

Review

The journal of
Blind Veterans UK
March 2019



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A visit to our Sheffield helpline

Benefits – what you're
entitled to claim

Codebreaker – we talk to
Member Margaret Wilson

In the field

Jim Davidson on
performing for
the troops



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

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On the cover

We talk to television's Jim Davidson about his work with veterans and his memories of entertaining the troops



Editorial welcome

Hello, and a warm welcome to your March edition of **Review** magazine.

One of the nicer things in life is when someone you meet for the first time exceeds your expectations of them, and turns out to be a very different person from the one you'd imagined.

Recently, I agreed to interview Jim Davidson, who many of you will remember from his television work, and who gained a reputation for being a somewhat bawdy, if that is the right word, comic. I imagined an interview peppered by risqué jokes which would have to be edited down to a shadow of its original self.

Instead, I spent over an hour with someone who came across as a warm, and thoughtful individual, whose interest in the welfare of our veterans is substantial. Jim – who runs his own veteran-related charity, Care After Combat – has taken an interest in the work we do for many years, and is an avid supporter of Blind Veterans UK. As you will read later on, his admiration for our services began after he was sent to Northern Ireland in the 1970s at the height of the 'Troubles'.

It just goes to show – never make an

assumption about someone, because nine times out of 10, that will prove to be wrong. You can read Jim's interview on page 36.

We've got a second interview this month with one of our members, Margaret Wilson. Margaret was based at Bletchley Park during the Second World War, and much of her work was a closely-guarded secret. In recent years, we've learned more about the splendid research undertaken in that establishment, and it's pleasing to note that Margaret and her comrades are getting the full recognition of the groundbreaking work they did.

Thank you to those of you who gave their feedback on the new format of the magazine. I'm pleased to say that we've made some changes based on your views, and I hope you find them useful.

Until next month, enjoy your magazine.

Chris Gilson
Editor



Trusting in the trustees

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

For the last few weeks I have been overly absorbed in the business of government. Don't worry, I don't mean the Government (I think I have been pretty disciplined in avoiding any reference to the 'B' word since I took over as Chairman, tempting as it might be to 'go off on one' on the subject). More accurately, it is the business of governance that has been concentrating my mind. We are revamping the introductory video we produce for new members, and I have been asked to do a couple of minutes on what the trustees do and how we govern the charity.

I find this task more than a little daunting. First, and most obviously, I am blessed with a face more suited to radio. Second, anybody who knows me will tell you that, once I get going, I have never limited myself to two minutes on any subject. And third, although I am certain that as a trustee

group we do a pretty decent job, it would be a foolish person who held up themselves or their charity as an exemplar in the governance game: pride comes before a fall.

In the charity sector, trustees perform the role that a Board would undertake for a company in the private sector. Essentially, we represent the collective interests of all the charity's stakeholders (the shareholders' equivalent, in the business world). Within the spirit of that simple statement, our job is to:

- Maintain the ethos of the charity;
- Develop and endorse strategies within which future planning can take place;
- Ensure that the charity manages business within an approved plan and to budget;

- Ensure that the charity complies with all relevant regulations; and
- Ensure that the charity remains solvent.
- Fairly easy to say but, for a charity of our size and complexity, often difficult to do.

Hidden in that paragraph is one word - 'stakeholder' - which deserves a little expansion. It might be tempting to limit our view of the stakeholder to the charity's membership. Important as the members' interests are, our

stakeholders are more numerous. Among them we number a raft of regulating bodies, some of whom could close us down at a stroke if we failed to recognise their authority. But I also rank highly as stakeholders the general public which treats us so generously when it offers its support and crucially its donations. We need constantly to reassure it that its money is spent well and prudently.

Not a perfect world

It isn't a perfect world, though. If we were to try to draw boundaries that were too rigid, we would →



Caption: Paul Luker

very quickly create friction and threaten the trust that needs to exist between our staff and trustees. To overcome this, we have established a number of joint committees to bring both parties closer together. In the same way, whenever trustees can find the time, we all try to get out on the ground with the regional teams to get a feel for life at the coal face. Many of you will have met us at reunion lunches and the like, where it is so important that we get direct feedback from members on their perceptions of the charity's work.

To make all this work it is clearly important that we get the right trustee mix. In addition to Member trustees we also have trustees who come from backgrounds as diverse as finance, investment, journalism, accountancy, construction, commerce, ophthalmic surgery, residential care and so forth. And, purely for good taste we also have trustees from RN, Army and RAF backgrounds, reflecting the Service

“In the charity sector, trustees perform the role that a Board would undertake for a company in the private sector”

ethos of the charity and providing a link back to the Armed Forces.

I am immensely grateful for what our trustees are prepared to do for us and the time they dedicate to the charity. Most of them are holding down busy and challenging jobs, many at the forefront of their profession. They all go well beyond the strict definition of their responsibilities, not least in the really challenging environment of fund-raising. While we frequently have deep and meaningful discussions and challenge ourselves, almost without exception decisions are achieved through consensus; I can't remember ever having to take a controversial issue to a vote. There is no glamour or gain in being a trustee. If we get it wrong, we (hopefully metaphorically!) go to gaol. If we get it right, the staff and volunteers quite properly get the accolades. The bottom line is that we all care passionately about Blind Veterans UK, what it does and the people in it. If we can keep it solvent, doing good work and with a clearly mapped out future I think we would all regard that as reward enough.

Which brings me back to Government, Parliament and the shenanigans of the last few months. Now, if you ask me, it is pretty clear that what we should be doing...

Brave new world

Blind Veterans UK Chief Executive **Major General (rtd) Nick Caplin CB** looks at artificial intelligence (AI), and how it is shaping our thinking

I am fascinated by connections, joining the dots, and, in particular, by linking the past to the present and the future. In this edition, it is the article on the remarkable Margaret Wilson that has got me thinking.

Today, the Government Communications Headquarters, otherwise known as GCHQ, is a prominent building in the heart of Cheltenham, affectionately known by those who know it as 'The Doughnut'. It is probably the largest doughnut-shaped building on the planet, but the location of GCHQ is therefore no secret, just what goes on inside.

During the Second World War, the GCHQ equivalent was Bletchley Park,



Caption: Nick Caplin

which was very much more a national secret. Its role was unknown, and employees followed a strict code of silence, with each and every →

one doing their bit to conceal its true purpose. All staff signed the Official Secrets Act, and were routinely warned about the importance of discretion - "Do not talk at meals. Do not talk in the transport. Do not talk travelling. Do not talk in the billet. Do not talk by your own fireside. Be careful even in your hut ...".

It is to the great credit of Bletchley employees that they carried their secrets with them throughout life – indeed Margaret herself reveals in her interview that she will remain faithful to the act for the rest of her days.

It seems that it is only since the spotlight has shone on the scientist and mathematician Alan Turing, that people have felt comfortable revealing their association with Bletchley Park. Alan lived in Warwick Avenue close to our London office and I frequently see his blue heritage plaque and wonder about what life was like for him all those years ago.

It is a real privilege to read of Margaret's involvement with Bletchley Park and to think of the vital work that she and others were doing to help secure victory through the brilliance of the human mind and intelligence. **You can read her interview from page 28.**

The modern computer

After the conflict, Turing designed the Automatic Computing Engine which was arguably the forerunner of the modern computer. It involved using a machine to do what would otherwise require considerable human effort, intelligence and time to achieve. It was, perhaps, the start of Artificial Intelligence (AI), which is the use of computers to process



STATUS / UNSPLASH

Caption: Alexa is a useful tool

quantities of information and data at unimaginable speeds. Today, GCHQ uses AI extensively in its work, to a great extent focusing on pattern recognition - identifying patterns in data that the human eye would simply never detect.

Whether we like it or not, AI is of growing importance and is beginning to affect our lives on a daily basis. The wonderful Alexa that keeps us company in our homes today uses AI to help find the answers to our questions, and to predict our interests. Advertising makes extensive use of AI to understand our preferences and shopping patterns in an attempt to be ahead of the game, always ready with the product that we didn't realise that we wanted but simply can't resist!

And we are using AI within the charity. On 6 March we are unveiling our new 'Autonomous Pod', or driverless car, at our Brighton centre. This wonderful vehicle - named Arthur after our Founder - will be part of a trial over the next six months to understand the

“Whether we like it or not, AI is of growing importance and is beginning to affect our lives on a daily basis”

challenges and potential of driverless cars for the visually impaired. In addition to providing the opportunity for members to beetle around the Brighton estate, this trial will be gathering data that will be used to develop and refine driverless cars so that we can make them a reality. AI will therefore be at the heart of giving the visually impaired their freedom on the roads at some stage in the future.

We are also using AI to help in the battle against macular degeneration (AMD). Together with the Macular Society, Fight for Sight and Scottish War Blinded, we have commissioned research into drug discovery, using AI to identify drugs that might be able to help prevent the onset of AMD in the future. This is a long term project and hugely challenging, but it has started. And without AI, it would simply not be possible.

From the brilliance of our code-breakers at Bletchley Park, we have seen the development of the computer and a world that is increasingly harnessing the power of AI or 'computer thinking' to deal with the challenges of today and tomorrow. It is quite a story. If you would like to know more about how we use artificial intelligence within the charity, please get in touch with our Research Department.

News



Caption: Win Marrable tests the Vive

There was great feedback from the members who were present for the trial. For those with no sight at all, the sounds made them feel as though they were really there. The members thoroughly enjoyed trying out a new, cutting-end technology with some saying that it was the most fun they'd ever had!

Those at the lunch had a whale of a time, diving to the depths of the coral reef and a sunken shipwreck, while marvelling at how the virtual underwater experience felt so real without a scuba kit!

Matt Holland and our Research team have worked very hard to secure this technology in our Brighton Centre, and we're now looking at offering it as a more regular activity for communities and centres alike.

Marine Band

Please note that the date of the Marine Band concert at our Brighton Centre has changed to 10 May. The concert will run between 2pm and 4pm.

Virtual reality in Brighton

Leon Groombridge and Matt Holland, two IT Instructors at our Brighton centre, were invited to attend Community 18's lunch club event in Chichester to give a demonstration of the HTC Vive virtual reality headset.

The headset is linked to a laptop, giving the wearer an exciting experience in 360 degree visuals and sound with the opportunity to play games or just be transported into all types of environments.

Victorious friends in Manchester

Manchester-based volunteer Anne Butterworth and Blind Veterans UK Member Marion Burrows will become the first friends of our Victory Over Blindness statue outside Manchester Piccadilly station.

Both will volunteer their time to check on its wellbeing, and will ensure that the statue is kept graffiti free. They will also carry out bucket collections nearby to raise awareness for us.

In time, it is hoped that more volunteers will come forwards to help form a wider of 'friends of the statue' group.



Caption: Blind Veterans UK Member Marion Burrows and our Victory Over Blindness statue outside Manchester Piccadilly station

Joan Osborne

This is a short correction to the Chief Executive's Welcome in the February edition, and concerns Joan Osborne, one of our Members at the Brighton Centre.

Joan's father, Joe, was a 'St Dunstaner' having been wounded at Ypres in the First World War, while her husband Bob was blinded in the Second World War. Joan and Bob were both entertainers - Joan being a very fine pianist (and former music teacher for the music department at Church Stretton and at Brighton during the war).

They ran the 'kiosk' at Ian Fraser House for many years, as well as the Brighton Club.

Joan is also heavily involved in both the Brighton Bowls Club and the National Bowls Club, which is why it was so wonderful to see Joan awarded the British Empire Medal in the New Year's List for her services to disabled veterans.

Incidentally we looked back through the archives and found her birth notice from June 1927, well done Joan!



Caption: A 1958 view of Hiroshima, with the devastation still clear to see

A Japanese Odyssey - part 2

Member **Neville Parkin** talks about his visit to Japan during his time as a national serviceman

To give a full account of how I spent the next month would take too long, but a few highlights should paint a picture of a truly fabulous experience. I used the occasional taxi, but the bulk of my travel was by trains and buses

that always departed and arrived on time, which is something that we do not seem to have cracked even today in England. During the remainder of my time in Tokyo, I visited the Kodokwan judo hall, had an evening

at a geisha tea ceremony and spent three hours at a Kabuki Theatre production. I also had an impressive view of Mount Fuji from the train as I departed.

Having spent a couple of nights in European style hotels, I decided not to miss the opportunity of sampling Japanese style comfort.

I was issued with a kimono and escorted down a corridor from which I entered a room by means of a sliding door. My escort was a kimono clad girl in her late teens who, on reaching the door went on to her knees, slid the door open and with a wave of her arm and the word "Dozo" invited me to enter. Having deposited my suitcase in the room, I was invited to take a bath before my evening meal. Again, my escort led the way. I was about to discover that taking a bath in Japan had rather more to it than just getting yourself clean.

Arm waving, gesticulating and pointing

"Instructions about what to do next were given to me by a combination of arm waving, gesticulating and pointing, accompanied by odd words of Japanese and English. After removing my kimono, I sat down on a small wooden stool beside the bath. I was then handed a small wooden

bowl, which I filled with water by dipping it into the bath.

"Next, I was handed a small bar of soap and went on to wash all the parts of my body, which I could reach. My escort completed the job by washing my back. I then emptied the bowl. I refilled it from the bath in order to rinse myself. Only now that I was clean was I allowed to climb into the bath. This resembled a small swimming bath, which was about 10sq ft, and deep enough to immerse yourself up to the shoulders when sitting down. It was without doubt the hottest bath I had ever been in. However, I soon got used to it and it was really quite a pleasurable experience."



Caption: Neville in front of Mount Aso on Kyu Slu, Japan

Taking a bath was quite a complicated affair, and for one not versed wholly in Japanese culture, Neville soon found that some aspects were more alien than others.

“Throughout the whole process I was accompanied by a steady stream of people joining me. Whilst watching other people, I realised that the small cloth, about the size of a tea cloth, which had been handed to me as I



Caption: Shinichi and Neville in flood water at Ueno in Tokyo

climbed into the bath was not for washing myself, but was to wipe perspiration from my face. When not in use the cloth should have been sitting on my head! Finally I climbed out of the bath, was helped by my escort to get dry and, after replacing my kimono, I returned to my room where a meal was served.

Temples, temples everywhere

Neville continued his tour, heading further into Japan, and encountering a sobering reminder of the recent conflict.

“Moving south, I visited Kyoto where I quickly became ‘temped out’. I then travelled to Hiroshima where I visited Ground Zero – the aiming point for the atomic bomb dropped there on 6 August, 1945. Despite the passage of years, there were still signs of destruction. For example, the roads were all in a terrible state of repair. The landscape was certainly very flat, and this meant that the devastation from the bomb was widespread. Further south is the island of Kyushu. I remember the hot springs at Unzen, where I saw people cooking using the boiling water straight out of the ground. There was also Beppu, where people were buried up to the neck in hot mud as some form of clinical treatment.

“Taking a bath was quite a complicated affair, and for one not versed wholly in Japanese culture”

“I spent a day climbing Mount Aso, which was an active volcano. Walking around the edge of the crater, it was possible to see the hot liquid bubbling like a huge bowl of soup. Only a few minutes after I had left the crater, there was a huge explosion as the volcano erupted. I have a photograph of a group of screaming schoolgirls trying to make a quick exit. I was told that only a few weeks before, the volcano had been fully active depositing debris on the town of Kumamoto some 14km away. And then of course there was Nagasaki – the second city to suffer the impact of the atomic bomb. I visited the Glover Mansion, high up on the hills outside the city, and sat in the room where Puccini had written *Madame Butterfly*.

Drinking green tea

“I had stayed almost exclusively in Japanese-style hotels, and really got to like Japanese food. My favourite is still sashimi, and I can drink green tea until the cows come home! Now began the first stage of my journey back to Little Sai Wan, and I took a small ship through the inland sea to Kobe. Here I boarded

the Dutch passenger cargo ship called **Tegelberg**, and we were bound for Okinawa where the ship was to take cargo on board to Hong Kong.

“We set sail in the early evening and as the light was failing, we left the south coast of Japan. Almost immediately the ship began to pitch and roll in alarming fashion, and yes, you’ve guessed it, we were heading into another typhoon! The cargo-less ship was high in the water and we were thrown around like a cork. I spent the next 36 hours feeling very ill, and most of the time I was in bed. At one point I felt that it would be a blessing if the ship were to go down. I vowed that if I ever reached dry land I would never again travel on any form of water.

“Late morning on day three, we reached Okinawa and docked to take on cargo. This gave us chance to spend two or three hours sightseeing until we left port in the late afternoon with a fully loaded ship and in water calmer than a millpond. It was hardly possible to believe that we were at sea. During the next two days we played table tennis on the deck in blazing sunshine.

“I arrived back in Hong Kong with one day of leave left. Arriving at Little Sai Wan felt just like coming home. I eventually left the RAF in December 1959 as a Senior Aircraftsman.”

In Your Community

Community IT celebrates the date

Fingers on devices is the way forward for the Blind Veterans UK Community IT service, which has celebrated its first year in action.

The scheme now focuses on group training sessions, and has held these so far in Neath, Cwmbrân, Durham and most recently on 8 February, at Grantham in Lincolnshire.

The group sessions have proved to be very successful so far, and aim at improving the wellbeing of our



Caption: Getting to grips with technology at the group training session in Grantham

members by providing opportunities for socialising, peer support and community integration.

■ **If you're interested in finding out more, then talk to your Case Support Worker for more details.**

Calling all archers

If you'd like to know more about archery opportunities in Blind Veterans UK, your contact is now John Cunnington, and is no longer David Poyner.

■ **John can be contacted on jfc352@btinternet.com or 01323 489 118.**

Taking Pride

This year will be Blind Veterans UK's first year participation in Brighton Pride, one of the country's most popular pride events celebrating diversity and inclusiveness in our community.

It has been 19 years since the ban on lesbian, gay and bisexual people serving

in the Forces was lifted, and we'll be celebrating by joining the parade on Saturday, 3 August. As well as the Blind Veterans UK contingent, our friends at the Royal British Legion will also represent the ex-Service community.

■ **If you would be interested in taking part in the parade, including a two-night stay at the Brighton centre, please get in touch to register your interest via telephone on 01273 391 892 or 01273 391 894 or email BrightonPride@blindveterans.org.uk**

Blind veteran publishes book

A Derbyshire blind veteran is publishing a book about his experience of losing his sight.

Simon Mahoney from Ashbourne authored the book **A Descent into Darkness**, which is a reflection of Simon's incredible journey of discovery through sight loss. Despite having no expertise, other than becoming blind himself, Simon explains: "This is my account of losing my sight over a period of three years and includes some basic techniques that have worked for me."

After he joined us, we helped Simon to start writing his book. He explains: "I learned how to touch type during a



Caption: Simon Mahoney

trip to the Llandudno Centre, I went home and I practised, I practised and I practised. It's 18 months later and I've just published my own book. I'm an example of what can be achieved with determination."

■ **Simon's book is priced at £9.95, and is published in large print or as an electronic book. It is available to order online in hardback via Aye Aye publishers and Amazon.co.uk, Smashwords, Apple iBooks - international, Barnes and Noble and Kobo. To order your copy, visit wingingitblind.com**

A Victoria sponge with a difference

In her latest recipe for Review, Blind Veterans UK Member and celebrity cook **Penny Melville-Brown** presents a chilli and coriander Victoria sponge



Yes, I know it sounds mad, but this is one of the dishes I cooked in the jungle kitchen in Costa Rica during my prize-winning world tour. You don't have to add the chilli and coriander if you just want to make the traditional sponge.

- Weigh the eggs and then measure out the same weight in butter, sugar and flour.
- Cream the butter and sugar together using a whisk or food processor – it should become light and fluffy.
- Beat in the eggs one at a time, adding a little flour if there is any risk of curdling.
- Fold in the flour using a metal serving spoon in figure-of-eight movements.
- If using, fold in the finely chopped chilli and coriander to taste.
- Place the mixture in to individual bun or muffin tins.
- Cook for about 20 minutes at Gas mark 4 (350f or 175c)

Ingredients

3 eggs

Same weight butter

Same weight sugar

Same weight self-raising flour (or plain flour plus a teaspoon of baking powder)

1 red chilli, de-seeded and finely chopped (optional)

Coriander stalks finely chopped (optional)

Topping (optional)

3 slices of fresh pineapple

2 teaspoons tamarind paste

- Put the pineapple and tamarind paste in to a food processor and process until smooth.

Once the cakes are out of the oven, prick the tops with a wooden tooth pick and spoon a little of the pineapple mix on to each.

My tips

We served this with a slice of fresh pineapple that had been seared in butter and brushed with chilli oil plus pineapple and banana ice cream. You can replace the chilli and coriander with a level teaspoon of vanilla extract.

I often add the zest of a lemon (or

two) to this mix before baking and, once cooked, prick and pour over the lemon juice to make lemon drizzle cakes. I prefer not to add more sugar to the lemon juice to keep the cakes tart.

The variations are endless: try coffee and a pecan nut topping; orange zest and juice, or 200 grams raspberries at the folding in stage. Once you have got the hang of this basic cake, you can go wild with your flavourings - as I did in Costa Rica.

If you are adding lemon juice or something similar to the cooked cakes, it is best to either add cold liquid to a warm cake or warm liquid to a cold cake to get the best absorption.

I use "Mary Berry" tins from Lakeland with individual "loose bottoms" in the bun tin, so that it is really easy to get the cakes out.

- You can see the video of that cooking session at bit.ly/2Eh13Wu

We'd love to see how your recipes turn out - you can send in pictures by e-mail or post to the address in our Contacts section on page 51

Padre's corner

Blind Veterans UK Padre **Clare Callanan** talks about how there is light at the end of the tunnel despite the negative feelings we can have

I learnt the word haar, a Scottish word meaning a sea mist coming in from the East, during my time living in Edinburgh many years ago.

Here at the Brighton Centre as I started to write this, we are experiencing something similar. I am not sure that it is coming in from the



Caption: Padre Clare Callanan

East but it is certainly suspended right over the hill at Ovingdean. It is a strange sensation - every view from the windows shows a grey blankness; there is no view. Everything that can normally be seen is no more... the sea, the cliffs, the wind farm, the grounds of the Centre, the hills, the sheep, dog walkers. All gone, blanketed away in the mist.

This meteorological experience has left me with a sense of isolation; a feeling that will be known by any number of us in all its different ways and for all its different reasons. It is not a very comfortable feeling, and I long for a clearing of the mist, for a glimpse of the sun on the sea, for a lightening of the skies. How often can we feel like that and yet what we do know is that the mist will clear at some point, the sun will always appear eventually, and the skies will lighten for us.

And so it has proved. I am completing this the next day and the sun is bouncing its light off the waves and the wind is rustling through the long grass up on the hills behind us. Things have cleared, my world has enlarged again. There are things to be done, journeys to begin and friends around me. As a songwriter over 2,000 years ago wrote "This is that day that the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it."

Rehabilitation

Lindsey Deere is one of our Rehabilitation Officers (ROVI). She tells us more about her role and what it means to her



Lindsey's tip: So many people have told me that they lose their remote controls as they 'disappear' into the couch or get lost on tables. Placing a strip of Day-Glo bright orange tape on these can help them stand out better. This is also useful for cupboard and room door edges when someone else in the house forgets to close them!

I started working at Blind Veterans UK in June 2017 as a community ROVI, mainly covering the West Midlands and surrounding areas. The community team was relatively new when I joined, and it has grown and developed so much over the last 12 months.

Prior to this, while I was training to be a Rehabilitation Officer I worked within a Low Vision Centre in Birmingham. My role was to support people living with sight loss to use their low vision aids

more effectively and get the most out of technology such as smart phones/tablets and accessible computer software.

It has been wonderful to see so many people I worked with previously now become members of Blind Veterans UK.

My role as a community ROVI allows me to travel to parts of the Midlands I've never been to before and I am constantly overwhelmed by how welcoming our members are. What I love about my job is that I get to see the veterans I've worked with attend our community events, using their low vision aids or gadgets as part of day to day life.

"The community team was relatively new when I joined, and it has grown and developed so much over the last 12 months"

At the push of a button

Our Sheffield based helpline is there for those members who need a friendly voice to speak to, but as **Chris Gilson** finds out, that's not the whole story

"Hello, can I speak to Peter, please?"

It's first thing in the morning at the Blind Veterans UK office in Sheffield, and already the calls have started, with Equipment Delivery Installer Aaron Munshi telephoning a member with an answer to an equipment query. In June last year, the rehabilitation and IT helpline moved into its new and improved home, and I'm here to see what happens during its working day.

The story began in November 2015, when the helpline was created in the now-closed Sheffield training centre on Fulwood Road. Designed to help our members with issues ranging from problems with IT equipment, to a wide variety of situations, it was quickly realised that despite its success, the location wasn't ideal.

"It was a turning point when we

moved," says Senior Rehabilitation Officer Imke Carruthers, "We now have dedicated spaces for our needs and a much better phone system."

The lines are open Monday to Friday from 9am to 4pm, and are staffed daily on a changing rota by two of the staff who are based there. One person will look after the e-mail enquiries, while the second handles any calls, although everybody helps if it gets busy.

The seven permanent members of the team are Imke Carruthers, Ashley Li, Sarah Hughes, Craig Vaughton, Lauren Layzelle, Lucy Bradshaw and Aaron Munshi.

"We aim for first call resolution with most things," notes Imke, "they're all assessed on an individual basis, and that makes for a very personal service."

Imke explains that our Sheffield team makes every effort to keep updated on the latest technology and every two to three months, holds a small forum of members to discuss their various needs and talk about possible solutions. In the case of new equipment, the ROVI identifies the need, and the team evaluates items as they arrive. On the day of my visit, there's a live demonstration of a new electronic magnifier, which is watched with interest by everyone at the centre.

Holding the line

I visited on a Monday, which is always the busiest day of the week. On average, the helpline receives 255 queries a week, of which around 115 come from our members while the rest are mainly equipment-related. Since it started, the busiest month was October 2018, which saw an amazing 1,276 contacts.

Many calls also come from staff, such as our community support



Caption: Some of the refurbished magnifiers waiting to be sent out to our members



Caption: The team - from left, Lucy, Craig, Imke, Sarah, Lauren, Aaron and Ashley

workers, who may be at a veteran's house, and need advice to help resolve a problem.

"Approximately 40 per cent of those enquiries relate to IT equipment," says Support Worker Lauren, "while the other 60 per cent are rehabilitation related."

It's not just about being on the end of the telephone though, as the Sheffield team also run an equipment recycling service which sees unwanted items such as electronic magnifiers and

readers refurbished and then sent out again to the members that need them. On the day of my visit, 23 Clearview-C, and 36 Merlin magnifiers were in stock, and were either being assessed or were ready to be sent out.

"We deliver each piece of equipment personally," says Rehabilitation and Training Support Worker Sarah Hughes, who helped set up the recycling service, "we don't just drop it off at the house - we also assess the need of the member, set it up for

"Many calls also come from staff, such as our community support workers, who maybe at a veterans' house, and need advice to help resolve a problem"

them and make sure they can use it. It's about observation and guidance, we'll silently observe the member using it for themselves before we leave it with confidence. After one month, their case support worker will make sure they're still happy with it."

Two members of staff are responsible for this service - Aaron in Sheffield, and Chris Ayres in Brighton. Between them, they cover the whole country, so if you've received a piece of kit recently, the chances are it'll be either Aaron or Chris who delivered it.

Aaron is very proud of the hard work they do in the recycling service.

"We test everything the same day it arrives," he says, "ideally we can turn things round in two days, and we're making the most of our resources. I enjoy seeing the satisfaction on a member's face, when they receive the piece of equipment they've been waiting for."

Learn to test, test to learn

It's all very well sending out equipment to our members, but the staff who have contact with them need to know how to use the equipment too. To help with this, Support Worker Lucy Bradshaw has begun a training program that ensures the best support possible is on hand.

"Our home visitors and volunteer co-ordinators are in a good position to identify common problems and patterns and listening to our staff calling for advice, we began a bespoke teaching package to help with any on the spot queries they have."

Thanks to this new scheme, our member-facing support workers will be more able to deliver the help and advice needed, benefitting everyone.

When I ask Lauren what makes her work on the helpline so special, she doesn't hesitate before answering,

"It's about helping someone get their independence back," she asserts, "and that's such an important thing."

■ The ROVI/IT helpline can be reached on 01273 391 447

Rising to the baking challenge

Providing afternoon tea, for their peers and staff at our Llandudno centre was one of the challenges ahead for those blind veterans attending Food and Drink week, writes **Lynette Denzey**



Spa, Deganwy, they enjoyed afternoon tea to the accompaniment of a harpist, who incidentally made his own harp.

Then, it was off to Anglesey's Tŷ Halen Saltcote and Visitor Centre for a wonderful behind-the-scenes tour, learning about salt in our history and culture, and what it is that makes Halen Môn Sea Salt so unique.

One of the veterans attending was our Vice President Paul Palmer, 68 who is totally blind. He said, "I enjoyed the week enormously, it was so well organised and with so many varied activities it was a lot of fun".

Paul explained, "When I first lost my sight it was very frightening. It's hard to describe all of the things you feel. You suddenly can't do the things you used to be able to do and took for granted". He joined the charity in 2010 since when

"I have been able to take part in some excellent activities such as arts and crafts and blind archery. This was my first go at cooking though".

Fulfilling their dreams

Wednesday was intended to be a butchery presentation and trip to Conwy Brewery for a tour and tasting, but this was cancelled. The veterans were asked what they would like to do, and their answer was, of course, go for an ice cream in the snow! So, off they went to Conwy Ice Cream World where, with 48 flavours to choose from, there was plenty to satisfy everyone.



Caption: Some of the attendees with a selection of the food they created for their friends and the staff of our Llandudno Centre

Thursday morning was spent in the kitchen making sausage rolls in the oven, and a variety of sweet treats. Veteran Paul said, "I love sausage rolls and haven't made them since being blind. They are so easy. I want to make fudge with my grandchildren now too."

A question and answer session with Keith the beekeeper and our volunteer Kevin, who take care of our Llandudno centre's beehives, was followed by our veterans sampling honey from Australia, Italy, heather honey, honeycomb and Keith's own honey. Then a very special treat - taste from the one and only jar of honey produced by our own Llandudno centre bees. Obviously, it was voted the best.

Just in case anyone was still hungry, a cheese and wine tasting was hosted by Gemma from The Little Cheesemonger shop in Rhuddlan.

The veterans spent their final morning showing off their skills. This included preparing, baking and decorating scones, cupcakes, bara brith (mottled bread), pain au chocolat, sandwiches and much more for sharing that afternoon.

■ **The next Food and Drink Week will be at our Brighton Centre between 13-19 October this year.**

Above top secret

Blind Veterans UK Member, Margaret Wilson was employed at the highly secret Bletchley Park establishment during the war, but – as **Chris Gilson** found out – some things stay secret



Caption: Margaret at last year's Remembrance Day parade in London

"One of the things I can remember about her," says Margaret Wilson, in her Shirebrook, Nottinghamshire home, "is that her father worked in the

Fry's chocolate factory, and that every month he would send us a big box of chocolates."

Margaret is talking about the other aircraftswoman she worked with in her section at Bletchley Park, during World War Two. During wartime, the site was home to the highly secret Government Code and Cypher School, which played a vital part in cracking German codes and ciphers. It is only in recent years that the public has been able to find out more about what went on there, and Bletchley Park has since become a museum.

"Only two of us worked in secret together," Margaret recalls, "and the other girl, I've tried to find her for quite a while, but to no avail."

It was a strange path that led

Margaret to her intelligence work.

"I always wanted to be a wireless operator from day one, but I couldn't get in because the [six monthly] classes had started, so I went instead to Barrow in Furness. After I finally passed my wireless operator training, I was posted to Bomber Command for six months, but was only there for four before I was recalled for six months special training. I was then sent to the communications centre at RAF Stanbridge, outside Leighton Buzzard, which I thought was the top of the top really."

After a short spell at RAF Stanbridge,

Margaret was selected for work at Bletchley Park, and life became very different. From the start, the word was secrecy.

"I was sworn into secrecy by a justice of the peace – there were nine of us done on that day – and he said to us 'look into my eyes, now, what I'm going to tell you, you take with you to the end of your days, you do not repeat anything. The government will tell you "yes, it's open now, you can tell us, and you can say all", but you do not.'"

Still sealed

Margaret, like many veterans, has remained faithful to her vow →



Caption: Margaret's wartime work has led to much media interest

“I was sworn into secrecy by a justice of the peace – there were nine of us done on that day”

of silence, and her lips are still firmly sealed, despite the passage of time and the increased prominence of the work at Bletchley Park – much of which has since become declassified.

“They’ve told us down at Bletchley, that we were the most secret because there were only two of us working with the sergeant, although he never spoke to us anyway. We worked with him for eight solid hours and there was never a yes, no, or anything.

“We were taken to work in an RAF transport with blacked out windows, you didn’t know where you were going. I found out about Bletchley Park re-opening when I was on Remembrance Parade a few years ago, and someone said to me ‘you must go’, but I never saw the place really, you always got taken straight inside to the hut. Even now I still learn new things.”

After the museum opened, Margaret became a regular visitor and attends the site at least once a year where she is a widely recognised and fêted figure. But despite the pleading of those that



Caption: An interview at BBC Radio Nottingham for Margaret

run Bletchley Park now, Margaret still won’t say a word.

“When we visit Bletchley once a year for veterans day, the top historians always make a beeline for me, but I won’t tell them anything. I was sworn to secrecy. We’re always treated like royalty too.

“I know my code, what I was using from A-Z and I could tell you, but I’m not going to do so because the Justice

of the Peace told us this would happen, and it has.”

The visits are nostalgic for Margaret, and bought back some vivid memories of her time there.

“On a recent visit one of the historians took me inside my old hut, and said ‘this Margaret, is for you’, and I went ever so shivery. And then I said, ‘that’s ablutions, that’s ablutions, that’s ablutions’. Those three rooms, that’s what they were. And the only time you used them was in the middle of the night and you were dying to close your eyes after looking at coding marks. You used to go out there, swill your face with cold water and go back in. And every time you wanted to go, you had to put your hand up to get the sergeant to come and sit in your place and carry on with what you were doing.”

One exhibit that interested Margaret was Colossus – the first programmable digital electronic computer, designed and created by the brilliant scientist Alan Turing. Like the site itself, the incredible work of Turing has only come to light relatively recently, with the man himself finally receiving the accolades he deserved.

“I wished I could have met him, but he didn’t see anybody,” recalls Margaret. “It’s a wonder how he thought of it

all, you know, and then for him to get treated as he was treated, well you can’t understand it can you?”

A small cog

Despite the praise now being garnered by those who worked at Bletchley Park, she never saw her role as vital.

“I often think to myself, ‘oh what a little bit we did’. I once said to a vicar friend of mine ‘I’m only a small cog in a big wheel’, but he said to me, ‘you know that wheel couldn’t go without that little cog, just remember that.’”

Margaret left the RAF on 19 April 1946 as an Aircraftswoman First Class (ACW1). However, as she was leaving, she received an odd piece of mail.

“On the day I got demobbed I received a letter that stated I had to be prepared to return back within 24 hours, and in the meantime if I had got married or had children, to bring the children with you, and they will be looked after.”

Thankfully, that never happened and Margaret was able to enjoy her post-war life to the full.

Part two of Margaret’s wartime memories will be in the April edition of *Review*.

Tell us what you think: Member survey 2019

Fran McSweeney, South East Regional Manager, Community Services, asks for your help



IGITALGRILL / ISTOCK

since 2003. The survey will be carried out between March-May this year.

You may be contacted by phone, and asked if you would like to take part. We plan to interview 200 members. Each phone call should last for 20-30 minutes, and your responses are treated anonymously - Blind Veterans UK will not be told who participated.

What you told us in 2018

The 2018 survey showed very high levels of satisfaction with the services and support provided. 94 per cent of members rated the service they receive as good or excellent, and 91 per cent rated the charity good or excellent in helping them cope with sight loss.

We focused the questions on areas or services that you would like to see more of or improve. We asked how Members would like to use the new community teams and volunteers. The most popular responses were:

57 per cent would like to have contact with volunteers

48 per cent wanted a way of contacting other local members

53 per cent wanted to access local events or experiences

47 per cent wanted to practice and develop IT skills

45 per cent wanted help in arranging local meetings

We also asked Members how they would like to receive the service. 34 per cent said they would find it difficult to travel away and stay overnight. The vast majority of you preferred to be contacted by telephone. Some said that they did not know how to contact their community teams and that we did not always send information correctly.

We've listened to your feedback

We have:

■ Employed Volunteer coordinators in all community teams

Their job is to recruit, train and supervise volunteers in the local area to support Members in whatever they want to do. This could be organising a regular get together, trips out, going for walks or just having a cup of tea.

■ Set up an 'IT in the community' service

We have five IT Instructors that work in the community, providing local IT training to Members. We're building this service by recruiting and training volunteers to help, some are our veterans who want to help others. The Community IT service is aimed at people who are unable to travel.

■ Set up lots of local activity

Each area varies depending on geography and what our Members require locally, but most areas of the UK now have regular activities. As well as that we now have a Blind Veterans UK Choir, regular IT groups and there have been trips to the theatre, pantomimes, sailing, 'fish and fizz' on Brighton Pier and other activities. If you've got any ideas for things to do, please let us know and we'll do our best to oblige. If you would like to set up your own group locally, please let us know - we're always open to offers of help.

Improving communication

Every Member should have the contact details of their regional office which is the best way to contact the Community team.

Over the next year, we'll be contacting all Members to check that we are up to date about how you would like to receive information from us.

Keeping warm

In the first of a series detailing what benefits you can claim, Community Support Worker **Noreen Dean** looks at the Winter Fuel Payment



MARINA113 / ISTOCK

Caption: What are you entitled to?

The Winter Fuel Payment is a cash benefit paid by the Government. It is an annual, tax free payment intended to help you pay your heating bills. If eligible, you could receive between £100-300.

Who qualifies?

You will be eligible for the 2018-2019 Winter Fuel Payment if:

- You were born on or before 5 November, 1953
- You receive the state pension or another social security benefit (excluding housing benefit, Universal Credit, Council Tax reduction or child benefit)
- You were living in the UK during the 'qualifying week' week of 17-23 September, 2018.

If you were not living in the UK during the 'qualifying week', you may still be eligible if you were living in Switzerland or a European Economic Area country during that period. However, you must also have a genuine link with the UK social security system, such as having lived in the UK for most of your life.

How much will I get?

If you qualify, the amount you will get will depend on your personal circumstances as set out in this table:

Your circumstances	You were born between 24 Sept, 1938 and 5 Nov, 1953	You were born on or before Sept, 1938
You qualify and you live alone (or live with people who do not qualify)	£200	£300
You qualify and live with someone under 80 who also qualifies	£100	£200
You qualify and live with someone who is 80 or over who also qualifies	£100	£150
You qualify, live in a care home and do not get certain benefits	£100	£150

To claim by phone you call:

- **0800 731 0160** if you are in the UK
- **+44 (0)191 218 7777** outside the UK
- **0800 731 0464** if you use a textphone
- **+44 (0)191 218 7280** if you are using a textphone outside the UK.

To claim by post you can download a claim form from the government website gov.uk/publications/winter-fuel-payment-claim-form if you live in the UK or from gov.uk/government/publications/winter-fuel-payment-claim-form-eea-and-switzerland if you live in Switzerland or an eligible EEA country. The address you must post your completed claim form to will be given on the website.

How will I be paid?

If your claim is accepted, you will be sent a letter confirming the amount you qualify for and when this will be paid into your bank account.

Is there a deadline to claim for the 2018-19 payment

If you are claiming for the first time, your claim must be received by 31 March.

Can I challenge the decision made on my claim?

If you disagree with the decision made on your eligibility for the Winter Fuel Payment, you can contact the Winter Fuel Payment centre and ask for the decision to be looked at again.

What if I need support with this claim?

If you would like some help to claim the Winter Fuel Payment, your Community Support Worker will be happy to help.

Treading the boards

Jim Davidson is a familiar face, having been entertaining us on television since the 1970s, here he talks to **Chris Gilson** about his work with veterans

It's a quiet moment in our London offices, and I'm listening as comedian Jim Davidson begins to explain how he began working with the Armed Forces, and ultimately, our veterans. It may seem surprising to those of you who remember Jim as a bawdy comedian, but behind the scenes he has worked with ex-servicemen and women for many years in a series of rehabilitation charities.

"Years ago there was a government department called Combined Service Entertainment, which was run by a

"I wrote to Margaret Thatcher, and offered to entertain the troops for nothing"

chap called Derek Agutter who was the father of [actress] Jenny Agutter. He was a great guy, and I first met him when he called my agent in 1975, and said 'Would Jim go to Northern Ireland and do some shows there?'

"At the time I didn't even know we had soldiers in Northern Ireland. I was a typical young kid who didn't know the world at all. So, I was flown out there to entertain these troops, and got £75 for it - which wasn't bad. I remember being about to do a show in the canteen at 9.30 in the morning, then the bell went and they all ran off - so I never even got to do my bit!

"Then about three weeks later, they asked me if I wanted to go to Cyprus, and entertain the troops there. I'd

never even been abroad before. It was absolutely great fun. Then I went to Belize, and a few more tours. Finally, when the Falklands war broke out, I wrote to Margaret Thatcher, and offered to entertain the troops for nothing. They accepted - I wasn't funny - but I was cost effective."

It's interesting to note that Jim has visited British Armed Forces in every major conflict since the 1970s, including Afghanistan and the two Gulf Wars. However, one thing that rankled with him was the price that some of the entertainers asked for before going to perform.

"I decided to put an entertainment charity together called the British Forces Foundation, and formed that with the Governor of the Falkland Islands, Vice-Admiral Sir Rex Hunt, the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, First Sea Lord Admiral Sir Jock Slater, Major General Arthur Denaro, and a few others. We put on shows for nothing when we went out.

"Not long after that, I bumped into Falklands veterans and campaigner Simon Weston, and he said 'Did you know we have three and a half thousand veterans in prison?', so then I formed Care After Combat. →



Caption: Chris Gilson and Jim Davidson at our Harcourt Street offices

From inside to outside

Care after Combat is a charity that supports veterans with alcohol and substance misuse problems, many of who are in prison. While still serving their sentences they are mentored, and are resettled into society once released.

"We now look after 600 veterans in prison", Jim continues, "Getting them mentored inside there, and preparing them to face life when they come out.

"In the last 18 months of their sentence they get given a mentor who will visit them. All that time we're collecting information on that prisoner – they've given us their consent – and that helps us to understand them more. We're working out ways to try and prevent them from committing crimes in the first place."

Q Are there any projects that Care After Combat is working on at the moment?

"We've teamed with Walking With the Wounded to form Project Nova. This is a court diversion service, which avoids sending veterans to prison and instead rehabilitates them. We have reduced reoffending from 45 per cent in the first year to eight per cent after mentoring."

Q But why does working with veterans mean so much to Jim? His answer is immediate,

"Why veterans? It got in my blood when I was entertaining as a young comic. A psychiatrist once said to me 'stick with winners', and the British military are all winners to me. When I was entertaining them, I thought 'I'd better learn all about them', so I read everything that possibly was. I choose to be around people who are good at things.



Caption: Jim has been entertaining our troops since the 1970s

"Being around veterans is slightly different – it's more challenging. Every veteran I've met has their own needs."

Q I ask Jim is there were any stand-out moments from his time entertaining our troops

"One time I had a backing band that came out with us, and in the van was a man called Joe Fagin who sang the song from **Auf Wiederseh'n, Pet**, and a girl guitarist called Val. We were on Port Stanley airstrip in a hangar with Harriers at the back, and an audience seated in front of them. Joe sang 'Up where we belong' and said, "This is for you guys, you do it for real", and that brought a tear to the eye. I think the idea of entertaining troops is that you bring the love of a grateful public to them.

"Another time I got shot down in a helicopter in Iraq, but thankfully [opera singer] Katherine Jenkins was sitting next to me, so I knew that if I died it would have made the papers. But yes, we bounced down on the ground a bit hard and then we walked away from it. I was stuck to the roof of the helicopter, because I didn't have a seatbelt on, and when it dropped out of the air, I flew up!

"The thing about working with the armed forces is that I feel at home, that I'm with people who don't judge me, it's nice to be liked by people you admire."

Q Did Jim ever consider a service career when he was younger? Surprisingly, the answer is yes.

"I went to join the navy when I was 16, I was a messenger boy in London and then I did my exams. They kept me waiting for a month, while I was expecting to go to HMS **Raleigh**, and eventually I got offered a better job, and so I wrote to them and said 'I refuse your shilling', and then of course I got lucky, and I won New Faces on television."

Q Jim is well-known for his forthright views, and for having an act that many have seen as risqué. I ask him if that still proves popular

"The majority of people out there still like the old school humour, and pack the theatres. I don't think a comedian goes on stage to upset people.

"I question the subjects I talk about, so it almost becomes a funny discussion. I do two hours, and then I do a few jokes. It is good fun, and the kick I get is when the audience rocks like a sea – there's a sea of heads all moving together because they're literally crying with laughter.

"A comic always wants to do something else – whether it's being a rock singer, or an artist, but luckily I have my other job, which is looking after veterans."



Family News

Birthdays

John Wells who celebrates his 105th birthday on 1st March.

Thomas Davies who celebrates his 101st birthday on 3rd March.

Peta Jenkins who celebrates his 102nd birthday on 3rd March.

Horace D'arcy who celebrates his 107th birthday on 10th March.

Marie Goodman who celebrates her 103rd birthday on 22nd March.

Monica Abel who died on 1st January 2019. She was the wife of Brian John Abel.

Doris Ruth Andrews who died on 6th December 2018. She was the wife of Donald Mcbeth Andrews.

Ena Janet Bannon who died on 22nd November 2018. She was the wife of John Joseph Bannon.

Jean Audrey Brown who died on 29th December 2018. She was the wife of Roland Brown.

Nancy Ellen Fraser who died on 3rd February 2019. She was the widow of the late James Fraser.

Margaret Donald Clarke Kelbie who died on 8th November 2018. She was the wife of Michael Kelbie.

Doreen Anderson Kerslake who died on 18th January 2019. She was the widow of the late Norman Alexander Kerslake.

Sadie Martin who died on 17th January 2019. She was the wife of Michael Martin.

Janet Peckham who died on 3rd January 2019. She was the widow of the late John Charles Gildersleeve Peckham.

Daisy Evelyn Perkins who died on 12th January 2019. She was the widow of the late Douglas George Perkins.

Anne Sylvia Portet who died on 2nd December 2018. She was the widow of the late Lawrence Raoul Portet.

Mary Regina Pygott who died on 1st January 2019. She was the wife of Gordon Leslie Pygott.

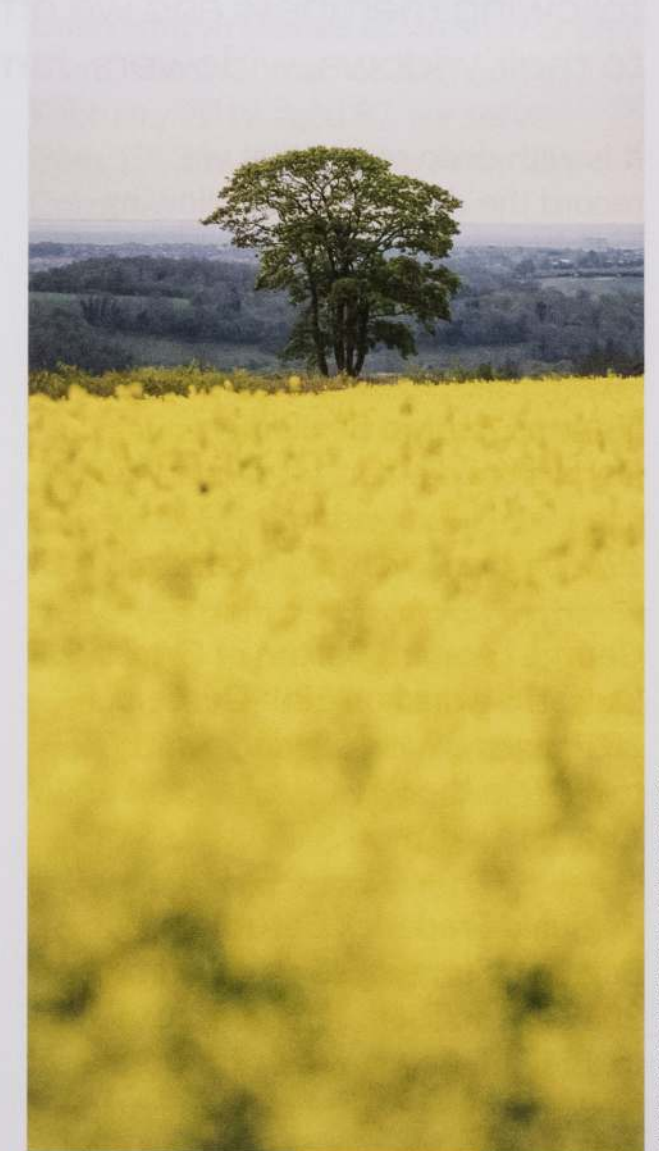
Jean Roper who died on 4th December 2018. She was the wife of Norman Vernon Roper.

Joyce Smith who died on 7th January 2019. She was the wife of Sidney George Smith.

Elizabeth May Warren who died on 26th November 2018. She was the wife of Alan Robert Warren.

Gladys Wood who died on 5th January 2019. She was the wife of Colin Harry Wood.

Gloria Wopling who died on 23rd December 2018. She was the wife of Arthur John Wopling.



LUKE RICHARDSON / UNSPLASH



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

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.

Norman Ashton of Glossop, Derbyshire died on 1st January 2019 aged 96. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.

George Leonard Barton of Ormskirk, Lancashire died on 13th December 2018 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 1.

Reginald Frederick Bartram of Bagshot, Surrey died on 6th February 2019 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1947 in the Army as a Corporal.

Seth Marsh Beaver of Brighton died

on 9th February 2019 aged 90. He served from 1946 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force as a Sergeant.

Merton Boocock of Bradford, West Yorkshire died on 9th January 2019 aged 86. He served from 1947 to 1958 in the Army as a Band Corporal.

Thomas Brammer of Blackpool died on 17th January 2019 aged 94. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Army as a Trooper.

Edward Brown of Hayes, Middlesex died on 28th December 2018 aged 97. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Army as a Signalman.

James Thomson Brown of Minehead, Somerset died on 5th February 2019 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1964 in the Royal Navy as a Chief Electrician.

Adam Moore Brownlie of Glasgow, Lanarkshire died on 1st January 2019 aged 87. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force as a Junior Technician.

Alfred Victor Cadd of Stalybridge, Cheshire died on 2nd January 2019 aged 84. He served from 1952 to 1958 in the Army as a Fusilier.

Walter Harry Chadwick of Nottingham died on 29th November 2018 aged 98. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

Anthony Robert Clarkin of Llandrindod Wells, Powys died on 11th November 2018 aged 70. He served from 1967 to 1976 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

Charles Clements of Hayle, Cornwall died on 13th January 2019 aged 98. He served from 1942 to 1943 in the Army as a Sapper.

Dennis Sylvanus Coates of Weymouth, Dorset died on 14th January 2019 aged 87. He served from 1949 to 1959 in the Army as a Private.

Leonard Charles Collett of Felixstowe, Suffolk died on 24th January 2019 aged 87. He served from 1950 to 1952 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

Phyllis Collins of Hailsham, East Sussex died on 22nd January 2019 aged 94. She served from 1943 to 1947 in the Army as a Private.

Patrick Geoffrey Cullen of Swansea, West Glamorgan died on 1st December 2018 aged 88. He served from 1951 to 1954 in the Royal Air Force as a S.A.C.

Colin Hinton Davies of Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset died on 7th February 2019 aged 87. He served from 1952 to 1959 in the Army as a Corporal.

George Richard Deeks of Hawick, Roxburghshire died on 1st January 2019 aged 71. He served from 1968 to 1973 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

George Dentith of Honiton, Cornwall died on 18th January 2019 aged 96. He served from 1937 to 1953 in the Royal Navy as an Able Seaman.

Violet Irene Douglas of Westbury, Wiltshire died on 17th January 2019 aged 97. She served from 1941 to 1944 in the Royal Navy as a Wren.

George Dunn of Ayr died on 21st January 2019 aged 92. He served from 1944 to 1948 in the Army as a Guardsman.



Geoffrey Elsey of Barnsley, South Yorkshire died on 14th January 2019 aged 92. He served from 1945 to 1954 in the Army as a Private.

Anthony Fitzsimmons of Liverpool, Merseyside died on 1st January 2019 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1953 in the Army as a Private.

Peggy Mary Fry of Paignton, Devon died on 28th January 2019 aged 96. She served from 1942 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.W.

Colin Huw Gibbs of Wrexham, Clwyd died on 11th January 2019 aged 83. He served from 1953 to 1955 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Richard Glass of Scarborough, North Yorkshire died on 31st December 2018 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as an Acting Able Seaman.

Kenneth Thompson Godfrey of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire died on 8th February 2019 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1947 in the Army as a Colour Sergeant.

John Wingate Grosset of Ilkley, West Yorkshire died on 24th January 2019 aged 86. He served from 1954 to 1956 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

William Haskell of Liverpool died on 8th February 2019 aged 85. He served from 1952 to 1957 in the Army as a Private.

John Joseph Hodgson of Cleator, Cumbria died on 11th January 2019 aged 87. He served from 1952 to 1955 in the Army as a Private.

David Livingstone Holms of Bridport, Dorset died on 27th January 2019 aged 88. He served from 1948 to 1955 in the Royal Navy as a Steward.

Peter Frederick Holyfield of Kendal, Cumbria died on 1st January 2019 aged 95. He served from 1942 to 1944 in the Army as a Private.

Brian Hood of Scunthorpe, South Humberside died on 10th December 2018 aged 77. He served from 1959 to 1959 in the Army as a Sapper.

Margaret Howard of Brighton, East Sussex died on 22nd January 2019 aged 94. She served from 1941 to 1946 in the Army as a Private.

Wilfred Keating of Salford died on 10th February 2019 aged 92. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

David Thorpe Kilian of Pwllheli, Gwynedd died on 29th January 2019 aged 86. He served from 1951 to 1953 in the Army as a Private.

Edward James George King of Grantham, Lincolnshire died on 2nd February 2019 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Army as a Lance Corporal.

Percy George Kirby of Fakenham, Norfolk died on 28th January 2019 aged 97. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Army as a Lance Sergeant.

Ronald William Leigh of Burgess Hill, West Sussex died on 16th January 2019 aged 88. He served from 1949 to 1954 in the Army.

Emily May Luxton of Sidmouth, Devon died on 21st November 2018 aged 95. She served from 1943 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Wren.

Bernard Marsden of Nelson, Lancashire died on 26th January 2019 aged 86. He served from 1951 to 1953 in the Royal Air Force as an Aircraftman.

Thomas McMurtry of Ellesmere Port died on 29th November 2018 aged 69. He served from 1966 to 1989 in the Army as a Corporal.

Colin Mills of Rotherham, South Yorkshire died on 18th November 2018 aged 84. He served from 1958 to 1970 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Isabella Oakton of Bournemouth, Dorset died on 4th February 2019 aged 96. She served from 1942 to 1946 in the Royal Navy as a Leading Wren And Petty Officer Wren.

Laura Packwood of Gainsborough, Lincolnshire died on 18th January 2019 aged 57. She served from 1979 to 1980 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.W.

Vinayak Patel of London died on 24th January 2019 aged 89. He served from 1953 to 1965 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

Emil Erhard Paulinski of Uttoxeter, Staffordshire died on 13th January 2019 aged 96. He served from 1945 to 1949 in the Army as a Private.

John William Powell of Beaminster, Dorset died on 19th January 2019 aged 100. He served from 1941 to 1946 in the Army as a Signaller.

Terence Leslie Price of Weston-Super-Mare, North Somerset died on 29th January 2019 aged 84. He served from 1950 to 1960 in the Army as a Craftsman. →

Melvyn Pritchard of Caernarfon, Gwynedd died on 26th January 2019 aged 79. He served from 1961 to 1964 in the Army as a Private.

Kenneth Rawcliffe of Blackburn, Lancashire died on 7th February 2019 aged 88. He served from 1951 to 1953 in the Royal Air Force as a Corporal.

Joseph Vincent Richardson of St. Helens, Merseyside died on 8th February 2019 aged 76. He served from 1960 to 1966 in the Army as a Gunner.

Derek Robertson of Sale, Cheshire died on 7th January 2019 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1949 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 1.

John Allen Robinson of Swindon died on 28th December 2018 aged 100. He served from 1940 to 1946 in the Army as a Private.

Henry Cecil Donald Rosling of Bristol died on 1st January 2019 aged 91. He served from 1945 to 1948 in the Army as a Private.

Peter Sayles of Guildford, Surrey died on 26th January 2019 aged 80. He served from 1957 to 1960 in the Army as a Trooper.

Edward Scott of Sunderland, Tyne And Wear died on 18th December 2018 aged 85. He served from 1952 to 1958 in the Army as a Sapper.

William Stewart Menzies Shaw of Ormskirk, Lancashire died on 26th December 2018 aged 91. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Army as a Gunner.

Sydney Phineas Spiers of Lancing, West Sussex died on 23rd January 2019 aged 102. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Army.

Vivian Stamp of Yeovil, Somerset died on 16th January 2019 aged 87. She served from 1949 to 1954 in the Army as a Driver.

Kenneth Statham of Belper, Derbyshire died on 11th January 2019 aged 96. He served from 1947 to 1955 in the Royal Air Force as an Aircraftman.

Ray Stillwell of Newcastle Upon Tyne died on 1st December 2018 aged 79. He served from 1960 to 1961 in the Army as a Craftsman.

Thomas Taylor of Glasgow, Lanarkshire died on 20th January 2019 aged 103. He served from 1939 to 1946 in the Army.

Dennis Temple of Peacehaven, East Sussex died on 7th February 2019 aged 97. He served from 1940 to 1945 in the Royal Air Force as a L.A.C.

Frederick James Tree of Brighton, East Sussex died on 5th February 2019 aged 102. He served from 1933 to 1945 in the Army as a Corporal.

Patrick Vernon of Doncaster, South Yorkshire died on 28th December 2018 aged 89. He served from 1947 to 1950 in the Royal Navy as a Stoker.

Leslie Ward of Blackpool died on 11th January 2019 aged 96. He served from 1941 to 1947 in the Royal Navy as an Acting Radio Mechanic.

Robert Edward Watts of Brighton died on 24th January 2019 aged 93. He served from 1943 to 1959 in the Army as a Lance Bombardier.

Dennis Alan Wheatley of Worthing, West Sussex died on 5th February 2019 aged 98. He served from 1940 to 1946 in the Royal Air Force as an Aircraftman.

Raymond Allan White of Bridgwater, Somerset died on 19th January 2019 aged 90. He served from 1946 to 1948 in the Royal Air Force as an A.C. 1.

Thomas James Wicks of Newport, Gwent died on 28th December 2018 aged 87. He served from 1947 to 1965 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Sidney William Wilkins of Wirral, Merseyside died on 1st January 2019 aged 100. He served from 1942 to 1946 in the Army.

Frank Wilson of Coventry died on 20th January 2019 aged 89. He served from 1950 to 1967 in the Army.

Joan Worthing of St. Ives, Cambridgeshire died on 9th February 2019 aged 89. She served from 1948 to 1951 in the Royal Air Force as an ACW1.

Philip Wright of Gateshead, Tyne And Wear died on 2nd February 2019 aged 86. He served from 1953 to 1959 in the Army as a Gunner.

Stephen Wyres of Exeter died on 5th January 2019 aged 60. He served from 1974 to 2003 in the Army as a Sergeant.

Remembering the Fallen of recent conflicts

In the first part of a short series, our President **Colin Williamson** remembers those who fell in the other conflicts our Armed Forces have taken part in

While it is only right that we remember those that lost their lives in both World Wars, we should also never forget those members of the Armed Forces that made the supreme sacrifice in other conflicts around the globe.

Below is a list of actions that members of the British Armed Forces have been involved in where brave soldiers, sailors, aircrew and Royal Marines have paid the ultimate price.

Palestine. 1922-1948.

In 1922 Great Britain was granted control over some of the Ottoman Empire by a mandate from the League of Nations. Today, this includes what is now Israel, the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and Jordan. During the conflict, which ran between 1922 and 1948, 233 British soldiers lost their lives. The mandate was terminated on 15 May 1948, and on the same day the State of Israel was proclaimed, sparking off the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

Malaya. 1948-1960.

The Federation of Malaya was created after the end of the Second World War and almost at once a campaign of guerrilla warfare ensued, orchestrated by the mainly Chinese Communist Party of Malaya with the aim of creating Communist rule over the country.

After the murder of three rubber planters in June 1948, a state of emergency was declared and terrorist activity continued to thwart Britain's attempts to address political and economic grievances.

British forces losses added up to 340, mostly National Servicemen, and in all a total of 519 Commonwealth personnel lost their lives during the conflict, including Britain's High Commissioner, Sir Hugh Gurney, who was ambushed and killed in 1951.

Yangtze River Incident. 1949.

During the Chinese Civil War in the

summer of 1949, the British frigate HMS **Amethyst** was on her way up the Yangtze River to replace the C Class destroyer HMS **Consort** which was acting as a guard ship for the British Embassy in Nanking when she was fired upon by Chinese Peoples Liberation Army small arms fire and a field gun from the north bank of the river.

She suffered severe damage with 22 men killed and 31 wounded. During her attempted rescue, HMS **Consort**, HMS **London** and HMS **Black Swan** suffered a total of 13 men killed and 37 wounded. HMS **Amethyst** was eventually successfully refloated and escaped on the night of 30 July.



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Caption: Korean war

Korean War. 1950-1953.

At the end of the Second World War and the defeat of the Japanese forces that occupied Korea, the country was split at the 38th parallel with the United States controlling the south and the Russians having control of the north.

On 25 June 1950, troops from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from the north invaded their southern neighbours and fellow countrymen, heralding the start of the Korean War.

In 1950 Great Britain was a full member of the United Nations Security Council and as the invasion of the south by forces from the north was seen as a breach of peace. Great Britain was again at war.

It is estimated that over 100,000 British troops were involved in the war, the majority were National Servicemen (including Fusilier Maurice Micklewhite, now known as Sir Michael Caine) and includes members of Blind Veterans UK who fought in the conflict and lived to tell the tale.

One of the bloodiest battles fought since the end of the Second World War took place at the Imjin River where four hundred members of The Gloucestershire Regiment (The Glorious Glosters) held out against 10,000 Chinese soldiers for three nights, winning two Victoria Crosses in the →

process and successfully delaying the Chinese offensive, allowing time for the UN forces to withdraw to a defensive line north of Seoul, where the Chinese were halted.

It is estimated that nearly 1,000 British soldiers were killed during the Korean War, some dying in prison camps in the jungle. Some are still listed as 'missing in action'; having never returned home and having no named graves.

Canal Zone Conflict. 1951-1953.

Opened in 1869, the Suez Canal connected the Mediterranean Sea to the Red Sea, making it a vitally important maritime trade route. Great Britain had a military presence in Egypt since it invaded the country in 1882, with one of its roles being the protection of this key waterway.

Nationalist anti-British feeling had continued to grow after the end of the Second World War, and the presence of British troops was becoming unpopular. This escalated into guerrilla warfare and a total of 54 British soldiers lost their lives in the conflict.

Mau-Mau uprising. 1952-1960.

The Mau-Mau uprising was a direct consequence of Britain's colonial rule in Kenya. The Mau-Mau consisted of peoples from the Kikuyu, Meru and Embu tribes and also factions of the



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Caption: Tanks Destroyed in Sinai, 1956

Maasai and Kamba tribes, who wanted a return to independence.

This was met by a show of force from Great Britain, which in October 1952 sent in three battalions of the Kings African Rifles to augment the two battalions already in theatre. They were joined by a battalion of British troops, drawn from 1st Battalion, XX The Lancashire Fusiliers.

The RAF was also utilised and sent in two flights, consisting of Avro Lincolns, and the single engine North American Harvard trainer as an attack aircraft.

The uprising ended when the state of emergency was lifted. It has been estimated that over 200 British soldiers and policemen died during the rebellion.

Contact telephone numbers

Harcourt Street 020 7723 5021.

The Brighton centre 01273 307 811.

The Llandudno centre 01492 868 700.

The Booking Office for the Brighton centre: To book accommodation at the Brighton centre telephone **01273 391 500**. If you have care needs please first contact your Team Leader or Community Support Worker

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

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March for Veterans

Step out in the month of March to help end isolation for blind veterans.

Whether you choose to count your own steps or join one of our organised walks you can help us raise funds to support ex-Servicemen and women who have lost their sight.



Rebuilding
lives after
sight loss

For more information and to register, visit our website at blindveterans.org.uk/marchforveterans