eating for all**

Coming along to this week will give you the tools and knowledge to make food choices that will benefit your overall health. You will have the chance to try various food and drinks that have great health benefits and taste great. You will also learn how to prepare simple healthy meals.

#### **Mind and body re-balance**

A team of experts will guide you through traditional practices to leave your body and mind feeling stretched. This week will feature energetic and relaxing practices in physical disciplines such as yoga, pilates and Tai Chi. We will also touch upon meditation, mindfulness, aromatherapy and Ayurveda.

#### **Technology week**

The Technology week will appeal to members who have an interest in how technology impacts our lives. The week contains talks and demonstrations for external speakers, ranging from latest gadgets that you can use at home or out and about to learning about how new ideas work in the world around us.

#### **Walking week**

Spectacular and challenging for all, Walking week will include the best coastal trails, forest, heathland and downland walks the South East has to offer. Take in famous land marks such as Pooh Bear Country, Seven Sisters and other areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and enjoy the odd pub lunch. Distances will vary and can be adapted to suit all needs.

#### **Who cares for the carers? We do!**

Enjoy a weekend or midweek break with other carers. We offer trips out to local attractions and dinner to one of the many Brighton eateries. A full activity programme will be provided which can include making gifts for yourselves or others to take away, mindful sessions and lots of opportunities to pamper yourselves.

#### **Themed and activity weeks at our Llandudno Centre from April 2019 to March 2020**

Welcome to the Llandudno Centre's programme for April 2019 – March 2020

Activity week bookings will be open from 11-28th February 2019, and the lines open at 8.30am. The team will take the details of your first three choices and will confirm bookings between 8-15 March 2019. There will be a limit to the number of people able to book on each week and priority will be given to members who have not had an opportunity in previous years.

To book an Activity Week at the Llandudno Centre please call **01492 868 700**. Lines open at 8.30am.

Both the themed weeks and in-house themes are charged at a standard holiday rate. The bookings team can tell you how much this will be when you book.

#### **Llandudno Centre – what's in store**

So you can see what's best for you, here are some descriptions of the activities and weeks on offer.

#### **Driving week - 14 April**

For all you petrol heads we are offering a fantastic opportunity to take part in a wide range of driving activities including buggy and hovercraft driving, 4x4 off-road driving experience, and go-karting. Members will have the chance to get behind the wheel once again either driving solo or with one to one assistance.

#### **Adventure week - 23 June**

This is a fantastic opportunity to take you from your comfort zone and help reach new goals - it will be fun, wet and high! Experience adventures and activities such as tandem cycling, climbing, abseiling, underground zip-wire and water-based activities.

#### **Accessible Adventure week - 28 July**

Now you can access the world of adventure at any level of mobility to help develop self-confidence, 'challenge yourself' and - above all - have a fun, safe week of enjoyment. Experience the delights of Snowdonia, from the rivers and lakes to the hills and mountains, while demonstrating a willingness to achieve and a sense of camaraderie.



**Picture:** The perfect catch? Why not try the Fishing Week?





**Picture:** Members go-karting during the Llandudno Driving Week

#### **Hill walking week - 29 September**

Walk, talk and take the opportunity to document your ventures into the Welsh landscape. Your journeys will vary, from walking on beaches, through mountains, across rivers and waterfalls.

#### **Fishing week - 18 August**

Develop your fishing techniques on a full day boat trip, or on the pier on a sunny summer's day. You can also visit local trout farms during the calm, warm evenings when the fish are always biting!

#### **Cycling week - 8 September**

Free yourself from day-to-day life and feel the excitement and thrill of riding

on a tandem around the North Wales landscape; feel the sea breeze on your face, the burn in your legs as you ascend the hills of Snowdonia.

#### **Military week 2019 Llandudno**

Culminating with the Remembrance Sunday parade at Llandudno's cenotaph, our Military week promises to deliver an unforgettable time.

The week will include visiting local military camps and museums, and members will have the opportunity to interact with present day soldiers and military personnel. This will be a great chance to share stories, compare modern military lifestyles and even try out some of the up-to-date equipment. There will also be guest speakers for you to enjoy.

The week will end fittingly by remembering those who served, and celebrating with a 'dining-in' dinner at the Llandudno Centre; so do bring your formal lounge wear and medals with you.

#### **Golf week - 19 May**

Time for a round! Golf is a fun, sociable and a great way to get some exercise. It doesn't matter whether you have never picked up a golf club in your life or if you have played a bit and would love the opportunity to get back out on the course again. Golfing week will be totally inclusive for all who attend

#### **Horse Riding week - 23 February, 2020**

Learn the basics of horse riding on this taster week. Start by using the latest in technology on a mechanical horse at a specialist riding centre, and go on days out in the Welsh countryside at local riding schools. You will be shown how to groom and look after these magnificent animals - there is something for everyone who is interested in the equine world.

#### **Photography week - 15 March, 2020**

Join like-minded people and visit spectacular locations across North Wales. Capture the mountains, the sea side and the architecture. Learn new tips and share skills with other members. You will have the opportunity to create, print and mount your own photography, and showcase your work within an

exhibition for the whole centre to enjoy. Please bring your own camera.

#### **Join the Blind Veterans UK GOAL Group in 2019**

GOAL stands for Get Out And Live, and active male and female Blind Veterans UK members aged between 50 and 76, who despite their sight loss wish to participate in new challenges, maximise their lifestyle and enjoy the camaraderie of like-minded people, are encouraged to join us on our events. We visit places of interest and try many different activities; some of which you or other members of the group may not have done since losing their sight.

Although we work together as a group, one of our objectives is to promote members confidence and independence, and for that

## **March for Veterans**

**March for Veterans is Blind Veterans UK new campaign to raise money throughout the month of March through a variety of activities.**

**We are encouraging supporters to participate in the month by completing a 100 mile walk throughout the month of March, hosting a coffee morning or any other fundraising activity they would like.**

**The month will accumulate in a series of five ten-mile walks across the UK, all of which will take place on 30 March.**

**Please contact Sophie Hill on 0207 616 7939 for more details.**





**Picture:** Horse riding school

reason the blind veteran cannot be accompanied by partners or carers.

While it is not envisaged that excessive physical activity is needed to participate in these events, participants must be active and fully mobile; as not only do participants have to travel to the event by public transport, but we often have to walk to, from and around venues, or travel to venues using public transport. The use of the rail assistance scheme is very much encouraged

and sometimes members may be able to accompany other members participating in the same event.

Although some events take place at external venues, it is highly recommended that new participants initially attend an event at a centre and to encourage this, priority is given to new members when allocating places for events at both Llandudno and Port Hall. This affords both the new member and others in the group the opportunity to meet in a safe, predictable environment, encouraging relaxed integration.

The first GOAL event in 2019 will be held at the **Llandudno Centre**, from **13-18 May, 2019**.

For the second GOAL event we will stay at **Port Hall**, close to our Brighton Centre, from **10-14 June, 2019**.

Members of Blind Veterans UK who wish to obtain further information about the GOAL Group, should email or telephone either, or both, of the members below, who will be pleased to help -

John Brice at **john.brice.goal@gmail.com** Tel: **01934 261783**.

Chris Humphrey at **chrisandhazel3@gmail.com** Tel: **01603 701402**.

# Padre's Corner

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

As many of you know, our Brighton Centre sits on the side of a steep hill, surrounded by down and meadowland, with the sea to the front. In the last few days there have been a number of amazing cloud formations around mid-afternoon. As the year moves on, the sunsets are earlier and it is wonderful to see their panorama while working there.

I am sure you know the sort I mean. When scattered clouds stretch out across the sky, and you can see the rays of sunlight stretching out, seemingly from the point where the sun is located. They are called crepuscular rays (trust me...I'm married to a meteorologist even if he is retired now). These rays stream through openings in clouds, and are columns of sunlit air particles caused by hazy conditions. Crepuscular rays are also known as sunbeams, splintered light or god rays. What wonderful names...

Today there was another spectacular view of the 'god rays' shining down on the sea like an ever moving spotlight, lighting up the surface of the water.



**Picture:** Padre Clare Callanan





**Picture:** Light and fire

It was as if the sky was making up for the fact that we are moving towards the darker mornings and evenings. Many of us do not like this increasing lack of light as it brings the colder months too. For some with a vision impairment, light can be too bright - whereas for others, darkness is their everyday experience.

### Light and fire

Many cultures and faiths have celebrations involving both light and fire; Divali in the Hindu faith, Hannukkah in Judaism, St Lucia's day in Sweden, bonfire celebrations at Yule, and also the winter solstice. For

Christians, this season and month is the time for recognising the birth of Christ, a time of warm candle light at carol services, and sparkling decorations on the trees. The symbolism of the darkness deepening, but then the rebirth and return of light and the sun/son is deeply embedded in the Christian celebrations at this time of year (unless of course you are planning to be in Australia this year and then it gets confusing!).

The Christmas carols, cards, decorations, gifts and nativity scenes are all around us in increasing glitter and false brightness, as the rush that is the commercial Christmas goes on around us with the message of having more, getting lots and making money. But there is another way - lifting our faces to the splintered light of the sun or sensing the flickering warmth from the candles, hearing the familiar soaring notes of cathedral choirs or the laughter of children exploring the woods on frosty walks, smelling fresh fir and evergreen branches, feeling the holly prickles or crumbly pastry of the mince pies; allow these gifts to give you pause to dwell on the wonder of life and light in our lives.

Let those 'god rays' be a part of your Christmas and winter festivities.

Blessings

**Padre Clare Callanan**

# Take part in our new fundraising activity

**#24Unplugged: sponsor a loved to go device-free for a day on 26 January**

Technology is a wonderful thing – we're all familiar with the benefits tools such as the Synaptic phone, Orcam and even Amazon's Alexa have brought to our members – but do you ever feel like you're missing out on face to face conversation?

We'd like you to nominate a friend or family member who you think could benefit from a 24-hour digital detox on 26 January, and raise important funds which will help us to reach new members who are isolated and experiencing sight loss.

There are tens of thousands of blind veterans across the UK who would benefit from the help our charity has to offer but who we are yet to reach, many of whom have no relatives or friends to help them day-to-day. With enough funds, we can deliver our specialist IT instruction and the right software and help reconnect isolated blind veterans to their communities.

We spoke to member Vic Nicholls who said: "Wherever I seem to go, ever since my wife passed away, was taken up with laptops all over the place. It happened in my own family. And as these young people grew up, moved away and went to university then I was left more and more on my own. And life can be very lonely when everyone that you know is working away."

After a recent week at the Brighton centre where he undertook IT training with instructor Leon Groombridge, Vic is now communicating with his family via email: "I emailed all my relatives and I've heard from every one of them saying, 'well done Grandad, keep going, we're listening, we're watching! It's absolutely tremendous."

To sign up individually or nominate someone to unplug, visit:

**[www.blindveterans.org.uk/24unplugged](http://www.blindveterans.org.uk/24unplugged)**



# Grants – what you need to know

One of our members, Chris White from London, talks to Eastern Regional Manager Alison Becker, who has been leading the Grants Review Working Group. Together, they'll explain what you need to know about forthcoming changes.

**Chris – Could you tell us why the Blind Veterans UK grant policy and procedures have been reviewed?**

**Alison –** We review our policies regularly to ensure they remain current and are



**Picture:** Chris White talks to Alison Becker about the Grants Review

able to support members for many years to come. The last time we reviewed our grants policy was December 2015, so it was due to be updated this year.

**Chris – How was the review undertaken?**

**Alison –** We set up a working group of staff from across the charity who helped to devise some principles which would ensure our grant decisions are fair and consistent. The group consulted widely, asking for further suggestions and feedback from members and staff. The revised policy and procedures were then scrutinised and agreed by our trustees.

**Chris – Were members involved?**

**Alison –** Absolutely. We wanted to have members involved and be completely transparent about what we were doing. In April this year there was an article in the 'Review' magazine, asking members to contact us with any questions, comments or ideas. We also arranged consultation meetings and attended lunch clubs and other events to get further feedback from members from across the country. There has been more consultation with, and involvement by, members in this grants review than any other previously.

**Chris – You've mentioned 'grant principles' a couple of times. Could you explain what these are?**

**Alison –** One of the issues which we had identified with the existing process is that it was unclear and inconsistent. This is unhelpful to staff and causes confusion for members.

We wanted the new policy to be clear and easily understood so we put in place some principles which all grant requests will need to meet;

1. All applications are based on need, directly linked to the goals identified when the member meets our Community staff
2. The grant should enable the member to live more independently
3. All grant requests should be made and agreed in advance of purchase
4. All grants are considered on an individual basis and reviewed regularly
5. Before any grants are made, we'll look to see if there is funding available from other organisations, for example, the NHS or local authority
6. Prior to submitting a grant request, our Community Team will need to get an understanding of the member's financial situation
7. Finally, members should be given transparent information on our grants process



These principles were discussed with members and were really well received. The comment most used was that they seemed to be 'common sense'.

**Chris – So, what's changed?**

**Alison** – The main change is that we now have clearly defined grant principles which will ensure more consistency in decisions made about grants. Members of Blind Veterans UK can still come to the charity for financial support and, in most cases, this will still be given. We just ask that the grant requests are in line with the principles previously mentioned so that we issue grants fairly. We really want all of our grants to support members to rebuild their lives after sight loss.

**If any member is concerned about the grant principles or procedures then we ask that that they talk to their local community team.**

**Chris – Will members be expected to contribute anything towards the cost?**

**Alison** – We will always ask members if they are able to contribute anything towards the cost of the grant. If they can't, then we completely understand and will do all that we can to get the member the support which they require.

**Chris – Will members be asked for details of their finances?**

**Alison** – If a non-war blinded member is applying for a grant of over £750, we'll complete a financial assessment form. Generally if a member has over £11,000 in savings they will be expected to make a contribution to the cost. If a member has over £20,000 worth of savings it's unlikely that we would be able to provide a grant. We do however understand that there may be exceptions and every grant is considered individually according to that members own personal circumstances.

I need to emphasise that the vast majority of grant requests that we receive are for less than £750 and so, for example, last year 94% of applications would not have needed a financial assessment.

War-blinded members will not be subject to financial assessments due to our long standing commitment to them.

**Chris – That sounds a bit complex. Do you think some members may have difficulty in getting hold of such information?**

**Alison** – It's not as complicated as it seems. We already have a form, which is

used by other Service charities, and our community staff will go through it with the member. We'll ask the member the question and we trust what they tell us without having to view bank statements or other paperwork. We do need to ask so that we can evaluate whether or not we can award a grant and at what level.

If a member declines to share this information with us then unfortunately we'll be unable to consider them for a grant.

**Chris – Do members have to provide receipts following a grant being issued?**

**Alison** – Yes. We need to receive receipts or invoices for all grants so we can show where the charity spends its funds. We completely understand that there may be occasions where it is difficult to obtain a receipt (for instance, from a gardener) and in these circumstances a handwritten, signed note will be accepted.

**Chris – Do Blind Veterans UK provide assistance with care costs?**

**Alison** – We can provide domestic support grants such as cleaning, food preparation or getting to events. However, due to the statutory responsibility for the Local Authority to provide care, Blind Veterans UK cannot provide residential (top up fee) or personal (domiciliary/medical) care grants but we can help members to get the support they need from the local authority.

The Care Act of 2014 placed much greater responsibility on local authorities to provide support to people. They have to provide an assessment of need to everyone who meets the Government's criteria for support and then, if needs



**Picture:** Chris and Alison



are identified, they have to provide information as to what services are available in the community and funding. In exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Chair of the grants committee, war-blinded members may be supported with residential or personal care grants.

**Chris – Will widows be affected by the changes to the grant policy?**

**Alison** – Widows of war-blinded members will be able to receive grant support, in line with our seven principles. They won't be required to undertake a formal financial assessment.

For widows of non-war blinded members, if any grants which have previously been provided need to remain in place, then this can be done for a period of 12 months after their bereavement.

It is possible for spouses and dependents of Blind Veterans UK to receive funding from us, however, the grant must be linked to supporting the members outcomes and will be assessed based on the grant principles.

**Chris – Can you explain how a member can access our grants if they need to?**

**Alison** – Of course. Members just have to let their community team know that they are in need of grant support. The community team can then give more information about our grants process and answer any questions they may have. The community team will look into a variety of ways that they can support which may involve approaching other organisations such as the local authority, the NHS or other charities. We will always talk this through with the member first and get their consent to do this.

If a grant is under £1000 then the community team will submit the information to the local Regional Manager for a decision. If it is over £1,000 then the request will go to the Blind Veterans UK grants committee which meets every month.

**Chris – It sounds as if this has been a big piece of work for the charity, how do we find out more?**

**Alison** – It has been but it's also been a great example of our staff working together, with our members and trustees, to create a policy which will enable us to provide grants to Blind Veterans UK long into the future.

**To find out more about grants please talk to your local community team.**



**Picture:** Left to right - Carole & guide dog Layla, Chris, John, Dave, Billy, Graham and guide dog Clyde, Lindy, Diane & John Brice

# GOAL for Liverpool

**In early September, members of the Get Out and Live (GOAL) group visited Liverpool for a week. John Brice describes what happened next**

## Monday

10 September, nine members of the intrepid GOAL group - Billy Aspinall, John Cantwell, Lindy Elliot, Dave Hazelgrove, Chris Humphry, Diane Mountford, Carole Sharpe, Graham Ward and John Brice - arrive at the Ibis Hotel in Liverpool. That evening, led by Billy – nicknamed 'Sat-Nav' - a Liverpudlian himself, we set off to sample some of the culinary delights on offer before returning and getting some sleep.

## Tuesday

The next day, 'Sat-Nav' guided us to the Pier Head to catch the famous 'Ferry



'Cross the Mersey'. Crossing to Seacombe Terminal, we sailed down to Woodside Terminal, seeing the Queensway Tunnel Ventilation Station, the Birkenhead Hamilton Square Railway Station and Birkenhead Town Hall buildings. Then, it was across to Pier Head Terminal, taking in the Royal Albert Docks, Liverpool Cathedral, Museum of Liverpool, Royal Liver Building, Metropolitan Cathedral, Radio City Tower and Beetham West Tower.

Finally transferring to the 'Hop On, Hop Off' tour bus, we duly hopped off at the Metropolitan Cathedral. Rather unkindly called the 'Mersey Funnel' by some, it is an imposing modern building and was consecrated on 14 May, 1967.

From there we walked to the bombed-out shell of St Luke's Church, then past the Chinese Arch at the entrance to Nelson Street. Our last visit was to the Lutyens-designed Liverpool Cathedral, which took 74 years to build.

### Wednesday

Once again we set off with 'Sat-Nav' leading us to the Merseyside Maritime Museum, where we were to meet guides for the Old Dock Tour. Our helpful



**Picture:** Billy the drummer at the British Music Experience museum

guides, Danny and Gary, led us to the Old Dock via small walkways onto the main road, and across into the city itself.

In a hole in the ground, underneath the Hilton Hotel in the city streets of Liverpool, we stood on the spot where three hundred years ago the future of Liverpool, the wider UK and the world was changed with the world's first commercial wet dock. The importance of the events that took place affects us today, yet the person responsible for this, Thomas Steer, is unknown to most of the public, except engineers.



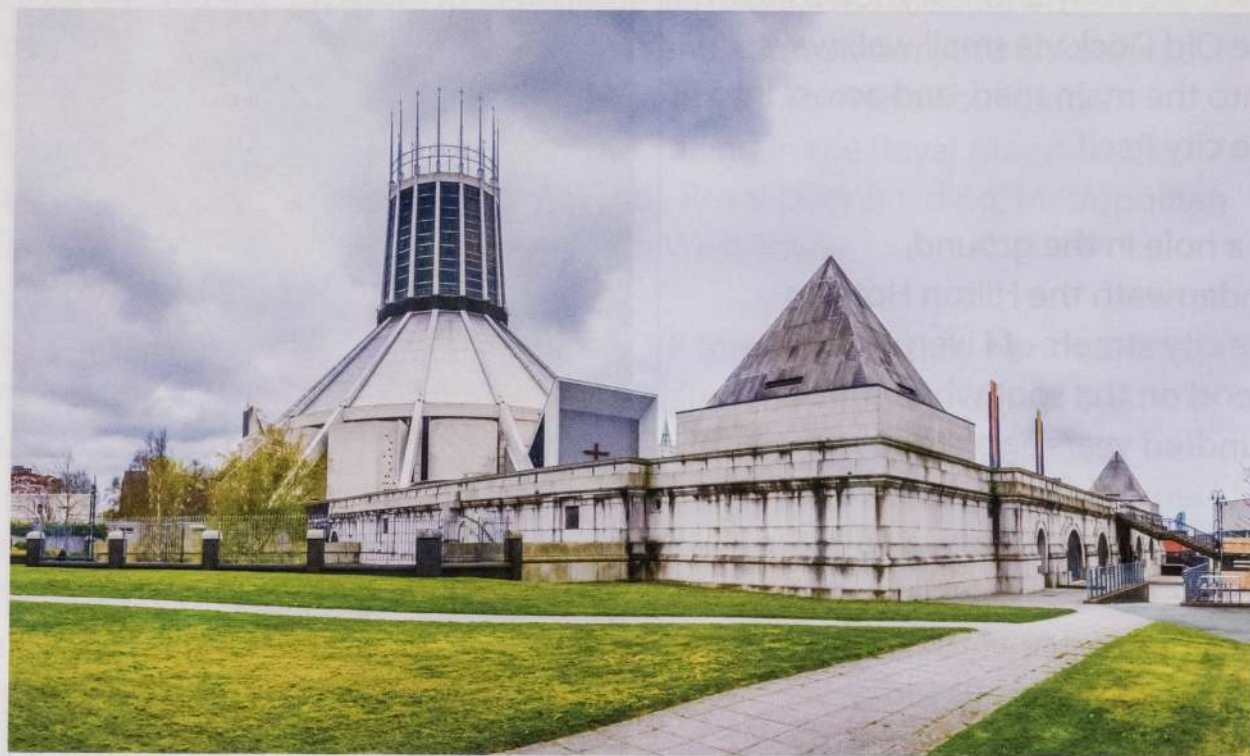
**Picture:** Terracotta Warriors

We would be equally as ignorant but for Danny and Gary. A pair of funny, professional, knowledgeable guides, they painted the picture of the Old Dock from its conception to today's historical attraction while answering all our questions with quips thrown in.

From there, it was a short walk to the Cavern Club, The club itself was atmospherically lit, and live music from the Beatles' era was being performed. We were transported back to the days when we were young in a heartbeat. We knew all the words to the songs, and tried to sing and 'dance' which was possibly not as visually delightful as once it may have been!

After lunch, it was off to the Western Approaches Museum - a wartime bunker that housed Royal Navy and Women's Auxiliary Air Force personnel, who were engaged in protecting the convoys bringing supplies to Britain across the Atlantic, or troops and equipment being sent to war theatres. We saw the map room, where Leading Aircraftswoman P E Lane fell to her death from one of the map chart wall ladders, together with the sleeping quarters and other rooms where these young people fought throughout the Second World War. Finally we finished the tour with a cuppa at 1940s prices, 2d or less than a penny today!





**Picture:** Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral

### Thursday

Our penultimate day saw us doing the ultimate tourist bit. We had our photos taken around the Royal Albert Docks, together with the Museum of Liverpool for a photo with the Lambananas and the Beatles statues for our traditional GOAL group shot. We also visited the 'Titanic' Memorial dedicated to the 244 engine room staff who lost their lives. This was very impressive, especially on a sunny day against a bright blue sky.

Next came the 'Three Graces of Liverpool' – the Royal Liver Building with its two Liver birds, the Cunard Building, and the White Star Line building. Then it was back to the Cunard Building, for lunch and a visit to the British Music Experience, and what a visit they gave us. The lunch was the best we had in Liverpool.

Paul, our guide, took us around the music exhibition describing what was in each section and the relevance to the years it represented; painting pictures that took us back to our youth and reliving it again. He also delivered a reminiscence session and quiz, which further tested our memories. Thank you, Paul, you really are a walking encyclopaedia of all things musical.

The day culminated with Billy having his photo taken behind Queen's drum kit, a unique privilege.

### Friday

We sampled some older history for our final day with a visit to The World Museum's 'China's First Emperor and the Terracotta Warriors' exhibition. We were also lucky enough to have not one but three guides - Lucy, Liz and Jess – and the privilege of being taken in early so as not to have to rush round the fascinating exhibits.

With our group divided into three, we had an explanation of life in China at the time of its First Emperor, together with the political struggles for power, and the effect of the following events that occurred. We saw the terracotta warriors, and their clothing was explained as a type of uniform. We found out more about the other exhibits, such as the jade soles which were believed to have protective powers and the currency, some of which was shaped like round coins and others as 'knives', bringing a whole new meaning to the phrase 'hard cash'. We also took in the golden horse - made of bronze and gilded - and the Emperor's carriage and the small, hardy horses that pulled it.

It was really fascinating to see the utensils used, and the structure of the court, which included stable boys, strong men, jugglers, archers, horsemen and much more. The tactile session was also greatly appreciated - especially by those with no or extremely limited sight.

What a fabulous tour of the Terracotta Warriors - they absolutely made the visit for us. We enjoyed the experience so much I had to almost physically drag people away to catch our various trains home. The feeling on the way to the bus was that I had saved the best until last. It was another great GOAL adventure over – but there will be more next year.

If you want to obtain further information about the GOAL Group should contact any of the members below, who will be only too pleased to help:

**John Brice**      [john.brice.goal@gmail.com](mailto:john.brice.goal@gmail.com)  
**Chris Humphrey**      [chrisandhazel3@gmail.com](mailto:chrisandhazel3@gmail.com)

**Tel: 01934 261 783**  
**Tel: 01603 701 402**



# Family News

## Birthdays

**Alice Coupe** who celebrated her 100th birthday on 27 November.  
**Phyllis Mary Thorn** who celebrated her 100th birthday on 6th December.  
**John Richard Evans** who celebrated his 103rd birthday on 8th December.  
**John Allen Robinson** who celebrated his 100th birthday on 10th December.  
**Reginald Henry George Goodwin** who celebrated his 103rd birthday on 27th December.  
**Thomas John Port** who celebrated his 100th birthday on 27th December.  
**Margaret Inglis** who celebrated her 100th birthday on 27th December.

## Condolences

**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.**

**Jennifer Brittain** who died on 22nd August 2018. She was the wife of Anthony Brittain.

## Order your 2019 VIP large print diaries

As we approach 2019 you can now place your orders for VIP calendars, diaries and address and telephone books.



2019 A3 Calendars are priced at £6.25  
2019 A4 Desk Diaries are priced at £9.45  
2019 A5 Desk Diaries are priced at £7.75  
2019 A6 Pocket Diaries are priced at £5.75  
VIP Address books are priced at £9.25  
VIP Telephone books are priced at £9.25

To place your orders please telephone Ben Kemble in the Procurement Office at the Brighton Centre on telephone **01273 391 494**

# 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.**

**Lilieth Marcia Anderson** of Bury, Lancashire died on 11th October 2018 aged 63. She served from 1972 to 1979 in the Army.

**Olive Marjorie Bushell** of King's Lynn, Norfolk died on 15th October 2018 aged 98. She served from 1941 to 1945 in the Army.

**Keith Beresford Cargin** of Swindon, Wiltshire died on 9th September 2018 aged 98. He served from 1940 to 1968 in the Royal Air Force.

**Phillip Henry Cooke** of St. Ives, Cambridgeshire died on 28th August 2018 aged 89. He served from 1946 to 1949 in the Royal Air Force.

**Mary Alberta Stephanie Eames** of Portsmouth, Hampshire died on 13th October 2018 aged 95. She served from 1942 to 1944 in the Royal Air Force.

**Ann Forrest** of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 13th October 2018 aged 94. She served from 1942 to 1947 in the Royal Navy.

**Edith Alice Garrett** of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 5th October 2018 aged 95. She served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force.

**Richard Gordon-Steward** of Helston, Cornwall died on 28th September 2018 aged 85. He served from 1951 to 1988 in the Army.





**Arthur Hardy** of Shrewsbury, died on 13th October 2018 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1976 in the Army.

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**Alfred Laurence Harris** of Kidderminster, Worcestershire died on 12th August 2018 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Army.

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**Ernest Harrop** of Stalybridge, Cheshire died on 14th October 2018 aged 90. He served from 1946 to 1952 in the Army.

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**John Alan Hill** of Egham, Surrey died on 11th October 2018 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1950 in the Royal Air Force.

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**John Hodgson** of Cannock, Staffordshire died on 10th August 2018 aged 82. He served from 1958 to 1962 in the Army.

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**Douglas Frederick Johnson** of Middlesbrough, Cleveland died on 11th October 2018 aged 93. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Army.

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**John Bertram Morris** of Newport, Gwent died on 10th October 2018 aged 87. He served from 1952 to 1957 in the Army.

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**Gordon Munro** of Bognor Regis, West Sussex died on 11th October 2018 aged 94. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy.

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**Dennis Munro** of Rushden, Northamptonshire died on 11th October 2018 aged 84. He served from 1956 to 1962 in the Army.

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**Michael John Paxman** of Retford, Nottinghamshire died on 12th October 2018 aged 82. He served from 1956 to 1958 in the Army.

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**George Fred Kemish Pearce** of Southampton, Hampshire died on 1st October 2018 aged 96. He served from 1941 to 1945 in the Army.

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**John Price** of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 30th September 2018 aged 92. He served from 1944 to 1952 in the Army.

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**Stanley Reay** of Newcastle Upon Tyne, Tyne And Wear died on 4th July 2018 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Eric Ridge** of Aldershot, Hampshire died on 1st October 2018 aged 93. He served in the Army.

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**Irene Smith** of Bexhill-On-Sea, East Sussex died on 14th October 2018 aged 95. She served from 1947 to 1948 in the Army.

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

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**Mollie Joan Stroud** of Ross-On-Wye, Herefordshire died on 1st October 2018 aged 98. She served from 1942 to 1945 in the Army.

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**Matilda Taylor** of Glasgow, Lanarkshire died on 5th October 2018 aged 92. She served from 1944 to 1945 in the Royal Navy.

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**Marjorie Joan Wallis** of Reigate, Surrey died on 9th October 2018 aged 96. She served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Navy.

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**Bernard Aubry James Wheeler** of London died on 21st August 2018 aged 93. He served from 1942 to 1947 in the Royal Air Force.

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**Ivan Wright** of Consett, County Durham died on 28th September 2018 aged 85. He served from 1954 to 1956 in the Royal Air Force.

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# Project Gemini saddles up and heads out West

The U.S. reciprocal leg of the annual exchange programme Project Gemini took place in Tucson, Arizona and a fantastic time was had by all. Colin Williamson reports

Our Blind Veterans UK group consisted of members Stephen Percival, Andy Bache, Keith Ward and Mike Johnson with staff members Kate Pierce from the Llandudno centre, Louise Timms from our Brighton centre, and I, on hand to make sure everything went smoothly and to plan.

The flight to Phoenix from Heathrow took over ten hours, so when we all



**Picture:** The team gather for a group shot in the historic setting of Tombstone – scene of the infamous Gunfight at the O K Corral

arrived we were a little jaded, but soon picked up when we stepped out of the airport and into the glorious sunshine that they were enjoying in Arizona. The temperature was in the mid to high eighties with clear blue skies and a blazing sun, which was typical for that time of year in Phoenix, the largest city in the Sonoran Desert, which covers vast parts of the Southwestern United States and Northwest Mexico.

We were guests of the Blinded Veterans Association, and on hand to greet us was their Operation Peer Support Chairperson, Monaca Gilmore and their Project Gemini coordinator Scott Scieszinski, both past Project Gemini participants. Our driver and 'go to' person for the week was our old friend Joe Amerling, a former U.S. Ranger and retired law enforcement officer.

## A very impressive facility

Our first visit was to the Blind Rehabilitation Centre (BRC) in Tucson for a tour of the very impressive facility, and a chance to meet some of the staff. We returned there later on in the week to try our hand at the various crafts that they teach to their students - namely pottery, leather work, copper tooling and turning a pen on a lathe. We were also taught the correct way to grill a Sonoran hot-dog, which proved to be a popular activity!

During the course of the week we visited the fantastic International Wildlife Museum, an old film-set in the desert where lots of cowboy movies were made, San Xavier Mission, an historic Spanish Catholic Mission on the Tohono O'odham Nation San Xavier Indian Reservation, Pima pistol club where we had a great morning shooting assault rifles and creating lots of noise, and finally



**Picture:** Member Andy Bache gets to grips with a python at the International Wildlife Museum



the amazing Pima Air and Space Museum, which is spread over eighty acres of desert and contains over 300 aircraft.

We were given a guided tour of the museum, and introduced to retired U.S. Air Force Colonel Richard Bushong who fought in three wars, namely the Second World War, the Korean War and the war in Vietnam. Colonel Bushong very kindly signed his book for us and posed for photographs next to an immense Boeing B-17F 'Flying Fortress' heavy bomber which he used to fly over Germany, France and Holland during his time with the 390th Bomb Group based at Framlingham Airbase, near Ipswich.

We also tried our hand at adaptive golf at Haven Golf Club, and spent an amazing day at Tombstone, scene of the infamous 'Gunfight at the O K Corral' and Boot Hill graveyard, where some of the victims of the shootout are buried.

Tombstone is a very interesting and authentic Wild West themed town with its old Courthouse, saloons, (one of which is named 'Big Nosed Kate's Saloon, much to the merriment of our group but not apparently with our very own Kate Pierce) theatres, boardwalks and jail. We witnessed a re-enactment of the



**Picture:** Our President Colin Williamson and Colonel Richard Bushong stand in front of a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress bomber at the Pima Air Force Museum

gunfight on Allen Street, close to where the corral used to stand and afterwards went into the Arizona Ranger's law enforcement office, where we chatted with a modern-day Ranger about his work and what it's like living and working in such an exciting and colourful town.

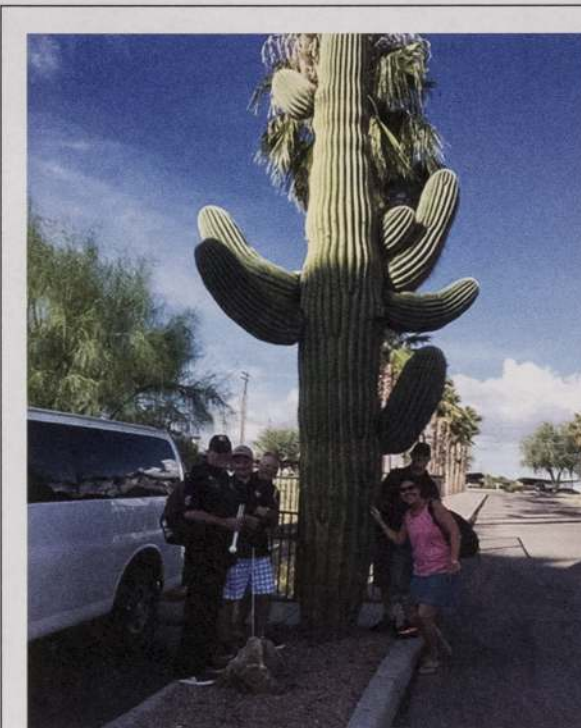
### 'Woody' emerges

We took in the Rose Tree Museum, home to the largest rose tree in the world, and then ventured into Doc Holliday's Saloon to feel the bullet holes in the walls and bar, courtesy of some over-exuberant cowboys on a night out after a hard day in the saddle.

Our member Keith then moseyed into a shop and bought himself a Stetson hat, which promptly earned him the nickname 'Woody', which refers to Sheriff 'Woody' Pride, hero and main protagonist in the animated children's film 'Toy Story'. Keith had some difficulty finding a hat to fit, as he has such a large head but has kindly offered to lend it out to any members who require a large receptacle to store a stone of potatoes in.

We were afforded some fantastic hospitality when we were over in Tucson, especially by the American Legion who hosted us for dinners and lunches and also the Southwestern Blind Rehabilitation Centre (BRC) which ensured that we were all fed and watered, and entertained us on some of the evenings. Many thanks to the BRC Chief, Diana Kellermeyer who was pivotal in making the week such an amazing experience for all, and to our friends Monaca, Scott and Joe for all of their hard work and dedication.

Thanks must also go to the Blind Veterans UK members and staff who made the trip for their contribution, and for being fine ambassadors for the charity, and also to the members of the Blinded Veterans Association, especially Kijuan Amey and Jeanie Murphy for their part in making the week so special.



**Picture:** An impressively big cactus – it looks to be around 20ft tall





# Season's Greetings

All of the staff and volunteers at Brighton, Llandudno, London and Sheffield, and those around the country wish you, our members, a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

We trust you will enjoy good health and happiness during 2019.



Rebuilding  
lives after  
sight loss